

Exploring Kindergarten Programs for Supporting Early Learning Outcome in Inclusive Education

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ABSTRACT: The study explored the implementation of kindergarten programs within inclusive education settings in Bahrain and their impact on early learning outcome. It surveyed 81 pre-school teachers from eight selected schools, collecting data on their age, educational attainment, and years of experience. The research examined critical learning drivers, including curriculum and instruction, time block structuring, classroom utilization, teaching methods, and administrative support, while also assessing early learning outcomes in Language and Literacy and Mathematical Thinking. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational design, data was gathered through an adapted questionnaire from purposively sampled schools. Findings indicated that kindergarten inclusive education programs were implemented to a "Very High Extent" in curriculum and instruction, scheduling, and teaching methods, with administrative support at a "High Extent." Learners, however, showed "Intermediate" outcomes in Language and Literacy and Mathematical Thinking. Teacher demographics like age and experience did not significantly impact implementation, though higher educational attainment did. A significant relationship was found between "Curriculum & Instruction" and "Methods of Teaching" with improved learning outcomes, but not for "Blocks of Time" or "Administrative Support." Based on these results, a comprehensive Educational Framework was proposed. This framework aims to enhance kindergarten programs in inclusive education through five key components: Inclusive Curriculum Design and Implementation, Effective Instructional Strategies, Comprehensive Professional Development, Inclusive Assessment Strategies, and Supportive School and Program Environments.

KEYWORDS: kindergarten programs, early learning outcome, inclusive education, educational framework

I. INTRODUCTION

The initial years of education play a crucial role in developing respect for diversity, as early exposure to inclusive environments helps cultivate a strong sense of appreciation and understanding in young learners (Johnson Villa, 2024). Involving children with special needs in inclusive settings from the outset not only improves their social, emotional, academic, and cultural abilities but also promotes positive attitudes among their classmates. Studies show that children who frequently engage with peers with special needs are more likely to adopt a favorable perspective on diversity (Danniels, & Pyle, 2023). Additionally, growing up in a diverse setting from an early age is linked to enhanced overall well-being and stronger development in various aspects (Mastorci, Lazzeri, Vassalle, & Pingitore, 2024).

Jordan and Dunham (2021) argue that children are often labeled due to their differences not because these differences are inherent problems, but because the educational structures fail to accommodate them. In inclusive settings, these differences are not seen as deficits but as opportunities to enrich the learning environment, allowing all children to view themselves as integral parts of the community (Milner, 2021).

Globally, disparities in foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy remain a challenge, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (Grotlüschen, Desjardins, & Liu, 2020). The quality and inclusiveness of kindergarten programs are critical to bridging these gaps and maximizing children's developmental potential. Evidence shows that children in inclusive settings benefit from tailored support that promotes school readiness and lifelong learning. Nonetheless, many education systems struggle with providing accessible and high-quality inclusive kindergarten education, underscoring the urgent need for systematic improvements.

In the context of Bahrain, the implementation of inclusive kindergarten programs faces challenges such as low enrollment rates, insufficient teacher qualifications, and lack of specialized curricula for diverse learning needs. Assessment practices, although evolving, require further refinement to effectively support inclusive education. This research highlights these issues while advocating for strengthened policies, professional development, and resource allocation to build an enhanced

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educational framework that supports kindergarten programs and optimizes early learning outcomes for all children in inclusive education.

In the Philippines, the training of special education teachers and the integration of inclusive education in teacher education curriculum are areas of ongoing focus. However, studies have highlighted the need for more comprehensive and targeted professional development initiatives to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to support diverse learners effectively (Samundeeswari, 2024). Flexible curriculum design and individualized education plans (IEPs) are key strategies.

Kindergarten teachers perform a multidimensional role (Cohen-Azaria, 2022). They are responsible for implementing a program that is well-planned, challenging, engaging, and integrated that is appropriate and responsive in the promotion of positive outcomes for all children. Kindergarten teachers need to be aware of the curriculum expectations for the further studies in the basic education of children. Knowledge of the literacy and numeracy is critical for teachers as they lay the foundation for learning. Teachers should use reflective practice, planned observation and a range of assessment strategies to identify the strengths, needs and interest of the children in order to provide instruction that is appropriate for each child.

In addition, Aloizou (2024), stated that learning environment is taken into consideration in the implementation of the program as it affects the learning process of the learners as well. The school environment plays an important role in the learning process of students. Infrastructure facilities in school are needed in the learning process. Incomplete infrastructure facilities will hamper the learning process as well as the execution and delivery of the teachers in the teaching-learning process.

This research is designed to thoroughly evaluate how effectively the program has been implemented by focusing specifically on the learners' achievement of the intended learning outcomes. It aims to investigate whether the educational objectives set forth by the program are being met in practice and to what extent the learners acquiring the knowledge, skills, and competencies expected of them. By assessing the actual learning outcomes, the research seeks to provide concrete evidence on the program's impact on student learning, identify areas of strength, and uncover opportunities for improvement. This evaluation not only gauges the success of current instructional strategies and curricular design but also informs future decisions to enhance the program's effectiveness and ensure that it meets both institutional standards and learners' educational needs.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the demographic profile of the kindergarten teachers in terms of age, educational attainment, and years of teaching?
2. What is the extent of implementation of Kindergarten Programs in inclusive education in the Kingdom of Bahrain in terms of curriculum and instruction, blocks of time, classroom utilization, methods of teaching used, and administrative support?
3. What is the level of the learners' learning outcome in terms of language and literacy and mathematics thinking?
4. Is there a significant difference on the extent of implementation of kindergarten programs in inclusive education when grouped according to their demographic profile?
5. Is there a relationship on the extent of the implementation of kindergarten programs in inclusive education and the level of the learners' learning outcome?

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a non-experimental quantitative descriptive correlation design intends to determine the extent of implementation of inclusive kindergarten programs and its impact on the learning outcome of kindergarten learners in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The target population for this study were pre-school teachers primarily responsible for teaching academic and social skills to kindergarten pupils. The respondents of this study were 81 kindergarten teachers in the Kingdom of Bahrain involving eight selected schools such as Britus International School, American School In Bahrian, Al Fajer School, Al Rawabi School, Ahlia School, Al Raja School, Bayan School, and Alhekma School. The survey questionnaire consisting of the demographic profile of the respondents, the extent of implementation of Kindergarten Programs in inclusive education, and the level of learning outcomes.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
AGE		
50 & above	2	2.47%
45-49	18	22.22%
40-45	33	40.74%
35-39	15	18.52%
30-34	12	14.81%
25-29	1	1.23%
20-24	0	0.00%

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Total	81	100%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
BS Graduate	50	61.73%
with MA units	19	23.46%
Completed MA units with Doctoral units	7	8.64%
Doctoral Graduate	5	6.17%
Total	81	100%
NO. OF YRS. WORKING WITH CHILDREN 0-5 YEARS OLD		
30 yrs & above	3	3.70%
25-29 yrs	22	27.16%
20-24 yrs	31	38.27%
15-19 yrs	16	19.75%
10-14 yrs	6	7.41%
5-9 yrs	3	3.70%
less than 5 yrs	0	0.00%
Total	81	100%

Table 1 presents a demographic profile of 81 respondents, revealing a mature and well-qualified group. The majority are aged 40–49, with most holding a bachelor's degree (61.73%) or having earned MA units (23.46%). A significant portion also has extensive experience in early childhood education, with 38.27% having 20–24 years and 27.16% having 25–29 years of service.

Table 2. Extent of Implementation of Inclusive Education in Terms of Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum and Instruction	Mean	SD	Description
The curriculum and instruction in this school ...			
Include the standards and competencies expected of five-year old children by the Ministry of Education.	3.54	0.57	Very High Extent
are thematic and integrative to ensure the development of foundational skills among children.	3.42	0.54	Very High Extent
cater to the needs of learners with special needs such as the gifted, those with disabilities, and other diverse learners.	3.42	0.67	Very High Extent
use the mother tongue of the learners as the primary medium of instruction.	3.37	0.56	Very High Extent
Employ differentiated instruction when the pupils in the kindergarten classroom have different mother tongue or when some of them speak another mother tongue/ first language at home	3.48	0.57	Very High Extent
Overall Mean	3.45	0.58	Very High Extent

LEGEND: 4.00 – 3.26 Very High Extent; 3.25-2.51 High Extent; 2.50-1.76 Moderate Extent; 1.75-1.00 Low Extent

Table 2 shows a very high extent of implementation of inclusive education in terms of curriculum and instruction, with the highest mean (3.54) reflecting strong alignment with national standards for five-year-old children. Other key areas, such as thematic and integrative approaches and addressing diverse learning needs, also scored high (mean of 3.42), indicating a focus on holistic development and inclusion. Although the use of mother tongue instruction had the lowest mean (3.37), it still falls to a very high extent, suggesting consistent implementation with some room for enhancement.

Table 3. Extent of Implementation of Inclusive Education in Terms of Blocks of Time

Blocks of Time	Mean	SD	Interpretation
The flag ceremony, prayer, and attendance check during arrival time were effectively implemented.	3.57	0.55	Very High Extent
During Meeting Time, teacher instructions clearly prepared children for Work Periods	3.57	0.50	Very High Extent
Small group activities in Work Period 1 fostered collaboration and engagement among the children.	3.51	0.50	Very High Extent
Children actively presented their group work during Meeting Time enhancing peer learning.	3.53	0.50	Very High Extent
The rest and story-telling period created a relaxing and literacy-rich environment.	3.42	0.50	Very High Extent
Varied tasks in Work Period 2 reinforced learning objectives	3.93	0.50	Very High Extent

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through small group activities.			
Recreational play during indoor/outdoor activity promoted physical activity and social skills.	3.51	0.50	Very High Extent
Meeting Time 3: The dismissal routine ensured a smooth and organized transition for children at the end of the day.	3.48	0.50	Very High Extent
Overall Mean	3.57	0.51	Very High Extent

LEGEND: 4.00 – 3.26 Very High Extent; 3.25-2.51 High Extent; 2.50-1.76 Moderate Extent; 1.75-1.00 Low Extent

Table 3 reveals a "Very High Extent" of inclusive education implementation across various time blocks, with an overall mean of 3.57 and a low standard deviation of 0.51, indicating consistency and effectiveness. The highest-rated area was Work Period 2 (mean = 3.93), emphasizing the success of varied small group tasks in reinforcing learning objectives, likely due to well-planned, inclusive strategies. Although all time blocks were rated very high, the Rest and Storytelling Period received the lowest mean (3.42), suggesting an opportunity for enhancement in fostering relaxation, emotional regulation, and literacy in a more inclusive and engaging way.

Table 4. Extent of Implementation of Inclusive Education in Terms of Classroom Utilization

Classroom Utilization	Mean	SD	Interpretation
The reading area offers a wide selection of age-appropriate books and comfortable/adequate seating, fostering engagement in literacy activities.	3.63	0.56	Very High Extent
The activity area supports various hands-on learning experiences with materials that are readily available and well-organized.	3.49	0.50	Very High Extent
The sleeping area provides a quiet and comfortable. an adequate space for rest, with conditions that are highly conducive to relaxation.	3.48	0.57	Very High Extent
The washing area promotes good hygiene practices through easy access to soap and water.	3.48	0.50	Very High Extent
The playing area offers diverse opportunities for physical activity and social interaction with equipment that is safe, well-maintained, and stimulating.	3.53	0.50	Very High Extent
Overall Mean	3.52	0.54	Very High Extent

LEGEND: 4.00 – 3.26 Very High Extent; 3.25-2.51 High Extent; 2.50-1.76 Moderate Extent; 1.75-1.00 Low Extent

Table 4 highlights a very high level of classroom utilization for inclusive education, with an overall mean of 3.52 and a low standard deviation of 0.54, indicating consistent implementation across all areas. The reading and playing areas received the highest mean scores (3.63 and 3.53, respectively), reflecting strong support for both cognitive and physical development in an inclusive setting. Although the sleeping and washing areas had the lowest means (3.48), they still showed a very high extent of implementation, suggesting minor areas for improvement to further support student well-being and enhance the inclusive classroom environment.

Table 5. Extent of Implementation of Inclusive Education in Terms of Methods of Teaching

Methods of Teaching,	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Storytelling and reading methods captivate children's imaginations and foster a love for literacy.	3.65	0.57	Very High Extent
Listening story activities enhance auditory processing and comprehension skills in young learners.	3.25	0.50	High Extent
Oral communication activities develop children's expressive language skills and confidence in speaking.	3.44	0.59	High Extent
Interactive strategies promote active participation and engagement, making learning dynamic and collaborative.	3.22	0.50	High Extent
Manipulative games offer a hands-on approach to learning, promoting cognitive development and problem-solving skills.	3.25	0.50	High Extent
Experiential small group discussions encourage children to share personal experiences, fostering empathy and social understanding.	3.22	0.49	High Extent
Overall Mean	3.34	0.53	Very High Extent

LEGEND: 4.00 – 3.26 Very High Extent; 3.25-2.51 High Extent; 2.50-1.76 Moderate Extent; 1.75-1.00 Low Extent

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Table 5 demonstrates a very high extent of implementation of inclusive education methods, with an overall mean of 3.34 and a standard deviation of 0.53, reflecting consistent use of diverse teaching strategies. Storytelling and reading methods stood out with the highest mean score of 3.65, indicating they are the most frequently and effectively applied. While interactive strategies and experiential group discussions received slightly lower mean scores (3.22), they were still rated at a high extent, suggesting a strong but slightly less emphasized use, pointing to areas for further enhancement in fostering active participation and empathy.

Table 6. Extent of Implementation of Inclusive Education in Terms of Administrative Support

Administrative Support	Mean	SD	Interpretation
The school head (HO) organizes small group meetings to address and resolve teacher-related challenges collaboratively	3.57	0.52	Very High Extent
The school administrator displays supportive and encouraging behavior towards the staff, fostering a positive and motivating work environment.	3.11	0.50	High Extent
The school head (HO) conducts intensive supervision of teachers to ensure quality instruction and adherence to educational standards.	3.46	0.57	Very High Extent
In-depth training is provided to teachers to upgrade their teaching competencies, equipping them with the latest pedagogical skills and knowledge.	3.12	0.50	High Extent
The school head (HO) conducts evaluations of required skills to identify areas for improvement and ensure teachers possess the necessary competencies.	3.16	0.50	High Extent
The school head (HO) actively seeks funding to address the pre-school's additional needs, ensuring adequate resources for effective operation.	3.15	0.50	High Extent
The school head (HO) prioritizes the replacement of worn-out facilities, ensuring a safe and conducive learning environment for students.	3.25	0.50	High Extent
Overall Mean	3.26	0.51	High Extent

LEGEND: 4.00 – 3.26 Very High Extent; 3.25-2.51 High Extent; 2.50-1.76 Moderate Extent; 1.75-1.00 Low Extent

Table 6 presents the extent of administrative support for inclusive education, with an overall mean of 3.26 and a consistent standard deviation range of 0.50 to 0.57, indicating a "High Extent" of implementation. The highest-rated area was the organization of small group meetings for collaborative problem-solving (mean = 3.57), reflecting strong support in addressing teacher-related challenges. While all aspects were implemented to a high or very high extent, the lowest mean (3.11) for supportive behavior from administrators suggests room for growth in fostering a more encouraging and motivating work environment to further enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education.

Table 7. Summary Table on Extent of Implementation of Kindergarten Programs in Inclusive Education

Indicators	Overall Mean	Description
Curriculum & Instruction	3.45	Very High Extent
Blocks of Time	3.57	Very High Extent
Methods of Teaching	3.34	Very High Extent
Administrative Support	3.26	High Extent
Overall Mean	3.41	Very High Extent

Table 7 summarizes the overall extent of implementation of Kindergarten Programs in Inclusive Education, with an overall mean of 3.41, interpreted as "Very High Extent." The highest implementation was observed in "Blocks of Time" (mean = 3.57), indicating effective use of structured schedules to support diverse learners. While "Administrative Support" had the lowest mean (3.26), still rated as "High Extent," this suggests a potential area for improvement to further strengthen inclusive practices through enhanced leadership, resources, and staff development.

Table 8. The Level of the Learners' Learning Outcomes in Terms of Language and Literacy

A. Language and Literacy The Child...	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Uses complex sentence structures – for example says "If she had brought her umbrella she wouldn't have gotten wet" or "Yesterday, it was raining cats and dogs" or "Why can't we go on the field trip at the same time as the first grade?"	3.63	0.53	Intermediate
2. Understands and interprets a story or other text read to him/her - for example by retelling a story just read to the group, or telling about why a story ended as it did, or connecting part of the story to his/her own life.	3.49	0.55	Intermediate
3. Easily and quickly names all upper and lower-cases letter of the alphabet	3.59	0.49	Intermediate

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4. Predicts what will happen next in stories by using the pictures and storyline for clues.	3.52	0.63	Intermediate
5. Reads simple books independently – for example, reads books with repetitive language pattern.	3.58	0.50	Intermediate
6. Uses different strategies to read unfamiliar words – for example, examines cues from pictures or context, or uses prior knowledge in order make predictions.	3.57	0.52	Intermediate
7. Demonstrates early writing behaviors – for example, by using initial consonants to spell words (“d” for the word “dog”) or using letter names to represent sounds (“r” for the word “are”) or phonetic spelling (“hrt”) for the word “heart” to convey words or ideas.	3.56	0.55	Intermediate
8. Composes simple stories - for example by writing about a personal experience in a journal.	3.59	0.52	Intermediate
9. Demonstrates an understanding of some of the conventions or print - for example by using both upper and lower cases letters when writing, or putting spaces between words	3.77	0.43	Intermediate
Overall Mean	3.59	0.53	Intermediate

LEGEND: 5.00-4.21 Proficient; 4.20-3.41 Intermediate; 3.40-2.61 In Progress; 2.60-1.81 Beginning; 1.80-1.00 Not Yet

Table 8 presents an analysis of learners' language and literacy outcomes, with an overall mean of 3.59, interpreted as "Intermediate." The highest-performing areas include understanding print conventions (mean = 3.77) and the use of complex sentence structures (mean = 3.63), indicating developing skills in writing mechanics and verbal expression. While these results reflect solid progress, the overall intermediate rating suggests a need for continued instructional support to help learners reach higher levels of proficiency across all language and literacy areas.

Table 9. The Level of the Learners' Learning Outcomes in Terms of Mathematics Thinking

Mathematical Thinking	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Sorts, classifies, and compares math materials by various rules and attributes – for example, by creating a rule for sorting keys such as “keys with numbers” in another pile or by sorting shapes by several attributes such as “large plastic shapes” and small wooden shapes	3.60	0.61	Intermediate
2. Orders a group of objects – for example, by ordering rods or sticks by length, or arranging paints from lightest to darkest or musical instruments from softest to loudest.	3.59	0.52	Intermediate
3. Shows an understanding of the relationship between quantities - for example, knows that a group of ten small stories is the same quantity as a group of ten larger books.	3.60	0.54	Intermediate
13. Solves problems involving numbers using concrete objects – for example, “Vera has six blocks. George has three, how many block are there in all?” or “How many do I need to give George so he will have the same number or blocks as Vera?”	3.49	0.53	Intermediate
14. Demonstrates an understanding of graphing activities - for example, by looking at a picture graph on favorite ice cream flavors and knowing which flavor is the most popular and which one is the least popular.	3.62	0.51	Intermediate
15. Uses instruments accurately for measuring - for example, by using a balance scale to compare the weight of two objects, or using tablespoons and teaspoons during a cooking project, or using a measuring tape to measure the length of different objects	3.40	0.54	Intermediate
16. Uses a variety of strategies to solve math problems – for example by using manipulative materials, looking for a pattern, or acting out a problem.	3.57	0.52	Intermediate
17. Models, reads, writes, and compares fractions – for example shows that $\frac{1}{2}$ of the candy bar is $\frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4}$, or shows that $\frac{1}{4}$ of a set of 12 is 3.	3.63	0.51	Intermediate
Overall Mean	3.56	0.54	Intermediate

LEGEND: 5.00-4.21 Proficient; 4.20-3.41 Intermediate; 3.40-2.61 In Progress; 2.60-1.81 Beginning; 1.80-1.00 Not Yet

Table 9 analyzes learners' mathematical thinking, with all indicators and the overall mean of 3.56 interpreted as "Intermediate," reflecting a moderate level of competency across assessed skills. The highest mean was for modeling and comparing fractions

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(3.63), followed closely by graphing skills (3.62), indicating strengths in conceptual understanding and data interpretation. The lowest mean, 3.40, was for accurate use of measuring instruments, suggesting a slight need for improvement in practical measurement skills, though still within the intermediate range.

Table 10. Significance Difference in the Extent of Implementation of Inclusive Education across the respondents' demographic profile

Demographic Profile	F-value	F-critical	p-value	Significant Difference
Age group	2.05	2.31	0.078	Not Significant
Educational Attainment	3.45	3.11	0.042	Significant
Years of Experience	2.12	2.31	0.063	Not Significant

***Significant at 0.05**

Table 10 shows a statistically significant difference in the extent of implementation of inclusive education kindergarten programs based on the respondents' educational attainment, with those holding MA or Doctoral degrees reporting slightly higher mean scores. The ANOVA yielded an F-value of 3.45, surpassing the F-critical value of 3.11 at $p = 0.042$, confirming significance at the 0.05 level. However, no significant differences were found based on age ($F = 2.05$, $p = 0.078$) or years of experience ($F = 2.12$, $p = 0.063$), indicating that professional development through higher education may influence perceptions of implementation more than age or tenure.

Table 11. Significant Relationship between the Extent of Implementation and Level of Learners' Learning Outcome

Variables	Level of Learning Outcomes			
	df	Computed r Value	p-value	Interpretation
Curriculum & Instruction	79	0.412	0.000	Significant
Blocks of Time	79	0.127	0.238	Not Significant
Methods of Teaching	79	0.387	0.043	Significant
Administrative Support	79	0.109	0.312	Not Significant

Table 11 presents the correlation between various aspects of kindergarten program implementation and learners' learning outcomes, using Pearson's r and corresponding p -values. The results show statistically significant positive relationships for "Curriculum & Instruction" ($r = 0.412$, $p = 0.000$) and "Methods of Teaching" ($r = 0.387$, $p = 0.043$), indicating that these factors significantly influence student learning. In contrast, "Blocks of Time" ($r = 0.127$, $p = 0.238$) and "Administrative Support" ($r = 0.109$, $p = 0.312$) did not show significant correlations, suggesting that while effective curriculum and teaching methods enhance learning outcomes, time structuring and administrative backing may have a less direct or measurable impact in this context.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that kindergarten teachers in Bahrain are generally mature, well-educated, and experienced, and that inclusive education programs are implemented to a very high extent, especially in curriculum, scheduling, and teaching methods. Despite this, learners' outcomes in language, literacy, and math remain at an intermediate level. Higher teacher education levels are linked to better program implementation, and curriculum and teaching methods significantly influence learning outcomes, while time structuring and administrative support do not. An educational framework has been proposed to further strengthen inclusive practices through improvements in curriculum, instruction, professional development, assessment, and supportive environments.

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