

The "One-Way" Predicament and Strategic Research on the Two-Way Transition of Art Education between Kindergarten and Primary School in China: A Grounded Theory Study

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Abstract

In China, the primary responsibility for the kindergarten-to-primary school transition (K-2 transition) falls predominantly on kindergartens, while primary schools do not play an active role in the process. Many students fail to adapt to the new teaching environment and methods upon entering primary school, leading to issues such as loss of interest in learning and even dropping out. This paper investigates the practical predicament of the "one-way" nature of the two-way transition in Chinese art education and proposes promotion strategies for art education within the K-2 transition context. To comprehensively analyze this issue, this study employs Grounded Theory methodology. Through line-by-line coding of materials including academic literature, news reports, expert lectures, and public WeChat account articles, the study identifies that the "one-way" predicament in the two-way transition of art education is primarily focused on four dimensions: lax supervision by education departments, insufficient guidance from schools, lack of comprehensive teacher competency, and lack of parental awareness regarding the transition. Based on these findings, the paper proposes targeted strategies to address the "one-way" predicament. These four dimensions not only reflect the root causes of the "one-way" predicament in the K-2 art education transition but also provide valuable references for enhancing the accuracy of future analyses of the transition issue and for formulating effective transition strategies.

Keywords: Art Education, Kindergarten-Primary School Transition, "One-Way" Predicament, Strategies, Grounded Theory

Introduction

The transition period from kindergarten to primary school is a critical stage in child development (Cavioni & Zanetti, 2019). The emotional appeal, subjective experience, and degree of school adaptation during children's initial school entry phase play a crucial role in highlighting the importance of their developmental trajectories. These factors shape their

emotional experiences and personal characteristics within the school environment, exerting profound long-term effects on their future lives (Cokuk & Kozikoglu, 2020). Facing the K-2 transition, children encounter significant challenges; they must rapidly adapt to a new environment and more demanding academic tasks, inevitably imposing considerable psychological and academic pressure (Blair, 2022). Art education plays a significant role in alleviating learning pressure and fostering creativity, making effective transitional methods particularly important, especially during the shift from kindergarten to the new stage. As a key discipline for cultivating children's innovative abilities, art education positively impacts their growth and development (Helm & McCormick, 2020). However, existing research rarely focuses on the role of art education within the K-2 transition process, often neglecting the importance of stage-specific cultivation in both kindergarten and primary school art education. The lack of effective K-2 transition work in art education is not only a practical challenge facing current art education but also a significant obstacle to cultivating children's creative development.

The research question of this paper focuses on: Exploring the practical predicament of the "one-way" nature of the two-way transition in Chinese art education between kindergarten and primary school. Using Grounded Theory methodology, the study involves line-by-line coding of data from literature, news reports, expert lectures, and public WeChat account articles. Through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, the study synthesizes the practical predicament of the "one-way" transition in Chinese art education and proposes promotion strategies for art education within the K-2 transition context.

This study focuses on the prevalent one-way dilemma existing in the two-way transition of domestic art education between kindergarten and primary school, and carries out systematic discussions centering on this core issue. The motivation for this research stems from three interrelated practical and theoretical demands. International academia has widely verified that kindergarten-primary transition exerts a crucial impact on children's subsequent development. Although relevant studies have identified multiple discontinuities in the transition process, in-depth investigations specifically targeting the specialized field of art education remain scarce. Meanwhile, domestic kindergarten-primary transition practices have long suffered from an unbalanced pattern where kindergartens bear transition responsibilities unilaterally while primary schools offer passive cooperation. Misunderstandings of the connotation of transition among parents and the fragile collaborative mechanisms among multiple stakeholders further aggravate this one-way predicament. Furthermore, art education delivers unique educational functions during the kindergarten-primary transition period: it facilitates children's transitional development in emotional expression and aesthetic perception, and fosters the natural advancement of hand-brain coordination and creative thinking. Nevertheless, existing relevant literature lacks systematic sorting and theoretical integration of the educational functions of art education at this transitional stage.

Grounded theory is adopted as the methodological framework of this research. Rich empirical data are collected through multiple channels, and rigorous three-level coding procedures are implemented to elaborate on the actual manifestations of the one-way dilemma, based on which corresponding optimization strategies are proposed. At the level of theoretical construction, this study innovatively constructs a multi-dimensional integrated theoretical

model for the one-way dilemma in art education's kindergarten-primary transition via grounded theory, which effectively breaks through the limitations of prior research relying on single perspectives or partial factor explanations. From four dimensions including education authorities, schools, teachers and parents, this model clearly defines dilemma factors at each level as well as the logic of their interactions: loose supervision by education authorities constitutes the root cause; insufficient guidance at the school level acts as an intermediate variable; inadequate professional literacy of teachers and cognitive biases of parents serve as direct inducing factors. This theoretical construction not only fills the research gap of systematic interpretive frameworks in the field of art education's kindergarten-primary transition and enriches the theoretical discourse system of this research direction, but also provides a complete problem diagnosis tool and practical improvement basis for policy-makers, school administrators and frontline teachers, bearing both academic value and practical significance.

This paper is divided into five parts. The main content of the remaining four parts is as follows: Part 2 is the Literature Review; Part 3 is the Research Design, introducing the research methods, data sources, and the processes of open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and theoretical saturation testing; Part 4 presents the theoretical model of the "one-way" predicament; Part 5 is the Research Conclusions and Discussion.

Literature Review

The transition between preschool and primary education is influenced by multiple factors and exhibits complex characteristics. In K-2 transition education, the needs of participants show significant differences during the transition process, including but not limited to aspects such as learning quality, educational expectations, teacher-student relationships, and growth environment. These differences contribute to the diversity and complexity of K-2 transition issues. The extent to which schools prioritize the K-2 transition, the comprehensive competency of teachers, and the active cooperation of parents significantly influence the effectiveness of the transition. The exchange and communication of teaching practices between primary schools and kindergartens are crucial for proposing improvement measures and enhancing the quality of the K-2 transition (Jiang & Chang, 2023). A lack of effective communication can lead to fractures in K-2 transition education, thereby hindering its effective implementation (Zhou, 2023). [Analyzing the problems and strategies of K-2 transition work]. In Proceedings of the 6th Teaching Seminar of Guangdong Provincial Teachers Continuing Education Society (Vol. 8) (pp. 114-120)). K-2 transition teaching requires teachers to possess excellent cross-stage teaching abilities and profound knowledge of child developmental psychology. However, the reality shows that many teachers have varying levels of professional knowledge and skills, leading to disparities in the quality of K-2 transition teaching. Furthermore, parents' levels of participation in kindergarten education vary, resulting in differing influences on the K-2 transition (Liu, 2022). During the K-2 transition process, students' rapid progress and positive development are closely linked to multiple factors including schools, teachers, and parents, all of which significantly impact the K-2 transition (Atkinson & Takriti, 2021).

Research on K-2 Transition Education in China

In recent years, societal attention to the kindergarten-to-primary school transition in China has been increasing (Wang & Zhang, 2023), and relevant policy documents from education

departments regarding the transition from preschool to primary education are continuously being adjusted and refined. In April 2022, the Ministry of Education issued the "Compulsory Education Curriculum Plan (2022 Edition)" and the "Compulsory Education Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)," which strengthened cross-stage articulation, explicitly emphasized the importance of K-2 transition, and provided corresponding curriculum implementation suggestions. Education departments have fully recognized the significant psychological differences between early childhood education and primary education, clarifying the direction for the transition from early childhood to primary education. Currently, China is actively implementing the primary school "Zero Starting Point" policy to ensure a smooth transition between preschool and primary education (Deng, 2023). In this process, national and local governments have formulated corresponding policies and documents to guide the transition and articulation between preschool and primary education (Hong & Liu, 2022). However, despite these policy measures, literature analysis and practical survey results indicate that many preschool education institutions have not genuinely implemented K-2 transition curricula, and some even lack an understanding of the scientific concepts related to the preschool-to-primary school transition, resulting in early childhood education becoming an inappropriate form of "primary education." This not only adversely affects children's age-appropriate development but also fails to effectively achieve a scientific connection between preschool and primary education (Liu, 2023).

Research on Issues Related to K-2 Transition Education

The issue of K-2 transition is a highly concerned topic in the field of education. Previous research has mainly focused on three key aspects. Firstly, concerning the subjects involved in the K-2 transition, scholars widely point out the problem of kindergartens unilaterally catering to primary schools (Wang, 2023). The core of this issue is that kindergartens tend towards primary school orientation, losing their independent developmental characteristics and moving towards an extreme of one-way articulation. The "primary schoolization" of kindergarten education is not only detrimental to children's development but also poses a significant obstacle to the healthy development of early childhood education (Xiao, 2023). Some kindergartens offer courses like arithmetic, English, phonics, literacy, and abacus mental arithmetic in their middle and senior classes; some even teach two-to-three-year-old children to recite "classics" or memorise pi, bringing primary school learning content into the preschool stage as an overloaded curriculum. Due to a lack of teacher awareness, educational techniques, and strategies, this reflects a "primary schoolization" characteristic in teaching orientation (Huang, 2023). Secondly, regarding the content of the transition, there is an overemphasis on knowledge-based content while neglecting the multifaceted transition needs related to life adaptation, social adaptation, and psychological development. There is a lack of an educational philosophy centered on children and responsible for their sustainable development. Consequently, teaching content is not based on a child-centered view, exceeding children's physical and mental developmental levels and violating their psychological developmental characteristics. It fails to genuinely understand and care for children's needs, neglecting their physical and mental health requirements (Lu, 2022). This leads to children losing initiative and enthusiasm for learning, compromising educational quality, and exerting negative physiological, psychological, and personality-shaping impacts on children's future learning.

Research Review

In summary, research findings on the kindergarten-to-primary school transition are relatively abundant, mainly focusing on influencing factors and comprehensive issues. However, there is a lack of in-depth reflection and exploration regarding the advancement and evolution of individual disciplines. This paper aims to fill this research gap by systematically collating and analyzing textual materials on the K-2 transition in Chinese art education using the Grounded Theory approach. The goal is to construct a pathway model for the "one-way" predicament in the two-way K-2 transition of Chinese art education and, based on the identified predicament, propose corresponding coping strategies, providing theoretical reference and insights for further improving the quality of K-2 transition education.

Research Design

Research Method

Qualitative research possesses an excellent capacity for broadly exploring social phenomena. This research method uses an inductive approach to analyze data to generate theories and explains the meaning of behaviors and construction through interaction with research subjects (Sheng, 2020). In this context, Grounded Theory is considered a scientific qualitative research method. Its key advantage lies in extracting core concepts from data and then constructing theories by inducing relationships among these concepts, thereby revealing specific phenomena.

The specific process of the research covers the following steps: problem definition, literature review, data selection, data analysis, theoretical saturation testing, theory construction, and theory explanation. In practice, the coding phase of procedural grounded theory is divided into three steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Data Collection

Given geographical factors and the different educational backgrounds faced by various disciplines, this study aims to delve into the "one-way" issue in the K-2 transition of Chinese art education through multi-channel information gathering. To obtain high-quality domestic literature on the K-2 transition, this study first employed a systematic literature search strategy. In important databases such as CNKI and Wanfang, keywords including "kindergarten-primary school transition," "art education K-2 transition," "K-2 transition predicament," and "K-2 transition one-way" were used for literature retrieval. To ensure data reliability, materials closely related to the research question were selectively identified from the initial search results. To avoid the problem of a single data source, video information from expert interviews and social media was further searched on video websites and the WeChat platform, followed by screening. After repeated comparisons, based on information completeness and the principle of theoretical saturation, 32 high-quality textual materials were ultimately selected, totaling 299,200 Chinese characters. These materials met the refined research conditions, providing a solid foundation for the subsequent coding process. Ultimately, 187 eligible materials were identified.

Coding System Construction

In the process of data collection and theory generation, coding plays a crucial role. The coding process involves meticulous and systematic analysis of raw data, aiming to reveal the classification, naming, and integration of concepts, as well as to determine category

attributes and dimensions, providing the necessary basis for subsequent theory construction. To ensure coding accuracy, a series of rigorous steps were followed. First, expert lectures and news interview content were transcribed into textual form, and these texts were imported into the qualitative analysis software NVIVO 12 for in-depth analysis. During coding, the researcher adhered to the principle of no preset bias, conducting three levels of coding on each piece of material, analyzing word-by-word and line-by-line to ensure every detail was fully considered. Through this rigorous coding process, four primary reasons leading to the one-way predicament in the K-2 transition of art education were successfully identified. These issues, processed through classification, induction, and coding, allowed for a deeper understanding of their essence. This coding process strictly followed the principle of theoretical saturation, meaning that when textual materials could no longer generate new concepts or insights, the theoretical saturation point was considered reached. This principle helps ensure the coding work is both comprehensive and in-depth. To ensure the accuracy and consistency of coding, experts in the relevant field were also invited for further discussion. This detailed coding process provided a solid and trustworthy foundation for subsequent theory construction.

Open Coding

In the initial stage of the research, open coding plays a crucial role. This key step involves extracting key statements from the collected materials and, through repeated comparative analysis, conceptualizing and categorizing these original statements to form initial concepts and basic categories. In this process, conceptualization refers to reading original materials line-by-line, extracting sentences related to the research purpose, and inducing common elements from all original statements. This further transforms original statements into more concise and refined expressions, thereby generating initial concepts. Categorization, on the other hand, involves further summarizing and naming these initial concepts to construct basic categories (Francis & Johnston, 2010). In practice, researchers used NVIVO 12 to classify, parse, and code the relevant materials line-by-line. Through continuous comparison, a total of 234 reference points were obtained. During repeated comparisons, concepts with similar meanings were merged, and duplicate concepts appearing less than twice were removed, ultimately yielding 47 initial concepts, labeled a1 to a47. Through comparison of these initial concepts, they were categorized, resulting in the identification of 14 basic categories, labeled A1 to A14. Due to space constraints, Table 1 below presents only a partial example of the coding results.

Table 1
Examples of Open Coding

Basic Category	Initial Concept	Original Statement
A1 Lax Regulatory System	a1 Supervision not implemented	Joint supervision not implemented leading to unsupported transition implementation. Teachers from multiple kindergartens and primary schools stated, "There are no professional supervisors to tell us exactly how to coordinate with primary schools," and "We are navigating the K-2 transition coordination blindly."
	a2 Joint evaluation not conducted	Joint evaluation not conducted leading to no direction for improvement. After investigating whether "your kindergarten/primary school has received evaluations for its K-2 transition coordination work," the research group found that the evaluation mechanism for such coordination has not yet been established, and no evaluation has been carried out.
A2 Loose supervision of K-2 transition	a3 Unreasonable off-campus institution training	Off-campus training institutions provide primary school curriculum content to preschool children. These institutions severely disrupt kindergartens' teaching order. In some kindergartens, many children in the senior class take leave to attend these training classes.
	a4 Teachers organizing transition training	In-service kindergarten and primary school teachers organize, participate in, or are nominally involved in K-2 transition training. The prevalence of teachers participating in or establishing off-campus training institutions increases the learning burden on young children and primary school students.
A3 Non-standard transition system	a5 Lack of teaching evaluation	K-2 transition evaluation should include evaluations of teachers' transitional teaching methods and children's learning outcomes in transitional teaching.
	a6 Non-standard teaching behavior	For kindergartens with non-standard teaching behaviors and a tendency towards primary schoolization, a one-vote veto system is applied in annual inspections and kindergarten grade evaluations.
A4 Lack of attention to K-2 differences	a12 Differences in environment between kindergarten and primary school	The learning environments of kindergarten and primary school are vastly different. At this stage, children may feel uncomfortable with the sudden change in environment and may develop resistance to attending school. Upon entering primary school, children face sudden changes in learning, activities, and environment, making short-term adaptation difficult.
	a13 Differences in teaching methods between kindergarten and primary school	These school adaptation issues primarily stem from the difference between traditional open and comprehensive activities in kindergartens and the static, subject-based teaching in primary school classrooms. The learning content and methods of participation in kindergarten thematic and field activities differ significantly from the subject arrangements and participation methods in primary school.
A5 Unclear Teaching Objectives	a18 Lack of art education teaching objectives	Therefore, teaching objectives must be defined first. Kindergarten art education is almost non-existent. Art education is often neglected, lacking unified teaching objectives.
	a19 Unclear teaching methods	Teaching methods are variable and mechanically applied, causing children to become bored with art. Using methods from knowledge-based subjects leads to a loss of learning interest.

Axial Coding

The core objective of axial coding is to conduct in-depth comparison and analysis of the initial concepts and basic categories derived from the open coding phase, to explore potential links between these independent basic categories, and then perform a comprehensive summary, naming, and construction of main categories. In this phase, researchers carefully refined, integrated, and classified the 14 basic categories obtained from open coding, while also sorting out the logical relationships among them. This ultimately generated four main categories: "Loose regulation by education departments," "Insufficient guidance from

schools," "Lack of comprehensive teacher competency," and "Lack of parental awareness regarding the transition" (labeled B1 to B4). See Table 2 for details.

Table 2
Axial Coding

Main Category	Initial Category	Category Connotation
B1 Loose regulation by education departments	A1 Lax regulatory system	A lax regulatory system leads to K-2 transition problems. Supervision and guidance are lacking, joint supervision is absent, joint evaluation is not conducted, and the evaluation mechanism is not established. The absence of supervision and assessment systems results in low teacher enthusiasm for K-2 transition coordination.
	A2 Loose supervision of K-2 transition	Problems in supervising off-campus K-2 transition primarily manifest as unreasonable off-campus institution training and teachers establishing transition training, leading to a regulatory gap.
	A3 Non-standard transition system	A non-standard transition system leads to K-2 transition problems. There is a lack of teaching evaluation, non-standard teaching behaviors, and an inadequate coordination mechanism. Admission bases are unreasonable, class division is inappropriate, and teacher selection is not strict enough. Scientific policy guidance is insufficient; primary schools do not fulfill their responsibilities adequately; and there is insufficient attention to K-2 transition policies.
B2 Insufficient guidance from schools	A4 Lack of attention to K-2 differences	K-2 transition problems: Significant differences between kindergarten and primary school environments lead to a lack of smooth transition; differences in teaching methods and task awareness are substantial, and children fail to meet primary school requirements; kindergartens emphasize play while primary schools emphasize classroom learning; physical and mental differences between the two stages make role transition difficult, causing psychological gaps; primary schools do not fully understand children's psychology and lack effective methods to facilitate the transition.
	A5 Unclear teaching objectives	Problems with confused teaching objectives. There is a lack of clear art education teaching objectives, teaching directions vary, and there is a lack of systematicity, causing children to lose interest in art.
	A6 Neglect of art education	Problems with the neglect of art education. Teachers' art education abilities are limited, often involving only basic color recognition without in-depth instruction. During the K-2 transition stage, children's interest diminishes, and some develop a resistance to drawing.
	A7 One-way effort from kindergartens	Problems with one-way transition from kindergartens. There is a weak sense of coordination; K-2 transition efforts are primarily initiated by kindergartens, with primary schools responding passively; kindergartens bear sole responsibility, and problems tend to be attributed to them; a coordination system has not been established, making the transition process discontinuous; responsibility distribution is unclear, making coordination work passive and fragmented; coordination methods are simplistic and lack innovation, resulting in unsatisfactory outcomes.
	A8 Lack of effective transition methods	Physical and mental differences in K-2 transition. Differences in teaching methods cause K-2 transition problems: kindergarten activity- and play-based teaching does not align with primary school classroom learning, making it difficult for children to adapt. Kindergartens balance play and learning, while primary schools focus on classroom learning with longer hours and stricter discipline. Children lack psychological preparation for the transition to primary school, and teachers lack understanding. Primary school teachers are unfamiliar with the psychological characteristics of children in the K-2 transition stage and lack effective transitional methods.

B3 Lack of comprehensive teacher competency	A9 Weak educational teaching staff	Problems with teacher professionalism. Incorrect teaching methods, such as requiring children to imitate drawings or objects, reduce interest. Some art teachers lack professional knowledge, teaching lacks depth, which destroys children's learning interest.
	A10 Insufficient teacher attention	Problems with teacher professional focus. Awareness of K-2 transition is weak, teaching and research interaction is insufficient, and systematic learning is lacking. Teaching plans are absent, transition implementation is insufficient, and evaluation and feedback are inadequate.
	A11 No difference between kindergarten and primary education	Problems with primary schoolization in kindergartens. The differences between kindergarten and primary education are unclear, lacking transition strategies; excessive focus on subject knowledge increases pressure; the tendency towards primary schoolization is evident, and teaching behaviors are not adapted to children's needs.
B4 Lack of parental awareness regarding the transition	A12 Insufficient parental understanding of transition	Parents blindly pursue quick success, overly focus on skill training, and neglect holistic development. They even send children to off-campus "K-2 transition classes" to acclimate them early to the primary school environment, which goes against children's nature and increases their burden.
	A13 Unreasonable parental mindset	Parents face anxiety and often exhibit a herd mentality. They eagerly enroll children in K-2 transition cram courses out of fear they will fall behind their peers, creating a herd mentality. This mindset stems from worrying that children will not adapt upon entering primary school, potentially damaging their confidence and self-esteem.
	A14 Lack of communication between parents and school	Insufficient home-school communication. A lack of effective communication between parents and schools prevents parents from receiving scientific guidance and help, and also hinders their understanding and support for children's school readiness.

Selective Coding

The goal of selective coding is to systematically process the relationships among the main categories. It requires extracting a core category with overarching significance from the main categories and analyzing the interrelationships between this core category and the main categories to delineate the overall theory or phenomenon. Through continuous comparison and discussion, the researcher further synthesized and integrated the main categories formed through axial coding to extract the core categories. Ultimately, five dimensions were formed: educational regulation, school guidance, teacher competency, and parental awareness. By sorting out the relationships between concepts and categories, it was found that the four dimensions are interrelated, jointly constituting the key factors of the "one-way" predicament in the two-way K-2 transition of Chinese art education (see Figure 2). The one-way K-2 transition in Chinese art education is caused by four fundamental factors, related to education departments, teaching institutions, teachers, and parents. The performance of schools, teachers, and parents determines whether the one-way transition occurs. Education departments, as the supervisory and management bodies for K-2 transition, provide support for its directionality and effectiveness.

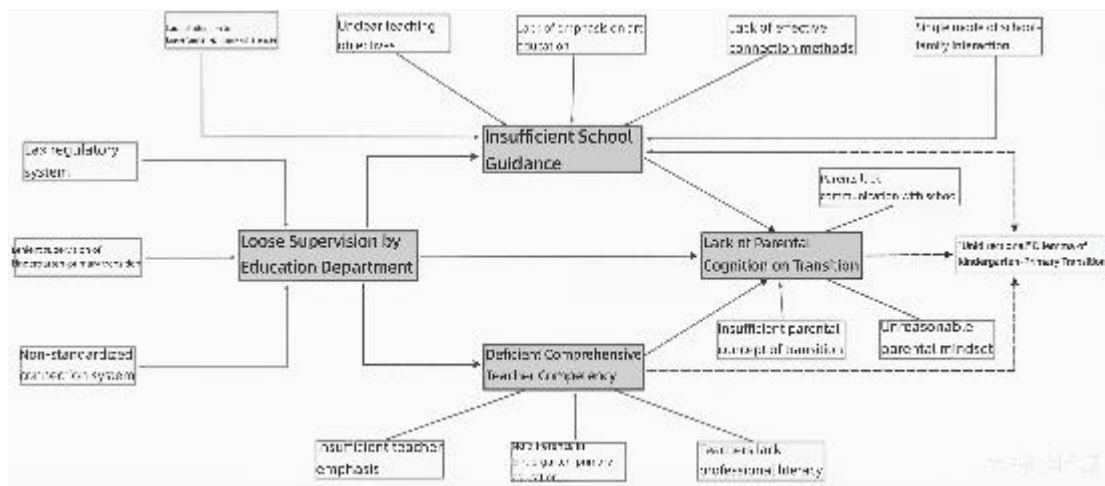


Fig. 2. "One-Way" Predicament Model for K-2 Art Education Transition

Theoretical Saturation Testing

When the coding stage of data materials can no longer discover new conceptual categories and relationships, researchers need to conduct re-tests using more than three additional materials. If new conceptual categories and relationships still do not appear, the theory constructed by the coding can be considered saturated [50]. To verify saturation, this study imported four reserved random literature items into NVivo 12 software. Following the previously described steps, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were sequentially performed. After detailed analysis, no new concepts or categories were found, and no new relationships emerged between categories. This result indicates that the theoretical model shown in Figure 2 has passed the theoretical saturation test.

Interpretation of the "One-Way" Predicament Model for K-2 Art Education Transition

The "One-Way" Predicament Model for K-2 Art Education Transition

Through line-by-line coding of academic literature, expert lectures, news reports, and WeChat public account articles related to the "one-way" K-2 transition, a complete "storyline" centered on the "one-way" nature of K-2 art education transition was formed, constructing a theoretical model of this predicament.

Loose regulation by education departments, insufficient guidance from schools, lack of comprehensive teacher competency, and lack of parental awareness regarding the transition are important elements leading to the one-way predicament in K-2 art education transition. Each element exhibits certain stage characteristics. Loose regulation by education departments serves as the root cause for insufficient school guidance (unclear teaching objectives, lack of effective transition methods, simplistic coordination methods, neglect of art education, lack of attention to K-2 differences) and lack of comprehensive teacher competency (no difference between kindergarten and primary education, insufficient teacher attention, lack of teacher professional competency). Because of the lax supervision by education departments and the absence of a strict and standardized transition system to supervise and manage schools, schools end up with unclear teaching objectives and a lack of transition methods. The following sections provide a detailed explanation of each element of the model.

Composition and Dimensional Connotations of the "One-Way" Predicament in K-2 Art Education Transition

Loose Regulation by Education Departments

In the field of K-2 transition education, loose regulation by education departments has caused a series of problems. Firstly, in the teacher assessment process, education departments use psychology knowledge as an assessment criterion, leading to primary school teachers lacking an understanding of child psychology. This is particularly problematic during the K-2 transition stage, as they are unable to effectively respond to the psychological characteristics of primary school students, negatively impacting children's smooth adaptation to primary school life. Secondly, the K-2 transition in art education lacks clear teaching objectives and systematic guidance, making children feel fatigued in art learning and preventing them from receiving effective artistic cultivation. Furthermore, unreasonable training provided by off-campus institutions exacerbates the problem, causing children to be exposed to primary school curriculum content prematurely, resulting in a lack of continuity.

Loose regulation by education departments also creates problems in teacher training. Although some teachers spontaneously conduct K-2 transition training, the participation and quality of such training are unstable, and teacher involvement is inconsistent (Dang, 2019). Additionally, problems exist in educational evaluation; there is a lack of a comprehensive evaluation mechanism for the K-2 transition, making it impossible to accurately assess teachers' transitional teaching methods and children's learning outcomes. In terms of teaching behavior, some kindergartens show tendencies towards non-standard practices and primary schoolization. However, the annual audits and grade evaluations of kindergartens lack rigor, making it difficult to effectively correct these issues. Insufficient scientific policy guidance further aggravates the problem, leading to primary schools failing to fulfill their responsibilities and mission adequately. The insufficient attention paid by education departments to K-2 transition policies is also a significant cause of the problem. The absence of supervision and assessment systems leads to a lack of enthusiasm among teachers for K-2 transition coordination, thereby affecting the quality of K-2 transition education. In summary, the issues arising from the loose regulation by education departments affect multiple aspects of K-2 transition education and require systematic improvement to enhance its quality and effectiveness.

Insufficient Guidance from Schools

Schools face multiple problems in K-2 transition education, leading to a disjointed educational process. Firstly, schools lack clear educational objectives for the K-2 transition, making the educational direction uncertain. They also fail to formulate feasible educational plans to support children's smooth transition to primary school. Furthermore, schools lack clear responsibility allocation and organizational structures for coordination, resulting in insufficient coordination and orderliness in collaborative work. Currently, coordination methods mainly involve primary school visits, but primary schools are usually not actively involved in K-2 transition work and also lack in-depth understanding of kindergarten curricula and educational philosophies. This simplistic and non-diverse coordination method leads to discontinuity and unsatisfactory outcomes in the transition process, failing to fully realize the potential of coordination to improve children's adaptability and learning outcomes.

Schools do not pay sufficient attention to the differences between kindergartens and primary schools, which encompass aspects like learning environment, educational methods, and task awareness. This deficiency causes children to feel uncomfortable when transitioning from one environment to another, potentially triggering resistance to school attendance. Additionally, primary schools place higher demands on students, requiring stronger task awareness. Compared to kindergartens, this difference has not received adequate attention during the guidance process.

There are significant differences between traditional kindergarten integrated activities and primary school static subject-based teaching, including variations in content and educational methods. These differences cause children to feel uncomfortable in the primary school learning environment. Kindergartens typically focus on play and thematic activities, while primary schools mainly employ classroom teaching. This disparity makes it difficult for children transitioning from kindergarten to primary school to adapt to new learning methods, thereby affecting their transition. Therefore, schools need to adopt systematic and comprehensive improvement measures to effectively guide children in overcoming these differences and enhancing their adaptability and learning outcomes during the K-2 transition process.

Lack of Comprehensive Teacher Competency

In the field of K-2 transition education, teachers face a series of problems primarily centered on a lack of comprehensive competency, directly impacting the effectiveness and quality of K-2 transition education. A prominent issue is the lack of practical and feasible K-2 transition education plans. Although the concept of "K-2 transition" has been updated, teachers lack systematic educational plans in practice. Consequently, K-2 transition education lacks clear guidance, making it difficult to achieve effective teaching objectives. Moreover, teachers exhibit insufficient differentiation in early childhood and primary education, sometimes displaying non-standard teaching practices. They oversimplify by replicating the primary school environment, content, and methods in kindergartens, showing a clear trend towards primary schoolization, resulting in a lack of distinction between the two stages. This practice violates the essential differences between early childhood and primary education, overemphasizing subject knowledge while neglecting the goal of cultivating children's holistic development. Furthermore, the annual inspection and grade evaluation systems implemented in kindergartens overly emphasize primary school standards, thereby neglecting the characteristics and needs of young children.

In art education, teachers often employ incorrect teaching methods, such as having children imitate or mechanically copy, which not only makes learning difficult for them but also diminishes their interest in art. Secondly, teachers lack professional knowledge, relying solely on textbook content without in-depth understanding and explanation, which damages children's interest. Thirdly, the lack of sufficient attention from teachers is also a clear problem. Teachers demonstrate insufficient attention to the K-2 transition, reflected in their weak awareness and focus on the issue. In practical teaching, transition awareness is relatively weak, and follow-up contact and communication after teaching and research activities are scarce. This indicates a lack of proactive learning and self-improvement willingness among teachers, hindering the sustained promotion of teaching and research activities in practice.

The lack of comprehensive teacher competency directly leads to problems in K-2 transition education. Insufficient professional competency leads to incorrect teaching methods and a lack of professional knowledge. Insufficient attention results in weak transition awareness and inadequate teaching research activities. Deficient educational plans, undifferentiated K-2 education, and the tendency towards primary schoolization all exacerbate the severity of the problem.

Lack of Parental Awareness regarding the Transition

Ineffective communication between parents and schools, coupled with a lack of scientific guidance and support, leads to problems of information blockage and insufficient support. Consequently, parents lack a full understanding of the K-2 transition and may make misguided decisions, such as sending children to so-called "K-2 transition classes," which do not align with children's natural developmental needs and instead increase their burden. This outdated conceptual bias subjects children to excessive pressure and challenges during the K-2 transition, hindering its smooth progress. Parental anxiety is also a problem. They worry that children cannot keep up with the pace of the K-2 transition, leading to loss of confidence, affected self-esteem, and even impacted social skills. This anxiety may prompt them to take unnecessary actions, such as enrolling children in transition cram courses. However, this can lead to insufficient school readiness and difficulties in adaptation.

Many parents also lack sufficient understanding of the K-2 transition and fail to actively participate in the work, resulting in a lack of mutual cooperation. This can lead to educational discontinuity and inadequate support. They may misunderstand the core principles and methods of the K-2 transition, taking inappropriate actions, including blindly seeking quick results, neglecting the gradual process, and overemphasizing unilateral education while neglecting multi-party cooperation. Even after kindergartens correct the "primary schoolization" tendency, some parents remain eager to send children to "K-2 transition classes" or even require them to master first-grade textbook content before entering school. This places tremendous pressure on children, leading to adaptation difficulties and resistance after enrollment. This goes against children's nature, as their development requires a natural, gradual process, not premature academic burden.

Many parents have outdated educational concepts, focusing on skill and technique training while neglecting children's holistic development. They may overemphasize short-term outcomes while ignoring children's lifelong development. These issues, encompassing parents' cognition, ideology, cooperation attitude, mindset, and home-school communication, collectively affect children's K-2 transition process.

Strategies for Promoting the Resolution of the "One-Way" Predicament in Two-Way Transition

Establishing a Rigorous Educational Supervision System is the Guarantee for K-2 Transition

To address the issues in K-2 transition education caused by loose regulation by education departments, a series of scientifically effective strategies must be adopted to enhance the quality and effectiveness of K-2 transition education. Firstly, effective supervision and assessment systems should be established to ensure education departments' regulation of K-2 transition is no longer lax, thereby stimulating the enthusiasm of schools and teachers in K-2 transition education. Secondly, in terms of policy guidance, it is necessary to strengthen the

formulation and guidance of policies for K-2 transition education, promoting more scientifically sound policies to support its improvement and development.

Furthermore, normative codes of conduct for K-2 transition education should be formulated to ensure that kindergarten education better meets child development needs and reduces non-standard practices and the tendency towards primary schoolization. Similarly, annual inspections of kindergartens and primary schools should be strengthened, and grade evaluations should be conducted rigorously to ensure strict assessment and effectively monitor and improve teaching quality. Moreover, the coordination mechanism should be improved, designing reasonable admission criteria to avoid using single indicators like exams or competitions as standards, and emphasizing comprehensive quality assessment.

On the other hand, a sound K-2 transition training system needs to be established to ensure the content and quality of training, enhancing teacher participation and training effectiveness. At the same time, a comprehensive evaluation mechanism should be established to scientifically assess teachers' transitional teaching methods and children's learning outcomes, thereby driving educational quality improvement. Additionally, primary school teachers' understanding of child psychology should be enhanced by strengthening their training in child developmental psychology, with special attention to the psychological characteristics of the K-2 transition stage, providing targeted training and guidance to help them better understand and respond to children's psychological needs. In the selection of professional teachers by education departments, strict screening for art teachers should be implemented, considering not only their painting skills but also their educational background and teaching abilities to ensure the professionalism and stability of the teaching staff. Finally, it is recommended to establish clear art education teaching objectives, defining specific goals for kindergarten art education to ensure it goes beyond mere doodling and color recognition, effectively cultivating children's artistic interest and creative abilities.

Through the integrated implementation of the above strategies, the issues in K-2 transition education caused by loose regulation by education departments can be effectively addressed. It is recommended that education management departments at all levels, schools, and educational practitioners collaborate to promote the continuous improvement of K-2 transition education using scientific and effective methods, providing children with a higher quality learning transition and growth environment.

Optimizing School Guidance Pathways is a Necessary Condition for K-2 Transition

Addressing the complex problem of insufficient school guidance requires considering various factors, including K-2 differences, teaching differences, pedagogical method differences, physical and mental differences, educational objectives, and coordination. The following are some practical and effective strategies that can be adopted in academic research and educational practice.

First, provide primary school teachers with professional training related to kindergarten educational philosophies and practices to help them better understand children's developmental needs and characteristics, helping to narrow the K-2 gap and increase attention to children. Second, conduct collaborative curriculum planning. Kindergartens and primary schools can jointly plan curricula to ensure a smooth transition, including ensuring

continuity in curriculum objectives, educational methods, and assessment methods, thereby reducing teaching differences. Adopt a gradual transition approach to help children adapt to different learning methods, gradually introducing primary school teaching methods for a smoother transition, possibly by incorporating some primary school-style activities into kindergarten. Provide psychological support. Primary schools can offer psychological support to help children cope with challenges in school life, including support from educational psychologists or counselors and the development of mental health plans. Establish clear educational objectives. Schools need to define clear K-2 transition educational objectives and integrate them into educational plans, helping ensure consistency in educational direction and reducing uncertainty. Establish close coordination mechanisms. Stronger coordination mechanisms between kindergartens and primary schools are needed, including joint planning meetings, exchange opportunities, and resource sharing, to ensure the continuity of the transition process. Clarify the responsibility allocation of each school in the K-2 transition to ensure coordination and efficiency in coordination work, possibly by appointing liaisons to facilitate coordination. Introduce diverse coordination methods. Besides visiting primary schools, this can include teacher seminars, joint projects, and parental involvement to enhance the effectiveness of coordination.

These strategies require close cooperation among schools, education management departments, and educators to ensure children adapt better to the school environment and improve learning outcomes during the K-2 transition. Additionally, these strategies should undergo continuous evaluation and improvement to ensure their effectiveness and feasibility in practice, which will help promote academic research and practical development in the K-2 transition field.

Improving Teacher Comprehensive Competency is the Key to K-2 Transition

To enhance teachers' professional competency, regular professional training can be provided, covering educational psychology, child development, K-2 transition, and other relevant areas. Teachers should also be encouraged to actively participate in seminars, workshops, and learning communities to facilitate the sharing of educational experiences and best practices. Establish cross-stage teacher collaboration mechanisms to promote exchange and cooperation between primary school and kindergarten teachers, enhance transition awareness, and create more opportunities for long-term contact and collaboration following teaching and research activities. Simultaneously, provide teachers with accessible and implementable K-2 transition education plans and materials to guide their teaching and develop resources specifically for the transition, including lesson plans, materials, and curricula.

While educating teachers, cultivate their sensitivity to the diverse needs of children, emphasizing personalized education to meet the different developmental levels and interests of children. Encourage kindergartens and primary schools to develop corresponding educational objectives and methods based on the differences between preschool and primary education. To ensure that kindergarten teachers' teaching behaviors align with children's characteristics, more rigorous teaching behavior assessments can be implemented, along with regular supervision and feedback on teachers' educational practices to help them improve their teaching methods. Policymakers should take the lead in formulating K-2 transition education policies, clarifying the importance and principles of the transition to

guide schools and educational institutions in implementing relevant reforms. At the same time, policymakers should encourage the collaborative development of preschool and primary education to ensure a smooth transition between the two stages.

Through strategies such as professional training, teacher collaboration, educational plan improvement, emphasis on differentiated education, standardizing teaching behaviors, and policy guidance, teacher comprehensive competency can be enhanced, and the quality and effectiveness of K-2 transition education can be improved. These measures can help teachers better meet the needs of children, ensuring a smooth transition between kindergarten and primary school.

Improving Parental Participation Awareness is the Foundation for K-2 Transition

To address parents' lack of awareness and cognitive errors, schools can conduct parental education and training activities to help parents understand the core principles and methods of the K-2 transition, guiding them to correctly comprehend the importance of early childhood education and avoid making misguided decisions. At the same time, schools and educational institutions can actively disseminate new concepts, emphasizing the importance of children's holistic development and the balance between short-term outcomes and lifelong development. This helps change parents' lagging ideologies, encouraging them to focus more on their children's comprehensive growth. Furthermore, establish home-school cooperation mechanisms, encouraging parents to actively participate in K-2 transition work and jointly formulate reasonable educational plans. Through close cooperation with parents, children's adaptation and development can be better supported. Schools can also provide mental health support and counseling services to help parents manage anxiety, reducing their anxious emotions and enabling them to face the K-2 transition process more calmly. Meanwhile, schools should strengthen information dissemination and communication with parents, providing scientific guidance and support to ensure parents can effectively prepare their children for school, reducing herd mentality and helping them make better educational decisions. Through these strategies, schools can better address the cognitive issues parents face during the K-2 transition, improving children's adaptability and learning outcomes and facilitating the smooth progress of education.

Research Conclusions and Implications

Research Findings

This study employed Grounded Theory to construct a multi-dimensional integrated model of the "one-way" predicament in the two-way K-2 transition of Chinese art education. It systematically explained the key elements and theoretical logic of this predicament. The specific conclusions are as follows:

(1) In the "one-way" predicament of K-2 transition, four elements play significant roles: loose regulation by education departments, insufficient guidance from schools, lack of comprehensive teacher competency, and lack of parental awareness regarding the transition. Among these, loose regulation by education departments, insufficient school guidance, and lack of teacher competency belong to influencing factors within the educational domain, while lack of parental awareness is a factor from the family side. These factors collectively constitute the primary drivers of the one-way K-2 transition predicament.

(2) The four elements are interconnected, and these connections can exert influence through partial superposition. In causing the "one-way" predicament of K-2 transition, these elements share a certain responsibility, interacting with each other and leading to the aggravation of the problem.

(3) This study found that the K-2 transition issue is not solely related to the teaching sector; the lack of parental awareness also plays a role in generating the problem. Parental anxiety, lagging ideologies, and other factors influence the teaching sector's attention to the K-2 transition, and to some extent, they may even lead teaching departments to neglect its importance in an attempt to cater to parental expectations.

Research Contributions

(1) Based on Grounded Theory, this study is the first to systematically explore the "one-way" predicament of the K-2 transition issue within the field of art education. The research delved into the core constituent elements and their internal logic, constructing a multi-dimensional integrated model of the "one-way" K-2 transition. Current research on K-2 transition issues tends to focus on a single perspective; few studies have systematically classified the "one-way" issue in art education across multiple levels (including education departments, schools, teachers, and parents). Although some studies touch upon the "one-way" K-2 transition issue, they lack systematic and in-depth exploration of the internal relationships among the various factors. This study focuses on the "one-way" predicament within the art education K-2 transition. By analyzing diverse data such as expert lectures, news reports, public WeChat account articles, and academic literature using Grounded Theory, it systematically investigates the elements and their internal logic contributing to the "one-way" issue in the two-way K-2 transition within art education. Specifically, the study constructs a theoretical analytical framework to deeply examine how factors like lax education department regulation, insufficient school guidance, lack of teacher competency, and lack of parental awareness synergistically lead to the "one-way" phenomenon in the two-way transition.

(2) This study systematically analyzed the key elements influencing the "one-way" phenomenon in the K-2 art education transition and their mechanisms of action, while also revealing the impacts from both the educational sector and parents on this transition. The research highlights the dual influence of external and internal factors, providing a more comprehensive theoretical framework for research on K-2 art education transition. Unlike previous studies, this research focuses on the interactions between education departments and teaching institutions, and between teaching institutions and parents, analyzing the combined impact of these relationships on the K-2 art education transition. The findings indicate that loose regulation by education departments is the root cause of the "one-way" phenomenon. Lax supervision leads to schools lacking clear teaching objectives and guidance direction, which in turn affects teacher competency. Simultaneously, the lack of direction from teaching institutions regarding the K-2 transition results in parents lacking relevant awareness, overemphasizing skill training and short-term outcomes, exhibiting a herd mentality, and influencing teaching evaluation standards, causing teaching to lean towards parental expectations. This cycle generates the "one-way" K-2 transition problem. This research is significant for an in-depth exploration of the K-2 transition issue in art education and promoting its optimal development. It is expected to provide useful guidance for educational practices and policy-making in related fields.

Research Limitations and Prospects

The data for this study were derived from information sources related to the "one-way" predicament in K-2 transition, such as expert lectures, news reports, and academic literature. After collecting the data, multiple rounds of screening were conducted, followed by line-by-line coding of the materials. During the analysis and coding process, the comprehensiveness and integrity of the data were always considered, and the principle of theoretical saturation was strictly followed. However, it is worth noting that since the published materials themselves may carry subjectivity and specific emphases, a certain degree of uncertainty inevitably exists in the analysis process.

To further validate and enrich the path model of the "one-way" K-2 transition predicament, future research could employ methods like in-depth interviews to obtain more data sources. Although this paper theoretically explored the issue of "one-way" K-2 transition in art education based on practical synthesis, relevant theoretical research in this field is currently relatively scarce. Given that the K-2 transition issue has become a significant challenge in child education development, further theoretical guidance is necessary to ensure its correct and sustainable progress.

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