

Early Childhood

Education and Care in Dubai



An Executive Summary

2009

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been commissioned by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) as a preliminary analysis of early childhood education in Dubai to open dialogue between the many players involved in this important sector. Its purpose is to present facts and data, share information and raise awareness about early childhood education in Dubai for the first time.

Our major findings on the early childhood education sector include:

KINDERGARTENS:

More than 90% of the age appropriate children in Dubai are enrolled in kindergarten, surpassing the attendance rates of many OECD countries and demonstrating parental awareness about the importance of these years as preparation for compulsory schooling.

Current funding is efficient (high access rates at minimal cost to the state) but not effective. The ideal situation is to have funding that is both effective (achieving all the necessary goals) and efficient (spending public funds without waste).

Though over 90% of children are enrolled in kindergartens before compulsory schooling, at minimal cost to the state, the small government investment does not ensure quality of services for all young children in Dubai.

70.3% of Emirati children are enrolled in private kindergarten services where quality can be improved.

Within the kindergartens, the quality of programmes provided to children is variable - while some kindergartens provide excellent early childhood education, in others there is room for improvement.

NURSERIES:

Almost 90% of nursery users in Dubai are non-nationals and less than 5% of Emirati children aged 0-4 years are in nurseries.

Emirati mothers have expressed an interest in early childhood education services, meaning that availability of better services could be one of the reasons to depend on nurseries instead of traditional homecare.

In comparison to OECD countries, there is scope for development of nursery services in Dubai.

All nurseries are private and for-profit, except for two government-run nurseries that serve 43 children.

5.4% of nursery staff in Dubai speak Arabic, raising concerns about children whose first language is Arabic.

INTRODUCTION

What is early childhood education?

Neurological studies related to early child development have highlighted the importance of early childhood, which scientists have defined as the period from conception to age 8, when the foundations of physical, social, emotional and cognitive development are laid. These skills develop in a simultaneous and interconnected fashion, and the development in each stage builds on the capacities achieved in the previous stage.

In recognition of the distinct needs of young learners and to distinguish early childhood services in Dubai from schools, KHDA has adopted the 0-6 age group as the definition of the early childhood stage in Dubai. This encompasses the years prior to compulsory education, which begins at age 6 according to federal law.⁹

Data was collated from a variety of sources; statistics from ministries and authorities, interviews with stakeholders (ministry officials, principals, and parents), international reports and from site visits to kindergartens and nurseries.





CHAPTER 1

**THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF EARLY
CHILDHOOD IN DUBAI**

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD IN DUBAI

The Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) was created in 2006 to develop all education and human resource sectors in Dubai. What follows is a description of the social context in Dubai in relation to the early childhood education sector.

POPULATION:

The total population of Dubai in the year 2008 was 1.646 million, making up approximately one-third of the population of the UAE. Of this population, 1.48 million (89%) are expatriate and 158,000 (11%) are nationals. Population growth rate is 1.52% annually. The total fertility rate of national women is 3.57. In recent census of the Emirati population, male births (54%) outnumber female births (46%). In Dubai, national household size is large, with on average 7.45 persons: 49% have 6-10 persons and 30% have over 10 family members. The current child population by year of age (from birth to 6 years) in Dubai is as follows in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Dubai's 2009 child population by age, from 1 to 6 years

Age	Emirati	Expatriate	Total
1-2 years	4,954	12,331	17,285
2-3 years	4,005	11,753	15,758
3-4 years	3,980	11,951	15,931
4-5 years	3,738	10,849	14,587
5-6 years	3,675	11,030	14,705

Source: DSC, 2008

DATA RELATED TO CHILD WELL-BEING AND STATUS:

The UAE infant mortality rate is 8.5 per thousand (EU-25 average = 5.72 per thousand. Luxembourg = 2 per thousand). Public expenditure on education is 1.3% of GDP in the UAE¹ (EU average 4.72%). The actual 1.3% of GDP provides a relatively high per capita investment considering the educational sector in the UAE.

DATA RELATED TO THE STATUS OF WOMEN:

Education level: More than 80% go on to tertiary level education: 24.7% of Dubai national women have a first-level tertiary degree from UAE universities compared with 12.7% of men. Of the whole working-age population in Dubai 2008, the percentage of Emirati females employed is 24.3%, compared with 86% of expatriate women in work and 59% of national men employed (EU-27 employment average is 59.1% for women and 72.8% for men). Maternity and parental leave: A maternity leave of 60 working days is available

¹ UNESCO, 2005 – public expenditure on education.

to mothers, which may be linked to their annual leave to amount to 100 working days.¹

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES IN DUBAI

The first kindergarten in the United Arab Emirates was established in Abu Dhabi in 1972. Shortly afterwards, three kindergartens were established in Dubai. Developments thereafter were rapid: from 7 kindergartens in the 1970s to 97 by 2004-2005. In 1980, a department in the Ministry of Education (MoE) was designated to establish public kindergartens in the UAE. By 2004, the ministry had created two units within these departments, one to take charge of existing kindergartens and a second unit dedicated to program development.

Up to the establishment in 1980 of the first kindergarten section at the Ministry of Education in the UAE, governance of all KGs in the UAE was affiliated to the Directorate of Education in Kuwait. In 1987, the UAE Ministry of Education established a department responsible jointly for KGs and primary education. Ten years later, a separate KG Department was established, the main responsibility of which was to inspect, set standards and curricula for KGs, as well as to hire and train KG staff. Growth in the sector has been remarkable: the initial number of children (2,135) enrolled in seven public kindergartens in 1973/1974 has risen to 22,219 children enrolled in 97 kindergartens in 2004/2005. In parallel, the number of teachers increased from 73 teachers in 1974 to 1,372 teachers in 2004-2005.²

The first licensed nursery in Dubai was established in 1984, following the issuing of a new federal law to regulate the licensing and functioning of nurseries in the UAE.

Table 2. Nurseries in Dubai and number of children enrolled

Year	Number of Nurseries	Number of Children enrolled
1996	27	1,911
2000	36	2,230
2004	55	2,540
2007	71	6,155
2009	84	7,594

Source: MoSA, 2009

Over the last three decades, rapid economic growth has brought large numbers of expatriates from varied cultural backgrounds, nationalities and languages to Dubai to fill the many posts available in the labour force.

¹ Dubai Gov. HR Management Law No.27, 2006.

² Development of KGs in UAE 1972-2005, Dr. Fouzia Badri, 2005.

Private nurseries and kindergartens have been established to provide the pre-school services required for these incoming families. The governance of these private services was divided among different ministries. Responsibility for nursery services was first taken in charge by the then Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in 1983¹ and after the separation of these ministries in 2004, was ascribed to the Ministry of Social Affairs. The greater part of the early childhood sector is privately owned with 82 private nurseries, and two public nurseries, serving a total enrolment of 7,594 children.

More than 90% of children in Dubai are enrolled in kindergarten – which suggests a very positive appreciation of kindergarten services. The Dubai Strategic Plan: Social Development Sector Plan (2006) notes that almost 90% of nursery users are non-nationals: many expatriate women work and believe that nurseries provide better developmental opportunities for their child than an in-home nanny or maid.² By contrast, the national culture in Dubai is based on extended families and homecare services, a tradition that probably lessens demand for extra-domestic care. Another reason for homecare among Emirati families is their comparative wealth³ and the abundance of inexpensive housemaids/nannies who are employed to help with rearing children and other tasks. Research is required to provide information regarding the type of care provided by the extended family, the quality of learning of children aged 0-6 within the care of the extended family and whether this care is provided mostly by nannies/maids or by members of the extended family.

Table 3. Family types and employment of housemaids in Dubai

Type of family	Average number of maids per family with maid	% of families with maid	No. of maids	No. of families with maids	Total number of families
National	1.7 maids per family	94%	37,780	22,397	23,851
Non-National	1.1 maids per family	5%	8,550	7,662	144,630
Total	1.5 maids per family		46,330	30,059	168,481

Source: DSC, 2005

Most of the maids in Dubai are educated to lower secondary level, speak English as a second language and

¹ Law No. 5.

² One needs to take into account also that non-nationals lack the support from extended family on which many nationals can rely.

³ By 'comparative wealth' is meant that many national families enjoy a level of wealth that makes it unnecessary for women to work.

receive wages ranging from AED 700-1,184 monthly (equivalent to an annual income range of \$2,292–\$3,892), considerably less than the fees for a nursery place which, in 2008, ranged from AED 5,000 (\$1,369) to AED 50,000 (\$13,698) annually, depending on the number of hours being used.¹

Multiple reasons may explain the national preference for in-home care, such as: traditional family attitudes discouraging placing young children in crèches; a conviction among the majority of Emirati women that young children are better reared at home; a lack of knowledge of nursery services and their potential contribution to child development; a lack of quality nurseries; not enough acceptable and/or affordable nursery places; a preference for work-based crèches like those sponsored by the government (of which, very few exist); and lack of support and guidance for parents.

In addition, the nursery workforce in Dubai is almost entirely non-national (89%) and non-Arabic speaking, which may create an additional barrier for some users. The location of services may also not be ideal; very few companies and office buildings have taken advantage of the existing law that allows them to establish nurseries for their working mothers. With the exception of the questionnaire mentioned in the following paragraph, serious research on potential interest in early childhood services in Dubai is not available. Stakeholder consultations conducted by KHDA, however, have indicated the quality and cost of private nurseries in Dubai is variable and that fees are often prohibitive for some families.

For all these reasons, demand among national families both for childcare and a pre-kindergarten year may be stronger than enrolment figures suggest. Results of a questionnaire issued by the Dubai Women's Establishment (DWE) support this assumption. According to the questionnaire, issued to 1,186 working women in government departments in Dubai, 62% of the children under the age of 4 years were reared at home by housemaids; 32% by extended family members and 5% were enrolled in private nurseries.² Yet, when asked whether they would make use of a quality child care facility if their employers provided it, 92% of the women surveyed confirmed that they would, with 84% stressing their preference for high-quality child care centres offering the expertise of trained educational specialists.³

There is also the practice, particularly in the English-speaking world, of placing babies in childcare from the age of three months or so. However, international research is clear that a balance needs to be struck between maternal home care and outside services. The breast-feeding period is important for the health and well-being of infants and should be reasonable in length.⁴

Ideally, early childhood services should work with families and communities. Their function is not to replace parents but to support them. Unless there is an emergency, it may not be advisable to place infants in

¹ dubaifaqs.com, 2009.

² According to Kindergarten School Data Records of MoE 2008/9, 33% of 3-4 year olds are already enrolled in kindergartens.

³ DWE, 2005.

⁴ In its Baby-Friendly Initiative, UNICEF recommends a breastfeeding period of at least 6 months: All breastfeeding mothers should be encouraged to breastfeed exclusively for around six months: <http://www.babyfriendly.org.uk>

childcare services from the age of two or three months for long hours.¹ In fact, many experts do not advise childcare for children in the first year of life.²

The practice of the leading countries, such as Sweden, supports the research findings: although as a country Sweden has one of the highest female employment rates among OECD countries, it is very rare to find a child in an early childhood service in Sweden before the age of 15 months. This is achieved through funding a parental leave period that lasts at least a year. From that age, municipalities in Sweden have the obligation to provide a (fee-paying) place for every child in an early education service.

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC)

Early childhood is a critical period in the human development cycle, marked by rapid transformations in physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development. Significant and critical brain development occurs, especially during the first three years of life and what happens in the early years sets trajectories in health, learning and behaviour that can last throughout life. Though young children are very robust, they are also more vulnerable than at any other age to poor care, deprivation, neglect and violence.³

ECEC services are normally defined in the international literature as including all arrangements that provide care and education for young children under compulsory school age, outside the home. These services support children's survival, growth, development and learning – including health, nutrition and hygiene, and cognitive, social, emotional and physical development – from birth to entry into primary school in formal, informal and non-formal settings. They take diverse forms, ranging from parenting programmes to community-based and home-based childcare, centre-based provision, pre-primary education and after school care, often in schools.⁴ Early childhood policies also include measures to support families, such as parental leave and childcare allowances. From the international research, four strong evidence-based findings emerge:

Current research shows the critical importance of the early childhood period in the human development cycle.⁵ The early years are the foundation stage not only of education, but also of adult well-being, physical and mental health. In particular, the years from 0-3 are critical for brain development in the spheres of socio-emotional, cognitive and language development.

The family is the natural environment of the child.⁶ Normally, it is within the family that the child's physical, social and learning development first takes place. The socio-emotional development of young children requires warm and stable relationships with nurturing adults (preferably parents) and other children.⁷ If both

1 NICHD, 2005.

2 Belsky J., 2007

3 Shonkoff and Philips, 2000; Mustard, 2002; Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007.

4 UNESCO, 2006.

5 Shonkoff et al 2000; Frazer Mustard, 2007.

6 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.

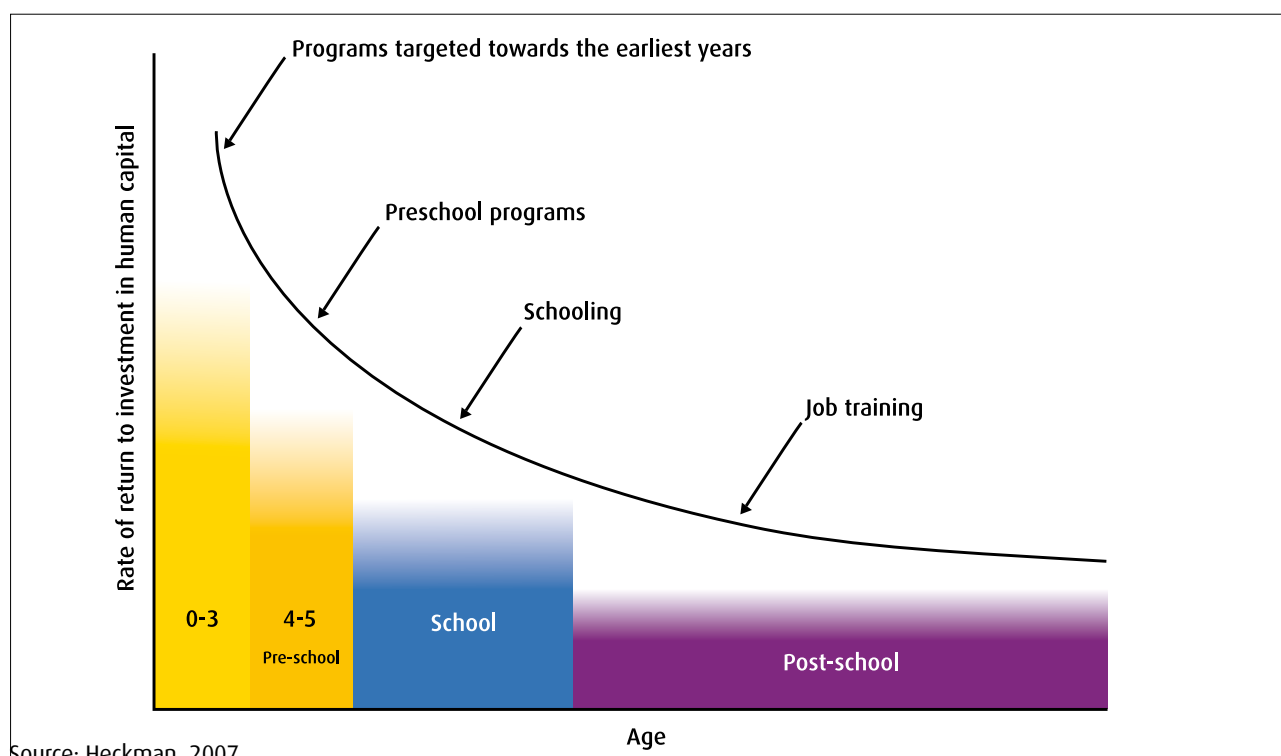
7 AAP/APHA/NRCHSCC (2002).

parents are working, parental leave policies can help secure a stable family environment for the child during the first critical year of life.

Young children from about the age of one year can benefit from caring, high quality programs, run by early childhood professionals.¹ When of high quality, such programs help to develop children’s knowledge and socio-emotional attitudes (such as trust, self-confidence, curiosity and teamwork), skills that are critical for contemporary knowledge societies.

The economic, social and educational returns from investing in early childhood services are high and achieve a two to seven times return on investment². Strong social, economic and education benefits flow from creating and maintaining national networks of early childhood services. Governments benefit from the investment through more people working, higher taxation returns, more social cohesion at community level, less reliance of families on social security, less criminality, and better quality of intake into the compulsory education system.

Figure 1. Heckman’s curve – rates of return on human capital investment at different ages



1 Shonkoff et al. 2000.

2 For overviews of American research, see Rolnick & Grunewald, Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return, March 2003; High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40, November 2004. James J. Heckman and Dimitriy V. Masterov, The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children, October 2004; NIEER, 2006, 2009 Cost-Benefit analyses





CHAPTER 2

**GOVERNANCE AND FINANCING OF EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES**

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCING OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES

GOVERNANCE

Aligned with the objectives of Dubai Strategic Plan 2015 and the education outcomes required for a skilled and competitive workforce, in addition to the awareness of the importance of quality education provision for the pre-school years, KHDA's intention is to support a vision guided by global best practices and building on current expertise in the existing Early Childhood Education and Care community in Dubai. Until recently in Dubai, early childhood education has been split between kindergartens and nurseries. While the majority of nurseries are independent facilities, many kindergartens have been assimilated into primary schools with advantages for teachers and administrators (greater parity of work conditions and salaries with primary education) while it is not necessarily beneficial for children in all cases.

On a federal level, early childhood education and care related responsibilities lie among: Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) for licensing of nurseries; Ministry of Education (MoE) for setting curriculum and standards for public KGs; and Ministry of Health (MoH) for monitoring pre- and post-natal health issues.

In Dubai, where early childhood education is mostly in the private sector, other local government institutions are also involved: KHDA supplies licensing, quality assurance, policy development, and support; Department of Economic Development (DED) issues required commercial licences to all nurseries and KGs in the private sector; Dubai Women's Establishment (DWE) monitors early childcare standards; and the Community Development Authority (CDA) provides parenting services and support for children with special needs.

PUBLIC, NON-PROFIT AND FOR-PROFIT PROVISION

There are primarily two different types of provision of early education and care in Dubai: it has witnessed a growth in the private system which reflects the huge growth in its population. The government provides kindergarten services to nationals. As no governmental support is provided to expatriate families, the private sector is likely to continue to expand.

For-profit provision is generally balanced in OECD countries by the presence of non-profit providers who, subsidised by government, serve the modest-income families. Supply by non-profit groups has been particularly strong in Europe, but also occurs in North America and the Maghreb countries where governments allow education to be delivered by recognised non-profit groups. In Tunisia, for example, more children under 5 years attend the *kouttabs* (Koranic schools for young children) than other forms of early years provision, before entering the free, state-provided early childhood education year for 5-6 year olds. The use of private provision is a means of bringing choice and the strengths of the private sector into education, but on government terms and in a responsible manner. Although it exists in the school sector, there are opportunities for the non-profit sector to be represented on the early childhood education landscape.

LICENSING

Another important government function in a mixed public-private system is the issue of licensing. Unlicensed childcare remains a common practice in many countries, the most usual form being child care provided

by untrained local childminders. Some countries, such as Denmark have made the practice illegal in the interests of child protection and safety. Where unlicensed child care continues to exist, consumers are more likely to be low and moderate income families. More affluent families, with higher educational levels, tend to choose centre-based, licensed services for their children.⁹

In Dubai, private entities need to have a commercial license to operate, issued by the Department for Economic Development, and an administrative license from MoSA. In the kindergarten sector, KHDA is now in charge of licensing and already a simplification and strengthening of education licensing can be seen. The following table provides an overview of the chief licensing authorities in Dubai, which in some way impact on early childhood services.

Table4. Authorities involved in the Early Childhood Education and Care sector

External Stakeholders	Responsibilities
Ministry of Social Affairs	Licensing, Policy Development, Regulatory, Quality Assurance
Ministry of Education	Licensing, Policy Development, Regulatory, Curriculum development, Staff development, Quality Assurance
KHDA	Licensing, Policy Development, Regulatory, Quality Assurance, Support
Community Development Authority	Special Needs provision, Social integration of early childhood in community centres
Ministry of Labour	Support services for workforce involved in early childhood care
Immigration and Naturalisation Department	Issue the residency visa for employees and the visa for maids, nannies and other domestic staff
Civil Defence	Ensure building fire safety Provide approval before opening any building Provide fire drill training in all schools and other buildings
Dubai Municipality	Approve design and building of schools and nurseries
Dubai Economic Department (DED)	Provide commercial licenses for private schools and nurseries

Source: KHDA, 2009

The recent Childcare Standards, published by Dubai Women’s Establishment (DWE) in 2009 give some idea of what a regulatory text with exacting demands specific to early childhood should be like.

The standards aim to define acceptable qualitative and quantitative requirements for childcare settings in Dubai, in order to ensure “a safe and healthy environment that fosters children’s physical, intellectual, psychological, social and emotional development”.

THE DWE STANDARDS FOR CHILD CARE:

Box 1. Dubai Women’s Establishment, Standards for Early Childhood Care (DWE), 2009

1. Licensing and administration

The childcare provider should be licensed by the relevant Government authorities in accordance with the prevailing laws. It should be administered by a licensed person who is responsible for its organisation and operation in accordance with a policy and procedures manual that complies with the National Standards, including record keeping for children and staff and a system for admission and accounting.

2. Building and equipment

The child care building should be a safe and healthy setting that comprises ample indoor and outdoor areas proportional to the number and ages of children. It should be equipped in a manner that produces a pleasant setting satisfying the needs of children and stimulating their physical, intellectual and social development.

3. Child care organization

The environment shall be administered and organized in a manner that ensures the continuous supervision and care of children by an adequate number of qualified carers and assistants, proportional to the number of children as set out by these Standards.

4. Care and learning activities

Provide activities that foster children’s physical, intellectual, social and emotional capabilities, taking into consideration each child’s individual needs and abilities, based on a scientific system of observation and assessment.

5. Safety and security

Take all necessary measures to ensure that children are safe and protected against risks both inside the nursery or child care centre, or during outings, and that all staff are fully aware of the safety and security requirements and procedures.

6. Health care

Promote the good health of children and take all necessary precautions to prevent contamination and the spread of diseases, with appropriate measures for dealing with injuries and sick children.

7. Nutrition

Provide children with meals and drinks in adequate quantities, variations and at set times, to meet children’s nutritional needs, in compliance with their individual dietary requirements.

8. Partnership with parents

A close cooperation should be developed between child care staff and children’s parents and guardians in the best interest of the child, through exchange of information, periodical reports and continuous enhancement of their knowledge about the educational aims and objectives

QUALITY ASSURANCE

During 2008-9 and 2009-2010, the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) carried out inspections of Dubai schools and kindergartens. The results for private kindergartens are included in their overall school rating, as are the results for three public kindergartens which are also attached to schools. The results for the other 12 public kindergartens in Dubai in 2009 were as follows in Table 5.

Table 5. Evaluation ratings of Public kindergartens

Scholastic Year	Evaluation ratings of Public Kindergartens			
	Outstanding	Good	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
2008-2009	0	6	6	0
2009-2010	2	7	3	0

Source: DSIB Annual Reports for 2009 and 2010

This data showed encouraging improvement in quality and a necessary component of early childhood governance is quality assurance. Inspection and support services are needed to ensure that programme standards are known and observed in early childhood education centres and that required outcomes for children are being achieved.

DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

Data on young children is collected by a wide variety of sources in Dubai – primarily by the ministries, KHDA and the Dubai Statistical Centre, such as the number and situation of nurseries and kindergartens, the number of children in attendance, the qualifications of staff.

For the moment, only a few organisations conduct research, such as the Dubai School of Government, the Emirates Foundation in Abu Dhabi, and some private companies such as the Gulf Centre for Research and Development in Sharjah. The Emirates Foundation provided grants to sponsor two pieces of research focusing on early childhood development and family related policies.

An emergent research potential exists in the growing university sector. Several federal universities, such as Zayed University, are involved with the early childhood field, along with other tertiary institutions in Dubai including The Higher Colleges of Technology. However, the number of Masters and Doctoral students in these institutions is relatively low, and few faculty members are accredited in the early childhood field.

FINANCING

Where financing the early childhood education sector is concerned, international research is clear: the countries that invest strongly in young children and their services generally have comprehensive levels of services, high labour participation rates for women in full-time jobs,¹ and strong education systems. Child health and child well-being are high. Societies that do not invest sufficiently in children’s services and in equity in education may have good education systems, but can suffer from the reproduction of poverty and educational failure among certain groups.

¹ Some countries, such as Canada, the Netherlands and the USA, have high female labour market participation rates, but many of the jobs that women hold are part-time (less than 30 hours per week), sometimes - particularly in North America - without social protection. This means that at the end of life, women’s pensions are lower than men’s. The result is the formation of a new poor group in the OECD countries, namely, elderly women.

The returns on investment from early childhood provision are also well recorded. Not only do children and families benefit but also – and perhaps in particular – governments. Governmental domains that gain from the widespread provision of early childhood education and care services are: the national economy (short term through the production contributions of working women, and long term through more effective human capital formation); health (better mental and physical health for children and families, less at-risk behaviours); social welfare and criminal justice (less dependency of families on social welfare; higher earnings for families; more gender equality; less family violence, less criminality); education (better integration of young children at-risk into primary school, better grade progression, less participation in special education).

Quality is defined as adherence to a national set of standards or framework. Such a quality framework exists only for public KGs, but not for private KGs or for nurseries.

Efficiency means the best possible use of public resources in view of the policy goals fixed for the early childhood sector.

Equity means the availability of services to all children, both geographically and socially. Certain groups of children should not be advantaged or disadvantaged on the grounds of ethnic origin, income, social class, ability or disability.

Choice means the freedom of families to choose between different providers and different types of affordable service.

Quality depends on clearly defined goals and structural standards for a system, on ongoing support to a culture of quality and on agreed program standards such as child:staff ratio, staff qualifications, and learning environments.

The equity of the system is likewise open to question, that is, the equal availability of comparable services to all children regardless of location, ethnic origin, income, social class, ability or disability. Apart from the small public kindergarten network, the sector is wholly marketised, and wide differences between kindergartens are evident. Public kindergartens are free of charge for Emirati citizens, while for non-Emiratis who have access, they are (moderately) fee-paying. Private kindergartens are all fee-paying, with 2008-9 fees ranging from AED 1,500 to AED 71,000 annually (\$400 – \$19,300). In nurseries, fees range from AED 5,000 to AED 50,000 (\$1,361 – \$13,610) annually, depending on the number of hours being used. A registration fee and additional transport costs can also be charged.¹

¹ dubaifaqs.com, 2009.

Internationally, childcare costs to parents vary from country to country, going from entirely free services to parents paying full costs, as is the case in Ireland where most parents pay full costs (an exception in Europe). In general, public authorities subsidise services through direct local authority provision (Denmark, Finland, France, Norway, and Sweden); through parent subsidies (Netherlands, United Kingdom, where parents receive a childcare cash benefit); or through indirect subsidies, such as family cash benefits (Australia, US), tax credits (Belgium, UK) and employer contributions (Belgium, Italy, Netherlands).





CHAPTER 3

ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

At first view, choice seems to be safeguarded in the Dubai Early Childhood Education and Care: there is a good mix of different providers at different prices and major language groups have their own kindergartens and schools. In the nursery sector, however, choice is limited. Again, one finds a wide range of providers, but Arabic language nurseries are few.

Compared to other countries, the variety of service is also limited: information is still lacking regarding family day care homes, drop-in services, parent support groups for stay-at-home mothers, play groups, or family centres. Apart from the DWE (2006) questionnaire, few surveys of the preferences of parents have been launched.

In countries with extensive early childhood services, the following service types are generally available to children. In Europe, such services cater for about 30% of children below the age of 3 years and between 80%- 100% of children in the 3-6 age group.

Family day care: Family day care exists when a child (or children) is looked after in the private home of a carer/childminder on a sessional or half-day (less than 20 hours per week) or full-day basis.

Centre-based early childhood education: Early childhood education centres provide structured educational experiences to young children, based on learning through play. The centres may be public or private, and normally cater for toddlers and/or older children on a voluntary basis until entry into compulsory schooling.

Nursery: A nursery (crèche) is a centre-based service primarily for infants and toddlers. These centres, staffed by professional nurse and educators, are generally open 8-10 hours per day throughout the year.

Kindergarten or pre-school programmes are professional centre-based programmes, primarily for children from 3-6 years, with a predominantly educational aim. Kindergarten and pre-school programmes are distinguished from playgroups in being daily and more intensive, and with more highly qualified staff.

Out-of-school provision, after-school care or free-time services for children.¹ Professionally organised care service for children aged 6 - 12 years before and/or after early education/primary school hours. The service can take place either on the school premises or outside.

Playgroup: A playgroup is a service offering toddlers (and perhaps, older children) the opportunity - generally on a sessional basis, once or twice a week - to play with each other, ideally supervised by a qualified playgroup supervisor or parent.

As noted above, the traditional organisation of Early Childhood Education and Care services in the UAE has

¹ These services are known in various countries as out-of-school provision, after-school care, and leisure-time services. The term 'free-time service' underlines that this time is free time for children, to be used for recreation and leisure (as well as for homework or sports), taken in secure and stimulating environments and facilitated by trained personnel.

been a system split between nursery provision and a kindergarten network. There has been little choice in the types of service on offer for Emirati children: the majority of children 0-4 years are mostly at home with some (less than 5%) in nurseries; the majority of children 4-6 years are mostly in kindergarten with a very small proportion (3.2%) uncounted for.

NURSERIES

In all in 2009, there were 82 private licensed nurseries with a total of 7,551 children enrolled aged 0-4, of whom 95.4% are expatriate children¹ and two nurseries that have recently been established in government ministries located in Dubai, catering for 43 children. Less than 5% of the eligible national children attend, as the vast majority of Emirati children are reared at home up to the age of 4 years. The child-at-home model is reinforced by the availability of low-paid, English-speaking, female labour from Asian countries, notably from India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. The use of this labour for rearing young children is widespread in the Gulf States.² 58% of children under the age of three years in the Arabian Gulf are cared for by housemaids for 30-70 hours per week. This length of time is far greater than most institutional childcare hours in the US or Europe, which are increasingly criticised for being too long.³ Roumani considers that the time spent in house-maid care far exceeds the duration recommended by major studies to avoid harm to maternal attachment or prevent problem behaviours.

All nurseries in Dubai are private, for-profit and fee-paying, except for the two government nurseries mentioned above. Though fixed for a three-year period by the MoSA, fees are at the discretion of the providers, in other words, they are based on the market law of supply and demand. The current fee-structure makes it difficult for low- and modest-income expatriate families to access the childcare they need. As this form of childcare is not recognised by the authorities, no figures exist on the exact number of children involved with informal daycare.

KINDERGARTENS

Kindergartens in Dubai are both public and private. In the public national system, there are 12 kindergartens, with three further kindergartens attached to primary schools, plus a Childhood Development Centre. Public kindergartens accept only Emirati citizens and some Arabic-speaking children. In all, they enrol 2,181 children, of which over 2,027 are national, that is, 21.6% of the total Dubai 4-6 cohort for the age range. The budget allocated is not per capita (per child), but a flat rate payment provided to the centres, regardless of the number or needs of the children enrolled. The estimated annual cost of tuition in public kindergartens per child is 7,000AED or \$1,917 USD.⁴ The teachers and other personnel are paid by the state.

In parallel, there are 123 private kindergartens catering for 31,559 children, of whom 26,140 are expatriate children and 5,419 are nationals. This suggests that a strong preference for private kindergartens exists,

¹ MoSA, 2009.

² Roumani, 2005.

³ See for example, Belsky, 2007.

⁴ KHDA, 2009.

even among the national population. Despite the research in other countries on better quality being found in public systems¹, many parents believe that fee-paying private services are superior to the state public kindergarten service. The choice may be influenced by social class considerations, by the value accorded to English language learning, and by further education opportunities (many private kindergartens are often feeder kindergartens for private primary schools). For Emirati parents holding this view, the expatriate kindergartens hold an obvious advantage: they allow Emirati children to learn English from native speakers and in the company of English-speaking children.

Enrolments for Emirati children in kindergarten are high by international standards with 96.8% of children 4-6 years enrolled in either private (70.3%) or public (26.5%) kindergartens (DSC, 2009). Only 4.6% of Dubai national children are enrolled in nurseries. Expatriate children take up most places in both services, outnumbering national children by about 8:1 in nurseries and by about 3:1 in private kindergartens. A matter of concern is the low enrolment in public kindergartens which, according to some kindergarten teachers, increasingly serve low and middle-income national families. The enrolment figures also suggest that 3.2% of national children do not follow a kindergarten programme prior to entry into primary school.²

The table below provides essential information on Dubai access patterns. Gender access patterns are omitted from the table as enrolments of girls and boys are similar in Dubai until secondary school level. At that moment, girls begin to pull ahead of boys and are more likely to complete secondary education and continue into tertiary studies.

As can be seen from the table, access to services is much weaker for Emirati children 1-4 years, with less than 5% attending a nursery. This suggests that most Emirati mothers with young children stay at home to rear their children and/or rely on assistance from live-in housemaids. Although reliable figures on the employment rates of mothers with children under the age of 4 years and under the age of 6 years are not available, it may be presumed – if Dubai follow OECD employment patterns – that the employment rate for these mothers is significantly higher than the Dubai average female employment figure of 24.3%. In sum, the probability is strong that significant numbers of mothers go back to work and make home-based provision for the care of nursery-age children, through either extended family arrangements or the employment of live-in maids.

¹ Cleveland, 2004.

² DSC, 2009.

Table 6. Enrolment of children in licensed kindergartens and nurseries in Dubai,

Service type, no. of centres	Total enrolled	Nationalities			% of Emirati children from total enrolled	% of Arabic-speaking children from total enrolled	Enrolment of Emirati children as % of Dubai cohort (c. 3850 per year)
		Emirati	Arab	Expatriate			
Private Nurseries, (1-4 yrs): 71 nurseries. (DSC data 2007)	6,155	552	864	4,739	8.96 %	24.7%	4.6 % of the national children eligible for the service, assuming enrolment from the age of one year, that is, a 1-4 years intake only (Cohort =3850x3) ¹
Gov.KG (4-6 yrs) (KHDA data 2009)	2,181	2,041	140	0	93.6%	100%	24.6% of the national children eligible for the service (Cohort =3850x2)
Private KGs (4-6yrs):KHDA data 2008/2009	31,559	5,419	4215	21,925	17.2%	30.8%	70.4% of the national children eligible for the service (Cohort =3850x2)

Sources: KHDA, 2009; Dubai Statistical Yearbook, 2007; MoSA, 2009

MAPPING OF SERVICES

The rationale for and mechanisms of the mapping of services, that is, the geographical distribution of early childhood education services in Dubai and the surrounding area, remain unclear. One knows where the present nurseries and kindergartens are situated, but their location is not linked to population density, number of eligible children, socio-economic status or number of special needs children. In consequence, there are few means of judging whether the current spread matches present needs, for example, with respect to the time spent or the distances to be travelled in order to access a suitable service. The proximity of services to home is an important issue for families with very young children and also has health implications for infants and toddlers who, ideally, should not be transported in heavy traffic on a daily basis.



في الطريق، لآح صوتٌ ضعيف،
قال الأرنب البري،
وهو ينظر نحوي:
«ساعدني أيها الفرْد اللطيف»
«لقد علقت قدمي في الحفرة،
ولللخروج منها... أحتاج إلى القوة،
فأنا أحملُ الجزر لأولادي».

CHAPTER 4

THE QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

THE QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

ASPECTS OF QUALITY

In attempting to evaluate early childhood systems, different aspects of quality can be examined.¹ For example:

Governance quality: This refers to the type and level of attention childhood policy receives through national legislation, licensing, governance and financing.

System or programme quality: From a systems perspective, quality is ensured by the clear formulation and enforcement of regulations, requirements and standards. Programme standards may define the quality of the physical environment for young children (buildings, space, outdoors, pedagogical materials); the quality and training levels of the staff; an appropriate curriculum properly trialled that covers all the broad areas of child development; acceptable child-staff ratios; adequate work conditions and compensation of staff.

Interaction or process quality: Teachers and many early childhood education experts may believe that the educational concept and practice of centres is at the heart of quality. These, and the quality of the social and pedagogical relations in the centre, figure among the goals most frequently cited in research.²

Operational quality is assured by centre management and focuses on responsiveness to local need, quality improvement and effective team building. It includes regular planning at centre and classroom level; opportunities for staff to engage in continuous professional and career development; time allowed for child observation, assessments and documentation; support to staff performance in the form of accompaniment and mentoring.

Child-outcome quality or performance standards: Positive child outcomes are a major goal for early childhood education programmes in all countries. Differences between countries arise about the outcomes to be privileged. A child-outcome approach privileging language and logico-mathematical skills is characteristic of France and the English-speaking countries (except New Zealand), countries that adopt a 'readiness for school' approach.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT STANDARDS

For the health, well-being and learning of young children, the quality of the physical environment is important. The buildings, the indoor and outdoor organisation of space, the toys and pedagogical materials placed at the children's disposal should be appropriate to their age and developmental needs. Most OECD countries have good standards where new buildings are concerned but buildings attached to schools are often antiquated, with poor layout and insufficient space for the number of children occupying classrooms. For example, during the OECD early childhood reviews, reviewers encountered early childhood programmes taking place in church halls, basements, and other non-specific buildings, where only fire and safety inspectors were

¹ See for example, Tietze & Cryer, 2002; Myers 2004, OECD 2006.

² See for example AAP/APHA, 2002; NICHD, 2004; Rutter et al, 2003

involved in granting a license to operate.

Within the public kindergarten sector, the provisions for kindergarten buildings are more spacious than in many OECD countries. While there is no law stipulating the required number of square metres allotted per student in public kindergartens, in practice, the Ministry of Education guidelines for kindergartens classrooms stipulate they must be at least 100 square metres.¹ In the public kindergartens visited, these specifications seem to be observed to the letter. Premises are spacious and well-appointed, and include libraries, resource rooms, shaded outdoor spaces, etc. Play and educational materials are in plentiful supply, although one noted that free access to materials is not always possible for children as much teacher-directed group work takes place. In addition – and the remark applies also to the private sector – the use of plastic toys and materials seemed to predominate over more creative project work using and exploring natural materials.

In the private sector, nursery and kindergarten premises are not always so well equipped particular, with outdoor facilities – but those visited were of acceptable standard and one was very well endowed. The previous bylaws for private schools went into the detail on the physical requirements for kindergartens. *“The area of each room should not be less than 30 sq m and an area of not less than 1.5 sq m should be allocated for each child.”*²

Private kindergartens in Dubai, are free to choose their own curricula as long as it is authorised while ‘curricula’ followed by nurseries are not as yet subject to approval by any government entity. It is estimated that about thirteen curricula from different countries are followed.

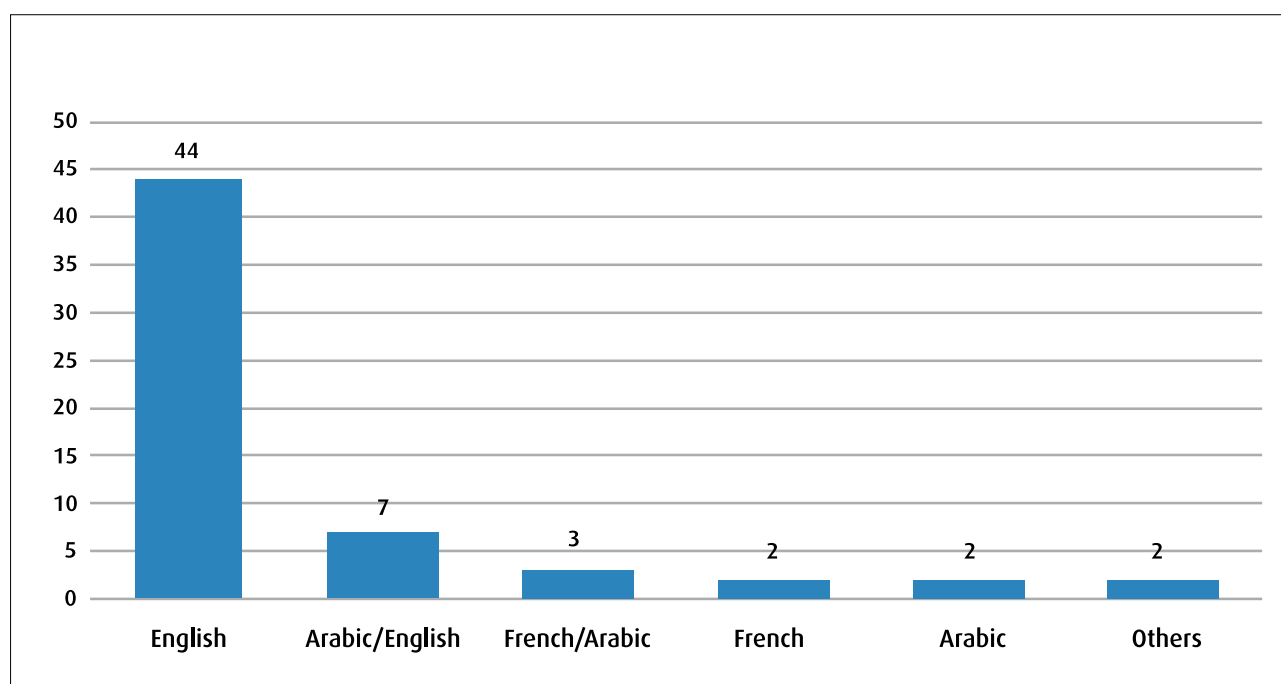
1 This works out to a guideline of at least 4.5 sq. m. per student given the MoE guidelines of no more than 22 students in public kindergartens.

2 Executive regulation of Federal Law 28 of 1999, Ministerial Resolution 4592 of 2001.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

An important element in curriculum is the question of language use in centres. With few exceptions, English is the language used by teachers in private nurseries and kindergartens in Dubai, on the assumption that full immersion in the second language is appropriate for language development at this age. Over 90% of nursery staff are expatriate, with only 5.4% speaking Arabic,¹ giving reason to believe that children's development in Arabic is being overlooked. Given the fact that nurseries are not subject to following an approved curriculum by any government authority, this may not address adequately the issue of Emirati culture among nationals.

Figure 2. language used in Dubai nurseries



Source: KHDA, 2009

CREATING A CULTURE OF QUALITY

Quality within an early childhood system can be significantly raised by a culture of voluntary quality improvement. Such a culture can be supported by district co-ordination: documentation; reflective practice; self-evaluation; formative evaluation; accreditation exercises and the use of sensitive rating systems. These practices often lead to centres seeking accreditation or other such quality marks.

As mentioned in the discussion on licensing, accreditation is a voluntary process proposed to providers by a government authority or professional association in order to help centres achieve higher standards in key domains of early childhood programming. Accreditation processes generally use licensing standards as their starting point, but supplement the standards in certain areas that are known through research to produce positive child outcomes. For example, an accreditation instrument may choose administrative policies and

¹ MoSA Statistics, 2008-2009.

procedures; facilities; staff qualifications and staff compensation; professional development opportunities; child:staff ratios; parent/family involvement as areas where an improved level of compliance can take place. Centres are then awarded accreditation or a quality mark for achieving better standards in these areas.

Kindergartens in Dubai have begun to formalise self-evaluation over the past two years as a result of their inspection experience with DSIB. In addition to performing self-evaluations, some reflection measures have been imbedded in the everyday practice of teachers, such as monitoring of daily and weekly planning. Principals at public kindergartens in Dubai also received training during 2009-2010 at 9-day workshops on self-evaluation and self-development planning. In addition, one outstanding example of a quality initiative stands out, that is, the initiative of the Dubai Women's Establishment to encourage more demanding programme standards in nurseries through the publication of its excellent National Childcare Standards.¹

ATTENTION TO PARENTS

A strong indicator of the quality of an early childhood system is the attention that it pays to parents and in particular, to mothers. Education during the pre-school age in the Arab world has been almost entirely the responsibility of women, and it is safe to assume that to achieve improvements in early childhood education, the leadership of women will be needed.² Women face particular challenges: how to continue their emancipation and how to reconcile motherhood with professional responsibilities. Because of this, attention to parents includes three separate strands:

Parental support, in particular to mothers - OECD countries generally provide remunerated parental leave, early childhood services and incentives to create family-friendly jobs.³

Parenting education is often given through direct courses but it is also provided in other forms such as through manuals, networking, relevant courses in secondary schools, web sites, radio and television messages. Parental competence is visible in parents' knowledge of breast-feeding, nutrition; health and hygiene; psychological needs of the child; socialisation and upbringing, including child discipline⁴; play and learning and in the avoidance of neglect, abuse or stressful family environments.

Parental involvement in children's learning - early childhood centres can show and motivate parents to invest in their children's socialisation and learning, especially during the early childhood period.

¹ DWE, 2009.

² "Arab Women Leadership Outlook 2009-2011," Dubai Women Establishment, 1st Edition, 2009.

³ Esping-Andersen et al., 2002.

⁴ Child discipline is often a concern of parents. They may be unaware of infant/child development patterns, such as curiosity, the desire to investigate surrounding objects... and as a result, restrict the freedom of the child. With older children, they may tend to use harsh orders or even punishment, rather than disciplining through patient explanation and reason.

Box 2. Home-school links at Al Anwaar Kindergarten

Al Anwaar Kindergarten in Dubai is one example of a school that has reached out to parents to improve learning opportunities for their children. Al Anwaar has taken a number of steps to encourage parents to take an interest in what their child is learning and to continue the learning at home. In order to inform parents what the class is currently working on, a visual curriculum planner and lesson plans were posted in the entrance area. There is also a well-used suggestion box and school and community news is displayed prominently around the school. This, together with a continuously updated DVD of school events and classroom activities, ensures parents are up to date on what is happening in the school.

Parents are also welcomed into the classroom, and are encouraged to come to school with their children and take part in an individual lesson or go along on a school trip. The school has a database of parents' skills and talents that it draws upon for special events and for parent-run workshops. Children have also visited other student's homes to learn about a diversity of family values as part of a study unit on 'The Family'. In addition, the school supports children's families through a network of parents it set up who are ready to assist families experiencing challenging personal circumstances.

Source: DSIB, Annual Report 2009, p. 9 Chapter 5

Emirati families are traditional in their approach to children. Families are large and mothers feel it their duty to remain with their children in the early years. In addition, they may have the means to employ housemaids and be assisted in child-rearing tasks. However, this gives rise to a number of issues:

Women are more educated today than in the 1950s. As a result, many young women wish to have careers and contribute to their own personal development and to society through salaried work outside the home. The service economies in which we live give them this opportunity. In fact, their weak labour market participation is a significant loss to the Dubai economy.

The employment of housemaids to assist in rearing children. Two issues were raised several times about this situation. First, that infants and young children are spending most of their time in the care of housemaids. Second, that most housemaids are non-Arabic speaking and have little training in child-rearing.

A third issue is that UAE families are not as stable as in the past. Divorce rates are high, and it is possible that the various ills that undermine family functioning in the West will also increase. The UAE authorities are already aware that more parenting information and education are needed.

Presently, the dissemination of information about early childhood education and care has room for improvement, especially since recent scientific research has shown us how critical early development is. Parents in Dubai and the UAE would greatly benefit from public awareness-raising programmes.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The term 'children with special needs' often embraces two categories of children: children with physical, mental or sensory disabilities; and children with additional learning needs derived from family dysfunction, socio-economic disadvantage, or from ethnic, cultural or linguistic factors.

Parental involvement is desirable in all programmes for young children, but particularly in programmes that include children with special educational needs. Early childhood education centres that receive children with special needs also put into place co-operative agreements with community health and social services agencies, an activity that demands expertise and much investment of time.

The Ministry of Social Affairs intends to open a customised, community service for children with disabilities in Dubai. The move will be much welcomed by families with special needs children and will bring much needed expertise to this field. In addition, the ministry will authorise all nurseries to accept children with special needs if they first recruit a special education professional. For the kindergarten and schools sector, the Ministry of Education issued in 2009 a guideline concerning the reception of special needs children in kindergartens and schools. The Dubai Community Health Centre also offers a range of support services and therapies including assistance for special needs children.

In many countries, the appropriate taking in charge of children with special needs still remains a challenge. While national laws or government policy allow or encourage access to mainstream services, the official position may not be followed up by an adequately funded national plan to ensure their systematic and appropriate inclusion in mainstream pre-school services. Except for a handful of countries, a picture emerges of public support to these children and their families being irregular, under-funded and non-inclusive.¹

Successful inclusion requires attention to the organisation and management of early childhood education settings, in particular the adaptation of premises to the needs of children with disabilities, the hiring or allocation of specialised staff, and more flexible organisation of group sizes and rooms to cater for specialised sessions. Inclusion also requires responsive pedagogical approaches and curricula, such as more intensive team planning and careful management of activities as staff endeavour to adapt constantly to the learning needs presented by individual children. Parental involvement is also desirable in all programmes for young children, but becomes critical in programmes that include children with special educational needs. Early childhood education centres that receive children with disabilities or other educational differences should also create co-operative agreements with community health and social services agencies, an activity that demands expertise and much investment of time.

In Dubai, despite recent progress by the MoE, the MoSA and the Dubai Community Development Authority, the appropriate care for children with special needs still remains a challenge. The exact number of special needs children is not known and much work remains to be done to ensure their systematic and appropriate inclusion in mainstream pre-school services.

¹ OECD, 2001.





CHAPTER 5

THE EARLY YEARS WORKFORCE



THE EARLY YEARS WORKFORCE

THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF AN EDUCATED, WELL-TRAINED WORKFORCE

Staff working with children have a major impact on their early development and learning. In fact, of all the elements likely to raise the quality and outcomes of an early childhood system, the quality of the staff employed has probably the greatest influence.¹ Research consistently shows the links between strong training and support of staff – including appropriate pay and conditions – and the quality of services.² Staff who have more formal education and more specialised early childhood training provide, in general, more stimulating, warm, and supportive interactions with children.

Despite the research position, the professional training and work conditions of the early childhood workforce in most countries tend to remain low. Wide differences exist between staff in early education (kindergarten) and at nursery level. Staff in kindergartens are generally trained to degree level and remunerated to the level of primary school teachers. By contrast, staff in nursery settings are more likely to have varied backgrounds, ranging from no training whatsoever to a professional/vocational education or a diploma.

Table 7. Profile of teaching staff in Dubai early childhood education services

<i>Qualification</i>	Nurseries	Public KGs	Private KGs
Graduate level or higher	44%	88%	67%
Tertiary diploma	11.5%	12%	21%
Secondary education	26%	--	12%
less than Secondary education	18.5%	--	--
<i>Nationality</i>			
% National	0.8%	97%	2%
% GCC and Arab	9.5%	3%	27%
% Expatriate	89%	--	70.5%

Source: KHDA, 2008; MoSA 2008

¹ CQCO Study Team, 1995, OECD, 2006.

² Bowman et al, 2000; EC Childcare Network, 1996a; EPPE, 2004; Peters, 2009.

As can be seen from the table, staff qualifications are highest in the public kindergartens. KHDA data on the 15 public kindergartens show that in 2008, 12% of teachers had a diploma and 88% of teachers held a B.A, usually in Early Childhood Development. All staff have received initial training in kindergarten teaching, although ongoing training is – according to the principals – unsatisfactory, because of lack of funding. In the private kindergarten and nursery sectors, general education standards are also high, and at first glance, compare well with qualifications in OECD countries.

THE CONTENT OF QUALIFICATIONS

Outside the public kindergarten system, information is not available on the content of qualifications that are classified by centres as ‘graduate level’. In addition, the lack of relevant qualifications may give rise to a significant disadvantage for private early childhood services in Dubai and help to explain the wide variability in quality experienced in our survey. In well-established early childhood systems, lead contact personnel are trained specifically as early childhood teachers or professionals. If they do not have this training, they are obliged to undergo certification studies in order to grasp thoroughly the theory and practice of early childhood education. This does not seem to be the case in the private sector in Dubai: recruitment advertisements for lead ‘teachers’ generally require a native English-speaking background, with a tertiary degree or diploma in any subject, and “experience with young children”. Without further certification studies or, at least, strong in-service training, such staff will not achieve an adequate level of quality for the children in their care. Some consideration may also be given to the use of the word ‘teacher’ within an education context. In most countries and in most professions, a professional title is not granted unless certification or another agreed process of induction has been achieved.

STAFF SALARIES

For staff in public kindergartens and schools, the Ministry of Education appoints only holders of a Bachelor’s degree for the post of a teacher, regardless of the stage they will teach, whether KG or upper grades. The Ministry of Education also sets the minimum salary for teachers, which differs between Emirati and Expatriate teachers. Emirati teacher salaries in the public sector start from AED 11,180 (\$3,063) monthly, while for Expatriate teachers, the monthly salary starts at AED 8,360 (\$2,090) per month.

In private kindergartens, expatriate teachers can be found to be paid a monthly salary starting from AED 2,500 depending on responsibilities, qualifications, type of school (Arabic and Indian schools at the lower end) and curriculum being taught (IB and British curriculum teachers receive the highest pay). They are employed, however, on contract basis and often return to their country of origin after this period. The practice

undermines continuity of relationships with young children, and can make it difficult for a centre to build up an experienced core team. In the private nursery sector, there is no official information available about salaries.

Table 8. Pay scale for public school and kindergarten teachers and principals

Post	Basic salary (AED)	Benefits (AED)	Total monthly salary (AED)
Emirati Starting Teacher	6,575	4,605	11,180= US \$ 3,063
Expatriate Starting Teacher	4,850	3,510	8,360= US \$ 2,290
Emirati starting Principal	6,575	5,205	11,780= US \$ 3,227
Maximum for Emirati Principal	7,675	5,575	13,250= US \$ 3,630

Source: Decree of Federal law No. (11) of 2008 regarding Human Resources in the federal government

IN-SERVICE TRAINING AND SUPPORT

In the public kindergarten system, the organisation of in-service training is the financial responsibility of each kindergarten. According to our interviews¹, such a responsibility is difficult for some kindergartens to assume because of the weak subsidies they receive for this budget line. The common opinion expressed was that teachers in the public kindergartens lack regular and sufficient in-service training and support.

In-service training is also an issue in private nurseries and kindergartens. The responsibility for this training is left to each centre which, in a for-profit system, may lead to its neglect. According to a nursery focus group meeting, only a few nurseries provide an entitlement to in-service training for their staff.

Private professional development opportunities do exist in Dubai, particularly in the universities and colleges. Zayed University offers professional development programs for nurseries or kindergartens, tailor-made according to the request received. In most instances, faculty members visit the centre to assess training needs and, accordingly, an agreed training programme will be designed. Zayed University also incorporates special professional development programs in its summer programmes, for example, an inclusion programme was conducted last summer, covering areas like special education, observation, assessment, classroom behaviour management and concepts of differentiated learning.

Dubai Women's College (from Higher Colleges of Technology, HCT) also provides professional development modules for kindergartens and nurseries. There is also the Gulf Montessori Centre, which provides certificate programs for teachers to become qualified teachers of the Montessori curriculum. Some small private training

¹ Interviews organized by KHDA to a focus group of kindergarten principals in 2009.

groups also operate, such as Early Years Educational Services, which offer training modules accredited by training institutions in other countries.

FUTURE AVAILABILITY OF STAFF

Apart from the private nurseries and kindergartens which generally recruit from abroad, there is a growing pool of graduates in early childhood studies within Dubai itself, at some tertiary colleges and universities. At HCT Dubai Women's College, 28 students are enrolled in early childhood programs, divided according to the different years of the programs. The first batch graduated in June 2010 with 12 students. In Zayed University, 15 students graduated in 2010 from early childhood programs. However, according to information received, most UAE graduates do not intend to work in classrooms in actual contact with children, but aim at higher managerial positions in the early childhood field.

UAE NATIONALS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES

The employment rate of UAE citizens is significantly lower than among expatriates: male employment among nationals reaches 69%, as against 96.3% among non-nationals. Although improving rapidly, the situation for women is even less favourable: only 24.3% of national females are employed – and then mostly in the government sector – compared to 45.6% of female non-nationals.¹

At the same time, there is much room and need for the employment of well-educated national non-graduates in early childhood education and care. In girls' secondary schools, only about half the staff are nationals, but in the nursery sector, the national share is less than 1%. This is not surprising as salaries, career prospects and work conditions are not as attractive in early education as in other government sectors. Yet, all countries need national teachers. The rationale for employing Emirati women in the education sector goes far beyond female employment rates, and touches on the very quality of the education sector. If employed, for example in early childhood education, Emirati women could ensure important government aims in education, in particular:

Preservation and development of the national culture and language;

Continuity for young children, as the current two-year contracting of expatriate staff may undermine the attachment needs of young children and their trust in relationships with adults;

New specialisations, such as special needs teaching, school and family counselling, community education, and early childhood research.

CURRICULUM

An early childhood curriculum will normally define appropriate outcomes that children at a certain age can strive for, and that cover all the broad areas of child development (health and physical development, socio-

¹ The expatriate female employment rate is also very low compared to the rates achieved in many OECD countries, UAE Economics Ministry, 2007.

emotional development, socialisation and values, cognitive and artistic development). It will also include a programme of learning activities to help children reach those goals. The curriculum should normally be supported by specific training of teachers, and linked to an appropriate external inspection and support system. If the curriculum is a national curriculum, it may also include a focus on the national language and culture.

In the public kindergartens and in private Arab kindergartens, the UAE national kindergarten curriculum is used. Private kindergartens and nurseries are free to choose their own curricula. Many advantages flow from the freedom given to services to select their own curricula, on condition that these curricula are authorised by KHDA. The disadvantage of not having a national curriculum to unify centre practice or to safeguard Emirati culture and language can be overcome by the formulation and publication of a state Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care.

With few exceptions, English is the language of instruction in nurseries and many nurseries act on the assumption that full immersion in the second language is appropriate for language development at this age. In consequence, children's development in their first language is not being given priority.

In parallel, as English language teaching is important for Dubai parents, some consideration may be given to allowing the national kindergartens to employ native English-language teachers for this task.

SOME CONCLUSIONS:

Considering the importance of early childhood education and care as evidenced in this report, further consideration should be given to ensure:

The awareness of all parties involved of the critical importance of the early stages of a child's life to the development of the individual and of society.

Achieving a desired level of quality of early education is an activity that is better achieved with all parties involved.

The current governance and structure of early childhood education in Dubai brings a key advantage of knowledge, expertise and resources already available in various authorities. A forum among these would bring great opportunities for building a framework based on global best practices.



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