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The Association Between Teacher Licensing Policy on Teaching Quality in Dubai Private Schools (2015-2017)

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the association between a licensing policy on teacher quality and school ratings in Dubai's private schools. The research focuses on the association between the policy and improvements in teacher quality. Specifically, this study explores changes in school ratings from 2011 to 2017, and looks into significant one-year changes in teaching practices within schools participating in the pilot phase of the policy. Using a mixed-methods approach, the data revealed no significant differences in teaching quality or school ratings. The findings suggest that the policy's impact is not yet evident, requiring more time for measurable effects. Recommendations highlight the beneficial collaboration between schools and teacher certification programs to prepare educators with the skills and knowledge to enhance teacher quality and alignment with the standards.

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Introduction

As part of the Vision 2021, the UAE set out major national policy agendas as well as strategies to achieve these targets. One of the six major policy initiatives was education reform. This policy set out to achieve a "first-rate education system" as a priority in the Vision 2021 (Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, 2024). The policy aims to achieve several objectives as part of a national education policy. One of the objectives highlighted is a higher number of highly qualified teachers with all teachers in the UAE licensed by 2021 (Warner & Burton, 2017).

Private education in the UAE is becoming more prevalent, especially in Dubai, where over 34% of Emirati students are enrolled in private educational institutions, and this percentage is expected to increase over the coming years (Whichschooladvisor, 2015). Private education is preferred among expats and citizens alike since it is widely considered to offer a higher quality of education as opposed to the poor performance of public educational institutions (ADEC, 2013; Whichschooladvisor, 2015). Due to the relatively large size of the private education sector, private schools are crucial in achieving the national policy agendas in the Vision 2021 (Thacker & Cuadra, 2014).

Dubai has established itself as a center of innovation in the UAE and has traditionally been ahead of the curve. It was the first emirate to adopt standards across the private education sector. To ensure these standards are maintained and carry out policy initiatives in the private sector, the emirate of Dubai created the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) in 2006 (International Trade Administration, 2023; Thacker & Cuadra, 2014). The KHDA is responsible for quality assurance for private educational institutions in the UAE. As a department of the KHDA, the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB), established in 2007, carries out inspections of private schools in the emirate of Dubai and provides ratings on school performance (Thacker & Cuadra, 2014). In addition to that, it is tasked with complying with the 2021 policy initiatives for education reform.

Along with developing a school assessment framework, KHDA initiated a teaching certification program across the emirate in coordination with the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) of the UAE. According to the NQA, teachers nationwide will soon be required to qualify under a uniform licensing system (Tamim & Colburn, 2019). The system will standardize qualifications for Emirati and expatriate teachers in private and public schools. The new licensing system was introduced in 2016 with plans for full implementation by 2021 (Tamim & Colburn, 2019; Warner & Burton, 2017). The system is co-developed by the Ministry of Education (MOE), the NQA, KHDA, the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK), and the Abu Dhabi Centre for Technical and Vocational Education Training (ACTVET) (MOE, 2017; Tamim & Colburn, 2019). The NQA is also working with the MOE on a handbook on teaching careers, outlining employment categories and the knowledge and skills required for each level of education. Currently, there are certain minimum requirements that applicant teachers must meet to qualify for a teacher's position, whether in public or private schools (MOE, 2017; Oxford Business Group, 2024; UAE Ministry of Presidential Affairs, 2012).

The main objective set by the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) and the KHDA teacher training programs is to develop the quality of education in the UAE, specifically in private schools (KHDA, 2018; Thacker & Cuadra, 2014). The UAE government has begun to create a structure within education reform for certifying teachers to ensure teachers are highly qualified and to also ensure private schools and their educators are capable of competing globally (Gallagher, 2019; KHDA, 2024; Warner & Burton, 2017).

Problem statement

There are concerns regarding school performance in Dubai, both in the public and private sectors, where two-thirds of schools are rated below average standards (ADEC, 2013). These rankings urge mandatory reform in the education sector, with a special focus on teacher qualifications. The government is anticipating that the new licensing requirement will improve teacher quality and standardise educational programs to align with international standards.

Research questions

The main aim of this research is to investigate the association between the licensing policy on teacher quality and school ratings in Dubai's private schools. The research aspires to answer the following questions:

Can the new licensing policy improve teaching quality in Dubai's private schools?

Are there any differences between the schools' overall ratings from 2011 until 2017, before and after implementing the licensing policy?

Significance of the Study

The UAE, specifically Dubai, is aiming to ensure that all educators in the country are internationally qualified by requiring a licensing certificate. This ensures that all teachers in the classroom are qualified to address the student's needs. This study will assess the effectiveness of the policy being piloted in private schools in Dubai.

Literature Review

Senge (1990) claims that effective leaders need to concentrate on clear purpose, collaborative planning and learning within the organizational culture. Hattie (2003) claims that improving effective education is important to match the economic vision and goals of a country, as well as to meet international standards and to improve teacher confidence and student achievement. This is the same aim of the KHDA licensing policy that concentrates on the UAE's vision in consideration of their aims for educational reform by improving teachers' performance for the needs of students and society. But if a licensing policy is to be effective in preparing teachers to be competent and of high quality in the classroom, the program must also have a reliable method for assessing the system of teacher certification.

Teacher Quality

According to KHDA (2017) there are four criteria to evaluate teacher quality. The first measure of high quality is lesson planning. Lessons should be detailed to address the various needs of the students, as well as being aligned with the standards and outcomes of the curriculum. The second measure is focused on the classroom environment. This criterion looks at the relationship between the teacher and the students and how well the teacher manages the classroom. The third measure evaluates how well the teacher differentiates to the needs of the students. This includes differentiating lessons for individual needs. The last measure addresses critical 21st-century skills for developing students' critical thinking skills and solving problems. A focus on the four C's (communication, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity) supports students in developing their ability as independent learners and builds on the skills students need for the future.

Research demonstrates that teacher quality has a direct impact on student learning (Boyd et al., 2007; Jimerson & Haddock, 2015; Mincu, 2015). Because of the importance of teacher quality, creating a system of teacher training is important for ensuring performance, including establishing a valid and reliable system for teacher certification. Research has also shown that certified teachers are more equipped in the classroom (Boyd et al., 2007; Kunter et al., 2013; Libman, 2012). Research conducted by Shannag et al. (2013) claims that teacher qualification affects students' results. In their study, a majority of the Singaporean teachers were certified, but the teachers in Saudi Arabia were not. This lack of certification translated into poor subject knowledge and pedagogy knowledge (Shannag et al., 2013). The research also found that Singaporean teachers were more prepared and knowledgeable than Saudi teachers even though they had almost the same number of years of teaching experience. This research demonstrated that teacher quality can be linked with teacher licensing.

According to the European Commission (2012), teachers are an essential part of evaluating the quality of schools because teachers have a direct impact on student learning and student achievement, and it is important to focus on improving teacher quality. Because teachers are vital to student learning and school improvement, teacher preparation programs should focus on ensuring competence in subject knowledge, preparing teachers to address individual student needs, analyzing data to drive teaching, integrating technology, and supporting reflective practices to ensure teachers are continually building on their craft by learning new methods and strategies (European Commission, 2012 b).

Teacher Licensing

However, many systems for certifying teachers need review. The APA Framework for assessing teacher programs shows the need for establishing a standard and reliable system for teacher observations (Brabeck et al., 2016). Other reports also demonstrate the need for teacher licensing programs to have a set structure that is well-organized and that covers a range of important topics related to curriculum, educational theories, and assessment (Mincu, 2015; European Commission, 2012). Other important factors of teacher preparation programs should also include: building interpersonal skills, practicing professional dialogue, cultivating innovation, and enhancing collaborative and reflective practices and skills for establishing professional learning communities for improving practice in the classrooms (Dodeen, 2013; Mincu, 2015; European Commission, 2012).

Additional components would also include processes for assessing teacher interest in professional development and strategies for adapting lessons and practice to address the unique needs of students in the classrooms (Spelman, 2007; Hanushek, 2009; European Commission, 2012). These suggestions align teaching practices in the classroom with teacher effectiveness and school

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performance outcomes. In addition, licensing programs should provide educators with ongoing support with a clear framework outlining research-based strategies to meet the needs of students and society (European Commission, 2012; Dodeen, 2013; Jimerson & Haddock, 2015; Shidler, 2008).

Effective Teacher Preparation APA Framework: Data and Evaluation Issues

The report is significant because it allows policymakers to make better-informed decisions regarding the programs of evaluation and preparation of educators. Brabeck (2014) recognizes the importance of the students' assessment of their own teachers, however, also recognizes that this sort of data cannot be acquired easily. An alternative would be to assess the academic achievement of students through standardized test results connected to teaching. This method evaluates the progress of student learning over a specific time, ideally one academic year.

Because teacher quality directly impacts student learning and student achievement, it is vital to provide a clear structure for building teacher capacity and ongoing support for teacher improvement, which is vital to sustained school improvement and reform (Mincu, 2015; Spelman, 2007). In addition, the system needs to provide a sturdy system for ensuring teacher training programs support new teachers (Dodeen, 2013). These systems need to take a holistic approach to teacher preparation programs that look at multiple areas for training and align with standards to improve teacher quality overall (Caena, 2014). Since teachers are vital for nurturing student success and learning, it follows that teacher preparation programs are essential since they develop high-quality teachers who can support student outcomes (Tatto, 2015). It is important to have systems in place to support teachers in developing their knowledge to improve their effectiveness which includes coaching and varied evaluative procedures and measures (Jimerson & Haddock, 2015; Shidler, 2008).

Other Factors Influencing Teacher and School Performance

Literature has found a number of factors outside the APA framework that affect school performance and teacher performance (Ingvarson & Rowe, 2008; Kearns et al., 2015; Radinger, 2014; Skourdoumbis & Gale, 2013). These studies reveal the complex nature of educational programs and provide a broader perspective when evaluating the program. When constructing a form to evaluate teaching, the important aspects of good or effective teaching are considered. When evaluating the validity of any instrument, a fundamental issue is to first define the complex construct of effective teaching. Unfortunately, the system of evaluating teachers is complex and often determined by many factors (Caena, 2014; Radinger, 2014; Spelman, 2007; Tatto, 2015).

Research suggests that teacher appraisal is important because it is a means of assessing teacher quality which has a direct link to school reform and school improvement (Hanushek, 2009; Radinger, 2014). Systems of teacher development and training should align with teacher appraisal systems to ensure a multifaceted approach to evaluating teacher quality, student achievement, and teacher training programs (Kearnsat et al., 2015; Skourdoumbis & Gale, 2013; Ingvarson & Rowe, 2008). The research demonstrates that highly qualified teachers have a beneficial influence on student outcomes and teacher training is a vital part of improving the quality of schools. The goal is to develop a system for teacher training that ensures educators are able to go into the classroom and provide students with high-quality instruction that aligns with research-based strategies. Also, the system for assessing teacher quality should align with teacher training programs to ensure data are used to address problems in the program to improve educator preparation programs (Brabeck et al., 2014).

This research aims to study the difference in the teaching for effective learning section in the inspection report provided by KHDA for the piloted private schools in Dubai before and after implementing the teacher licensing pilot program (2016-2017). It also seeks to evaluate if private schools will be able to achieve the specific licensing policy of the Vision of 2021. The main purpose of the licensing program is to improve teaching effectiveness and guarantee high standards across the country. A secondary aim of the research is to examine the inspection results of each school from 2011 to 2017 for any significant difference throughout these years. This paper will examine data related to the years 2015 and 2016 before and after the implementation of the new policy, namely the teaching for effective learning section of the inspection report. The reason for choosing this time frame is to ensure data accuracy and minimize errors caused by the change of teachers.

Conceptual Framework

The APA (American Psychology Association) task force report, Assessing and Evaluating Teacher Preparation Programs, is used to evaluate the UAE licensing policy which was piloted in the private schools in Dubai. The framework utilizes the following three main criteria as the basis of effective teacher evaluation programs: value-

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added assessments of student achievement, standardized observation protocols, and surveys of teacher performance (Brabeck et al., 2014). This study is based on the second criterion which highlights the importance of using standardized observation protocols. The APA framework states that any effective teacher program consists of standardized evaluations, especially in a teacher education program. It highlights the importance of integrating the interaction and behavior of the teachers in the classrooms on a day-to-day basis to identify effective teaching practices (Brabeck et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the process should contain elements of validity, reliability, and fairness to qualify as a measurement tool of classroom interactions that impact student learning. In addition, the observation instrument must be uniform in application, e.g. the training protocol and scoring directions. The observation instrument must include reliability information and training criteria. It must measure teacher quality consistently throughout lesson observations (e.g. different rates, length of the observation period, and variability across lessons). But most importantly, there needs to be an evident connection between the observation results and the student learning goals. These observations must be directly and meaningfully related to the student's learning.

This research uses the KHDA annual school inspection report. KHDA inspection reports act as a comprehensive survey of private schools across Dubai and assess schools across a number of criteria, including teaching effectiveness. These surveys are standardized in that the KHDA has a basic framework for how schools are assessed across the criterion, and they are comprehensive in scope. Additionally, all schools are required to be part of the assessment. The KHDA report measures effective teaching and acts as a reliable, standardised observation protocol instrument. Data used for this study was taken from the KHDA inspection reports for the overall ratings for all schools and data for the thirteen piloted schools for effective teaching and learning.

Purpose of the Study

The study examines the impact of the teacher licensing policy on teaching quality and school performance in Dubai's private schools. Specifically, this study analyzes school performance data from 2011 to 2017 to investigate whether implementing the licensing requirement improved teacher quality and whether these improvements are reflected in changes in overall school ratings before and after the policy's implementation. Analyzing the school performance data from 2011 to 2017 offers a window for exploring the effectiveness of the licensing policy as a reform initiative, as well as the policy's capacity to align Dubai's private schools' educational quality with international standards

Methodology

The methodology research uses data relating to the DSIB yearly assessment report released by the KHDA during the period 2011-2017. This data contains information for both the pilot schools participating in the initial certification programs, along with the rest of the schools on the KHDA school database. Data was completed and summarized so that statistical analysis could be conducted to answer the research questions. This research uses a post-positivist approach. The post-positivist approach has been selected based on the potential of the data to portray an accurate picture of how the policy has affected performance (Creswell, 2014). As has been pointed out, there are a range of other factors that could affect performance.

Research Design

To study the quality of the teacher licensing policy, information on the inspection reports for the pilot schools focused on the teaching for effectiveness learning data before and after the pilot program for the licensing policy. A mixed methodology research approach is performed. In addition to the study, the inspection school rates for all the private schools from 2011 to 2017 were also analyzed. The quantitative research method used hypothesis testing to draw a statistical conclusion regarding the differences in performance before and after the implementation of the pilot program. The significance level used in the hypothesis testing was 5% to put the findings into context and to determine the other factors in the changing performance. This method was used to gather more information on the effect of the licensing policy on schools of the piloted program. The qualitative methods used included analysis of the effectiveness of teaching in the piloted schools to indicate the factors affecting teaching quality in the piloted schools.

Results

The sample consisted of all school inspections available combined with school rating reports. These were considered together, and a separate data set consisting of thirteen schools participating in the pilot program was summarized. The time period considered for all schools in the KHDA database was 2011-2017. Table 1 below provides a summary of the data.

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Table 1.

Dubai Private Schools in KHDA Database (2011-2017)

	2011/12DSIB Rating	2012/13DSIB Rating	2013/14DSIB Rating	2014/15DSIB Rating	2015/16DSIB Rating	2016/17DSIB Rating
Mean	2.50	2.53	2.61	2.64	2.86	2.89
Standard Error	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.10	0.09	0.09
Median	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Mode	2.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.06	1.08	1.03	1.09	1.07	1.07
Sample Variance	1.12	1.17	1.07	1.20	1.14	1.14
Kurtosis	1.69	1.52	1.72	1.32	-0.22	-0.15
Skewness	0.29	0.29	0.35	0.27	0.62	0.50
Range	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.00
Minimum	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Sum	330.00	334.00	344.00	348.00	378.00	381.00
Count	132.00	132.00	132.00	132.00	132.00	132.00

Initially, there were 194 schools from the KHDA database with 132 selected for analysis. However, certain adjustments were made to eliminate the following:

- Newly formed schools with no rating
- Schools with no ratings through the period
- Schools with some report years missing

Research Instrument

The inspection documents measured school effectiveness in six areas:

1. Student achievement
2. Student personal and social development and their innovation skills
3. Teaching and assessment
4. Curriculum
5. The protection, care, guidance, and support of inclusion
6. Leadership and management

The research will perform a t-test and an ANOVA test:

T-test: The test will compare the school rating between all private schools between 2011-2016 and the piloted schools in 2017.

ANOVA test: Based on the above, 132 schools were selected for analysis. The data show that the mean score of all schools started an upward trend before the change in teacher training pilot regarding private schools. Skewness results were near zero, which indicates that the data is normally distributed, which is a prerequisite for conducting the t-test.

Table 2.

Pilot Private Schools in Dubai in KHDA Database (2011-2017)

	2011/12 DSIB Rating	*2012/13 DSIB Rating*	*2013/14 DSIB Rating*	*2014/15 DSIB Rating*	*2015/16 DSIB Rating*	*2016/17 DSIB Rating*
Mean	3.00	2.93	2.93	3.07	3.36	3.36
Standard Error	0.31	0.37	0.37	0.35	0.29	0.29
Median	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Mode	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.18	1.38	1.38	1.33	1.08	1.08
Sample Variance	1.38	1.92	1.92	1.76	1.17	1.17
Kurtosis	-0.39	0.54	0.54	1.40	-0.94	-0.94
Skewness	0.99	-0.06	-0.06	-0.38	0.43	0.43
Range	3.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	3.00
Minimum	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	2.00
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Sum	42.00	41.00	41.00	43.00	47.00	47.00
Count	14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00

Data Analysis

Data related to pilot licensing schools were selected for the period 2011-2017. A t-test was conducted to determine if there was a statistical difference between the school ratings before the implantation and school rations after implementation. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

T-Test School Rating

	2011-2016 Average	*2016/17 DSIB Rating*
Mean	3.06	3.36
Variance	1.51	1.17
Observations	14.00	
Pooled Variance	1.34	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	26.00	

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t Stat	-0.69
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.25
t Critical one-tail	1.71
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.50
t Critical two-tail	2.06

The two-tailed test's p value is 0.49, which is greater than the significance level of 5%. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, and there are no significant differences between the average school rating before the implementation of the new teacher licensing policy and the school year after. Table 4 details the teacher quality after the implementation of the new licensing policy.

Table 4.

T-Test of Teacher Quality

	2015-2016 Rate	***2016-2017 Rate***
Mean	3.08	3.08
Variance	1.08	0.74
Observations		
Pooled Variance	0.91	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	24.00	
***t* Stat**	0	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.50	
***t* Critical one-tail**	1.72	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.00	
***t* Critical two-tail**	2.07	

Discussion

Results for both the school ratings and teacher effectiveness ratings were tested to determine a significant difference in results arising from the initiation of a pilot program. This was achieved by conducting independent t-tests for:

All schools over a five-year period

Pilot schools in the five years before the program and the year after the pilot program

Teaching effectiveness of the pilot program in the five-year period and the year after

It was found that there was no significant difference in either teaching quality or school quality as a result of introducing the program in looking at data from KHDA inspection results. The independent t-test resulted in a failure to reject the null hypothesis and there was no significant difference in the school rating for all the schools selected. One of the fundamental objectives of the pilot program was to motivate other schools in the private sector to have their teachers register and qualify for the teacher licensing program. Therefore, it was expected by KHDA that there would be a resulting improvement in the ratings of each school. This was not the case as there was no significant difference found in the ratings of the schools. This result extended to the pilot schools.

When an independent t-test was conducted taking only the pilot schools, there was also no significant difference found as the null hypothesis was rejected. These results provide an answer to the first research question. The second research question relates to the improvement in teaching effectiveness (teaching quality) as a result of the program. As with the school ratings, there was again no significant difference found in teaching quality in the pilot schools. This is an especially surprising result as previous studies indicated that teaching certification boosts the quality of teaching at a school.

Content of the KHDA Inspection Report

To address the research questions a content analysis of the 2015-2017 KHDA inspection reports was needed because the t-test results did not provide clear information about the effectiveness of the licensing policy because the sample size (13 schools) was limited. The KHDA inspection report is used to analyse the effectiveness of the licensing policy. After looking through the report before implementing the licensing policy (pre) and after one year of this implementation (post), the important aspects are further highlighted in relation to what KHDA defines as quality teaching and teachers' effectiveness.

The first content evaluation looks at two schools (Al Ittihad Private School (BR) and The Indian High School) that were awarded a "4: Very good" prior to implementation of the licensing policy and then received a "3: Good" the next school year after implementation of the licensing policy. Both schools had a decrease in scores. After looking through the KHDA inspection report under teaching effectiveness at Al Ittihad, areas that saw a decline were in planning, the classroom environment, and in student questioning. Before implementing the licensing policy, Al Ittihad School had a system that allowed teachers to plan together. Planning together supported their ability to implement new strategies for motivating students. These strategies included differentiation, using technology in their classes and supporting students in developing 21st century skills. However, after the implementation of the policy teachers no longer planned together and there were noticeable changes in teacher quality and in teacher effectiveness.

The Indian High School also faced similar problems. Prior to the licensing pilot program, teachers planned good lessons but struggled to differentiate and provide students with opportunities to extend their learning. After the implementation of the licensing policy, they do not give all students an opportunity to be independent learners, and they do not differentiate among them, teachers ask both balance open and closed questions, the students' answers require short answers with follow-up questions to extend students learning .some teachers provides supports to students in most of the lessons, but others do not have support for students learning needs in their planning and class activities. The changes at both Ettihad and the Indian School demonstrate a lack of accountability within the training program. If the program is going to be successful there should be structures in place to ensure teachers are collaborating and applying what they are learning in their classrooms.

The second content analysis looks at two schools (Jumeira Baccalaureate School and Universal American School) that were awarded "3: Good" prior to implementation of the licensing program and then awarded "4: Very good" after implementation of the pilot licensing program. At Universal American School, teachers are knowledgeable and know how to engage students and teachers know how to develop key skills students need to acquire for the future. Planning is aligned with the outcomes of the curriculum and the standards and resource and activities used in the lessons are high quality and engaging. Further, teachers know how to manage their classes, they know how to deal with their students and they are aware about their strengths and weaknesses. However, lesson progression was not as solid. After implementation of the licensing program, Universal American School continued to build on their strengths and began to use many strategies to differentiate lessons for students which was enhanced in the 2016-2017 school year.

Jumeira Baccalaureate School has knowledgeable teachers that plan lessons aligned with the IB world criteria. The curriculum is rigorous and engaging for students. Teachers had good relationship with students and classrooms were managed well. The school also had differentiated lessons and used a variety of resources to encourage critical thinking skills and a greater variety of topics. The one difference between the two reports is that Jumeira had much more consistency across the school after implementation of the licensing programs. More teachers addressed student needs in a variety of ways and lessons were more effective across the school. Teachers differentiated and accommodated instruction to address the diverse needs of individual students. Also, relationships were excellent and teachers were successful in creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

In both the case for Universal American School and Jumeira Baccalaureate, the leadership took an active role in developing teacher skills. The KHDA report details how UAS had high teacher retention because of collegiality and collaborative professional development that supported teacher development (KHDA, 2015). Jumeira also demonstrated an involved leader with the principal of Jumeira being the only head of school to participate in the pilot licensing program because he believed that it was important to play an active role in teacher development and to be aware of what the program consisted (Clarke, 2017).

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Conclusion

This paper aimed to answer the following research questions:

Can the new licensing policy bring about improvements in teacher quality to education in Dubai's private schools?

Are there any noticeable differences between the school ratings in the years ranging from 2011 to 2017?

Is there any significant change in teaching in the piloted schools within a one-year period?

The above research questions were answered using a series of independent t-tests of significant difference and analysis based on the second criterion of the APA Task Force Framework, standardized observation protocols assessed using data gathered from KHDA annual school reports. Data collected from the database results in no significant difference in teaching quality and school rating relating to the period 2011-2017. Therefore, it could be concluded that the impact of the program was not evident across all schools in achieving the results set out in its policy objectives relating to Education Strategy 2020. More time is needed to measure the impact of the policy.

Yet, the trend of the school ratings over the period suggests that overall school quality has improved but has been stagnant for the past two years. Teacher quality has shown similar results. Therefore, at least it is a partial indication that the program is ineffective. Yet, there are other factors to be considered. First, the length of study is short and only 1 year after the pilot program, where literature recommends a three-year study into a certification program. Furthermore, there may be other factors which must be considered. One is that student performance should be used to measure effectiveness of teacher quality improvement. The KHDA criterion for teacher effectiveness does not integrate this aspect and could be distorting results. True effectiveness of the program is a measurement that shows that teachers are applying certification and training skills directly in the classroom and having a positive impact on the student's learning and achievement.

Recommendations

Teacher certification outcomes should be directly linked to student achievement, emphasizing the importance of teacher quality in driving educational success. To enhance this connection, more schools should actively participate in teacher certification programs, ensuring that educators are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge. Evaluating teacher performance and school ratings should incorporate a comprehensive view of the classroom environment, including thorough teacher observations. Extending the duration of teacher certification programs would allow for a more in-depth assessment of teacher quality. Additionally, school leaders should integrate the standards outlined in licensing policies into their evaluations and professional development initiatives, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and alignment with educational goals.

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