



# World Data on Education

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### Principles and general objectives of education

The general objectives of education in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) follow the directives of His Highness the President regarding human development, emphasizing that “Man is the most precious value and the most important element in the State.” The general objectives of education are based on the following principles:

- Education is considered a national investment. The State provides its nationals and expatriates with all the necessary facilities.
- Education is a main factor in the achievement of stability and national security.
- Education should match national and community needs, as well as development requirements.
- The efficiency of educational institutions, the performance rates and the use of educational resources should be improved; the development plans in the field of education should be expanded and the principle of equal opportunities in all stages of education should be adopted.
- The education policy should be based on scientific and objective principles and foster creative trends under the umbrella of comprehensive planning, allowing talents and gifts to emerge and distinguish themselves in all fields.

The following general objectives of education are taken into consideration:

- inculcating faith in God and His prophets, as well as moral and human values;
- inculcating pride in Arab nationalism, the nation itself and the homeland;
- ensuring the student’s physical, intellectual and emotional development;
- training individuals about the duties of citizenship and political and community participation;
- inculcating the values and practices of work, production and perfection;
- preparing human beings for the future (initiation, creativity, planning and organization);
- contributing to the realization of comprehensive development and bridging the gap in technological achievement;
- developing methodical, critical and rational thinking;
- eradicating illiteracy as a priority case, since it affects society and its growth;
- emphasizing that education is a lifelong process.

The recent Ministry of Education Strategy 2010-2020 aims at delivering a student-centered model focused on improving students’ outcomes, school life, and equality to meet world-class standards as well as promoting national identity. The general outcome of the strategy would be to create students ready for a lifetime career



and excellent teachers to support them. The desired outcome is to create students that are:

- proud model citizens, cherishing their national identity, embracing the U.A.E.'s history, culture, and Islamic values, and promoting forgiveness and tolerance;
- knowledgeable and creative, proficient in all relevant subjects like languages, sciences and humanities, that will grow to become avid lifetime learners and well rounded adults, contributing to the progress of the nation;
- proficient in needed skills, armed with critical thinking, analytical reasoning and strong communication skills, and destined to excel in higher education and in the workplace of the future;
- fit and active individuals, equipped with the necessary aspiration, motivation and knowledge to lead a healthy and productive life. (MOE, 2010).

## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The Ministry of Education refers to a number of laws and regulations to organize its work on the basis of a high performance standard. It is guided by Cabinet decrees, Ministerial resolutions and administrative regulations. The most important laws related to education are identified below.

**Federal Law No. 1-M7** of 1972 concerns specializations of ministries and Minister's authority. This federal law states that the duties of the ministries are to bear the responsibilities of educational affairs, to supervise and improve them; to make education available to every citizen and make it compulsory at the primary stage; to draw up educational plans and prepare curricula, examination systems and literacy programmes; and to establish schools and institutes, license private schools and supervise them.

**Federal Law No. 11** of 1972 covers compulsory education. This law states that education is compulsory in the primary stage and free at all stages for U.A.E. nationals; that it is the duty of the state to provide school buildings, textbooks and teachers; that compulsory education starts at the primary stage at age 6 and lasts as specified by regulations and laws; and that the Ministry lays down the curricula, scheme of work, subjects to be taught, methods of promotion, number of school years and whatever else may be acquired for good performance.

**Federal Law No. 9** of 1972 deals with private schools. This law defines private schools that are concerned with general, technical education and vocational training prior to higher education. It also defines the objectives of private schools and the conditions for licensing them, by means of the Ministerial decree No. 454 (1980). It states that Islamic studies, Arabic language and social studies are compulsory in all private schools in which Arab students make up more than 50% of the total enrolment. The syllabus for these subjects is established by the Ministry. It also states that special departments and supervisory bodies of the Ministry supervise private schools.



. The University of the United Arab Emirates was set up in 1977 according to **Federal Law No. 4** of 1976. In 1992, this Law was amended to stipulate the autonomy of the University after the creation of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

**Federal Law No. 29** of 2006 on the Rights of Persons with Special Needs seeks to protect the rights of persons with special needs and to provide them with all services within the limits of their abilities and capabilities. The State guarantees this class equality with other members of society with regards to legislation and economic and social development programs. The State takes the measures necessary to prevent discrimination against them on the basis that they are persons with special needs.

The Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) was established in accordance with **Law No. 24** of September 2005.

Some of the most important organizational laws concerning education are decrees issued by the Cabinet. Others are Ministerial Resolutions organizing the work at the Ministry and defining certain tasks and responsibilities, in addition to the administrative circulars issued by the senior Ministry officials – dealing with funds allocations and work organization in the different sectors. Some important regulatory laws are listed below.

The **Cabinet Decree No. 1** of 5 January 1987 defines the Ministry's objectives and directs the Ministry's potentials and resources towards achieving these objectives. It regulates the formation of a Supreme Committee for Education Policy and defines its functions. It defines the functions of the Ministry's leading figures, sectors and departments. It also forms educational zones and offices and defines their functions.

The **Ministerial Resolution No. 378/2** of 30 October 1988 deals with allocating decision-making bodies and accomplishing technical, administrative and financial tasks between schools, zones and the Head Office. It also defines the responsibilities for the preparation of follow-up, evaluation of standards and assessment of administrative and technical levels prior to submitting them to the Committee for Administrative Regulations and Development. Following this, the **Ministerial Decree No. 345/2** of 1989 defined the course and steps of the planning cycle of the Ministry's activities, as well as its various sectors in addition to the task of coordinating the activities, projects and programmes approved by the Committee.

The **Cabinet Decree No. 7** of 15 May 1991 deals with the formation of a permanent Ministerial Advisory Committee to study all matters dealing with education policies and educating a generation equipped with science, morals and Islamic ethics and precepts. This Committee is concerned with the study of the general structure of education policy, projects of agreements and conventions related to education, culture, manpower planning, future needs and any jobs concerning education entrusted to it by the Cabinet. A secretariat submits all the conclusions of the meetings to the general secretariat of the Cabinet which, in turn, submits them to the Cabinet.

The most important laws and regulations issued by Ministerial resolutions are summarized below.



The Law issued by **Ministerial Resolution No. 480/2** of 1989 and amended by **Ministerial Resolution No. 20/2** of 1996, concerns the enrolment of students at schools of general and technical education; the procedures of enrolment, date and documents needed; and the transference of students and teachers from one school to another.

The Law issued by **Ministerial Resolution No. 2011/2** of 1995 deals with the assessment of primary stage pupils and the provision of data about primary stage branches, evaluation system, transference regulations, registers and cards.

The Law issued by **Ministerial Resolution No. 624/2** of 1991 concerns evaluation and examination regulations for the preparatory and secondary stages, after adopting the two-term school year. It also deals with the introduction of evaluations – their regulations, procedure, requirements and administrative and technical prerequisites.

Article 17 of the **Constitution** of U.A.E. (1971) states that education shall be a fundamental factor for the progress of society, that it shall be compulsory in its primary stage and free of charge at all stages. The law shall prescribe the necessary plans for the propagation and spread of education at various levels and for the eradication of illiteracy. In 2001, the Ministry of Education reported that basic education (covering nine years of schooling) is compulsory. (MOE, 2001).

## **Administration and management of the education system**

The United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) is a federal state established in December 1971 and consisting of seven emirates, namely (in order of size) Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Umm al Qaywayn, Ajman, Al Fajayrah, and Ras al Khaymah. The federal **Supreme Council**, consisting of rulers of the seven emirates, is the highest constitutional authority. It is also the highest legislative and executive authority, and it draws up the general policies and approves the various federal legislations. The **Cabinet**, or Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister, is the executive authority for the federation. Under the control of the President and the Supreme Council, it manages all internal and foreign affairs of the federation under its constitution and federal laws. Corresponding to the federal institutions are the local governments of the seven emirates. Varying in size, they have evolved along with the country's growth. However, their mechanisms differ from emirate to emirate, depending on factors such as population, area, and degree of development. The largest and most populous emirate, Abu Dhabi, has its own central governing organ, the Executive Council, under which there are a number of separate departments, equivalent to ministries. Abu Dhabi also has a National Consultative Council, chaired by a Speaker, with 60 members selected from among the emirate's main tribes and families. The Dubai Executive Council, established in 2003, has similar functions for the UAE's second largest emirate. Sharjah and Ajman also have Executive Councils.

The **Ministry of Education** is responsible for general education, literacy and adult education programmes. Higher education is under the responsibility of the **Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**. Special education schools are under the responsibility of the **Ministry of Social Affairs**. Schools are licensed by



the relevant educational zone in the emirate in which they operate. The Ministry of Education oversees all emirate-based education councils and authorities. Nurseries, daycare centers, and crèches are licensed by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

In September 2010 a new organizational structure was approved for the Ministry of Education. The new structure identifies the Ministry's tasks as providing education for all citizens of the U.A.E., developing educational plans, preparing curricula and examination systems and adult education programmes, in addition to establishing schools and institutes, as well as monitoring their performance. Under the new system, the Ministry is divided into five organizational units. The structure defines the role of the Minister as well as the tasks and functions of the Director General of the Ministry of Education and five executives directors concerned with overseeing the development and implementation of relevant policies, standards and plans in the following five sectors: private education, education policies, activities and school environment, educational processes, and support services.

The **Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA)**, under the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, is the federal government's quality assurance agency charged with promoting educational excellence across diverse institutions of higher learning in the U.A.E. Through licensure of post-secondary educational institutions, and accreditation of individual programmes, the Commission strives to assure high quality education, consistent with international standards.

The **National Admissions and Placement Office (NAPO)** was established in 1996 to improve the transition from secondary to higher education. NAPO is responsible for processing the applications for admission from students who wish to either receive a scholarship to study abroad or attend the United Arab Emirates University, higher colleges of technology or Zayed University. Those students who apply through the NAPO are required to take the Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) which consists of two tests, an English test and a mathematics test.

The **Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC)**, established in 2005, is an independent corporate body that seeks to develop and implement innovative educational policies, plans and programmes that aim to improve education in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and support educational institutions and staff in a manner that helps achieve the objectives of national development. Recently, the Ministerial Council for Services issued Decree No. 1/244 of 2009 to transfer administrators and teachers working in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi from the Ministry of Education Abu Dhabi to ADEC with effect from 2010. ADEC has been given authority to deliver education in the emirate of Abu Dhabi and therefore has become responsible for all staff working in the three educational zones in Abu Dhabi in terms of administration and financial affairs.

The **Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA)** of the government of Dubai was established in 2006 to develop all knowledge and human resource sectors in Dubai. Its mission is to assure quality and to improve accessibility to education, learning and human development, with the engagement of the community. The main objectives of the Authority are the following: (i) participate in the development of a comprehensive strategy for knowledge and human resources



development, and supervise its implementation in coordination with the concerned government entities; (ii) work with concerned government entities in developing the educational outcomes at all levels and in accordance with market requirements; (iii) establish and manage all educational and vocational institutions by assessing their performance in accordance with the laws in the country; (iv) develop and establish scholarships policies and regulations and allocate the scholarship fund in accordance with these regulations; (v) license and regulate private schools and other educational institutions, including appraisal and attestation, and setting standards and criteria for the services provided in accordance with and compatible to, the general policies of the concerned federal ministries; and (vi) supervise all educational services and institutions (such as schools, universities, institutions, and training centers) within the free zones in Dubai, including appraisal and attestation, and setting the necessary standards and criteria for the services provided.

The **National Institute for Vocational Education (NIVE)** was established in 2006 in order to provide students with the opportunity to gain specific job competencies geared to enhancing their employability. NIVE is an autonomously managed organization affiliated with the KHDA Dubai. NIVE's mission is to provide flexible, high quality, lifelong, world-class vocational education, benchmarked against professional standards that will meet the current and future needs of stakeholders, the government, community, employers and individuals in the U.A.E. and the Gulf region. Edexcel International—a merger of the UK vocational awarding body, Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), and the University of London Examinations and Assessment Council (ULEAC)—, certifies that the programmes meet requirements for accreditation by BTEC. Qualifications offered by NIVE are accredited by the KHDA.

The **University Quality Assurance International Board (UQAIB)** was established by the KHDA Dubai in 2008 to assess and license universities operating in the education free zones in Dubai, like Academic City (DIAC) and Knowledge Village (KV). This is different from accreditation from the CAA, e.g. the federal body that monitors tertiary institutes and courses in the U.A.E.

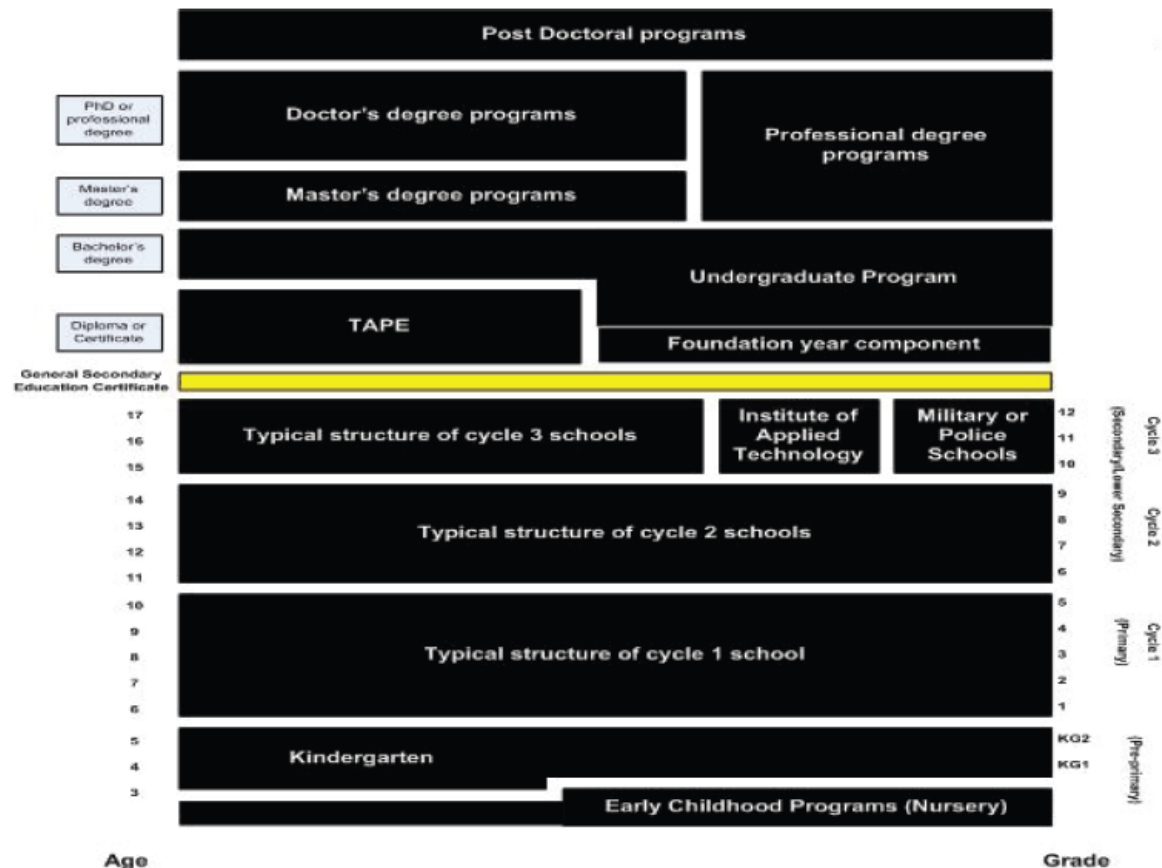
Due to the important role of education and its impact on the progress and prosperity of communities, several other bodies are contributing to the educational process. The **Ministry of Defense** has set up its own schools for students from the armed forces, although the curricula of the Ministry of Education are used. There is coordination between the two ministries in the fields of supervision, evaluation, examinations, textbooks and syllabi.

The **Women's Association** also plays a positive role in the educational process through its social and development centers; heritage revival centers; classes held in the Association's centers and societies in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The **General Women Union (GWU)** was established on 27 August 2008 and includes its founding women's associations (Abu Dhabi Women Association, Dubai Women Association, Sharjah Women Union Association, Ajman Um Al Mo'mineen Women Association, Umm Al Quwain Women Association, and Ras Al Khaimah Women Association). The Union performs a principal role in setting the general policy for women and the plans necessary for advancing women's affairs in all fields, as well as plans and programs that guarantee integration of women in

comprehensive development plans and enable them to perform their roles in life without discrimination.

## Structure and organization of the education system

### United Arab Emirates: typical structure of the education system in the Abu Dhabi Emirate (2010)



Source: Abu Dhabi Education Council, 2010. The figure is illustrative only and should be viewed as evolving in the context of major education reforms.

### Pre-school education

Preschool education (kindergarten) covers two years and accepts children from the age of 4. Nurseries are for children up to 4 years of age and might include daycare and crèche facilities. Preschool education is not compulsory.

### Primary education

Until the year 2000, primary education lasted six years for children in the age group 6-11. It included two stages: junior primary (grades 1 to 3, class-teacher system) and senior primary (grades 4 to 6, subject-teacher system). Starting from 2000/01, a new organization of the basic education stage has been introduced, with the first cycle (primary education) covering grades 1 to 5. The admission age is 6.





## Secondary education

Under the previous system, the duration of preparatory education was three years (age group 12-14), qualifying students for general or technical secondary education. According to the new structure introduced in 2000/01, the second cycle of basic education covers grades 6 to 9. The Ministry of Education (2001) reports the basic education is compulsory. General secondary education lasts three years and is for the age group 15-17. After a common first year of core subjects, students can choose between the science or arts tracks. Technical education comprises three main streams: technical, agricultural and commercial. At the end of the general and technical secondary stages, students receive the secondary school-leaving certificate or the technical secondary diploma after passing the general examination.

## Higher education

Higher education is offered at universities, higher colleges of technology and other higher education institutes. Students who apply through the National Admissions and Placement Office to study at the United Arab Emirates University, higher colleges of technology or Zayed University are required to take the Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) which consists of two tests (English and mathematics). The test in English is used for selection into bachelor's and higher diploma programmes. Higher colleges of technology offer to secondary education graduates one-year programmes leading to a first or an intermediate diploma, two-year programmes leading to a national diploma, and two-year programmes leading to a higher diploma (the latter for two-year post-secondary diploma holders). Bachelor's degree programmes generally last four years, or one or more years following the higher diploma. Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery programmes last six years. The duration of master's degree programmes is normally two years, and a doctoral degree usually takes at least three years to complete.

The school year consisted of 150 working days, or 30 weeks on average, at all levels. From 2010/11, for government schools the organization of the school year will change from two semesters to three terms, with a total of 180 school days. The academic year is divided into two semesters.

## The educational process

From 1971 to 1977 the Ministry of Education (MOE) used for all educational levels the syllabi developed in Kuwait. In 1977, the MOE launched its first curriculum reform project to produce the national curricula for the elementary and intermediate levels. The main purpose of the project was to produce curricula reflecting the U.A.E. identity and the needs of society. In 1983 the ministers of education in the Arab Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) namely, U.A.E., Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia decided to adopt unified curricula for mathematics and general science for the elementary and intermediate stages (grades 1-9). Experts from all GCC countries supervised by the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) worked together in the process. Special units about GCC countries were produced and added to textbooks of social studies and Arabic language. In 1988, the MOE conducted a major curricula evaluation with the assistance of a team of experts from



UNESCO. The evaluation process lasted two months and focused on the curricular documents, textbooks and teacher's books. The report served as basis for further reforms.

Before 1991, the MOE used an English language curriculum produced by a foreign publisher. There was a need to produce a national curriculum that better reflected the goals of the society and cope with students' local environment. A team of educators from the MOE and the U.A.E. University produced the new curriculum, which covered grades 4-12. One of the most significant curriculum developments that took place at the primary level is that of extending the English language instruction to the first three grades. The teaching of English was introduced in grade 1 in the academic year 1992/93. By 1994/95 the project was completed and English is now taught in all grades beyond kindergarten.

In 1992, the MOE initiated its second major project for curriculum reform. It was a necessary step to respond to the various changes in the society occurred during the period 1971-1991. Dramatic changes have occurred in all sectors of the economy and social life, new technologies were introduced and society has become more and more open to many foreign cultures. This project was carried out in four main phases. The first phase (1991-1992) concentrated on the evaluation of current curricula and teaching materials, as well as the assessment of the current needs and the teachers' and students' views. In the second phase (1992-1994), a Development Committee, chaired by the Minister, approved the proposed projects and sub-committees were formed accordingly to develop curricular documents for the following subject areas: Islamic Education (grades 1-12); Arabic language (grades 1-12); social studies (grades 4-6); geography (grades 7-12); philosophy, sociology and psychology (grades 11 and 12). The joint sub-committees from the U.A.E. University and the MOE completed their work in 1994. In the third phase (1994-1998), the new curricula (textbooks, teaching aids, teacher's manuals) were introduced, the new instructional materials were tested and teachers and inspectors received in-service training. Finally, during the period 1994-2000, data were collected about the effectiveness of the new curricula through school's and supervisor's reports, analysis of examination results and field observations.

Some significant innovations throughout the 1990s included: (i) the introduction of computer science in the first two forms of secondary school; the project started in 1988/89 in five schools and covered all secondary schools by the year 1994/95; and (ii) the introduction of the life skills course in 1999/2000: since the content of most curricula is subject matter-based, students do not acquire a variety of skills directly related to real life situations and to their lifelong needs; the new course was designed for grades 4 to 9, and life skills were defined as those essential skills used by individual in a variety of life situations (at home, school, work) to communicate, interact and live successfully.

In 2003/04, an enhanced curriculum for mathematics and integrated science was introduced in grade 1 in all government schools, as part of the new educational paradigm which aims to provide a holistic learning environment, embracing student, family and teacher in a shared experience.



Typically, the actors involved in decision-making processes for curriculum development include: senior MOE officials and counsellors; the professional staff of the MOE Center for Curricula and Educational Materials Development; specialists in different subjects; educational zones, supervisors and teachers; and advisory teams from the U.A.E. University. Furthermore, the MOE Assistant Under-secretary for Educational Programmes and Curricula and the Director of the Center for Curricula play a key role in decision making and implementation. Proposals and preliminary studies could also be initiated by the Center and submitted to the MOE senior officials. Discussions within those circles should lead to specific recommendations, but the final decision is the responsibility of the Minister of Education. Although the decision-making process looks to be highly centralized, educational zones, schools, teachers and supervisors take part in curriculum-related decisions. They send their suggestions and recommendations and also provide the Center with feedback on the curricula in use.

As regards the Abu Dhabi Emirate, the New School Model is the foundation for a better education system and student outcomes. It focuses on the student, the teacher, and the learning environment—facilities, classrooms, the management, and parental involvement. Within this model, a new curriculum and new teaching methods are introduced in order to enhance student performance by developing the student as communicator, a thinker and problem solver. This new approach to education will take a holistic approach in developing a well-rounded individual who is appreciative of the UAE, able to develop positive relationships, and is a confident, healthy, creative and imaginative person. It will be applied in the academic year 2010-2011 for KG1, KG2, and primary grades 1-3 across all Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, and Al Gharbia government schools and gradually be introduced to the older classes every year. It is planned that by 2016 all grades would be following the same single model. The new curriculum is a new approach to teaching and learning. Students will be at the center of an active teaching and learning environment supported by schools, families and the community. Improvements will develop strong Arabic and English literacy and numeracy, critical thinking, problem solving and creativity, and will also continue to emphasize cultural and national identity among Abu Dhabi students. Other key priorities will also include a focus on student health and safety, well-being and individualized learning. This new approach to education focuses on creating bi-literate students, which means that students will be able to understand, speak, read and write in both English and Arabic. While mathematics and science will be taught in English language, Arabic language, history, and Islamic studies will be taught by native Arabic speakers. Arabic language and heritage will remain an important part of the public education system in Abu Dhabi. (Abu Dhabi Education Council, *Strategic Plan for P-12 Education 2009-2018*).

The U.A.E. Ministry of Education Strategy 2010-2020 is organized around ten strategic objectives, including: ensure that a high quality curriculum is in place so that public and private schools students are best prepared for higher education; install a harmonized assessment on federal level to ensure acceptable standards of education and equal opportunities across all Emirates; and ensure that students with additional needs receive extra and individualized support to integrate them into the educational system. The following initiatives are envisaged in the domain of curriculum and assessment: develop curricula that equip students with necessary life skills; reinforce focus on specific knowledge (e.g. science, mathematics and English); eliminate the

foundation year by integrating it into the school curriculum; improve the curriculum of the Arabic language to increase proficiency of students; restructure kindergarten and primary education; restructure the secondary education curriculum to introduce new tracks and increase elective courses; increase instructional time and review weights of subjects; promote vocational and technical education and introduce new technologies into the curriculum; develop the Islamic education curriculum to form forgiving Muslim students; and set national standards for performance assessment of students and align with international testing standards. (MOE, 2010).

## Pre-primary education

Kindergartens offer a two-year programme for children aged 4-5. The aims of kindergarten education are the following:

- Developing the children's intuition and monitoring their moral, intellectual and physical growth in accordance with the principles of the Muslim religion.
- Helping the children to acquire the conceptual principals that match their age and their needs.
- Helping the children to acquire the proper behavioral moral rules that match their age by giving them a good example.
- Developing the national feeling by means of social and national activities related to the children's life and local community.
- Familiarizing the children with the school, introducing them progressively into the school's social life, and developing their reading and writing skills.
- Enriching the children's vocabulary by teaching them the right expressions and the easiest syntax according to their age and related to their life and direct social environment.
- Developing the children's intellectual development by encouraging them to search, discover, and invent.
- Encouraging the children to take decisions, express their opinions, take initiatives and ask questions.

The total population of Dubai in the year 2008 was 1.646 million, making up approximately one-third of the population of the U.A.E.; of this population, 89% were expatriate. Concerning this Emirate, more than 90% of the age appropriate children are enrolled in kindergarten, and 70.3% of Emirati children are enrolled in private kindergarten services where quality can be improved. In 2009 there were 82 private licensed nurseries with a total of 7,551 children enrolled aged 0-4. Almost 90% of nursery users in Dubai are non-nationals and less than 5% of Emirati children aged 0-4 years are in nurseries. All nurseries are private and for-profit, except for two government-run nurseries that serve 43 children. In the public national system, there were 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 enrolled 2,181 children, of whom over 2,027 were national. In parallel, there were 123 private kindergartens catering for 31,559 children, of whom 26,140 were expatriate children and 5,419 were nationals. Private kindergartens in Dubai are free to choose their own curricula as long as it is authorized 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. 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 bachelor's degree, 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. (KHDA, 2009).

According to the U.A.E. National Bureau of Statistics, in 2009/10 there were 124,173 children enrolled at the kindergarten level.

### **Basic education (primary and lower secondary education)**

Typically, the basic education cycle in public schools is organized into two cycles, the first covering grades 1 to 5, and the second including grades 6 to 9. The general aims of basic education are the following:

- Building a comprehensive human personality in terms of concepts, behavior, skills, and performance; strengthening the Muslim faith in its utmost expression; and teaching the children a number of religious duties according to their age.
- Reinforcing the national, Arab and Islamic feeling, deepening the national responsibility and affiliation, and strengthening the cultural identity.
- Adopting the Arabic language as a teaching and communication language with other cultures in the light of the Islamic Arab culture.
- Working in an organized and continuous way to overcome the obstacles and acquire a larger amount of information and knowledge, with better quality and precision, about the facts of social life.
- Stirring the children's enthusiasm for education and knowledge, developing their skills and tendencies, and harmonizing schools.
- Helping the children to acquire a practical mode of thinking according to their age and capabilities, securing them psychologically, and helping them to understand the facts of life.
- Appreciating beauty, the love of nature and the benefits of life and developing the children's observation, imagination and innovation skills according to their capabilities and competencies.
- Developing the diverse skills and the creativeness of the children, and heightening their awareness of their rights and duties.

Over 40% of pupils attend private schools. Some of these offer foreign language education geared towards expatriate communities, usually preserving the culture and following the curriculum of the students' countries of origin. Overall, private schools implement more than 17 different curricula including the curriculum set by the Ministry of Education. Many schools offer both primary and secondary education. The major direction for federal public policy within the pre-university sector is to improve student and school performance levels in line with the expectations of society and international standards, as well as enhancing the managerial independency of schools and promoting student-centered educational

processes. This is to be implemented in tandem with developing the governance framework for this sector in cooperation with local education councils.

The weekly lesson timetables for primary, preparatory and basic education in 2003-2004 are presented below:

#### Primary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade					
	Junior primary			Senior primary		
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Islamic education	5	5	5	4	4	4
Arabic language	10	10	10	8	8	8
English language	4	4	4	6	6	6
Mathematics	5	5	5	6	6	6
Science	3	3	3	3	3	3
Social studies	–	–	–	2	2	–
History	–	–	–	–	–	2
Geography	–	–	–	–	–	2
Fine arts	2	2	2	1	1	1
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2
Music	2	2	2	2	2	–
Life skills	–	–	–	1	1	–
Information technology	–	–	–	–	–	1
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>

Source: Information provided by the Gulf Arab States Educational Research Center (GASERC), November 2004. Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes.

#### Preparatory education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade		
	VII	VIII	IX
Islamic education	4	4	4
Arabic language	7	7	7
English language	6	6	6
Mathematics	6	6	6
Science	4	4	4
History	2	2	2
Geography	2	2	2
Civics	–	–	1
Fine arts	1	1	1
Physical education	2	2	1
Information technology	1	1	1
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>

Source: *Ibid.* Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.



## New basic education programme: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade								
	First cycle			Second cycle			Third cycle		
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
Islamic education	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Arabic language	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
English language	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Science	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Mathematics	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6
Social studies	–	–	–	2	2	2	–	–	–
History	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	2	2
Geography	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	2	2
Civics	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Fine arts	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Music	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Home economics	–	–	–	1	1	1	–	–	–
Life skills	–	–	–	1	1	1	–	–	–
Computer studies	–	–	–	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>

Source: Information provided by GASERC, February 2003.

The weekly lesson timetable for grades 1-9 in the Abu Dhabi Emirate (2010) is presented in the table below:

## United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi Emirate. Basic education: weekly lesson timetable (government schools)

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade								
	Primary					Lower secondary			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Islamic studies	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Arabic language	8	8	8	8	8	8	7	7	7
English language	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Science	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6
Social studies	–	–	–	2	2	2	–	–	–
History	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	2	3
Geography	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	2	2
Civics	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Health & physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Art	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Music	2	2	2	2	2	2	–	–	–
Home economics									
Life skills									
Information technology	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>

Source: Abu Dhabi Education Council, 2010. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.



A specific period is set aside at the end of each term for examinations, and students are promoted to higher classes according to their marks in the examinations and coursework throughout the year. A test is held at the end of each term. A coursework mark is added to decide the student's final result. At the end of the school year, successful students are awarded a certificate and are promoted to the next class. These certificates are authenticated and verified by the school and educational zone.

According to Ministry of Education, in 2008/09 there were 1,183 schools the U.A.E. (1,186 in 2009/10), of which 721 were government schools and 462 were private schools (most of which are in Dubai and Abu Dhabi). The U.A.E. National Bureau of Statistics reports that in 2009/10 there were 324,735 pupils enrolled at the primary level and 213,336 students enrolled at the intermediate (lower secondary) level. An additional 2,217 students were receiving special needs education, and 4,219 students were enrolled in religious education. For 2007/08, the number of teaching, administrative and technical staff was 60,144 (of whom 42,926 were female teachers); 27,032 were in government schools and 33,112 in private schools.

The Ministry of Economy reports that in 2005 the net enrolment ratio in grades 1-5 was 98%, and that the proportion of pupils starting grade 1 and reaching grade 5 was 96.8%. (Ministry of Economy, 2007). In 2008, the average drop-out rate in the first cycle (primary) was 2.2% for boys and 0.4% for girls, and in the second cycle it was 2.3% and 0.5% respectively. (MOE, 2010).

## Secondary education

The general secondary stage lasts three years. In the first year, the students follow a common curriculum. In the second and third years, they specialize in science or arts. At the end of the general secondary stage, students receive the secondary school-leaving certificate (or the technical secondary diploma for those students enrolled in technical education) after passing the general examination.

The weekly lesson timetable for general secondary education in 2004 is shown below:

**General secondary education: weekly lesson timetable**

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade				
	X	XI		XII	
		Arts	Science	Arts	Science
Islamic education	3	3	3	3	3
Arabic language	6	6	6	8	6
English language	6	6	6	6	6
Mathematics	6	3	6	3	6
Physics	2	2	4	–	5
Chemistry	2	2	3	–	4
Biology	2	2	3	–	3
Geology	1	–	1	–	1
History	2	2	–	4	–
Geography	2	2	–	5	–
Economics	–	2	–	2	–
Sociology	–	2	–	–	–
Psychology	–	–	–	3	–
Information technology	2	2	2	–	–
Physical education	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>

*Source:* Information provided by GASERC, November 2004. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

The weekly lesson timetable for general secondary education in the Abu Dhabi Emirate (2010) is presented in the table below:

**United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi Emirate. General secondary education: weekly lesson timetable (government schools)**

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade				
	10	11		12	
		Arts	Science	Arts	Science
Islamic studies	3	3	3	3	3
Arabic language	7	8	7	10	7
English language	10	10	10	10	10
Mathematics	10	6	10	5	9
Physics	2	2	4	2	5
Chemistry	2	2	3	–	4
Biology	2	2	3	2	3
Geology	1	–	1	–	1
History	2	2	–	2	–
Geography	2	2	–	3	–
Economics	–	2	–	2	–
Psychology	–	2	–	3	–
Information technology	2	2	2	1	1
Health and physical education	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>

*Source:* Abu Dhabi Education Council, 2010. Teaching periods last 40 or 45 minutes.



The U.A.E. National Bureau of Statistics reports that in 2009/10 there were 125,679 students enrolled at the secondary level. In 2008, the average drop-out rate in the third cycle (secondary education) was 7.7% for boys and 2.2% for girls. Most grade 12 graduates entering higher education enrol in a foundation year, needed to bring them up to the required levels in science, mathematics, English and ethics. (MOE, 2010).

### Assessing learning achievement nationwide

A survey conducted in 1997/98 by the Ministry of Education on the effectiveness of assessment and evaluation methods proved that the exams focused on the least levels of the cognitive aspect. They focused on memorizing the information and did not pay enough attention to assessing the intellectual skills of thinking, creativity and problem solving. Also, they did not evaluate the skills and emotional aspects. The survey also found that the written forms were the most common testing method, especially the essay questions and few multiple-choice items.

Considering that evaluation plays a vital role in educational reform and development, the document *Education Vision 2020* emphasized the need to improve evaluation policies and methods. It has also emphasized that the development of curricula, educational programmes and institutional evaluation in general should be based upon criteria such as performance, responsibility and accountability.

In 2007, Dubai participated for the first time in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). In Dubai, 111 primary schools and 84 secondary schools, around 3,000 Year 4 students and a little more than 3,200 Year 8 students took part in the exercise. A total of 48 countries at Year 8 and 36 countries at Year 4 participated in TIMSS 2007. In addition four provinces of Canada, two states of the United States, Dubai Emirate (UAE) and Basque Country, Spain, were also in the study as what are termed benchmarking participants. Concerning mathematics in Year 4, Dubai's score of 444 was lower than the international scale average of 500 score points, but was significantly higher than that of Kuwait and Qatar, and of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen. For Year 8, Dubai's score of 461 was lower than the international scale average of 500 score points. As regards science in Year 4, Dubai's score of 460 was significantly lower than the TIMSS scale mean. The difference of 40 points was not as great as that for mathematics. For Year 8, Dubai's score of 489 was significantly lower than the international scale average of 500 score points. A distinctive feature of the education system in Dubai is that there are many different curricula in the schools. While public schools all follow the National Curriculum, private schools follow different curricula, the main ones being the CBSE or Indian curriculum, the UK curriculum and the US curriculum, as well as some following the National Curriculum. Some findings were as follows: (i) at Year 4, students in private schools studying the National Curriculum performed at a significantly lower level than students studying any other type of curriculum, including those studying the National Curriculum at public schools; (ii) at Year 4, students in schools with the UK curriculum were achieving at the highest level, although this was still lower than the TIMSS scale average; (iii) at Year 8, students studying the National Curriculum in public schools were achieving at a significantly lower level than any other group, almost 130 score points lower than the TIMSS scale average in mathematics and 73 points in science; (iv) at Year 8, students in schools



following the UK curriculum were the highest achievers in both mathematics and science, with a score significantly higher than the TIMSS scale average in science and the same as the TIMSS scale average in mathematics. CBSE schools also scored at around the same as the TIMSS scale average in science. (KHDA, 2008).

As regards the results of the 2009 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) test, conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), approximately two-thirds of Dubai's 15-year-olds were assessed, with 5,620 students from 134 schools taking part for the first time in the PISA exercise. Among the 65 countries assessed, Dubai came 42nd in reading proficiency, 41st in mathematics and 41st in science. Dubai scored the best amongst Middle East and North Africa countries that took part in PISA 2009. The results showed that in reading Dubai's female students outperformed male students by a huge margin and in science by a small margin. In mathematics, there was no significant difference between the average scores for boys and girls. Private schools outperformed the public schools and the three top scoring curricula in the test were the International Baccalaureate, British and the Indian curriculum.

## Teaching staff

Teachers play a vital and indispensable role in the educational process. The training of efficient teachers is therefore the cornerstone of any successful education system. The Ministry's plans aim at high quality teacher training for both pre- and in-service. The teaching profession requires all staff to have a university degree and classroom experience. Expatriates applicants sit for a written examination—whether they are inside U.A.E. or abroad. Those who pass the written test also go for a personal interview to determine if they are eligible for teaching and which stage of education is suitable for their personal and educational qualifications.

Concerning Abu Dhabi, recent reforms require newly appointed teachers to hold a four-year bachelor's degree and have an acceptable standard of English language skills. In addition, existing teachers are required to attend skills development and training during regular school holidays. The Emirates College for Advanced Education (ECAE), the first teachers' training college in the U.A.E., is based in Abu Dhabi city and is licensed by the Commission for Academic Accreditation, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The College was created in 2007 to provide world-class teacher education and to train the next generation of teachers for Abu Dhabi and the U.A.E. ECAE is a partner college of the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC).

ECAE currently offers a four-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree, training Emirati students (as well as eligible expatriates starting from 2011/12) to teach in a range of subjects including English, mathematics and science in government schools at the kindergarten and grades 1-5 level. For Emirati students who don't fulfill the bachelor's programme requirements, ECAE offers a one-year foundation programme. The College also offers English training for in-service teachers and principals, offering a range of professional development courses. The Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) is expected to be a one-year full-time (or part-time equivalent) professional diploma for candidates holding a bachelor's degree with a major or minor relating to school education. It will equip graduates with a



teaching qualification in line with the Abu Dhabi government's Education Development Plan. In addition, the PGDE will prepare graduates with an important entry requirement for a Master of Education degree. The foundation programme is a one-year full-time course designed for Emirati students making the transition from high school to college-level studies. Foundation students study English, mathematics, and science through the medium of English, and are introduced to Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Higher colleges of technology (HCT) offer Bachelor degree, Diploma and Higher Diploma programmes in education. The HCT's teacher education programmes were developed specifically for the U.A.E.'s teaching needs. The English Language Teaching in Schools and Early Childhood Education Bachelor degree four-year programmes have been developed in collaboration with the Faculty of Education at the University of Melbourne, Australia. HCT also offer a four-year Bachelor of Education in Educational Technology.

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Ministry of Education and Youth. Department of Information, Statistics and Research. *National report on the development of education in the United Arab Emirates during the period 1990/91-1999/2000.* Presented at the 46th session of the International Conference of Education, Geneva, 2001.

## Web resources

Abu Dhabi Education Council: <http://www.adec.ac.ae/> [In Arabic and English. Last checked: August 2011.]

Commission for Academic Accreditation: <http://www.caa.ae/> [In English. Last checked: August 2011.]





Higher Colleges of Technology: <http://www.hct.ac.ae/> [In English. Last checked: August 2011.]

Knowledge and Human Development Authority: <http://www.khda.gov.ae/> [In Arabic and English. Last checked: August 2011.]

Links to Educational Councils, Offices and Zones:  
<http://www.moe.gov.ae/english/pages/zones.aspx> [Sites mainly in Arabic. Last checked: August 2011.]

Ministry of Education: <http://www.moe.gov.ae/> [In Arabic and English. Last checked: August 2011.]

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research: <https://www.moheer.gov.ae/> [In Arabic and English. Last checked: August 2011.]

Ministry of Social Affairs: <http://www.msa.gov.ae/> [In Arabic and English. Last checked: August 2011.]

National Admissions and Placement Office: <http://ws2.moheer.ae/NAPO/> [In Arabic and English. Last checked: August 2011.]

National Institute for Vocational Education: <http://www.nive.gov.ae/> [In Arabic and English. Last checked: August 2011.]

*For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>*