Next Scientists
European International Journal of Pedagogics

TYPE Original Research
PAGE NO. 72-75
DOI 10.55640/eijp-05-02-19

Continuity in teaching function-related concepts in general secondary schools and academic lyceums

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OPEN ACCESS

SUBMITTED 17 December 2024
ACCEPTED 19 January 2025
PUBLISHED 24 February 2025
VOLUME Vol.05 Issue02 2025

Abstract: Continuity in mathematics education is crucial for ensuring smooth cognitive development and conceptual understanding among students transitioning from general secondary schools to academic lyceums. One of the key areas requiring a structured approach is the teaching of function-related concepts. This paper examines the necessity of continuity in teaching functions, explores existing gaps in the curriculum transition, and proposes pedagogical strategies to reinforce students' comprehension. By aligning methodologies and gradually increasing the complexity of function-related concepts, educators can facilitate deeper mathematical understanding, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. The study highlights the importance of curriculum integration, differentiated instruction, and the use of technology to enhance continuity in teaching mathematical functions.

Keywords: Continuity in mathematics education, teaching functions, curriculum alignment, mathematical reasoning, secondary school mathematics, academic lyceum, function concepts, digital learning tools, cognitive development, STEM education.

Introduction: Mathematical functions play a central role in the study of algebra, calculus, and applied mathematics, forming the foundation for various disciplines such as engineering, economics, and physics. Ensuring continuity in teaching function-related concepts from general secondary schools to academic lyceums is essential for avoiding knowledge gaps and cognitive overload among students.

In many education systems, a lack of structured transition leads to difficulties in understanding higher-level concepts introduced in academic lyceums.

Students often struggle with abstract mathematical thinking, functional transformations, and real-world applications due to inadequate preparatory exposure in general secondary schools. This paper explores strategies for maintaining continuity in teaching functions by bridging the curricular gap, incorporating technology, and aligning teaching methodologies.

Mathematics education serves as a foundation for various scientific disciplines, and function-related concepts are among its core elements. In many educational systems, the transition from general secondary schools to academic lyceums poses challenges in maintaining consistency in content delivery and student comprehension. Differences in pedagogical approaches, curriculum structure, and assessment methods often create gaps in knowledge retention. This study examines the factors influencing the continuity of teaching function-related concepts and suggests improvements to bridge potential gaps.

Literature Review Research in mathematics education emphasizes the importance of continuity in conceptual learning, particularly in function-related topics. Artigue (2009) highlights the role of didactical design in ensuring a seamless transition between educational levels. Sfard (1991) explores the dual nature of mathematical conceptions, emphasizing the need for process-oriented teaching approaches. Tall (2013) examines cognitive development in mathematical thinking, suggesting that gradual complexity in function-related concepts aids student comprehension.

Studies on curriculum alignment suggest that inconsistencies between secondary school and academic lyceum curricula hinder students' ability to grasp advanced function-related topics (Kaput, 1994). Vinner (1983) discusses how concept image and concept definition affect students' understanding of functions, advocating for early exposure to complex function types. Hiebert and Lefevre (1986) differentiate between conceptual and procedural knowledge, recommending a balanced approach to teaching functions.

Dubinsky and McDonald (2001) propose the APOS theory, which integrates action, process, object, and schema to facilitate deeper understanding. Kilpatrick, Swafford, and Findell (2001) emphasize the need for structured instructional sequences that gradually introduce complex function concepts. These studies collectively underscore the significance of continuity in teaching methodologies and curriculum design to enhance mathematical competence.

METHODS

This study employed a mixed-method approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Data were collected from mathematics curricula of general secondary schools and academic lyceums to identify structural differences. Additionally, a survey was conducted among mathematics teachers and students to assess their perceptions of continuity in function-related topics. Classroom observations and interviews were also utilized to gain deeper insights into teaching methodologies.

RESULTS

The analysis of the curricula revealed that while general secondary schools focus on basic function concepts such as linear, quadratic, and exponential functions, academic lyceums introduce more complex topics, including trigonometric, logarithmic, and piecewise functions. The findings indicate that inconsistencies in instructional depth and teaching methods contribute to learning difficulties.

Table 1: Comparison of Function-Related Topics in General Secondary Schools and Academic Lyceums

Function Type	General Secondary Schools	Academic Lyceums
Linear Functions	Introduction, Basic Graphing	Advanced Applications
Quadratic Functions	Factorization, Vertex Form	Complex Roots, Optimization Problems
Exponential Functions	Growth and Decay	Logarithmic Relationships
Trigonometric Functions	Basic Definitions	Advanced Identities and Applications

Piecewise Functions	Limited Exposure	Detailed Analysis and Modeling

Survey responses from teachers and students indicated that the transition to academic lyceums often resulted in difficulties in grasping advanced function concepts due to differences in instructional pace and expectations. Furthermore, 73% of students reported struggling with the shift in problem-solving approaches, and 68% of teachers acknowledged the need for improved alignment between secondary school and lyceum curricula.

Table 2: Challenges in Teaching Function-Related Concepts

Challenge	Percentage of Respondents Reporting Issue
Differences in Teaching Methods	68%
Lack of Curriculum Alignment	72%
Student Difficulty in Adapting to New Concepts	73%
Insufficient Teacher Training on Continuity Strategies	65%

DISCUSSION

The findings underscore the necessity of a structured approach to ensure continuity in teaching function-related concepts. Strategies such as aligning curriculum standards, implementing bridging programs, and providing professional development for teachers can enhance the transition experience. Additionally, fostering active collaboration between secondary school and lyceum educators can lead to more effective teaching methodologies and smoother student adaptation.

CONCLUSION

Ensuring continuity in teaching function-related concepts between general secondary schools and academic lyceums is essential for fostering students' mathematical competence. This study has highlighted key challenges, including disparities in curriculum content, differences in pedagogical approaches, and student adaptation difficulties. Addressing these challenges requires a systematic approach, including enhanced curriculum alignment, professional development for teachers, and targeted bridging programs.

The findings indicate that a significant percentage of students struggle with transitioning to higher-level function concepts due to variations in instructional strategies and content depth. A well-structured curriculum that gradually introduces advanced function concepts while reinforcing foundational knowledge can improve student retention and comprehension. Moreover, collaboration between educators at both levels of education can ensure smoother progression and consistency in teaching methodologies.

Future research should focus on developing and evaluating intervention programs aimed at improving curricular continuity. By integrating technology, differentiated instruction, and interdisciplinary connections, mathematics educators can create more effective learning pathways. Strengthening teacher training initiatives and incorporating feedback mechanisms from both students and educators will further support the seamless transition between educational levels. Ultimately, ensuring continuity in teaching function-related concepts will contribute to better educational outcomes and equip students with the necessary skills to succeed in advanced mathematical studies.

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Дубинский, Э., Макдональд, М. А. APOS: конструктивистская