

Abstract: Bridging the Gap: Ensuring Synthetic Phonics Continues from Kindergarten into Primary School in Hong Kong

Objectives:

This study examines the continuity of phonics instruction from kindergarten to primary school in Hong Kong, where English proficiency remains a marker of social and educational attainment. Specifically, it addresses: (1) How are phonics skills maintained as learners transition to Primary 1? (2) Are primary schools equipped to reinforce these skills? (3) What initiatives can support kindergartens and primary schools in bridging potential gaps in phonics delivery?

Methodology:

Drawing on empirical evidence from 16 cohorts of the course "*Teaching Phonics to Young Learners*" at PolyU's School of Professional and Continuing Education—along with an analysis of Hong Kong's educational landscape (980 registered kindergartens serving 125,426 children)—this study evaluates phonics adoption trends, teacher preparedness, and curricular alignment. Qualitative insights from educators and parents highlight systemic challenges in phonics instruction.

Results:

Despite widespread kindergarten adoption of phonics, disparities exist in instructional quality and continuity into primary education. Data reveal a lack of formal policy or standardized support for phonics beyond kindergarten, leading to skill attrition among students. Case studies illustrate successful local initiatives but underscore the need for structured collaboration between kindergarten and primary educators.

Discussion:

The study emphasizes the urgency of aligning phonics pedagogy across educational stages to sustain literacy gains. Phonemic awareness, critical for reading and spelling, requires systematic reinforcement in primary schools. Recommendations include teacher training programs, curricular harmonization, and remedial pathways for students lacking foundational phonics. By addressing these gaps, Hong Kong can solidify English literacy outcomes, leveraging its bilingual context for long-term educational success.