هيئة ضمان جودة التعليم و التدريب
Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training

Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

Bahrain Montessori Centre (BMC)
Al Markh
Kingdom of Bahrain

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Table of Contents

The Vocational Review Unit **1**

Introduction **2**

Description of the provision 2

Scope of the review 2

Overall judgments **3**

Effectiveness of provision 3

Capacity to improve: 5

Summary of grades awarded 6

Main judgements and recommendations **7**

Strengths 7

Areas for improvement 8

Recommendations 8

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The Vocational Review Unit

The Vocational Review Unit (VRU) is part of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET), an independent body set up under Royal Decree No.32 of 2008 amended by Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the VRU is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the quality of vocational provision, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, establishing success measures, spreading best practice and offering policy advice to key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education.

Reviews are based on the VRU's *Review Framework*, and carried out on providers' premises by teams of carefully selected and highly trained reviewers. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the planning of the review, and to represent them during review team meetings. Reviewers examine a range of evidence before arriving at a series of judgements and awarding grades for the quality of the provision.

Review grades are awarded on a five-point scale:

Grade description	Interpretation
1: Outstanding	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all or nearly all aspects and is/are exemplary or exceptional in many.
2: Good	This describes provision or an outcome that is/are better than the basic level. Practice will be at least sound and there may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.
3: Satisfactory	This describes a basic level of adequacy. No major areas of weakness substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. Some features may be good.
4: Below satisfactory	This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strength in the provision.
5: Very weak	This describes situations where there are major weaknesses in all, or almost all, areas and where, as a result, learners are very poorly served.

Introduction

Description of the provision

The Bahrain Montessori Centre (BMC) is a part-time centre established in 1999 and is licensed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to offer teacher training courses for Early Years Education which are based on the Montessori philosophy and pedagogy. The centre offers the Foundation Certificate course and the Early Childhood Certificate course (ECC) and the International Diploma in Montessori Pedagogy. All courses are accredited by Montessori Centre International (MCI) in London, UK. Most students are self-sponsored with a few that are sponsored by their employers. Since October 2010, the centre has enrolled 14 students, all students are adult aged 19 and above.

BMC is run by a director, who is also the tutor, and employs two assistant teachers working on a volunteer basis. The centre operates from one location in Al Markh, Budaiya Road

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over three days by a team of four reviewers and one subject expert. During the review, reviewers observed teaching sessions, analysed data about the qualifications students achieve and the courses they complete, and observed classes for the student-teachers' at destination pre-schools, talked with the schools' tutor, assistant teachers and students.

This report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the Bahrain Montessori Centre should do to improve.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 1: Outstanding

The overall effectiveness of the Bahrain Montessori Centre is outstanding. The leadership and management are highly effective in meeting all aspects of the provision. All students benefit greatly from the expert teaching in the areas of the Montessori philosophy and pedagogy, and as a result they make excellent progress during the courses leading to achievement being outstanding. The centre provides access to well-equipped facilities that include a wide range of learning resources and apparatus. Students benefit from highly effective personal support and guidance on current and future employment opportunities. The highly specialised courses on offer are externally accredited by MCI and perfectly match students' and employers' needs.

All students achieve well above average results and develop extensive theoretical and practical Montessori-based philosophy, pedagogy and teaching skills. Eventually, all perform very effectively in the classes they teach at in their destination pre-schools. All students really enjoy their courses and are self-driven to achieve the qualification they are aiming for. The last group's pass-rate achievement was 100 per cent. The current group, who will sit for their final written examination during December 2011, are progressing well and have produced high quality course projects for the practical part of the examination. An effective initial assessment system is in place for all courses and outcomes are well recorded and used effectively by the tutor.

The centre delivers a well-structured and expert Montessori teaching approach on all courses. The very well qualified and experienced tutor and the two assistant teachers use a variety of highly effective teaching strategies and activities to engage and motivate students. The teachers use a range of attractive educational resources and materials which have a positive impact on learning and ensure all students make appropriate progress over time. This includes the effective utilisation of the Montessori apparatus and audio-visual teaching aids. All lessons are very well planned with clear and concise objectives that are shared with students. The tutor manages in-class activities very effectively and monitors progress critically. All teachers apply thorough and rigorous methods of evaluating students' class work and projects and provide them with constructive feedback on how well they are doing and how to improve further; for this purpose, an effective range of essays, quizzes, test and projects is used; all of these are checked and moderated by MCI.

BMC offers a range of highly specialized early years Montessori education courses that are accredited by MCI; courses are offered with proper progression. Students' and employers' are highly satisfied by the range of courses in offer. The centre ensures that all students are provided with course structure, objectives, schedule and outlines before they start. All teachers implement effective enrichment activities for the classes they teach; these include special field trips, regular emails' updates in the subject of early childhood education, key note speakers and participation on BMC's annual Montessori social gathering.

All students are very well supported during and after a course by BMC management and teachers. The tutor and the assistant teachers are cooperative, supportive, inculcate friendly relationships and provide counseling when needed. Students' have access to well-informed and systematic advice and guidance on course selection and, as required, on academic progression and employment opportunities. The centre offers additional, individual tuition to students having difficulties or not achieving well enough. A comprehensive and well-illustrated centre handbook is provided to students. BMC offers a very pleasant learning environment with a wide range of Montessori apparatus. The centre has appropriate health and safety measures in place although the swimming pool near the entrance of the classroom is lacking some specific safety aids.

BMC leadership and management are highly effective in meeting all aspects of students' and employers' needs. The outstanding quality of leadership and management practices impact positively on students' achievement yielding highly qualified and talented Montessori teachers. This is helped by offering courses in an inspiring learning environment using high quality, relevant resources. The management system to record, assess and monitor students' achievements and progress is highly effective, each individual student record being tracked closely by the tutor and their training lessons at their destination pre-school being observed three times. Management at BMC has a consistent approach to selection, training and monitoring highly qualified teachers and their teaching is assured through a highly effective lesson observation scheme. Although BMC management maintains close ties with local stakeholders it does not always seek their views in a systematic manner.

Capacity to improve:

Grade 2: Good

BMC has good capacity to improve the provision. The leadership and management maintained a high success rate for all students across all courses in 2009 and current students are progressing very well. Monitoring teachers' performance during classes is effectively done. Student-teachers' are well trained by the tutor on how to observe and assess children's progress. The centre is highly effective in meeting students' and employer's needs. However, the centre's strategic plan is insufficiently detailed. In addition to the range of specialised Montessori courses on offer, the centre recently added the Foundation Certificate course to cater for increasing demand by students, but these are not based on a formal market survey. Students' enrolment during the past three years has always reached the maximum allowable and most students progress through the levels at the centre. During the courses, all students are asked to fill out a written evaluation of BMC three times, the outcome of which is aggregated and analysed thoroughly by the management.

The centre maintains a useful set of manuals such as an operational manual and student handbook which are part of their internal quality assurance system. All course materials are of a high standard and supplied or authorised by MCI. The current human and physical resources for the part-time centre are sufficient and meet the requirements of the accreditation body. The self-evaluation form completed for the review is very comprehensive, informative and self-critical; the form identified precisely the areas that need to be improved.

Summary of grades awarded

Overall Judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	**Grade 1: Outstanding**
Capacity to Improve	Grade 2: Good
Review Findings	
How well do students achieve?	Grade 1: Outstanding
How effective is teaching?	Grade 1: Outstanding
How well do courses meet the needs of students and stakeholders?	Grade 1: Outstanding
How well are students guided and supported?	Grade 1: Outstanding
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade 1: Outstanding

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

- **Teachers are alert to students' learning needs, assess their practical skills closely and provide relevant feedback to challenge them to improve further**. The expert and highly qualified tutor, ably supported by the two assistant teachers, has a meticulous and highly effective approach to teaching which impacts positively on the students.
- **All students make excellent progress during the courses acquiring and developing theoretical and practical skills to a very high level and achieve the qualifications they aim for.** The outstanding quality of leadership and management practices impacts positively on the entire provision by offering a highly effective learning experience. This inspires all students to make excellent progress in their studies and to reach an outstanding level of achievement as well-qualified, trained Montessori teachers.
- **A highly qualified and expert tutor who very effectively uses a wide range of teaching strategies to engage, motivate and challenge students.** These include presentations, open discussions, direct questioning, small group activities, pair work and role play where they relate the lessons to the actual Montessori pre-schools.
- **Thorough and rigorous methods of evaluating students' work across all courses and the provision of constructive feedback.** This also includes feedback on how to improve further. An effective range of essays, quizzes, test and projects are used for this purpose, all of which are checked and moderated by MCI.
- **A range of externally accredited specialized courses are offered that expertly and exactly meets students' and employers' needs**. These are continuously developed by the centre to continue to meet the needs of current and future students-teachers.
- **Comprehensive enrichment activities to support students' to achieve better.** Very detailed and comprehensive course structures, objectives, schedules and outlines are given to students at the beginning of a course. These are supplemented during the course by a wide range of enrichment activities as well as the use of high quality MCI-approved course material and handouts to students.
- **Highly effective support given to all students during and after the courses.** The tutor and assistant teachers are cooperative, supportive, inculcate friendly relationships and provide counseling when needed. They also provide additional, individual tuition to students having difficulties or not achieving well by offering more lecture hours to meet their learning capabilities and improve their teaching skills.

- **Systematic monitoring and measuring of students' achievements.** The leadership and management implement a highly efficient system to monitor, record and assess students' achievements and progress on a continuous basis. Each student's record during the course is tracked closely by the tutor and the MCI and each is observed at least three times during her classroom training hours at their pre-school.
- **A comprehensive internal quality assurance system to ensure expert teaching by the assistant teachers.** Leadership and management have a consistent approach to select, train and monitor highly qualified teachers to assist the tutor in delivering the centre's courses. The quality of their teaching is assured by an effective and well-defined lesson observation scheme

Areas for improvement

- **An insufficiently detailed strategic plan.** Nonetheless, the centre's mission statement is well-defined and they do have a form of strategic plan, although this latter is not as comprehensive or robustly structured as it could be.
- **The swimming pool presents a potential risk and health and safety precautions are not always communicated to students**. The pool is located near the entrance to the teaching area and is devoid of some key safety features such as water depth notices and buoyancy aids.

Recommendations

In order to improve provision, the Bahrain Montessori Centre should:

- develop a more detailed and coherent strategic plan which addresses future expansion needs and builds on the quality of its current provision
- ensure that the swimming pool area is safe and secure and that health and safety precautions are always communicated to students.