

Factors Affecting the Support of 5-6-Year-Old Mong and Dao Ethnic Minority Children in Preschools in the Mountainous Regions of Northern Vietnam to be Ready to Adapt to Grade 1



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ABSTRACT: The article analyzes the current situation of factors affecting the support of 5-6-year-old Mong and Dao ethnic minority children in preschools in the mountainous areas of Northern Vietnam to be ready to adapt to grade 1. The study was conducted through a survey with the participation of 107 teachers, of which 99 teachers provided complete data for processing. These data were collected from teacher survey forms and field observations at kindergartens in 5 Departments of Education. The article analyzes two main factors: subjective factors (teachers) and objective factors (children, schools, families, and communities). The main methods used were surveys and in-depth interviews, and the results show that factors related to teachers strongly influence helping ethnic minority children prepare for grade 1, in which teachers' communication skills are rated highest. However, other factors, such as teachers' ability to apply information technology and teachers' understanding of ethnic minority languages, have a lower level of influence. On the objective side, children's health, intellectual development, and language, especially Vietnamese, are essential to helping children adapt to the new learning environment. Based on the survey results, the authors proposed recommendations to improve the support quality for ethnic minority children transitioning from preschool to primary school.

KEYWORDS: Factorss, support, Mong – Dao ethnic minority, preschool, adaptation, grade 1.

I. INTRODUCTION

The transition from preschool to primary school plays a vital role in children's development, determining their ability to adapt to a new learning environment and influencing their long-term learning (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). For ethnic minority children, especially Mong and Dao children in the mountainous areas of Northern Vietnam, this process becomes even more complicated due to differences in language, socio-economic conditions, and limited access to quality education (Nguyen Thi Oanh, 2008; Tudge & Doucet, 2016). Inadequate preparation can make it difficult for children to acquire knowledge, practice skills, communicate with teachers and friends, and adapt to school rules (Fantuzzo et al., 2016). Previous studies have shown that children's ability to adapt to grade 1 depends on many factors, including personal capacity, educational environment, and family support (Duncan et al., 2007; Marti et al., 2020).

Cognitive and language abilities are two important factors that help children quickly acquire knowledge, while social and emotional skills play a decisive role in building positive relationships with teachers and friends (McWayne et al., 2012; Ladd et al., 2015). However, ethnic minority children often face language barriers when their mother tongue differs from the official language of instruction at school, reducing their ability to communicate and acquire knowledge (Kim et al., 2021; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In addition to personal factors, the quality of preschool education also significantly impacts children's ability to adapt when entering grade 1. A positive learning environment, teachers with good child support skills, and a curriculum suitable for regional characteristics will help children develop more comprehensively (Pianta & Cox, 1999; Noble et al., 2015). At the same time, the coordination between family and school also plays an important role in creating conditions for children to adapt quickly to the primary school environment (Blair & Raver, 2016).

Although there have been many studies on this issue, works focusing on ethnic minority children in the mountainous areas of Northern Vietnam are still limited. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the current status of factors affecting the support of Mong and Dao ethnic minority children to be ready to adapt to grade 1. The research results help identify the difficulties that children

Factors Affecting the Support of 5-6-Year-Old Mong and Dao Ethnic Minority Children in Preschools in the Mountainous Regions of Northern Vietnam to be Ready to Adapt to Grade 1

and teachers face and provide a basis for proposing measures to improve support quality, ensuring comprehensive development for children in this transitional period.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research design

This study assessed the factors influencing the support of Mong and Dao ethnic minority children in preparing for first grade through analysis of teacher and management survey forms. The influencing factors were divided into three main groups: teacher factors, child factors, and school, family, and community factors. These factors were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Very influential” to “No influential.”

$$\text{Standard Deviation} = \frac{\text{Max} - \text{Min}}{\text{Range}} = \frac{5-1}{5} = 0,8$$

Scale to assess the current status of factors affecting the readiness of 5-6-year-old Mong and Dao ethnic minority children in preschools in the mountainous areas of northern Vietnam to adapt to grade 1:

- * Level 1 – No impact (from 1 to 1.8)
- * Level 2 – Little impact (from 1.81 to 2.6)
- * Level 3 – Moderate impact (from 2.61 to 3.4).
- * Level 4 – High impact (from 3.41 to 4.2).
- * Level 5 – Very high impact (from 4.21 to 5.0).

2.2. Data collection instruments

Data was collected using a survey of teachers and administrators combined with field observation and in-depth interviews. The survey was designed in Google Form format and sent to 4 Departments of Education and Training for distribution to teachers at participating preschools: Department of Education and Training of Vo Nhai district, Thai Nguyen; Department of Education and Training of Dong Van district, Ha Giang; Department of Education and Training of Hoang Su Phi district, Ha Giang; Department of Education and Training of Bac Ha district, Lao Cai. Teachers in charge of 5-6-year-old classes were asked to assess the level of influence of each factor on supporting children to be ready for grade 1. At the same time, the research team also conducted in-depth interviews with 18 teachers and administrators to have a more specific view of the factors that influence children's readiness to adapt to grade 1. The number of teachers surveyed in the education departments is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Overview of the number of participants

No	Survey area	Participants
1	Department of Education and Training of Vo Nhai district, Thai Nguyen	21
2	Department of Education and Training of Dong Van district, Ha Giang	29
3	Department of Education and Training of Hoang Su Phi district, Ha Giang	48
4	Department of Education and Training of Bac Ha district, Lao Cai	9

2.3. Data analysis

The collected data were processed using SPSS 29 software to calculate the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), thereby assessing the level of influence of each factor on children's learning readiness. Statistical analyses such as frequency, percentage, and correlation coefficient were also applied to compare the level of influence between different factors. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were coded and analyzed in content to clarify trends and propose solutions suitable for the local educational context. Combining quantitative and qualitative analysis helps the study have a more comprehensive view of the factors affecting the support of ethnic minority children in preparing for grade 1.

Factors Affecting the Support of 5-6-Year-Old Mong and Dao Ethnic Minority Children in Preschools in the Mountainous Regions of Northern Vietnam to be Ready to Adapt to Grade 1

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Current status of subjective factors affecting support for 5-6 year old ethnic minority children (Mong, Dao) to be ready to adapt to grade 1

The survey results on the level of influence of subjective factors on the process of supporting 5-6-year-old ethnic minority children (Mong, Dao) to be ready for grade 1 have clarified the critical role of teachers in teaching and supporting children. The collected data are reflected through the and standard deviation (SD), helping objectively evaluate each factor's impact.

Table 2. Current status of subjective factors affecting support for 5-6 year old ethnic minority children (Mong, Dao) to be ready to adapt to grade 1

No	Factors		Level of influence		
			Average	Level	SD
1	Teacher (Average = 4.23)	Teacher's communication skills	4.36	1	0.75
		Teacher's professional competence	4.23	5	0.81
		Teachers' ability to support children	4.30	2	0.75
		Teacher's relationship with children	4.25	4	0.80
		Teachers' Relationship with Family and Community	4.19	7	0.82
		Teachers' skills in using Mong and Dao ethnic languages	4.18	8	0.80
		Teachers' ability to apply information technology	4.08	9	0.87
		Teachers' sense of responsibility and love for children	4.27	3	0.86
		Teachers' physical and mental health	4.22	6	0.78

The survey provides specific data on the level of influence of subjective factors related to teachers on supporting ethnic minority children in preparing for grade 1. These subjective factors mainly reflect the capacity and ability of teachers to communicate, teach, and provide psychological support to children, as well as the relationship between teachers and children, teachers with families, and communities. From the survey results, these factors are assessed to have a high average level of influence (4.23), demonstrating the critical role of teachers in helping ethnic minority children adapt to the new learning environment. Among the surveyed teacher factors, teachers' communication skills achieved an average of 4.36, ranking first, with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.75, showing that this is the factor with the most decisive influence on supporting ethnic minority children to be ready for grade 1. Next, teachers' child support skills ranked second with an average of 4.30, SD = 0.75, also showing considerable influence. In addition, teachers' sense of responsibility and love for children (Average = 4.27, SD = 0.86) and teachers' relationship with children (Average = 4.25, SD = 0.80) ranked third and fourth, respectively. These factors reflect teachers' care, responsibility, and ability to engage with students, especially those from ethnic minority communities, which are significant in helping children integrate into their new learning environment.

As mentioned above, teachers' communication skills achieved an average score of 4.36. They topped the survey in terms of influence, which shows that effective communication between teachers and children significantly impacts supporting ethnic minority children in preparing for grade 1. In-depth interviews with teachers revealed that this factor not only plays a vital role in organizing educational activities but also plays an essential role in building a close relationship with children and creating a friendly and close learning environment.

One teacher shared:

“Ethnic minority children are often not confident when using Vietnamese. Therefore, teachers need to have good communication skills to help children feel more comfortable and confident when learning. Without an understanding of children's psychology, communication will become difficult and children will not be able to develop well in the new learning environment.”

Thus, teachers with good communication skills help children feel safe and easily absorb knowledge. Communication skills also help teachers understand children's thoughts and wishes, thereby allowing them to adjust educational methods to suit each child's characteristics. Therefore, teachers' communication skills are highly appreciated in supporting ethnic minority children in adjusting to grade 1.

Factors Affecting the Support of 5-6-Year-Old Mong and Dao Ethnic Minority Children in Preschools in the Mountainous Regions of Northern Vietnam to be Ready to Adapt to Grade 1

Teachers' ability to support children is the second most crucial factor, with a mean score of 4.30. This factor reflects teachers' ability to help children learn and support them in developing social, emotional, and psychological skills, especially in ethnic minority children who may have difficulty adapting to a new learning environment. In-depth interviews with teachers further clarified the importance of this factor.

One teacher noted:

"Supporting ethnic minority children can sometimes be very difficult, especially when they face language and cultural barriers. However, when teachers understand and know how to support them psychologically and in learning methods, children will easily overcome these difficulties. The important thing is to create a friendly learning environment, helping children feel confident and comfortable during the learning process."

Supporting ethnic minority children is about helping them acquire knowledge, develop skills, and build a solid psychological foundation to be more confident in their new learning environment. Teachers need to understand children's difficulties in integrating and find appropriate educational methods to help children develop comprehensively. This factor is highly appreciated in the survey because it affects children's learning ability, the process of forming social skills, and the ability to adapt to grade 1.

The third factor is teachers' sense of responsibility and love for children, with an average score of 4.27. This factor reflects teachers' care, love, and responsibility for students, especially ethnic minority children who have many difficulties in learning. In interviews, many teachers shared that:

"Without love and patience, it will be tough for teachers to accompany ethnic minority children in the process of preparing for first grade. Ethnic minority children are often shy, timid, and lack confidence. The love and patience of teachers will help children overcome these barriers."

A sense of responsibility and love for children are essential to creating a close relationship between teachers and students, helping children feel safe and protected in the learning environment. Ethnic minority children need special care and attention from teachers to overcome difficulties in the learning process. Teachers with a high sense of responsibility will always find ways to help and support children best, creating favorable conditions for children to develop academically and socially.

The factors of teacher-child relationships (Average = 4.25) and teacher-family and community relationships (Average = 4.19) were ranked 4th and 5th in the survey, reflecting the importance of the connection between teachers, students, and families. A good relationship with students helps children feel comfortable and safe and allows them to absorb knowledge quickly. In addition, the relationship between teachers and families, especially in ethnic minority communities, can help increase support for children, creating a synchronous and effective learning environment. Teachers need to connect with families to understand their children's circumstances proactively and, from there, have appropriate teaching and support methods. In an interview, one teacher said:

"Families have a huge impact on a child's development. When teachers and parents work well together, children receive more support. However, not all families have the means to work together, so teachers need to be more proactive in connecting with parents."

Close coordination between teachers and families will help children receive optimal support in preparing for grade 1. Therefore, teachers must understand each student's circumstances clearly and provide the most appropriate support methods.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that subjective factors related to teachers play a vital role in helping ethnic minority children prepare for grade 1. Factors such as communication skills, child support skills, a sense of responsibility and love for children, and the relationship between teachers and children all have a high level of influence, showing that teachers are knowledge transmitters and provide psychological and social support for children. In-depth interview responses from teachers have clarified the critical role of each of these factors and, at the same time, indicated that improving the quality of preschool education for ethnic minority children cannot be done without special attention from teachers.

3.2. Current status of objective factors affecting support for 5-6 year old ethnic minority children (Mong, Dao) to be ready to adapt to grade 1

To assess the current situation of objective factors affecting the support of 5-6-year-old ethnic minority children (Mong, Dao) to be ready to adapt to grade 1, we conducted a survey. We obtained the results in the following table:

Factors Affecting the Support of 5-6-Year-Old Mong and Dao Ethnic Minority Children in Preschools in the Mountainous Regions of Northern Vietnam to be Ready to Adapt to Grade 1

Table 3. Current status of objective factors affecting support for 5-6 year old ethnic minority children (Mong, Dao) to be ready to adapt to grade 1

No	Factors		Level of influence		
			Average	Level	SD
1	Children (Average = 4,25)	Child health status	4.29	8	0.76
		Children's living conditions	4.21	13	0.81
		Children's Vietnamese language	4.32	6	0.75
		Children's intellectual development	4.28	9	0.73
		Children's emotional and social development	4.24	11	0.72
		Children's sense of responsibility	4.17	16	0.80
2	School, family and community (Average = 4,28)	Parents' education level	4.35	4	0.75
		Parents' Vietnamese language	4.40	2	0.71
		Parental Cooperation	4.37	3	0.75
		Family economic conditions	4.00	17	0.85
		Young parents' sense of responsibility	4.42	1	0.70
		Community collaboration	4.23	12	0.75
		Local economic, political and social conditions	4.20	15	0.76
		School management	4.27	10	0.84
		School educational environment	4.33	5	0.82
		School curriculum	4.30	7	0.84
		School facilities	4.21	13	0.84

The survey results show that objective factors, including characteristics of children, families, schools, and communities, all have a high level of influence on supporting 5-6-year-old ethnic minority children (Mong, Dao) to be ready to adapt to grade 1. The average score of the factors ranges from 4.00 to 4.42, reflecting that all of these factors have a significant impact, but the level of influence of each factor is different.

Child-related factors are very important in helping ethnic minority children adapt to grade 1. In this group of factors, factors such as the child's health status, the child's living conditions, the child's Vietnamese language, the child's intellectual development, the child's emotional and social skills development, and the child's sense of responsibility all have a relatively high level of influence on the child's readiness to enter grade 1.

The Vietnamese language factor of children achieved an average score of 4.32 and ranked 6th, showing that children's ability to use Vietnamese significantly affects their adaptation to grade 1. For ethnic minority children, especially Mong and Dao children, the ability to use Vietnamese fluently is an essential factor in helping children absorb lessons and communicate with friends and teachers.

One teacher commented:

“Children who are not fluent in Vietnamese often have difficulty communicating with teachers and friends. This affects their learning ability and makes them feel less confident in the classroom.”

Language skills help children easily integrate with friends and a new learning environment. Therefore, improving children's Vietnamese language skills from preschool is very important to prepare them for first grade.

One of the most critical factors in this group is children's health. With an average score of 4.29 and ranking 8th in the survey, this factor shows that children's health plays a vital role in preparing them for first grade. In the interview responses, many teachers shared that:

“Ethnic minority children often have higher rates of malnutrition than children in urban areas. This directly affects their health and ability to concentrate in class. If children are unhealthy, they will have difficulty participating in learning activities, affecting their ability to absorb knowledge.”

Factors Affecting the Support of 5-6-Year-Old Mong and Dao Ethnic Minority Children in Preschools in the Mountainous Regions of Northern Vietnam to be Ready to Adapt to Grade 1

Good health gives children the physical foundation to participate in learning and playing activities, facilitating their adaptation to the first-grade environment. Meanwhile, children with poor health or malnutrition may have difficulty concentrating and participating in lessons.

The factors of children's intellectual development (Average = 4.28) and emotional and social development (Average = 4.24) are equally important. Intellectual development helps children absorb knowledge quickly, while emotional and social development is essential in assisting children to integrate with friends and teachers. Some teachers shared:

“Children with good intellectual development will absorb knowledge more quickly, but children lacking social skills struggle to integrate with friends and teachers. Social skills such as self-confidence, communication, and teamwork are important for ethnic minority children.”

When children develop intellectually and emotionally well, they quickly adapt to the first-grade environment, maximize their learning ability, and connect with friends.

Children's living conditions were ranked 13th with a mean score of 4.21, reflecting that children's living conditions significantly impact their readiness for first grade. Children living in economically disadvantaged and deprived areas may lack academic support at home, which affects their intellectual and social development. One teacher said:

“Ethnic minority children often live in difficult and deprived conditions, which makes learning at home more difficult. Children lacking learning materials and not having a good learning environment at home will have difficulty absorbing knowledge and developing comprehensively.”

A child's living situation can affect whether or not they have the resources to learn at home and their ability to participate in extracurricular activities. Therefore, good living conditions will facilitate the child's development.

Finally, the child's sense of responsibility factor has an average score of 4.17 and is ranked 16th. This reflects that ethnic minority children often lack independence and responsibility for their studies. A teacher, when asked, said:

“Ethnic minority children often have few opportunities to practice self-discipline and responsibility. Therefore, forming the habit of self-study, self-discipline, and responsibility for their actions is a long-term process and requires the support of teachers.”

Children's sense of responsibility is vital in helping them maintain self-awareness and effort in learning. However, because ethnic minority children are often protected by their families, they have few opportunities to practice independence, which requires support from teachers and families to help children develop independence from an early age.

School, family, and community factors are equally important in supporting 5-6-year-old ethnic minority children to prepare for grade 1. These factors are related to the learning environment, coordination between teachers and families, economic conditions, parents' education level, and support from the community.

Parents' Vietnamese language proficiency (average score = 4.40, ranked 2nd) is essential in helping ethnic minority children improve their language skills. Parents can support their children in learning Vietnamese at home, helping them better prepare for first grade. Some teachers said:

“When parents can use Vietnamese fluently, they can guide their children better, helping them communicate and learn more easily.”

Parental coordination (Average = 4.37, 3rd) and community coordination (Average = 4.23, 12th) are essential factors in creating synchronous support between family, school, and community in helping ethnic minority children enter grade 1. A teacher said:

“If families and communities work closely together, children will receive better support in their learning. However, many ethnic minority families have difficulty coordinating due to language and time barriers.”

The factor of parents' education level has an average score of 4.35, ranking 4th, showing that families with high education levels will help children have a solid academic foundation. Parents with good education levels can guide their children in learning, help them improve their language skills, and better prepare for grade 1. A teacher shared:

“Highly educated parents will help their children access better learning materials and guide them on how to study effectively. This helps children develop good study skills and confidence when entering first grade.”

An overview of objective factors affecting the preparation of 5-6-year-old ethnic minority children for Grade 1 shows that child, school, family, and community factors all significantly influence each other. Factors such as health status, Vietnamese language, intellectual and emotional development of children, and support from family and community play an essential role in helping children adapt to the Grade 1 environment. Improving these factors through specific support programs will help ethnic minority children have the opportunity to develop comprehensively and succeed in learning.

Factors Affecting the Support of 5-6-Year-Old Mong and Dao Ethnic Minority Children in Preschools in the Mountainous Regions of Northern Vietnam to be Ready to Adapt to Grade 1

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results show that the process of supporting 5-6-year-old Mong and Dao ethnic minority children to be ready to adapt to grade 1 is influenced by many subjective and objective factors. Subjective factors are mainly related to teachers, in which communication skills, ability to support children, sense of responsibility, and the relationship between teachers and children have the most significant impact on children's adaptation. Teachers with good communication skills help children become more confident, and the classroom environment becomes more friendly, thereby improving children's ability to learn.

In addition, objective factors such as children's health, living environment, parents' education level, and the ability to coordinate between school and family also play an essential role. The Vietnamese language of children and parents is one of the most influential factors. When children have a good foundation in Vietnamese, adapting to the classroom environment becomes more effortless.

Based on the research results, to improve the effectiveness of supporting ethnic minority children to prepare for grade 1, we propose the following recommendations:

Schools must focus on developing programs and building an educational environment that supports 5-6-year-old ethnic minority children entering grade 1. Schools must organize Vietnamese language supplementary classes for children before entering grade 1, especially those with limited vocabulary. In addition, improving facilities such as libraries, visual learning materials, and teaching aids will help children have a better learning environment. In addition, schools need to organize regular parent meetings to raise parents' awareness of the importance of preparing children for grade 1.

For teachers, it is necessary to improve communication skills and support skills for ethnic minority children. It is essential to proactively participate in specialized training programs on methods to support children in learning Vietnamese, communication skills, and using information technology in teaching. In addition, teachers need to strengthen connections with parents to coordinate more closely in supporting children's learning at home. In particular, teachers who can use ethnic languages will help children absorb knowledge more quickly, so it is necessary to encourage teachers to learn more languages of ethnic minority groups to improve the communication process with children.

For young parents, it is necessary to be proactive and increase their sense of responsibility in supporting their children in preparing for first grade. Young parents need to talk to their children in Vietnamese to help them improve their language skills. In addition, encouraging children to read books and participate in simple learning activities at home will help them get used to the school environment. Schools and teachers also need to guide parents in effectively supporting their children's learning, such as by using appropriate learning materials for their children.

Thus, to improve ethnic minority children's ability to adapt to grade 1, synchronous coordination between schools, teachers, and parents is needed. If these solutions are implemented effectively, ethnic minority children will have better learning conditions, making the transition from preschool to primary school smoother and more effective.

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Factors Affecting the Support of 5-6-Year-Old Mong and Dao Ethnic Minority Children in Preschools in the Mountainous Regions of Northern Vietnam to be Ready to Adapt to Grade 1

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