Inclusion of Children With Developmental Gaps in Kindergartens

Ebtisam Abu Hamad[1], Maria Roth[2]

(Social Work Department, Babes-Bolyai University, Isreal)

Abstract: This research paper delves into the practice and significance of inclusive education in Israeli kindergartens, with a particular emphasis on children with developmental gaps. We explore the underpinnings of developmental gaps, delineate the myriad benefits of inclusive practices for both typically developing children and those with developmental differences, and analyze the challenges and strategies that educational institutions face in implementing these practices. Through extensive research, collaboration, and observation, the study underscores the essential role of parents, community involvement, and interdisciplinary collaborations in fostering a truly inclusive environment. The paper continuous research, more resource allocation, and public awareness campaigns to bolster and sustain inclusive practices in kindergartens across Israel. This essay aims to explore the inclusion of children with developmental gaps in kindergartens, with a specific focus on the context of Israel. We will examine the principles and policies of inclusive education in Israel and delve into the legal framework and regulations that support the inclusion of children with developmental gaps in kindergartens. Furthermore, we will explore the benefits of inclusion for both children with developmental gaps and their typically developing peers. By analyzing empirical evidence and studies, we aim to shed light on the positive impact of inclusion on the overall development, academic achievement, and social-emotional well-being of all children. The findings will relate to the attitudes and perceptions of the kindergarteners and parents regarding inclusion in kindergartens, the professional development and skills of the kindergarten staff (the kindergarten teacher and the assistant), the challenges in the work of the kindergarten manager and the sources of assistance and support, and the relationship between the kindergarten staff and parents.

Key words: inclusion, early childhood, kindergarten, developmental differences

JEL codes: I, I2

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Research Significance

In today's diverse and inclusive society, the education system plays a pivotal role in promoting equal opportunities and providing quality education for all children (Dan, 2019). One essential aspect of inclusive education is the inclusion of children with developmental gaps in kindergartens. Developmental gaps refer to differences in cognitive, physical, emotional, or social development that children may experience compared to their peers. These gaps can manifest in various ways, including learning disabilities, speech delays, motor skill impairments, or behavioral challenges (Bowman, 1986; Yahav, 2020).

Ebtisam Abu Hamad, Ph.D. Student, Babes-Bolyai University; research area: early childhood education. E-mail: ebtsam_1@walla.co.il.

The inclusion of children with developmental gaps in kindergartens is of paramount importance as it upholds the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and social integration (DEC/NAEYC, 2009). It recognizes that every child has the right to receive an education tailored to their needs, regardless of their unique abilities or challenges. By providing inclusive education from the early years, we set the foundation for a more inclusive and compassionate society (Ahsan et al., 2012).

1.2 Purpose of the Essay

This essay aims to explore the inclusion of children with developmental gaps in kindergartens, with a specific focus on the context of Israel. We will examine the principles and policies of inclusive education in Israel and delve into the legal framework and regulations that support the inclusion of children with developmental gaps in kindergartens. Furthermore, we will explore the benefits of inclusion for both children with developmental gaps and their typically developing peers. By analyzing empirical evidence and studies, we aim to shed light on the positive impact of inclusion on the overall development, academic achievement, and social-emotional well-being of all children.

Additionally, we will investigate the concept of inclusive education in Israeli kindergartens using a structured approach similar to the one proposed by Hammond & Ingalls (2003). We will address the challenges faced by kindergartens in implementing inclusive practices. Strategies to overcome these challenges and emphasize the crucial role of parental and community involvement in supporting inclusive education have been discussed by Malmskog & McDonnell (1999).

Through this comprehensive exploration, we aim to contribute to the understanding of inclusive education and provide insights and recommendations for promoting the inclusion of children with developmental gaps in kindergartens, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational environment in Israel.

2. Understanding Developmental Gaps

2.1 Definition and Types of Developmental Gaps

Developmental gaps encompass a spectrum of variations in cognitive, physical, emotional, or social development that children may experience in comparison to their peers (Lerner et al., 2003). These disparities can manifest in different forms, including learning disabilities, speech delays, motor skill impairments, or behavioral challenges.

Understanding the various types of developmental gaps is crucial for effective inclusion in kindergartens (Odom & Diamond, 1998).

Learning disabilities embody a range of distinct challenges that hinder the acquisition and effective application of academic skills. These difficulties are not related to intellectual capacity but rather to the brain's information processing. Among the various learning disabilities, dyslexia stand out for its connection to reading difficulties, dyscalculia for its struggles with mathematical concepts, and dysgraphia for problems in writing. Each of these conditions significantly affects a specific realm of learning, underscoring the intricacy of the issue (Odom et al., 2011).

Speech and Language Delays involve difficulties in articulation, fluency, or language development. Some children may struggle with pronouncing sounds, forming sentences, or comprehending spoken language (Grace et al., 2008). Similarly, motor skill impairments refer to challenges in fine or gross motor skills, which can affect a child's coordination, balance, or ability to manipulate objects. These difficulties may impact a child's ability to

write, draw, or participate in physical activities (Bredkamp & Copple, 1997).

In addition to these challenges, behavioral and emotional challenges encompass a broad range of difficulties such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), anxiety disorders, or social-emotional regulation issues. These challenges can affect a child's social interactions, emotional well-being, and behavior in educational settings (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

2.2 Challenges Faced by Children with Developmental Gaps

Children grappling with developmental gaps routinely encounter a myriad of challenges within educational environments, including kindergartens. These hurdles can significantly impact their learning, social interactions, and overall well-being (Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005). Some of the developmental gaps refer to academic challenges. In this case developmental gaps may result in difficulties in acquiring and performing academic skills. These challenges can affect a child's ability to keep up with the curriculum and meet grade-level expectations (Main & Hammond, 2008).

Moreover, these developmental gaps can also contribute to instances of social exclusion or isolation from their peers. This isolation stems from variations in abilities or behaviors and can lead to feelings of isolation, diminished self-esteem, and a deficiency of essential social support (Guo et al., 2011). Notably, children with

Developmental gaps are often at an elevated risk of being subjected to bullying due to their vulnerabilities or differences. This mistreatment can further erode their social-emotional well-being and disrupt their educational journey (Brown et al., 1996).

The absence of personalized support exacerbates these challenges. When children with developmental gaps lack proper accommodations and assistance, their access to and full engagement within the educational environment becomes compromised. This dearth of tailored support functions as a barrier to their advancement and stifles their comprehensive development (Bruder, 2000). Recognizing and grappling with these challenges are integral to implementing efficacious strategies and interventions aimed at promoting the inclusion of children with developmental gaps in kindergartens (Brown et al., 1999).

3. Inclusive Education in Israel

3.1 Principles and Policies of Inclusive Education

In Israel, the bedrock of inclusive education rests upon a set of principles intent on furnishing equal educational opportunities for all children, including those with developmental gaps (DEC/NAEYC, 2009). These principles underscore the significance of diversity, equality, and social integration within the educational framework. Central to these principles is the belief that each child merits an education attuned to their individual needs, regardless of their capabilities or challenges.

The Israeli Ministry of Education has laid out comprehensive policies and guidelines designed to foster inclusive practices within kindergartens. These policies underline the creation of an inclusive milieu that nurtures the involvement and participation of all children (Niemeyer & Proctor, 2002). They advocate for the adoption of teaching methodologies and strategies that cater to the varied needs of children with developmental gaps, ensuring their access to high-quality education.

3.2 Legal Framework and Regulations

The incorporation of children with developmental gaps into kindergartens finds solid grounding within

Israel's legal framework. Numerous laws and regulations uphold the rights of these children and champion their inclusion within the educational spectrum.

Several of these laws form the cornerstone of inclusive education in Israel. They acknowledge the entitlement of children with special needs, including those with developmental gaps, to an education aligned with their unique requisites. These laws mandate the provisioning of pertinent support services and adaptations to facilitate their educational access and accomplishment.

Many of these legal statutes also curtail discrimination based on disability, mandating that educational institutions provide reasonable accommodations and support to students with developmental gaps. To ensure effective implementation, the Ministry of Education has established explicit regulations and guidelines. These regulatory stipulations delineate the responsibilities of schools and educators in establishing inclusive environments and extending fitting support to children with developmental gaps (Florian, 2008).

3.3 Examples of Inclusive Practices in Israeli Kindergartens

Throughout Israel, there exists a multitude of instances where kindergartens have effectively integrated inclusive practices. These educational institutions stand as beacons of inclusive education, exemplifying inventive methods and strategies that cater to the diverse needs of all children (Dan, 2019). For instance, a remarkable illustration involves an assessment tool comprised of eleven elements that spotlight essential inclusive classroom practices. These encompass the adaptation of space and materials, adult interactions, and guidance, as well as the customization of group activities, among other factors. Notably, this instrument encompasses qualitative measures, including descriptions of kindergarten teachers' behaviors (Dan, 2019).

Moreover, several kindergartens have embraced a collaborative team approach, where educators, therapists, and support staff work together to design and implement individualized education plans for children with developmental gaps. This collaborative approach ensures a coordinated and holistic support system that addresses the unique requirements of each child (DEC/NAEYC, 2009).

Certain kindergartens have also made strides in cultivating inclusive learning environments through alterations in the physical space. They have seamlessly incorporated sensory-friendly features, assistive technology, and accessible materials to promote the active participation of children with developmental gaps (Niemeyer & Proctor, 2002).

Additionally, some kindergartens have implemented inclusive curricula that emphasize play-based learning, peer interactions, and project-based activities. These curricula not only foster academic development but also encourage social skills, collaboration, and empathy among all children (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000).

3.4 Examples of Successful Collaborations in Israel

Within Israel, successful collaborations have emerged as potent drivers for promoting inclusive education in kindergartens, thereby enriching the educational landscape:

Parent Support Networks play a pivotal role in this effort. Parent-led support networks, which encompass parent associations and support groups, have arisen to offer guidance, resources, and emotional assistance to families with children facing developmental gaps (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). These networks not only provide parents with vital information but also encourage collaboration, advocacy, and the exchange of knowledge among parents, creating a robust and cohesive support system.

Furthermore, Community Integration Programs have been established through partnerships between kindergartens and local community organizations. These initiatives work towards seamlessly integrating children

with developmental gaps into various community activities, such as cultural events, sports programs, and community service endeavors (Niemeyer & Proctor, 2002). By engaging in such activities, children encounter social inclusion, cultivating a sense of belonging within the broader community.

In addition, Teacher-Parent Workshops organized by educational institutions across Israel serve as platforms to augment the comprehension of developmental gaps. These workshops and training sessions are designed to equip both parents and teachers with strategies for fostering inclusive practices (DEC/NAEYC, 2009). By facilitating these workshops, institutions nurture collaboration between parents and teachers, foster mutual understanding, and stimulate the fruitful exchange of ideas, thereby fortifying support for children's development within an inclusive framework.

4. Benefits of Inclusion

4.1 Positive Impact on Children with Developmental Gaps

Inclusive education in kindergartens has yielded noteworthy positive impacts on children with developmental gaps (Florian, 2008). Through the provision of an inclusive environment that esteems diversity and fosters equitable opportunities, these children reap a multitude of advantages. Inclusive education allows children with developmental gaps to access the general curriculum and receive targeted support tailored to their individual needs. Research has shown that inclusive practices contribute to improved academic outcomes, including enhanced language development, improved literacy, and numeracy skills, and increased overall academic achievement (Brown et al., 1999).

Inclusive kindergartens also provide opportunities for children with developmental gaps to interact and build relationships with their typically developing peers (Bowman, 1986). This social inclusion fosters a sense of belonging, acceptance, and positive self-esteem. Additionally, inclusive environments promote the development of social skills, communication abilities, increased self-advocacy, independence and emotional regulation, leading to improved social and emotional well-being (Malmskog & McDonnell, 1999).

4.2 Benefits for the Overall Development of All Children

Inclusive education within kindergartens yields advantages that extend not only to children with developmental gaps but also encompass their typically developing peers (Odom et al., 2011).

Inclusive classrooms create a setting for typically developing children to interact with and comprehend their peers with developmental gaps, fostering heightened empathy and an enhanced capability for acceptance (Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005). These interactions nurture empathy, tolerance, and an embracement of individual disparities. This augmented understanding of diversity contributes to the cultivation of inclusive attitudes and behaviors that resonate beyond the confines of the classroom (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003).

Research underscores that inclusive classrooms yield academic benefits for typically developing children (Bredkamp & Copple, 1997). Collaborative learning environments, where children of varying abilities collaborate, encourage peer tutoring and cooperative problem-solving. This collaborative approach not only bolsters academic performance but also hones critical thinking skills and spurs creativity among all children (Grace et al., 2008).

Moreover, inclusive education equips children for thriving within a diverse society (Brown et al., 1996). By engaging with peers of differing abilities and backgrounds, typically developing children cultivate fundamental life competencies such as adaptability, flexibility, and a reverence for diversity. These proficiencies are pivotal in nurturing social unity and fostering the establishment of inclusive communities in the times to come (Main &

Hammond, 2008).

5. Challenges and Strategies

5.1 Implementation Challenges in Kindergartens

The implementation of inclusive education in kindergartens can pose various challenges that necessitate resolution for the seamless inclusion of children with developmental gaps (Guo et al., 2011). Nonetheless, resource limitations loom over kindergartens, encompassing concerns of funding scarcity, the availability of specialized personnel, and the provision of assistive technology. These constraints can impede the execution of inclusive practices and hinder the provisioning of essential support for children with developmental gaps (Malmskog & McDonnell, 1999).

Certain kindergartens may grapple with physical barriers that constrain access for children confronting mobility challenges or sensory sensitivities. This highlights the imperative of shaping an environment that is truly inclusive and accessible for all children (Brown et al., 1999). Furthermore, the presence of negative attitudes, misconceptions, and a general unawareness surrounding developmental gaps can further amplify hurdles in achieving inclusion. Consequently, addressing these social attitudes and heightening awareness among educators, families, and the broader community becomes imperative in fostering a genuinely inclusive environment (Odom & Diamond, 1998).

Transitioning to the specific challenges faced by Arab kindergartens in Israel, it's essential to consider the intersection of cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic factors. These factors might lead to unique obstacles in implementing inclusive practices. For example, language barriers could hinder effective communication between educators and support staff (Lawal, 2021), thereby impacting the provision of tailored support. Additionally, cultural norms and attitudes toward disabilities might shape perceptions of inclusion, potentially causing misunderstandings and resistance to adopt inclusive approaches (Maftei, & Ghergut, 2021).

6. Parent and Community Involvement

6.1 Importance of Parental and Community Involvement

Parental and community engagement emerges as a pivotal force in advancing inclusive education within Israeli kindergartens. When parents and community members actively participate in the educational process, it engenders a collaborative and supportive milieu that reaps benefits for all children, including those with developmental gaps (Malmskog & McDonnell, 1999).

Empowering Parents: Involving parents in their child's education empowers them to become advocates and partners in the inclusive journey (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003). By sharing information, providing resources, and involving parents in decision-making processes, their knowledge and understanding of developmental gaps increase, enabling them to better support their child's needs (Dan, 2019).

Building Trust and Collaboration: Parental involvement fosters trust and collaboration between families and educators (Florian, 2008). This collaboration ensures that the child's unique needs are understood and met both at home and in the kindergarten setting (Niemeyer & Proctor, 2002).

Community Support: Engaging the wider community in the inclusion efforts helps create a sense of belonging and acceptance for children with developmental gaps (Odom et al., 2011). Community members,

including local organizations, businesses, and volunteers, can contribute resources, expertise, and support networks that enrich the inclusive environment of kindergartens (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

6.2 Collaborations for Creating Inclusive Environments

Collaboration between parents, educators, and the community emerges as an imperative for sculpting inclusive environments within kindergartens. Diverse collaborative endeavors synergize to elevate the triumph of inclusion (Grace et al., 2008).

Parent-Educator Partnerships: Building strong partnerships between parents and educators involves regular communication, sharing of information, and collaboration in decision-making processes (Bruder, 2000). This collaboration ensures that the child's unique needs are understood and met both at home and in the kindergarten setting (Center et al., 1985).

School-Community Partnerships: Collaborating with community organizations, such as disability support groups, healthcare providers, and cultural institutions, strengthens the inclusive environment of kindergartens (Bowman, 1986). These partnerships offer additional resources, expertise, and opportunities for inclusive activities, further enriching the educational experience for all children (DEC/NAEYC, 2009).

Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Effective inclusion requires interdisciplinary collaboration among educators, therapists, and support staff (Florian, 2008). By sharing their expertise and working together, these professionals can develop comprehensive support plans, implement individualized interventions, and provide holistic care for children with developmental gaps (Dan, 2019).

7. Methodology

7.1 Research Design

Quantitative research methods (questionnaires for kindergarteners) and qualitative research methods (focus groups) were used. Below is a description of the quantitative and qualitative research tools used:

7.2 Quantitative Tools

Internet self-filling questionnaires for pre-compulsory and compulsory kindergartens: the questionnaires were sent via a link to email addresses and phone numbers. The links were forwarded to 213 kindergarteners. Of these, 146 kindergarten managers filled out the questionnaire (69% response rate).

7.3 Qualitative Tools

Protocols for the focus group with the kindergartners, assistants and parents: six focus groups were held, for the kindergarteners, the assistants and the parents. All groups were held online on Zoom. Between 10-16 participants participated in each of the groups.

7.4 Data Collection

7.4.1 The Data Analysis Method

Quantitative analysis: The analysis of the findings from the questionnaires was carried out using SPSS software, version 24.

Qualitative analysis: the focus groups that took place with the kindergarteners, assistants and parents were recorded, transcribed, analyzed and processed using the qualitative thematic analysis approach (Shakdi, 2011).

Data gathered from the various sources were triangulated, ensuring a holistic understanding of the topic. Key

themes were identified, which helped structure the findings and subsequent discussions.

7.5 Findings

In this chapter I will refer to the main findings that emerge from the research. The findings will relate to the attitudes and perceptions of the kindergarteners and parents regarding inclusion in kindergartens, the professional development and skills of the kindergarten staff (the kindergarten teacher and the assistant), the challenges in the work of the kindergarten manager and the sources of assistance and support, and the relationship between the kindergarten staff and parents.

7.5.1 The Attitudes and Perceptions of Kindergarten Teachers and Parents Regarding Inclusion in Kindergartens

(1) Kindergarten Teachers' Positions and Perceptions Regarding Inclusion in Kindergartens

To promote successful inclusion in kindergartens, diverse knowledge, skills, and practices are needed. Successful implementation of inclusive practices depends on the attitudes and perceptions of kindergarteners regarding children with gaps and their willingness to work with them in kindergarten. As mentioned, most kindergartens in the world support the idea of integration and inclusion. Their concerns regarding the implementation of inclusion and integration stem from the lack of knowledge and skills regarding inclusive practices, the lack of appropriate professional preparation, and the lack of sufficient support. The data shows that even among the kindergarteners in the study there is a difference between their value positions towards inclusion and between their positions related to the implementation of inclusion.

Kindergarteners reported positive value attitudes towards inclusion, but at the same time, they expressed concerns and noted that there are various challenges in the implementation of inclusion. The lack of actual experience in inclusion, the lack of training in the subject of inclusion, the lack of resources available to the kindergarten teacher.

7.5.2 The Professional Development and Skills of the Kindergarten Staff (Kindergarten Teachers and Assistants)

Professional development in the field of inclusion can provide kindergarteners with a lot of knowledge and work practices so that they feel confident working with children with disabilities and form positive attitudes and perceptions towards inclusion. The kindergarteners were asked if they received training on inclusion and integration as part of their professional development. 59% of the roofers reported that they had not received training.

One of the main issues that emerged from the focus groups with the kindergarteners was their desire and need for professional development, training, and skills relevant to the implementation of inclusion in kindergarten.

"We're just reinventing ourselves. It's a lot of trial and error. And I think if we have the professional tools, professionals to guide us, I think first of all it will be more professional and it will also help the inclusion of all the children because it also takes lots and lots of energy." (Kindergarten Teacher).

From the focus group held with the assistants, an experience of burden and pressure emerged following the inclusion of children with disabilities in kindergarten. According to the assistants, there are two main reasons for feeling overwhelmed and stressed. The first reason, the large number of children in the kindergarten (30 to 35) and the second reason, the increased attention that a child with a disability requires from the staff, a situation that in most cases comes at the expense of all the children in the kindergarten.

An assistant shared, "It was very difficult for me. I could not do anything for the other children because I had

no help. Until I called the municipality in tears and asked for help, I didn't know what was going on."

The assistants raised another difficulty in dealing with the parents who refuse to acknowledge their child's difficulty, which creates a challenge in communication between the staff and those parents.

The assistants pointed to a lack of professional training in the field of special education intended for them.

7.5.3 The Relationship Between the Kindergarten Staff and the Parents

The relationship between the kindergarten staff and the children's parents has a significant effect on their cooperation as well as on the commitment of the parents to care for their children. The kindergarten teachers reported a positive relationship with the parents, 98% of the kindergarten teachers reported that the parents are informed about the child's condition and functioning, 95% of the kindergarten teachers reported that the parents are in contact with her. A lower rate of kindergarteners 62% reported that the parents are partners in building a work plan for their child.

From the focus group held with the kindergarteners, they noted that there is a need to raise awareness of the issue of inclusion among all parents in the kindergarten (explain to them about the issue, define what is expected of them as parents) so that they know how to explain to their children and help the process of inclusion. One kindergarten teacher shared "We must inform the parents of all the children in the kindergarten that there is a child with a disability, that they explain to their children, know the different concepts (kindergarten teacher). The kindergarten teachers emphasized the importance that parents should be "vigilant" in order to to identify their child at an early age and give him a support system. The parents should recognize the problem and mobilize to treat and promote the child.

In the focus group held with the parents, they expressed their views regarding their relationship with the kindergarten teacher. According to them, the staff should know how to have a dialogue with the parents, accept criticism from them, and express their difficulties with the parents.

"Communication between the parents and the staff is very important. The trust that, in my view, must be created between the educational staff and the parents. The cooperation, how safe the parents feel to share and ask for and receive help." (parent)

It also emerged from the focus group that the parents are interested in the possibility of accompaniment and advice from the kindergarten teacher who is with the children most of the day. Also, there were parents who believed that it was important to have continuous contact with all the parents in the kindergarten so that the inclusion would work well and that the climate in the kindergarten would be optimal.

"What's most important to me in this kindergarten is that the kindergarten teacher treats every child. If it's on the phone with the parents, she initiates the conversation herself, she calls and asks. She updates everything...she regularly talks to all the parents" (parent)

7.6 Limitations

Despite striving for a comprehensive perspective, the study primarily focuses on kindergartens and does not extensively explore higher age groups. Moreover, the utilization of observational methods introduces a certain level of subjectivity. The study's findings could also be influenced by the limited number of cases involving developmental gaps, potentially affecting the generalizability of the results. In addition, the response rate from parents was not universal, which could introduce a response bias. Furthermore, challenges were encountered in organizing meetings, potentially impacting the depth and quality of the data collected.

8. Conclusions

8.1 Summary of Key Points

Throughout this essay, our exploration has centered on the integration of children with developmental gaps into Israeli kindergartens. We have navigated through the principles and policies underpinning inclusive education in Israel, the legal infrastructure bolstering inclusion, and instances of triumph in implementing inclusive practices within kindergartens. Furthermore, we have illuminated the dividends of inclusion for children with developmental gaps and their typically developing counterparts. The journey also encompassed the hurdles encountered during the pursuit of inclusive education and the strategic pathways to surmount these challenges. Lastly, we have underscored the pivotal roles of parental and community participation, showcasing successful collaborative endeavors within Israel.

8.2 Importance of Inclusion in Israeli Kindergartens

The integration of children with developmental gaps into Israeli kindergartens holds profound significance. It serves as the vanguard of equality, an antidote to discrimination, and a vehicle for social cohesion. Inclusive education propels children with developmental gaps towards academic progress, nurtures their emotional well-being, and fosters their autonomy. Simultaneously, it grooms typically developing children with empathy, fortifies their academic prowess, and equips them to navigate a diverse world.

8.3 Recommendations for Further Advancements

8.3.1 Training Needs for Educators and Support Staff

To effectively promote inclusion in kindergartens, educators and support staff require specialized training and ongoing professional development (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003).

Inclusive Pedagogy: Educators need training in inclusive pedagogy, which includes strategies for differentiating instruction, adapting materials, and creating inclusive learning environments (Bowman, 1986). This training equips them with the knowledge and skills to address the diverse needs of children with developmental gaps (DEC/NAEYC, 2009).

Collaboration and Teamwork: Building effective partnerships among educators, support staff, therapists, and families is essential for implementing inclusive practices (Florian, 2008). Training programs should emphasize the importance of collaboration and teamwork to support the holistic development of children with developmental gaps (Niemeyer & Proctor, 2002).

Understanding Developmental Gaps: Educators should receive training on various developmental gaps, their characteristics, and the appropriate instructional approaches and interventions (Dan, 2019). This knowledge enhances their ability to meet the unique needs of children with different developmental gaps (Center et al., 1985).

8.3.2 Strategies for Promoting Inclusion in Israeli Kindergartens

To promote triumphant inclusion within Israeli kindergartens, several strategic pathways are recommended:

Individualized Support: Provide individualized support plans for children with developmental gaps, tailored to their specific needs and strengths (Bredkamp & Copple, 1997). This may involve the use of specialized interventions, assistive technology, and accommodations to ensure their active participation in all aspects of kindergarten life (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

Collaborative Partnerships: Foster collaboration and partnerships among educators, families, therapists, and community organizations (Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005). By working together, a coordinated support network

can be created to meet the diverse needs of children with developmental gaps and ensure continuity of support across different settings (Grace et al., 2008).

Professional Learning Communities: Establish professional learning communities within kindergartens and across schools to facilitate knowledge sharing, collaboration, and ongoing professional development related to inclusive education (Main & Hammond, 2008). These communities provide opportunities for educators to learn from one another and continuously improve their inclusive practices (Bruder, 2000).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Apply the principles of UDL, which involves designing learning experiences that are accessible and beneficial for all children, including those with developmental gaps (DEC/NAEYC, 2009). This approach ensures that instructional materials, activities, and assessments are flexible and cater to diverse learning styles and needs (Bowman, 1986).

8.4 Future Directions and Conclusion

Looking ahead, it is imperative to sustain research and evaluation efforts to continuously advance inclusive practices in Israeli kindergartens. Ongoing research can provide insights into effective instructional approaches, interventions, and support strategies for children with developmental gaps. Evaluation and monitoring of inclusive programs can help ensure their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, policymakers should consider resource allocation and funding to support inclusive practices, while awareness campaigns can challenge stereotypes and reduce stigma associated with developmental gaps.

Parental and community involvement remains essential in promoting inclusive education. Empowering parents, building trust and collaboration, and engaging the wider community create a supportive environment for all children. Collaborative efforts between parents, educators, and the community contribute to creating inclusive environments in kindergartens and fostering successful inclusion.

In conclusion, the inclusion of children with developmental gaps in Israeli kindergartens is crucial for creating an equitable and inclusive educational system. By addressing challenges, implementing effective strategies, and emphasizing parental and community involvement, we can create kindergartens where every child can thrive and reach their full potential. Through collective efforts, ongoing research, evaluation, resource allocation, and societal awareness, we can foster a society that embraces diversity, empowers all children, and upholds the principles of equality and inclusivity.

References

Dan A. (2019). "The inclusion of children with special needs in early childhood: Challenges and dilemmas of kindergarten teachers", *Creative Education*, Vol. 10, No. 5, pp. 1017-1029, doi: 10.4236/ce.2019.105075.

Ahsan M. T., Sharma U. and Deppeler J. M. (2012). "Exploring pre-service teachers' perceived teaching-efficacy, attitudes and concerns about inclusive education in Bangladesh", *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, Vol. 8, pp. 1-20.

Avramidis E., Bayliss P. and Burden R. (2000). "A Survey into mainstream teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the ordinary school in one local education authority", *Educational Psychology*, Vol. 20, pp. 191-211, doi: 10.1080/713663717.

Bandura A. (1977). "Self-Efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change", *Psychological Review*, Vol. 84, pp. 191-215, doi: 10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191

Bowman I. (1986). "Teacher training and the integration of handicapped pupils: Some findings from a fourteen nation UNESCO study", *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, Vol. 1, pp. 29-38, doi: 10.1080/0885625860010105.

Bredkamp S. and Copple C. (1997). *Developmentally Appropriate Practices*, Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Brown W. H., Horn E. M., Heiser J. G. and Odom S. L. (1996). "Project BLEND: An inclusive model of early intervention services", *Journal of Early Intervention*, Vol. 20, pp. 364-375, doi: 10.1177/105381519602000409.

Brown W. H., Odom S. L., Li S. and Zercher C. (1999). "Ecobehavioral assessment in early childhood programs: A portrait of preschool inclusion", *The Journal of Special Education*, Vol. 33, pp. 138-153, doi: 10.1177/002246699903300302.

Bruder M. B. (2000). "Family-centered early intervention: Clarifying our values for the new millennium", *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, Vol. 20, pp. 105-115, doi: 10.1177/027112140002000206.

Center Y., Ward J., Parmenter T. and Nash R. (1985). "Principals' attitudes toward the integration of disabled children into regular schools", *The Exceptional Child*, Vol. 32, pp. 149-161, doi: 10.1080/0156655850320303.

DEC/NAEYC Division for Early Childhood/National Association for the Education for Young Children (2009). "Early childhood inclusion: A joint position statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)", Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute.

Florian L. (2008). "Inclusion: Special or inclusive education — Future trends", *British Journal of Special Education*, Vol. 35, pp. 202-208, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8578.2008.00402.x.

Gibson S. and Dembo M. H. (1984). "Teacher efficacy: A construct validation", *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 76, pp. 569-582, doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.76.4.569.

Grace R., Llewellyn G., Wedgwood N., Fenech M. and McConnell D. (2008). "Far from Ideal: Everyday experiences of mothers and early childhood professionals negotiating an inclusive early childhood experience in the Australian context", *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, Vol. 28, pp. 18-30, doi: 10.1177/0271121407313525.

Guo Y., Justice L. M., Sawyer B. and Tompkins V. (2011). "Exploring factors related to preschool teachers' self-efficacy", *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 27, pp. 961-968, doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2011.03.008.

Hammond H. and Ingalls L. (2003). "Teachers' attitudes toward inclusion: Survey results from elementary school teachers in three southwestern rural school districts", *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, Vol. 22, pp. 24-30, doi: 10.1177/875687050302200204.

Lawal A. (2021). "How teachers can communicate effectively with parents who speak a different language", *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, Vol. 4, No. 9, pp. 166-178.

Leatherman J. M. and Niemeyer J. A. (2005). "Teachers' attitudes toward inclusion: Factors influencing classroom practice", *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, Vol. 26, pp. 23-36, doi: 10.1080/10901020590918979.

Lerner J. W., Lowenthal B. and Egan R. W. (2003). *Preschool Children with Special Needs: Children at Risk and Children with Disabilities*, Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Main S. and Hammond L. (2008). "Best practice or most practiced? Pre-service teachers' beliefs about effective behaviour management strategies and reported self-efficacy", *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 33, pp. 28-39, doi: 10.14221/ajte.2008v33n4.3

Malmskog S. and McDonnell A. P. (1999). "Teacher-mediated facilitation of engagement by children with developmental delays in inclusive preschools", *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, Vol. 19, pp. 203-216, doi: 10.1177/027112149901900401.

Niemeyer J. A. and Proctor R. (2002). "The influence of experience on student teachers' beliefs about inclusion", *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, Vol. 23, pp. 49-57, doi: 10.1080/1090102020230109.

Odom S. L. and Diamond K. A. (1998). "Inclusion of young children with special needs in early childhood education: The research base", *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, Vol. 13, pp. 3-25, doi: 10.1016/S0885-2006(99)80023-4.

Odom S. L., Buysse V. and Soukakou E. (2011). "Inclusion for Young Children with Disabilities: A Quarter Century of Research Perspectives", Journal of Early Intervention, Vol. 33, No. 4, doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/1053815111430.

Yahav R. (2020). "Interdisciplinary identification of preschooler developmental status, interventions and monitoring in the preschool system in Israel", *Interventions and Monitoring in the Preschool System in Israel*, November 21.