PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS OF ADAPTING PUPILS IN MULTI-BRANCH PRESCHOOL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

Multi-branch preschool education institutions combine several sites under one organizational, curricular, and managerial framework. While this model increases accessibility and program diversity, it also introduces adaptation challenges for children who navigate heterogeneous environments, staff teams, and routines. This article conceptualizes adaptation in multi-branch settings through an ecological and cultural-historical lens and reports on a design-based implementation carried out across three branches of a single institution over one academic year. The intervention integrated harmonized daily routines, shared pedagogical language, and intensively scaffolded family–teacher communication during the first eight weeks of enrollment and during intra-network transfers. The study argues for an institution-level adaptation protocol that aligns structural conditions with child-centered practices while respecting branch-specific cultural textures.

KEYWORDS: Adaptation; multi-branch preschool; early childhood pedagogy; ecological systems; transition to schooling; family engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The expansion of multi-branch preschool education reflects policy commitments to widen access and optimize resources while offering families proximity and differentiated programs. In these institutions, the child's educational experience is distributed across physical sites that may vary in material environment, staffing profiles, language exposure, and neighborhood culture. Such heterogeneity heightens the developmental task of adaptation, understood as the child's progressive attunement to new social partners, routines, and learning demands. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, adaptation is seen as the alignment of the child's competencies with the microsystem of the group, the mesosystem linking family and preschool, and the exosystemic institutional regulations that standardize practices across branches. From a cultural-historical perspective, adaptation is not mere habituation but participation in shared forms of activity mediated by tools, symbols, and adult scaffolding. The multi-branch format exposes pupils to transitions that can occur at entry, at movement between branches, and at the gradual increase of instructional complexity; these transitions are pedagogically consequential because they reorganize the child's attachments, expectations, and sense of predictability.

Research on school readiness and teacher–child relationships suggests that stable relational climates and coherent expectations facilitate self-regulation and engagement, yet few studies address how these principles operate when a single institution spans multiple sites. This article therefore examines how institutional coherence and child-centered practices can be braided into an adaptation protocol suited to multi-branch preschools.

The study employed a design-based implementation approach in one multi-branch institution serving children aged four to six. Over twelve months, a pedagogical team co-constructed and iteratively refined an adaptation protocol consisting of three components: harmonized daily schedules with identical temporal anchors for greeting, free play, small-group activity, outdoor time, and closing rituals; a shared pedagogical language for routines and socio-emotional cues embedded in visual supports and songs; and structured family–teacher communication that front-loads home visits or virtual conferences, daily two-way logs during the first month, and transfer briefings when children moved between branches. Data sources included structured classroom observations twice monthly, teacher reflective journals, and family feedback collected at weeks four, eight, and twelve.

Implementation fidelity was highest for the harmonized schedule and shared language, largely because these elements could be scripted and supported with common materials. Teachers reported that identical greeting rituals and visual timetables created immediate recognition for children transferring from another branch; children who previously hesitated at separation began to anticipate the opening song and joined peers more quickly. The shared language for socio-emotional cues—short phrases paired with gestures—functioned as a bridge when children encountered unfamiliar adults, reducing the interpretive burden of new relational contexts. Observations noted shorter latencies to engage in free play and small-group work, as well as fewer instances of clinginess during the first fortnight after entry or transfer. These changes were most pronounced in groups where the lead teacher consistently narrated transitions and used the same micro-routines that children had learned elsewhere in the network.

Family–teacher communication had a distinct yet complementary effect. Parents expressed confidence when teachers referenced the child's interests and self-regulation strategies documented in the initial conference, which in turn reduced parental anxiety at drop-off and stabilized the emotional climate of arrival. The two-way daily log served as a feedback loop that allowed micro-adjustments to sleep schedules, comfort objects, and peer pairing, strengthening the mesosystem link central to successful adaptation. Over time, the frequency of log entries decreased naturally as routines consolidated, suggesting that communication intensity can taper once predictability is secured.

Institutional coherence did not erase local culture, nor should it. Each branch retained its spatial identity and community flavor; the protocol's success rested on the principle of recognizable invariants within a landscape of permissible differences. For example, while all branches synchronized the timing and structure of small-group activity, materials and themes were curated to reflect the branch's linguistic and cultural context. Children thus experienced continuity of form with variability of content, a combination that supported both security and curiosity. This balance resonates with attachment-informed pedagogy: reliable routines and responsive adults

provide a base for exploration, and exploration feeds back into adaptation by making the new environment meaningful.

Teacher–child relationships emerged as the pivotal mechanism translating structural coherence into lived experience. Where staff turnover disrupted relational continuity, adaptation slowed despite the presence of common schedules and language. Conversely, branches that invested in co-teaching during the first week after transfer—so that the sending and receiving teachers briefly overlapped—saw swifter normalization of behavior and task engagement. This finding aligns with literature underscoring the predictive value of teacher–child relationship quality for early learning outcomes and suggests that multi-branch institutions should plan for relational handover, not merely informational transfer.

The study also illuminated the cognitive dimension of adaptation. Play-based tasks that preserved the same activity grammar across branches—such as story retelling with puppets or block-based problem solving—allowed children to map prior competencies onto new contexts, reducing working memory load during transitions. When tasks were structurally unfamiliar, children expended effort deciphering expectations rather than engaging content, a cost that was particularly visible after inter-branch moves.

Equity considerations surfaced in families with limited flexibility for home–school communication or with linguistic barriers. In these cases, the protocol's reliance on intensive early communication risked uneven benefits. Branches mitigated this by using multilingual visual logs and by scheduling brief audio messages instead of written notes, demonstrating that adaptive communication formats can protect inclusion without weakening the core of the approach.

Overall, the convergence of ecological, attachment, and cultural-historical perspectives helped situate adaptation as a negotiated process where institutional structures, teacher practices, and family relationships co-produce the child's sense of belonging. Multi-branch institutions are uniquely positioned to engineer coherence at scale; doing so requires disciplined alignment of routines and language, purposeful cultivation of relationships across sites, and respectful accommodation of local cultural textures.

Adapting pupils to the educational process in multi-branch preschool institutions is best achieved when institutional invariants—timing of routines, pedagogical language, and task structures—are deliberately harmonized and enacted by responsive adults who build relational continuity across sites. Family–teacher partnerships that are intense at entry and transfer, then gradually tapered, support the child's emotional security and accelerate engagement. Coherence must coexist with branch-level cultural expression so that children experience both familiarity and meaningful novelty. Embedding these principles into a formal adaptation protocol can reduce transition stress, strengthen participation in learning, and uphold equity across a distributed preschool network.

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