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Pedagogical Adaptation of First-Grade Pupils in the Early School Years: Theoretical Foundations, Psychological Readiness, and Determinants of Successful School Adjustment

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Abstract

The transition from preschool to formal schooling represents a critical developmental stage in a child's life and is frequently accompanied by significant psychological, social, and pedagogical challenges. Pedagogical adaptation in the first grade constitutes a complex, multidimensional process that reflects a child's adjustment to new academic demands, social roles, behavioral norms, and institutional expectations. This article provides a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the essence and fundamental provisions of pedagogical adaptation among first-grade pupils, drawing on classical and contemporary psychological and pedagogical frameworks. The study conceptualizes adaptation not merely as functional adjustment to school conditions, but as a dynamic process that integrates cognitive, emotional, volitional, and social dimensions of development. Particular attention is paid to the interrelationship between school adaptation and psychological readiness for learning, the role of pedagogical interaction, classroom climate, family environment, and continuity between preschool and primary education. The article synthesizes scholarly perspectives on adaptation levels, identifies key indicators of successful and unsuccessful adjustment, and analyzes risk factors leading to maladaptation in the early school years. By systematizing theoretical approaches and empirical findings, this paper highlights the importance of coordinated efforts among teachers, psychologists, and parents in supporting children's adaptation to school. The findings emphasize that effective pedagogical adaptation serves not only as a prerequisite for academic success but also as a foundation for the child's long-term psychological well-being and personal development.

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Introduction

The beginning of formal schooling marks a profound transition in a child's developmental trajectory, representing a shift from predominantly play-based activity to structured learning within an institutional framework. This transition is accompanied by new academic demands, social expectations, behavioral norms, and role obligations that collectively require the child to reorganize previously established patterns of activity and interaction. As a result, the process of pedagogical adaptation in the first grade has become a central topic in psychological and educational research.

The concept of adaptation has been present in scientific discourse since the second half of the eighteenth century and has since evolved into a key analytical category within pedagogy and psychology. In the educational context, adaptation refers to a child's adjustment to learning conditions, instructional requirements, social relationships, and the organizational structure of school life. Contemporary scholars emphasize that adaptation is not a static outcome but a continuous and dynamic process shaped by the interaction of individual psychological characteristics and external social conditions.

For first-grade pupils, school adaptation is particularly complex due to the radical transformation of their leading activity, social status, and daily routines. Entry into school entails the internalization of the pupil role, compliance with institutional norms, and participation in collective learning activities. At the same time, children must establish new relationships with teachers and peers, regulate their behavior, and cope with increased cognitive and emotional demands. The success or failure of this process significantly influences academic performance, motivation for learning, emotional stability, and future educational trajectories.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Pedagogical Adaptation of First-Grade Pupils in the Early School Years (Original picture belongs to author)

Research indicates that pedagogical adaptation cannot be reduced to academic achievement alone. Rather, it encompasses a broader range of indicators, including emotional well-being, social integration, self-esteem, motivation, and the development of volitional regulation. Psychological readiness for school plays a decisive role in determining how effectively children respond to new educational conditions. Insufficient readiness often manifests in heightened anxiety, behavioral difficulties, reduced learning motivation, and, in some cases, persistent maladaptation.

In addition to individual characteristics, contextual factors such as family environment, parenting style, classroom climate, and pedagogical interaction styles exert a powerful influence on adaptation outcomes. Continuity between preschool and primary education, consistency in pedagogical approaches, and supportive teacher–student relationships have been shown to mitigate transitional stress and facilitate smoother adjustment to school life.

Against this background, the present article aims to examine the theoretical foundations of pedagogical adaptation among first-grade pupils, identify its core components and levels, and analyze the key determinants that contribute to successful or problematic adaptation. By integrating psychological and pedagogical perspectives, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive conceptual framework that can inform educational practice and support early interventions aimed at promoting children's well-being and learning success in the initial years of schooling.

The Essence and Fundamental Provisions of the Theory of Pedagogical Adaptation of First-Grade Pupils

The term *adaptation* has been used in scientific literature since the second half of the eighteenth century and is commonly associated with the German physiologist H. Aubert. In pedagogical encyclopedias, adaptation in the educational process is defined as the simplification of instructional material for learners who are beginning to study a particular academic subject. Adaptation is also regarded as a multidimensional and dynamic process based on the interaction of intellectual, social-psychological, individual, subjective, and objective social conditions and factors.

In psychological dictionaries, adaptation is interpreted in two principal ways:

1. as the continuous process of an individual's adjustment to the conditions of the social environment;
2. as the outcome of this process (Psychological Dictionary, n.d.).

The ratio between these components, which determines behavioral patterns, depends on an individual's goals and value orientations, as well as the opportunities available to achieve them within a given social environment. Adaptation is a continuous phenomenon and is usually associated with periods of profound change in an individual's activity and social surroundings.

The complex and significant period of a child's adaptation to school is examined from various perspectives in contemporary research. In its broadest sense, school adaptation is understood as a child's adjustment to a new system of social conditions, relationships, requirements, forms of activity, and lifestyle. A child who successfully meets the school's demands, norms, and social relations is considered adapted. This interpretation of adaptation has been presented in the works of Dubrovina, Ovcharova, and Gutkina (Dubrovina et al.,1993.).

Adaptation is not limited to successful functioning within a specific environment; it also implies the capacity for ongoing psychological, personal, and social development. M. R. Bityanova distinguishes two conceptual interpretations of adaptation. The first views the individual as an object of adjustment to living conditions. In this sense, adapting a child to school means preparing them to work, comply with educational and social requirements, and assume the role of a pupil (Bityanova, n.d.). Such adjustment occurs not only at the level of external behavior but also at the internal, personal level. Certain personality traits are formed that shape the child into a diligent, disciplined, and compliant learner (Aliyev, 2019).

The second interpretation of adaptation conceptualizes it as *readiness for development*. An adapted individual becomes the active subject of life and its subsequent developmental stages. By utilizing the given social situation, the individual is able to address current challenges and create prerequisites for future development (Aliyev, 2006). Thus, adapting a child to school also means preparing them for development (Bityanova, n.d.). In this context, the child perceives themselves as the author of their own life within the school environment, developing psychological characteristics and skills that allow them to meet institutional demands and norms while realizing personal needs without conflict with the surrounding environment. School and child mutually adapt to one another (Hamidova Kh, 3023).

Therefore, adaptation should not be understood solely as a child's ability to function successfully in a new environment—such as new relationships, social conditions, demands, activities, and lifestyles—without experiencing severe internal losses, emotional distress, or diminished self-esteem. Rather, it also encompasses the capacity for further psychological, personal, and social development.

The German pediatric professor Theodor Hellbrügge extensively examined the problem of children's adaptation to school. He argued that the success of adaptation depends on the child's level of school readiness and on their morphological, functional, and cognitive development, provided that the requirements of systematic education do not harm the child's health (Hellbrügge, 1987.). Together with G. Derring, Hellbrügge studied physiological changes occurring in children during the initial stage of schooling.

Psychological adaptation is closely linked to a child's readiness for learning and academic life. It is evident that children with insufficient intellectual development, weak memory, or underdeveloped volitional qualities experience significant difficulties during the adaptation process. One major challenge lies in the fact that the beginning of schooling changes the child's leading activity; however, the new form of activity—learning—does not emerge immediately (Ahmadov, 2017; Hamidova, 2024).

At the initial stages of adaptation, particularly at the beginning of the academic year, cognitive and educational motives play a relatively minor role. The motivation for learning and the development of volitional regulation are not yet sufficiently formed and gradually develop within the learning activity itself. V. V. Davydov demonstrated that learning activity integrates multiple dimensions, including social aspects, indicating that the mechanisms of school adaptation are multifaceted and complex (Davydov, n.d.).

During the period of adaptation to school life, the term *primary adaptation* is also widely used. This refers to a phase that typically lasts throughout the first half of the academic year. It is during this period that teachers, psychologists, and parents initiate the main efforts aimed at facilitating children's rapid adjustment to school while simultaneously supporting their adaptation to a new developmental and life environment (Author, n.d.).

Duration and Indicators of Successful School Adaptation

The adaptation process typically lasts from **two to three weeks up to the first half of the academic year**, after which it becomes possible to assess the child's level of school readiness. One of the key indicators of successful adaptation is the pupil's **satisfaction with the learning process**. Signs of a successful entry into school life and the internalization of the pupil's new role include a positive attitude toward schoolwork, affection and respect for the teacher, interest in completing

assigned tasks, an effort to align one's results with established standards, and a sustained level of personal demands without lowering expectations.

Another important indicator of successful adaptation is the establishment of active social interaction with peers, particularly classmates. When children form new friendships, meet outside of school hours, discuss school-related matters, and share their impressions, this is considered a highly positive sign of socio-emotional adaptation.

A child must adapt not only to the organizational aspects of school life and a new social role but, above all, to the specific conditions of knowledge acquisition in the classroom setting. In some cases, a child is able to master learning material in familiar, individualized instructional contexts but encounters difficulties in the collective classroom environment. This aspect of adaptation has been extensively discussed in the works of V. R. Tsylev (Tsylev, n.d.).

At the initial stage of schooling, this dimension of adaptation is closely associated with the concept of psychological readiness for school. N. I. Gutkina defines psychological readiness for school as "the necessary and sufficient level of a child's development that enables the mastery of the school curriculum under collective learning conditions alongside peers" (Gutkina, n.d.). This form of school readiness essentially characterizes the child's capacity to assimilate instructional material and largely determines the success of adaptation to the organizational structure of classroom instruction.

Over several years, V. R. Tsylev conducted surveys aimed at supporting first-grade pupils experiencing psychological maladjustment at school or within the classroom environment (Tsylev, n.d.). The findings indicate that adaptation to standard instructional conditions is based primarily on the child's existing psychological characteristics (current developmental level) and unfolds within the child's zone of proximal development, particularly as it relates to the organization of cognitive processes. Accurate identification of a child's specific psychological difficulties and the coordinated efforts of psychologists, teachers, and parents make it possible to achieve meaningful change. Under such conditions, the child begins to genuinely adapt to the cognitive and organizational demands of classroom-based learning (Salmanov, et al., 2025).

Pedagogical Interaction and Adaptation Outcomes

Another crucial factor influencing the success of adaptation is the type of pedagogical interaction between teachers and pupils. This aspect of psychological adaptation was examined by M. E. Zelenova, who relied on a typology of pedagogical interaction proposed by a research group led by V. A. Petrovsky. Within the educational process, the authors distinguished between instructional-disciplinary and personality-oriented models of pedagogical communication (Petrovsky et al., n.d.).

In some cases, full adaptation to school does not occur during the first year of education. However, this does not necessarily coincide with pronounced difficulties in mastering the school curriculum; rather, it may unfold against a background of relatively strong academic performance (Author, n.d.). Nearly all six-year-old children experience difficulties adapting to new educational and social conditions. They undergo psychological tension, feelings of uncertainty associated with an entirely new life structure, and heightened anxiety. Physical strain is also common, as the new school routine disrupts previously established behavioral stereotypes. Even children who are accustomed to rules and disciplined routines may exhibit behavioral changes, sleep disturbances, and emotional instability.

Some children respond extremely sensitively to these changes, displaying increased irritability and emotional vulnerability. Excessive workload contributes to fatigue, which is characterized by reduced work capacity. Work capacity depends on multiple factors, including emotional engagement with assigned tasks, interest in achieving results, volitional strength, and the effective functioning of attention, thinking, and memory processes.

Indicators of productive school adaptation include positive dynamics in work capacity, improvement during the first half of the academic year, absence of significant negative changes in health indicators, and successful mastery of curriculum content (Hellbrügge, 1987.).

Levels of School Adaptation

Some children adapt to new conditions with considerable difficulty. In certain cases, the adaptation process may extend throughout the entire first year of schooling, during which signs of successful adaptation are replaced by indicators of **disadaptation**. Nevertheless, with well-organized educational practices both at school and at home, these difficulties can be overcome.

G. M. Chutkina identifies **three levels of school adaptation** (Chutkina, n.d.):

1. **High Level of Adaptation.** First-grade pupils demonstrate a positive attitude toward school, adequately perceive its requirements, easily master learning material, deeply and comprehensively assimilate curriculum content, solve complex tasks, attentively and willingly follow teachers' instructions, show strong interest in independent learning, consistently prepare for lessons, responsibly fulfill social assignments, and occupy a favorable position within the classroom group.
2. **Moderate Level of Adaptation.** Pupils display a generally positive attitude toward school without experiencing negative emotions. They understand instructional material when it is presented clearly and thoroughly, master

the core content of the curriculum, independently solve typical tasks, and complete assignments attentively under supervision. They concentrate effectively when tasks are interesting, usually prepare for lessons, regularly complete homework, responsibly fulfill social duties, and maintain friendly relations with many classmates.

3. **Low Level of Adaptation.** Pupils exhibit negative or indifferent attitudes toward school, frequently complain of illness, show depressive mood states, and demonstrate behavioral discipline problems. Learning material is assimilated fragmentarily, independent work is difficult, and interest in academic tasks is minimal. Such pupils are inconsistently prepared for lessons and require constant monitoring, reminders, and motivation from teachers and parents. They maintain work capacity only during extended breaks, need substantial assistance to understand new material, perform social tasks reluctantly, remain passive, lack close friendships, and recognize only a limited number of classmates by name.

Empirical Distribution of Adaptation Levels

Children in the first group (56%) adapt to school within the first two months of instruction—the period characterized by the most intense psychological adjustment. These pupils quickly integrate into the class collective, form friendships, maintain a positive emotional state, and fulfill teachers' requirements conscientiously and without excessive stress. Minor difficulties in peer or teacher interactions may occur but typically resolve by the end of October, after which the child fully internalizes the new pupil role.

The second group (30%) experiences a longer adaptation period. These children initially struggle to align their behavior with school requirements, accept learning situations, and establish communication with teachers and peers. As a rule, they also encounter difficulties in mastering the curriculum. Only by the end of the first academic semester do their responses begin to correspond to school norms.

The third group (14%) faces significant challenges in psychological adaptation, marked by persistent negative behaviors and pronounced emotional reactions.

Family Environment as a Determinant of Adaptation

As illustrated in Table 1.1.1, one of the most significant factors in the adaptation process is the family environment, including parenting style, parental attitudes toward the child, and the overall emotional climate of the household (Chutkina, n.d.).

Authoritarian parenting styles contribute to low self-confidence and disrupted peer relationships. Children raised in such families often exhibit dependency behaviors, struggle to establish peer communication, assume subordinate positions within the classroom, and encounter difficulties expressing their own opinions. Additionally, family environments characterized by internal aggression foster the development of aggressive personality traits in children, hindering their ability to adapt to school norms and requirements.

Continuity, Classroom Climate, and School (Mal)Adaptation in the Early Grades

Family upbringing, in all its dimensions, influences the adaptation process and, consequently, shapes children's peer relationships—one of the key criteria for psychological adaptation to school. In addition to family factors, a central role in children's adjustment to new school conditions is played by the continuity and coherence of pedagogical methods between preschool and first grade, as well as the quality of pedagogical communication.

Continuity Between Preschool and Primary School

The continuity between kindergarten and school represents a complex system. Its foundation lies in the coordination of curricula and educational programs that determine the content of teaching and upbringing practices in both settings. Such coordination helps ensure that the transition to new educational conditions occurs with minimal psychological strain for children (Author, n.d.).

Continuity creates conditions for implementing a unified, dynamic, and prospective educational system that supports the progressive development of personality. Establishing continuity between kindergarten and school enables the rapprochement of educational environments for preschoolers and younger schoolchildren. As a result, children enter new learning conditions more naturally, which improves the effectiveness of teaching and education and facilitates smoother adaptation.

One major cause of adaptation difficulties is the abrupt change in communication style between teachers and children. Even when teachers maintain a generally positive attitude toward children, they may employ rigid forms of pedagogical influence more frequently. This often produces feelings of aversion in children, fosters passivity, undermines initiative, and generates insecurity. Therefore, improving work with first-grade pupils requires reconsidering teacher influence strategies so they do not contradict the communication style characteristic of preschool educators (Author, n.d.).

A key mechanism for deepening continuity is the use of socio-psychological profiles prepared by preschool educators for each child and for the group as a whole and communicated to primary school teachers. These profiles support individualized pedagogical approaches and reduce transitional stress.

Classroom Psychological Climate and Teacher–Student Relationships

A supportive classroom psychological climate exerts a strong influence on successful school adaptation. Children must perceive what interests them among peers and what provides them enjoyment and emotional reward. The value attributed to a child by classmates and the attitudes they receive are especially significant, since children seek peer recognition, trust, and social status. In this process, the teacher's role is decisive: the teacher's attitude toward the child becomes an indicator of how the child is positioned within the classroom community. During the initial adaptation stage, teacher attitudes toward pupils largely determine the future development of teacher–student relationships and the child's psychological adjustment to school (Author, n.d.).

Levels of School Adaptation

Table 1.1.2 presents generalized levels of adaptation to school.

Table 1.1.2. Levels of a Child's Adaptation to School

Adaptation level — Description

- Adaptation (Adjusted): Children with excellent, good, or satisfactory academic performance; adequate self-esteem; and highly developed motivation and volitional regulation.
- Moderate adaptation: Children with excellent, good, or satisfactory academic performance and self-esteem, with strong volitional regulation but low learning motivation (often expressed as indifference toward school).
- Low adaptation: Children who may demonstrate externally acceptable academic performance (sometimes even good or excellent results) but show low interest in school, insufficient self-regulation (impulsivity), elevated anxiety related to dissatisfaction with the self, inadequate self-esteem, and difficulties in communication.
- Maladaptation (Disadaptation): Children exhibiting clear signs of school maladjustment, characterized by inadequate self-esteem, low motivation, satisfactory or unsatisfactory grades, and very weak volitional regulation.

Importantly, the concept of school maladaptation (disadaptation) does not refer to learning disruptions caused by conditions such as intellectual disability, severe organic disorders, or major physical impairments.

Stress Mechanisms and Risk Factors for Maladaptation

A major triggering mechanism in adaptation is a sharp change in living conditions or habitual environment that generates a mismatch between external social demands and internal psychological readiness. New school requirements may exceed a child's capacities, alter emotional states, and trigger a nonspecific stress response of the body (Author, n.d.). Additional negative factors include authoritarian pedagogical leadership styles and irrational organizational forms of instruction.

Inadequate adaptation mechanisms may develop into maladaptation and often evolve in accordance with a "closed vicious circle" principle: persistent psychotraumatic situations combine with developmental deficits that prevent the formation of effective coping strategies for new conditions. Once established, these patterns may intensify mental and somatic difficulties, worsen maladaptation, and lead to subsequent developmental delays.

When a pupil repeatedly encounters failure in life-salient domains and cannot prevent it, the child may become indifferent to learning activities or develop persistent psychological complexes that undermine motivation and confidence.

School Readiness and Psychological Preparedness

Any analysis of adaptation must include the issue of school readiness. Children's adaptation at the initial educational stage is closely related to psychological readiness for school. The better prepared the child is, the easier it becomes to adjust to the changes associated with starting school and to overcome emerging difficulties.

A review of psychological and pedagogical literature on psychological readiness for school suggests two broad approaches: **theoretical–descriptive** and **empirical**. The primary distinction is that in theoretical–descriptive works, readiness is treated mainly as a phenomenon to be described, while in empirical studies, readiness becomes an object of measurement and psychological testing.

Nearly all researchers emphasize the role of **volition (self-regulation)**. Upon school entry, core elements of volitional action are formed: the child can set goals, make decisions, plan activities, implement plans, make efforts to overcome obstacles, and evaluate outcomes (Hellbrügge, n.d.). These capacities are essential because first-grade pupils must not only do what they want but also follow school routines, curriculum requirements, and teacher expectations.

In the first approach, readiness is considered within the framework of concepts such as "leading activity" and "the social situation of development," with indicators grounded in the classical psychological triad: **intellect, affect, and volition**. In the second, empirical approach, a special place is occupied by testological and psychometric studies, where children are assessed both at entry to first grade and upon completing it.

From the first days of schooling, insufficient development of volitional regulation significantly complicates knowledge acquisition and the formation of learning activity. Children of primary school age must be prepared for learning as a leading activity, and the development of relevant skills is crucial. As indicated in the work of **A. P. Usova**, mastering such skills ensures "high-level learning," characterized by the ability to identify a learning task and transform it into an independent activity goal (Usova, n.d.). Nevertheless, every classroom includes intellectually passive children, who are at higher risk of falling behind and typically experience more difficult adaptation trajectories.

Key Areas of Difficulty in Early School Adaptation

Observations of younger schoolchildren make it possible to identify several primary areas in which adaptation difficulties most frequently occur (Hellbrügge, n.d.):

1. Failure to understand the teacher's professional role and position.
2. Insufficient communication skills and limited capacity to build relationships with peers.
3. Distorted self-attitudes—misjudgment of one's abilities, skills, performance, and results.

Difficulties in the early stages of schooling are associated with multiple external and internal influences. Research in this field often focuses on one dominant area of school life, including learning activity, relations with teachers, implementation of school norms and behavioral rules, and the nature of interpersonal communication in the classroom.

M. M. Bezrukikh proposes that school difficulties can be conditionally grouped into two categories:

- Specific difficulties, reflecting deficits in motor skills, visual–motor coordination, visual and spatial perception, speech development, and related domains;
- Nonspecific difficulties, arising from general physical weakening, low and unstable work capacity, high fatigue, and a slow individual tempo of activity (Bezrukikh, n.d.).

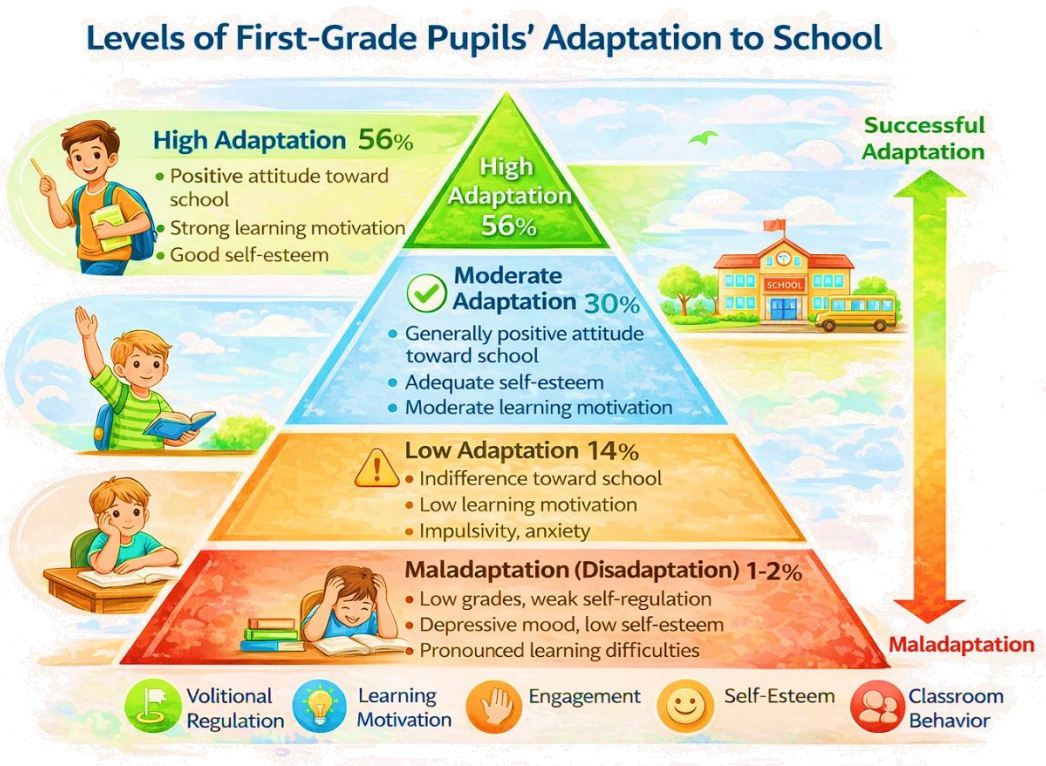
In practice, difficulties in adaptation can also be caused by parental attitudes toward school and toward the child's school success. On one hand, parental anxiety may lead to fear about the child's well-being at school (e.g., illness, discomfort). On the other, some parents expect extremely high achievement and express dissatisfaction when the child fails to meet expectations.

Adaptation difficulties may additionally arise from an underdeveloped internal position of the pupil—especially negative attitudes toward school, lack of learning motivation, and active resistance to learning. This pattern typically appears in three contexts:

1. the child was not accustomed in preschool years to regulating desires and overcoming difficulties, forming a "not trying" attitude;
2. fear of school was formed at home, leading to refusal behaviors;
3. school was idealized at home, and the confrontation with reality produces deep disappointment and sharp negative attitudes toward school (Author, n.d.).

Health conditions and neuropsychological difficulties may further intensify adaptation challenges. If adaptation does not occur, the situation should be conceptualized as school maladaptation.

Figure 2. Levels and Determinants of Pedagogical Adaptation in First-Grade Pupils



School Maladaptation and Learning Difficulties

The term school maladaptation is commonly used to refer to any difficulty encountered during the process of adapting to school. N. I. Gutkina and E. E. Kravtsova define school maladaptation as a constellation of signs reflecting a mismatch between a child's socio-psychological and psychophysiological status and the demands of the school situation, making learning difficult or, in some cases, impossible (Gutkina, 1993.; Kravtsova, 1997).

Difficulties in mastering learning activity may lead to failure to acquire school material. Major contributing factors include (Hellbrügge, n.d.):

1. Insufficient school preparation and socio-psychological neglect (e.g., Dubrovina; Kravtsova; Belkin, etc.).
2. Somatic weakness (e.g., Glushkova; Popova, etc.).
3. Disorders in the development of specific mental functions and cognitive processes (e.g., Zdunkevich; Lubovsky, etc.).
4. Disorders in the development of academic skills (e.g., dyslexia, dysgraphia; Filicheva, etc.).
5. Motor impairments (e.g., Lebedeva, etc.).
6. Emotional disorders (e.g., Zakharov; Strelyats, etc.).

Overall, the factors influencing psycho-pedagogical adaptation can be grouped as follows:

- Personal-psychological (cognitive development disturbances, emotional disorders, prolonged deprivation);
- Family-pedagogical (insufficient upbringing, parental indifference, disrupted gender-role functioning in single-parent families);
- Family-household (low socio-economic status, housing problems, parental antisocial behavior);
- School-pedagogical (stressful pedagogical tactics, intensification of the instructional process, mismatch between methods/technologies and age characteristics, irrational organization of instruction, teacher functional illiteracy);
- Psycho-pedagogical gaps (insufficient psychological and pedagogical support).

The Problem of School Adaptation in Pedagogical and Psychological Literature

The factors outlined above influence the psycho-pedagogical adaptation of pupils throughout the entire period of primary schooling. It is also evident that addressing the problem of first-grade pupils' psycho-pedagogical adaptation to formal schooling is not possible without studying the full system of influences affecting the child at school, within the family, and in the broader social environment, as well as the complex set of emerging difficulties (Ahmadov, 2017).

School Entry as a Developmental Transition

The first day of school marks an individual's initial step into formal education. From that moment, school becomes a crucial environment for self-development and skill acquisition. At school, children establish reciprocal communication with peers and teachers. This interactive context provides opportunities for children to apply and develop physical, emotional, cognitive, and language-related abilities. For this process to unfold effectively, children must reach a sufficient level of maturity for acquiring skills. Maturity is generally defined as the level of an individual's capacity to perform expected behaviors (Author, n.d.). As stated by Başara, the acquisition of new behaviors requires prior readiness in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Başara, n.d.). Consequently, school entry age is widely considered one of the important predictors of later educational success.

Characteristics of Early School Age and Changes in Social Position

In describing early school age as a distinctive period in children's general development, it is methodologically appropriate to focus on its characteristic features. When a child transitions from a preschool institution to school, both their social position and daily lifestyle undergo substantive changes. In the life of a young schoolchild, learning becomes a new leading activity, significantly transforming behavioral motives. Thus, the child is steadily confronted with the task of mastering an organized system of knowledge. The child's social status begins to form, and personality development intensifies during this period.

In the textbook *Psychology of the Schoolchild*, it is emphasized that well-organized preschool education creates broad opportunities for forming qualities, habits, and skills essential for the transition to school life. These include the ability to work in a group, fulfill specific work assignments, consider collective opinion, form an emotional attitude toward reward and punishment, develop sustained volitional effort and attentional control, subordinate behavior to goals, resist irrelevant impulses, and develop the habit of listening to the educator (Author, n.d.).

Emotional Security and Self-Efficacy in School Success

A. Oktay, in *The Magical Years of Life: The Preschool Period*, draws attention to the importance of emotional factors in educational settings and highlights Clay's idea that every child should feel valued, wanted, and capable (Oktay, n.d.). Feelings of trust and competence play a decisive role in achievement. Children who begin school with confidence are at an advantage: they experience acceptance and have learned strategies for success.

Components of Psychological Readiness for School

S. I. Seyidov and M. A. Hamzayev argue that psychological readiness for school requires not only the development of perception, attention, imagination, memory, thinking, and speech, but also the fulfillment of additional requirements necessary for effective learning activity. They include general physical development, a sufficient stock of knowledge, self-care and everyday skills, communication ability, culturally appropriate behavior, basic work skills, adequate development

of fundamental psychological functions, cognitive and intellectual development, capacity for cooperation, behavioral self-regulation, and interest and desire to learn (Seyidov & Hamzayev, n.d.).

Similarly, Yavuzer notes that readiness for any form of education refers to a period in which the child can learn easily and adequately without emotional difficulty. This implies that a child who previously struggled to acquire certain knowledge and skills is able to overcome these difficulties more effectively at the appropriate time (Yavuzer, 1999). In this sense, school readiness reflects the child's developmental preparedness for formal schooling and is a critical condition for school success.

Early Adaptation Difficulties and Motivational Change

From the first day of schooling, children experience notable changes in daily functioning, and adaptation difficulties often emerge. Many children initially rely on motives directly connected with intellectual learning; however, as age changes, the motivational structure of learning activity also changes. First graders become socialized within a new environment: they communicate with new people (teachers and classmates), comply with discipline, and gradually gain independence in social relations. According to N. Z. Chalabiyev, the child's smooth adjustment to the school learning environment depends on the level of preparation provided within the family and preschool settings (Chalabiyev, 2005).

Professor M. A. Hamzayev analyzes early difficulties experienced by first-grade pupils by emphasizing that many children struggle to regulate their behavior for some time, and some lack sufficient volitional strength to maintain self-control. Productive mental work at school requires patience, emotional self-regulation, activity control, and the ability to focus and sustain attention on learning tasks. Yet not all younger schoolchildren can consistently meet these demands, and many become fatigued easily (Hamzayev, n.d.).

School Maturity and the Debate on "Waiting" Versus Supportive Conditions

From the perspective of Gesell, school maturity is a function of maturation. Froebel metaphorically compares children to plants and parents to gardeners who nurture them (Author, n.d.). This framework suggests that children mature according to genetic dispositions and maturational schedules. However, some psychologists argue that waiting for maturation alone may be unnecessary or insufficient.

Kılıç, in *Teacher–Child Communication in Preschool Education*, challenges explanations based exclusively on maturation and stresses that intellectual background, life experiences, and instructional methods significantly influence school maturity. In this view, school maturity corresponds to readiness for all forms of learning—when a child can learn easily and appropriately without emotional difficulty. Drake similarly defines school maturity as a child's level of readiness to engage in specific tasks required of them (Kılıç, n.d.).

Yörükoğlu adds that starting school requires reaching a certain level of intellectual maturity. The primary cognitive condition is that the child attains an age-appropriate level of learning and comprehension. Even a child with strong intelligence may not yet demonstrate emotional maturity to separate from home (Yörükoğlu, 1998).

Contemporary Understanding of "School Readiness"

In contemporary educational discourse, school readiness is often understood through three complementary dimensions:

1. children's readiness to enter school;
2. the school's readiness to receive children;
3. voluntary support from family and society (Child Trends, 2001).

School readiness is also conceptualized as the set of experiences and skills accumulated from birth to school entry. Common frameworks describe five readiness domains: (1) physical health and motor skills; (2) social and emotional development; (3) approaches to learning; (4) language and emergent literacy development; and (5) cognition and general knowledge (Copple, 1997; Kagan et al., 1995).

Hamzayev further emphasizes that preparing younger schoolchildren for life and enabling their participation in learning activity is closely related to the development of cognitive processes. Therefore, particular attention should be devoted to studying the characteristics of sensation, perception, attention, memory, thinking, speech, and imagination (Hamzayev, n.d.).

Overall, school maturity implies reaching a certain developmental level across physical, cognitive, social, and emotional domains and being prepared to meet school requirements successfully. Across definitions, researchers consistently underscore the necessity for children to attain an adequate maturity level before entering formal education and to acquire sufficient learning experience and psychological capacity. Beyond hereditary dispositions, many scholars stress that favorable conditions and supportive environments are essential (Author, n.d.).

Özarslan identifies developmental domains that constitute the foundation of school maturity, including visual maturity, color discrimination, visual memory, hand–eye coordination, listening skills, social and emotional factors, and attention span (Özarslan, n.d.). When these developmental areas are established, children may be considered ready for primary education; nevertheless, adaptation to the environment remains a critical dimension, as the learning context interacts with child maturity.

Adaptation Problems as an Interaction of Environment and Internal Conflicts

Individuals may experience adaptation difficulties in unfamiliar contexts. For young children, primary school is a new environment that generates multiple unfamiliar situations, making adaptation problems likely, particularly for children who separate from their families at an early age.

Yavuzer suggests that adaptation problems emerge when negative environmental influences combine with difficulties inherent to individual developmental stages, and such problems may be identified as emotional disturbances (Yavuzer, n.d.). Adaptation problems also arise from multiple causes that reflect a child's internal conflicts (Yavuzer, n.d.). In this sense, adaptation difficulties can be conceptualized as a depressive state produced by the convergence of environmental pressures and internal problems.

Children experiencing adaptation problems often struggle with self-confidence and may perceive themselves as lacking the necessary strength to cope. Consequently, communication with the surrounding environment may become tense and problematic. Behavioral manifestations may include aggressiveness, irritability, maladaptation, conflict, school avoidance, defiance, and rule-breaking.

Conclusion

The transition to formal schooling represents a complex and multidimensional developmental challenge for young children, encompassing cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral adjustments. The findings of this study confirm that psycho-pedagogical adaptation to school is not a short-term or isolated process but rather a dynamic phenomenon shaped by the interaction of individual child characteristics, family environment, educational practices, and broader social conditions.

The analysis demonstrates that successful school adaptation depends on a combination of psychological readiness, emotional stability, volitional regulation, and supportive pedagogical conditions. Continuity between preschool and primary education, a positive classroom climate, constructive teacher–student interactions, and active family involvement emerge as decisive protective factors that facilitate adaptation. Conversely, maladaptive outcomes are often associated with inadequate school readiness, authoritarian pedagogical styles, unfavorable family environments, emotional and neuropsychological difficulties, and insufficient coordination between educational institutions.

Importantly, the study emphasizes that adaptation should not be understood merely as compliance with academic and behavioral norms. Rather, it involves the formation of internal psychological resources that enable children to engage meaningfully with learning, maintain emotional well-being, and sustain long-term personal and educational development. Early identification of adaptation difficulties and the implementation of coordinated psycho-pedagogical interventions involving teachers, psychologists, and parents are therefore essential.

Overall, the findings highlight the necessity of a holistic, child-centered approach to primary education that integrates developmental psychology, pedagogy, and family–school collaboration. Such an approach not only enhances children's initial adjustment to school but also lays a solid foundation for future academic achievement and social integration.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with internationally accepted ethical standards for research in education and psychology. The research is based on the analysis of theoretical sources and previously published empirical findings and does not involve direct experimentation on human subjects. Where references to empirical studies are made, they are cited appropriately, respecting intellectual property and academic integrity principles.

The authors ensured objectivity, transparency, and scholarly responsibility throughout the research process. All sources were acknowledged accurately, and interpretations were presented without distortion or misrepresentation of original findings. No data fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism occurred at any stage of the study.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to this study. The research was conducted without any financial, institutional, or personal relationships that could be perceived as influencing the objectivity or integrity of the work.

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(Note: replace "et al." with full author list if your target journal/dissertation requires it.)
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Spielberger–Andreyeva Method
Diagnosis of Learning Motivation and Emotional Attitudes Toward Education
Name and Surname: _____
School: _____
Grade/Class: _____ **Date of Administration:** _____
Table. Learning Motivation and Emotional State Questionnaire

No.	Statement	Almost Never (1)	Sometimes (2)	Often (3)	Almost Always (4)
1	I feel calm	4	3	2	1
2	I want to know, understand, and reach the truth	1	2	3	4
3	I feel angry	1	2	3	4
4	When I face learning difficulties, I feel discouraged	4	3	2	1
5	I feel tense	1	2	3	4
6	I feel interested	1	2	3	4
7	I want to bang my fist on the desk	1	2	3	4
8	I strive to receive only good and excellent grades	1	2	3	4
9	I feel relaxed	4	3	2	1
10	I feel curious	1	2	3	4
11	I feel angry	1	2	3	4
12	I strive to achieve success in my studies	1	2	3	4
13	I worry about possible failure	1	2	3	4
14	It seems to me that the lesson will never end	4	3	2	1
15	I want to shout at someone	1	2	3	4
16	I try to do everything correctly	1	2	3	4
17	I feel unsuccessful	1	2	3	4
18	I feel like a researcher	1	2	3	4
19	I want to break something	1	2	3	4
20	I feel that I cannot cope with my tasks	4	3	2	1
21	I feel anxious	1	2	3	4
22	I feel energetic	1	2	3	4
23	I feel angry	1	2	3	4
24	I am proud of my school achievements	1	2	3	4
25	I feel completely free	4	3	2	1
26	I feel that my mind works well	1	2	3	4
27	I feel irritated	1	2	3	4
28	I solve even the most difficult tasks	1	2	3	4
29	I feel insecure	1	2	3	4
30	I feel bored	4	3	2	1
31	I want to break something	1	2	3	4
32	I try to avoid getting poor grades	4	3	2	1
33	I feel emotionally balanced	4	3	2	1
34	I enjoy thinking and making decisions	1	2	3	4
35	I feel deceived	1	2	3	4
36	I try to demonstrate my abilities and intelligence	1	2	3	4
37	I feel afraid	1	2	3	4
38	I feel sad	4	3	2	1
39	Many things irritate me	1	2	3	4
40	I want to be among the best	1	2	3	4

Table 1. S. Bedur Scale for Identifying Classroom Teachers' Communication Styles with Students

Instructions: Please indicate how frequently each statement applies by selecting one option.

No.	Statement	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	I give my students sufficient opportunity to speak.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I listen to my students with empathy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I consider individual differences when communicating with students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	I use a tone of voice that students can clearly hear during lessons.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	I use short, clear, and understandable sentences to improve comprehension.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	I pay attention to stress and intonation while teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	In cases of misbehavior, I evaluate the behavior rather than the student.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	I show interest in student activities to help them bond with each other.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	I allow students to express their feelings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	I seek feedback from my students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	I encourage students who hesitate to speak.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	I evaluate students' work and provide feedback.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	I try to understand students' reactions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Students react when they believe I behave unfairly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	I try to engage multiple senses while communicating with students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	I pay attention to speaking clearly and fluently.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	Students share personal topics with me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	I share my feelings with students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19	I conduct individual meetings with students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	Sometimes I communicate with students through appropriate physical contact.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21	I am aware that students interpret my messages through body language.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22	There is inconsistency between my verbal language and body language.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23	I maintain eye contact when communicating with students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24	I consider seating arrangements to improve communication.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25	Instead of telling students what is right or wrong, I allow them to form their own opinions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix 2

Table 2. L. M. Kovaleva Method for Measuring First-Grade Students' Adaptation Level

Teacher Questionnaire

Response format: Mark each item if the statement applies to the student.

No.	Observation Item	Yes	No
1	Parents are almost completely disengaged from education and rarely visit school.	☐	☐
2	The child had no basic academic skills upon school entry (e.g., counting, writing).	☐	☐
3	The child lacks general knowledge common to peers (days, seasons, fairy tales, etc.).	☐	☐
4	Poor development of fine motor skills (uneven handwriting, tremors).	☐	☐
5	Writes with the right hand but was retrained from left-handedness.	☐	☐
6	Writes with the left hand.	☐	☐
7	Makes purposeless hand movements.	☐	☐

No.	Observation Item	Yes	No
8	Blinks frequently.	☐	☐
9	Sucks fingers or hands.	☐	☐
10	Occasionally stutters.	☐	☐
11	Bites nails.	☐	☐
12	Has a fragile body build and short stature.	☐	☐
13	Is clearly a "home child" and seeks affection and physical comfort.	☐	☐
14	Loves playing, even during lessons.	☐	☐
15	Appears younger than peers despite being the same age.	☐	☐
16	Speech resembles that of a 4–5-year-old child.	☐	☐
17	Is excessively restless during lessons.	☐	☐
18	Quickly resigns after failures.	☐	☐
19	Prefers noisy, active games during breaks.	☐	☐
20	Cannot sustain attention; rushes tasks without regard for quality.	☐	☐
21	Cannot switch to serious tasks after play or physical activity.	☐	☐
22	Experiences prolonged periods of failure.	☐	☐
23	Becomes confused by unexpected questions but answers well with time.	☐	☐
24	Takes an excessively long time to complete tasks.	☐	☐
25	Performs homework significantly better than classwork.	☐	☐
26	Takes a long time to switch between activities.	☐	☐
27	Cannot repeat simple material but remembers personal interests well.	☐	☐
28	Requires constant teacher attention and prompts.	☐	☐
29	Makes many errors when copying.	☐	☐
30	Is easily distracted by minor stimuli.	☐	☐
31	Brings toys to school and plays during class.	☐	☐
32	Does only the minimum required; lacks learning motivation.	☐	☐
33	Parents complain about difficulty getting the child to study.	☐	☐
34	Appears unwell during lessons but livelier during breaks.	☐	☐
35	Avoids effort and gives up easily, offering excuses.	☐	☐
36	Appears unhealthy (pale, thin).	☐	☐
37	Performance deteriorates by the end of the lesson.	☐	☐
38	Becomes irritated and cries when tasks fail.	☐	☐
39	Performs poorly under time pressure.	☐	☐
40	Frequently complains of fatigue or headaches.	☐	☐
41	Struggles with non-standard questions.	☐	☐
42	Performs better with external aids (e.g., counting on fingers).	☐	☐
43	Cannot complete similar tasks after explanation.	☐	☐
44	Has difficulty applying previously learned concepts.	☐	☐
45	Gives irrelevant answers and fails to identify the main idea.	☐	☐
46	Lacks foundational skills and concepts necessary for understanding.	☐	☐

Table 3. Scoring Key for Adaptation Domains (Kovaleva Method)

Item Numbers	Domain Code
1	VM
2–4	MH
5–6	S
7–11	NS
12–16	I
17–21	HAT
22–26	SSA
27–30	PSQI
31–35	OFAM
36–40	AS
41–46	IFP