

“Lifelong Learning Foundations: A Systematic Review of Early Education with Integration of the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education”

Ivy J. Lumanag, Gladys S. Escarlos

Department of Education, Central Mindanao University/Lumbo Integrated School, Valencia City,
Bukidnon, Philippines

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100400464>

Received: 02 May 2026; Accepted: 07 May 2026; Published: 14 May 2026

ABSTRACT

This systematic review focuses on lifelong learning, which means continuously gaining knowledge and skills throughout life, starting from early childhood. The study examines how early education, especially kindergarten, plays an important role in developing the basic skills needed for lifelong learning. It also looks at the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education in the Philippines, which aims to provide all children with quality, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate education. The review found that children who receive proper kindergarten education are better prepared for future schooling and are more likely to become successful lifelong learners. However, challenges such as limited resources, lack of teacher training, and unequal access to education still affect the full implementation of the policy. Overall, the study shows that strong early education programs and effective policies are important in building a solid foundation for lifelong learning and helping individuals succeed in the long term.

BRIEF BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Lifelong learning is defined as the continuous, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge across the lifespan. It begins in early childhood, where foundational cognitive, social, and emotional skills are developed. Early education plays a crucial role in shaping an individual’s capacity for future learning and adaptability.

In the Philippines, the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 20, s. 2008) institutionalizes kindergarten as a vital stage in basic education. It emphasizes holistic development, learner-centered approaches, and readiness for lifelong learning. This policy aligns with global perspectives that early childhood education is the foundation for continuous learning.

Despite increasing recognition of lifelong learning, there is limited synthesis linking early childhood education policies to long-term learning outcomes. This systematic review aims to examine how lifelong learning is supported by early education frameworks, including the implementation of the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a systematic review research design to examine existing literature on lifelong learning, with particular emphasis on early childhood education and the integration of the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 20, s. 2008). A systematic review approach was employed to ensure a comprehensive, structured, and transparent process in identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant studies. The review followed the principles of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) to enhance the rigor and reliability of the findings.

A comprehensive search of related literature was conducted across several academic databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, and PubMed. The search process used combinations of keywords such as “lifelong

learning,” “early childhood education,” “kindergarten education,” “Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education,” “DepEd kindergarten policy,” and “continuous learning.” Boolean operators such as AND and OR were applied to refine and narrow down the search results. The search focused on studies published between 2010 and 2025 to ensure relevance and timeliness of the data.

To maintain the quality and relevance of the review, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. Studies included were peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and official reports written in English that focused on lifelong learning, early childhood education, or educational policy frameworks, particularly within the Philippine context. Both empirical and review studies were considered. Excluded from the review were non-academic sources such as blogs, opinion articles, duplicate studies, and research with unclear or incomplete methodologies.

The selection of studies followed the PRISMA process, which involved four key stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Initially, all potential studies were collected through database searches. Titles and abstracts were then screened to remove irrelevant or duplicate entries. Full-text articles were subsequently assessed based on the inclusion criteria, and only those that met the requirements were included in the final sample for analysis.

A standardized data extraction process was employed to ensure consistency across the selected studies. Relevant information such as the author, year of publication, research design, sample characteristics, key findings, and relevance to lifelong learning and early childhood education was collected. The extracted data were organized and compared to identify patterns and trends.

The analysis of the data was conducted using a thematic approach, where studies were grouped according to recurring themes. These included the role of early childhood education as a foundation for lifelong learning, the benefits of continuous learning, the influence of educational policies, barriers to learning, and the role of technology. Particular attention was given to how the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education supports holistic child development and its alignment with lifelong learning principles.

To further strengthen the study, a policy analysis component was integrated, examining the objectives, guidelines, and implementation strategies of the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education. This allowed for a deeper understanding of how national policy frameworks contribute to the development of lifelong learning from the earliest stages of education. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study by ensuring proper citation of all sources and adherence to academic integrity, as the research relied solely on secondary data from published materials.

Objectives

This systematic review aims to:

1. Examine the concept of lifelong learning as presented in existing literature, particularly its relevance to early childhood education.
2. Identify the role of kindergarten education in establishing the foundational skills necessary for lifelong learning, including cognitive, social, and emotional development.
3. Analyze the key provisions of the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 20, s. 2008) and its intended outcomes for early learners.
4. Determine how the Omnibus Policy supports lifelong learning principles, such as learner-centered education, inclusivity, and holistic development.
5. Synthesize empirical findings on the benefits of early childhood education in promoting long-term academic success and continuous learning.
6. Identify common barriers and challenges affecting the implementation of kindergarten education and their implications for lifelong learning.
7. Evaluate the alignment between educational policy and actual practice, particularly in the Philippine context.

RESULTS

The systematic review revealed several significant findings regarding the role of lifelong learning, particularly its foundation in early childhood education and its alignment with the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education. Across the selected studies, a consistent pattern emerged highlighting that lifelong learning begins in early childhood, where foundational cognitive, social, and emotional skills are first developed. Research indicates that children exposed to structured and developmentally appropriate kindergarten programs demonstrate improved readiness for formal schooling, stronger literacy and numeracy skills, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. These competencies are essential in fostering an individual's capacity for continuous learning throughout life.

In relation to policy, the findings show that the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education plays a crucial role in institutionalizing early learning as a key stage in the educational system in the Philippines. The policy emphasizes holistic child development, learner-centered approaches, and inclusive education, all of which align closely with the principles of lifelong learning. Studies included in the review suggest that when such policies are effectively implemented, they contribute significantly to reducing learning gaps, promoting equal opportunities, and preparing young learners for long-term academic and personal success. The policy's focus on play-based and experiential learning further supports the development of curiosity and intrinsic motivation, which are critical traits for lifelong learners.

Furthermore, the review identified that lifelong learning yields multiple long-term benefits, including improved employability, adaptability to technological changes, and increased social participation. Individuals who develop strong learning habits early in life are more likely to engage in continuous education and skills development in adulthood. This reinforces the importance of investing in early childhood education policies such as the Omnibus Policy, as they serve as the foundation for these long-term outcomes.

However, the findings also pointed to several barriers and challenges affecting the effective implementation of lifelong learning principles. These include limited resources in public kindergarten classrooms, insufficient teacher training in early childhood education, and disparities in access to quality education, especially in rural and underserved areas. While the policy provides a strong framework, inconsistencies in implementation may hinder its full impact. Additionally, some studies noted that parental involvement and community support play a vital role in reinforcing early learning, yet these factors are not always consistently present.

Another important finding is the growing role of technology in supporting lifelong learning, even at the early education level. Digital tools and online learning platforms have been shown to enhance engagement and provide flexible learning opportunities. However, access to these technologies remains uneven, further contributing to educational inequality.

Overall, the results of this systematic review demonstrate that early childhood education, supported by strong policy frameworks such as the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education, is fundamental in establishing the foundation for lifelong learning. While the benefits are clear, the success of such initiatives depends largely on effective implementation, adequate resources, and continuous support for educators and learners alike.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic review underscore the critical role of early childhood education as the foundation of lifelong learning, confirming that learning is a continuous process that begins at the earliest stages of life. The results highlight that the development of essential skills such as curiosity, critical thinking, and social interaction during kindergarten significantly influences an individual's ability to engage in lifelong learning. This supports the broader view that early educational experiences are not isolated stages but are integral to shaping long-term academic trajectories and personal development. In this context, the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education emerges as a vital framework that aligns national educational practices with global lifelong learning principles by emphasizing holistic, learner-centered, and inclusive approaches.

The discussion further reveals that while the policy provides a strong structural foundation, its effectiveness depends largely on the quality of its implementation. The presence of disparities in resources, teacher preparedness, and access to quality kindergarten programs suggests that policy alone is insufficient without consistent and equitable execution. This gap between policy intention and practice highlights the need for continuous monitoring, capacity building, and investment in educational infrastructure. Moreover, the findings emphasize that teachers play a central role in translating policy into practice, as their ability to deliver developmentally appropriate and engaging instruction directly impacts learners' readiness for lifelong learning.

Another important insight from the results is the recognition of external factors such as family involvement, community support, and technological access in shaping lifelong learning outcomes. While the Omnibus Policy outlines institutional responsibilities, the discussion shows that learning is a shared responsibility that extends beyond the classroom. Parental engagement and supportive learning environments reinforce early learning experiences, thereby strengthening the continuity of learning across different stages of life. Additionally, the integration of technology presents both opportunities and challenges. While digital tools can enhance access and engagement, unequal access to technology may further widen educational gaps if not properly addressed.

Overall, the discussion affirms that the integration of early childhood education policies, such as the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education, with lifelong learning frameworks is essential in creating a sustainable and inclusive education system. However, for these benefits to be fully realized, there must be a strong alignment between policy, practice, and support systems. Addressing existing challenges and ensuring equitable access to quality early education will ultimately strengthen the foundation of lifelong learning and contribute to improved individual and societal outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review highlights the fundamental role of lifelong learning as a continuous process that begins in early childhood and extends throughout an individual's life. The findings confirm that early educational experiences, particularly at the kindergarten level, are crucial in shaping the cognitive, social, and emotional competencies necessary for sustained learning. The development of foundational skills such as curiosity, adaptability, and critical thinking during this stage significantly influences long-term academic success, employability, and active participation in society. As such, early childhood education is not merely a preparatory phase but a vital cornerstone of lifelong learning.

Within the Philippine context, the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 20, s. 2008) plays a critical role in institutionalizing quality early education and aligning national practices with global lifelong learning frameworks. The policy's emphasis on holistic child development, inclusive education, and learner-centered approaches strongly supports the cultivation of lifelong learning habits among young learners. By promoting developmentally appropriate and play-based learning experiences, the policy fosters intrinsic motivation and engagement key attributes that sustain continuous learning across the lifespan.

However, the review also reveals that the effectiveness of such policy frameworks depends largely on their implementation. Persistent challenges, including limited resources, disparities in access to quality education, insufficient teacher training, and unequal technological support, hinder the full realization of lifelong learning goals. These issues are particularly evident in underserved and rural areas, where educational inequities remain a significant concern. Consequently, while the policy provides a strong and comprehensive foundation, its intended outcomes can only be achieved through consistent, equitable, and well-supported execution.

Moreover, the findings emphasize that lifelong learning extends beyond formal education systems and requires the active involvement of families, communities, and broader societal structures. Parental engagement, supportive learning environments, and access to digital technologies all contribute to reinforcing early learning experiences and sustaining learning across different stages of life. The integration of these elements is essential in creating an inclusive and responsive education system that supports learners from early childhood through adulthood.

In conclusion, this systematic review affirms that lifelong learning is deeply rooted in early childhood education and significantly strengthened by effective policy frameworks such as the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten

Education. To maximize its impact, there is a need for continuous investment in educational resources, teacher development, and policy implementation strategies. Strengthening these areas will not only improve early childhood education but also ensure that individuals are equipped with the skills and mindset necessary for lifelong learning. Ultimately, fostering a strong foundation for lifelong learning contributes to individual growth, social equity, and national development, making it a critical priority for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders alike.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this systematic review, several key recommendations are proposed to strengthen the integration of lifelong learning and early childhood education, particularly in relation to the effective implementation of the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education. First, it is essential to enhance the quality and consistency of policy implementation across all regions. While the policy provides a strong framework, disparities in resources and access must be addressed by ensuring adequate funding, improved learning facilities, and equitable distribution of educational materials, especially in rural and underserved communities. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is also necessary to assess the effectiveness of the policy and ensure that its goals are being achieved consistently.

Second, the professional development of kindergarten teachers should be prioritized. Continuous training programs focused on early childhood education, child-centered pedagogy, and lifelong learning principles must be provided to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge. Teachers play a crucial role in shaping learners' foundational experiences; therefore, investing in their capacity building will significantly enhance the quality of early education and promote lifelong learning competencies among young learners.

Third, there is a need to increase support for inclusive and accessible learning environments. Educational programs should be designed to accommodate diverse learners, including those with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This includes the provision of appropriate learning materials, differentiated instruction, and supportive classroom practices that ensure all children have equal opportunities to develop foundational skills for lifelong learning.

Another important recommendation is to strengthen parental and community involvement in early childhood education. Lifelong learning does not occur solely within the classroom; it is reinforced through the home and community environment. Schools should establish programs that encourage parental participation, such as workshops, orientations, and collaborative learning activities. Engaging communities in educational initiatives can further support children's continuous development and foster a culture of learning beyond formal schooling.

Additionally, the integration of technology in early education should be expanded to support lifelong learning. Digital tools and platforms can enhance engagement, provide flexible learning opportunities, and prepare learners for the demands of a rapidly changing, technology-driven world. However, efforts must be made to address the digital divide by ensuring access to devices, internet connectivity, and teacher training in educational technology.

Finally, future research should continue to explore the long-term impacts of early childhood education policies on lifelong learning outcomes, particularly within the Philippine context. More empirical studies are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education and to identify best practices that can be replicated or scaled. By addressing these recommendations, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders can work collaboratively to strengthen the foundation of lifelong learning and create an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable education system.

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