In search of

Good Education

Why Emirati parents choose
private schools in Dubai

Research Report: **Kaltham Salem Kenaid**

CfBT
Education Trust

KHDA and CfBT working together to build Dubai's educational research capacity

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Since we were founded, we have worked in more than 40 countries around the world. Our work involves teacher and leadership training, curriculum design and school improvement services. The majority of staff provide services direct to learners: in nurseries, schools and academies; through projects for excluded pupils; in young offender institutions; and in advice and guidance centres for young people.

We have worked successfully to implement reform programmes for governments throughout the world. Government clients in the UK include the Department for Education (DfE), the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), and local authorities. Internationally, we work with education ministries in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Singapore among many others.

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ABOUT KHDA

The Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) is responsible for the growth, direction and quality of private education and learning in Dubai. We are a regulatory authority in the Government of Dubai which supports the improvement of schools, universities, training institutes and other human resource sectors.

We co-ordinate with many different partners; students, parents, teachers, the private sector and other Government bodies all play a role in Dubai's education community. KHDA's work is guided by the Government's strategy and carried out in a transparent manner to make sure everything we do benefits our highest priority – our students.

Most of Dubai's children attend private schools, and more Emirati children are in private education than attend Government schools. The number of Emiratis choosing private universities is also growing. KHDA is focusing on finding the reasons for this shift in behaviour to enhance policy decision-making for the future.

Our research ranges from early childhood to adult learning and our findings drive initiatives to ensure that Dubai has an educated and flexible workforce to meet the needs of our fast-changing and globalised world. Our publications, along with our detailed school inspection reports, provide evidence-based information for everyone involved in education.

Please visit www.khda.gov.ae for more details.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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* The photo on the opposite page shows some of the Emirati researchers discussing the findings of the report. They are from left to right; Badria Masood, Kaltham Kenaid (author), Zulaikha Mohamed, Maryam Qayed, Hanan AlFardan.

We also would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the private schools that coordinated the focus group sessions and to all the parents who participated enthusiastically in the sessions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kaltham Kenaid is an accomplished Emirati educationist with more than 20 years of experience in the Dubai education system. For the past four years, Kaltham has been heading research projects within KHDA on the participation of Emiratis in the economy and society. Some of these recent projects included focus groups with Emirati unemployed youth to determine different aspects of unemployment and labour market projections for Emiratis with Dubai-based recruitment companies.

Kaltham successfully graduated from the British University in Dubai with a Masters of Education in International Management and Policy in 2006. She has recently commenced her doctoral studies in education and her research will concentrate on Emirati students' perception of time.

FOREWORD

By Tony McAleavy
Education Director
CfBT Education Trust

CfBT has had the privilege of working in partnership with the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) since 2007. During that period KHDA has been at the forefront of regional efforts to use publicly available information and accountability as an engine for school improvement. KHDA has provided the parents who use private schools in the Emirate of Dubai with reliable information that can be used to inform school choice. We are pleased to have been associated with this important reform and see a strong link between the work of KHDA and our work in England, where we are one of Ofsted's three strategic partners, delivering a large scale rigorous inspection process and inspecting over 8,000 government and private schools. In England, as in Dubai, the idea of informed parental choice is central to this model of school improvement.

In 2004, The World Bank's Development Report identified two different forms of accountability which can both be applied to school inspection. Providers of public services are accountable to the public via the institutions of government. This is the so-called 'long route of accountability'. Government bodies should establish a form of compact or contract with schools whereby the provision of resources to government schools and the licence to operate for private schools are linked to the measurement of performance. The government acts on behalf of parents and students. Among other data sources, government bodies need to listen carefully to parents' voices and should use this data when regulating school performance. They should use hard data and the perspective of service users – in this case parents – to hold schools, both government and private, to account.

This report provides important evidence about what 'service users' are looking for from an education system. The high parental demand for private education in Dubai is a unique phenomenon amongst education systems around the world and understanding why they choose the schools that they do is vital in ensuring high quality education for the young people of the Emirate.

CfBT is proud to have had the opportunity to investigate this issue in partnership with the Knowledge and Human Development Authority. I would like to express my thanks to the KHDA research team for all their hard work and commitment throughout this project. I look forward to many similar collaborative projects.

FOREWORD

By Dr Abdulla al Karam

Chairman of the Board of Directors and Director General
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

Dubai's education system is unique with 87% of students in private schools. More than half of UAE nationals attend private schools. Understanding the reasons why UAE national parents choose to invest in a private education for their children is critical to help KHDA ensure access to the choice of school that parents desire for their children, now and into the future. Through research such as in this report, we are learning to understand the context, preferences and deeper values that influence parents' decision-making which in turn helps potential investors understand the specific needs of Emiratis.

Over the four years since KHDA was established, our role has centered on improving the quality of education in Dubai's schools. With the use of school inspections, regulatory compliance measures and engagement with the parent community, many schools have successfully achieved a demonstrable increase in the quality of the schooling that they provide to their students and increased interaction with the wider school community.

Continued progress in the quality of school education can be supported through an active partnership between schools, parents, education authorities and international organisations. As one example, collaborative research with leading international research institutions such as CfBT ensures that the work of KHDA is conducted professionally and that insights are acted upon locally.

Another important aspect of our collaborative research venture with CfBT is the transfer of knowledge and expertise from globally recognised research organisations to KHDA research staff. Building the capacity of UAE nationals to become future school inspectors or education researchers is essential to ensure that the specific needs of the local population are taken into account in the design and implementation of policies and programs.

At KHDA, we see this as a win-win situation. In compiling this report, our Emirati staff carried out a research project from start to finish, picking up new skills along the way. The report they have produced is a step towards achieving a clear picture of how Emirati parents are choosing the schools they want their children to go to. These new skills and this new information can now guide us towards more focused decision-making as we plan for Dubai's future needs.

1. BACKGROUND

In Dubai, there is an increasing trend for Emirati parents to choose private schools for their children. This trend has been gaining momentum from the beginning of the new millennium. Dubai is unique amongst education systems around the world in that a very high proportion of its student population (87%) attends private schools. These schools have been established to service the demand for expatriate families to educate their children. Although public schools providing a free education are available, more than half of Emirati parents choose to send their children to a private school.

Data collected from the 2010-2011 annual school census indicate that 28,983 Emirati students attend a private school in Dubai. From 2003 to 2010, the number of Emirati students in government schools plunged by 15% while in private schools it has increased by more than 75% (see figure 1). Annual data also point to the fact that two thirds of Emirati students (22,141) go to just 22 private schools out of the 148 private schools in Dubai.
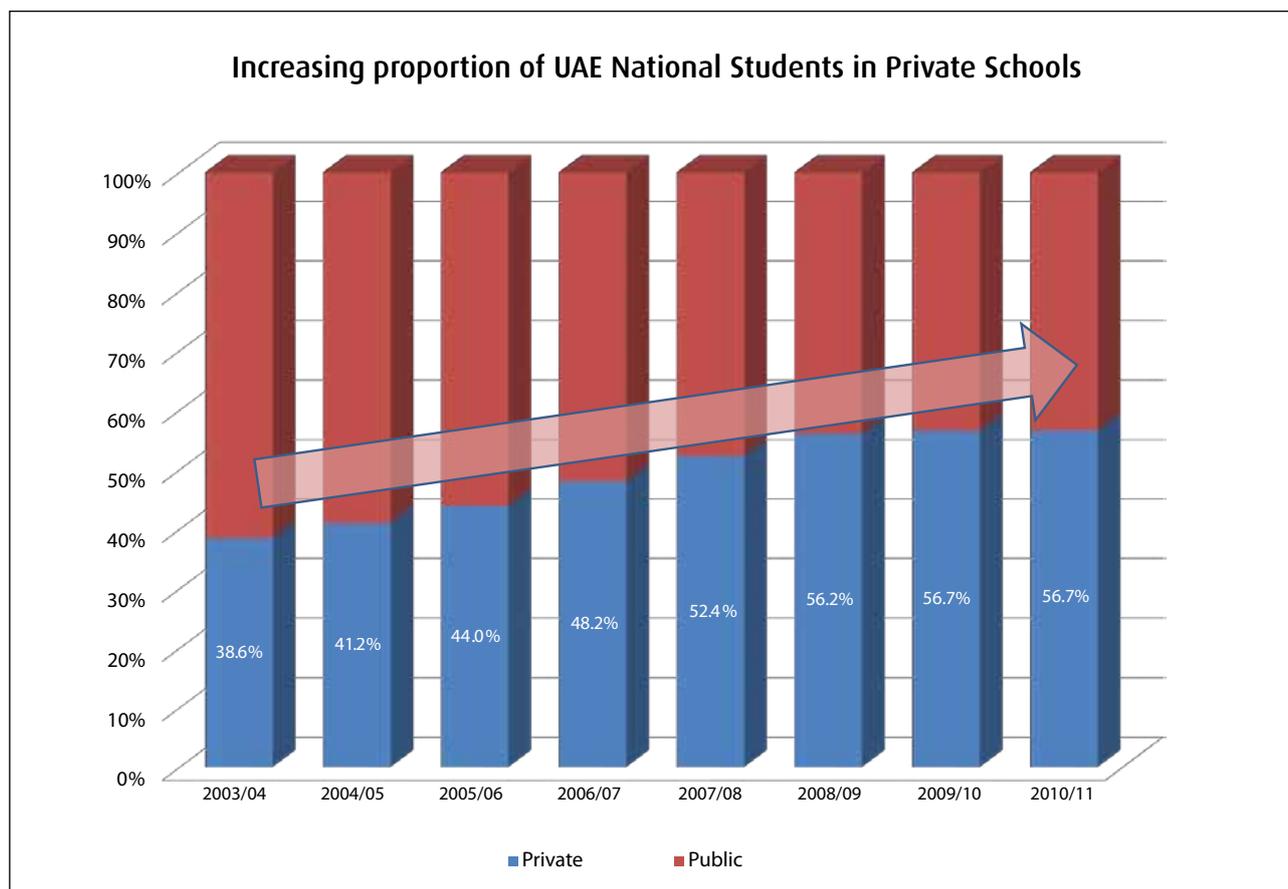
Figure 1. Change in the proportion of UAE National students in private schools

Emirati parents have different reasons and motivations for choosing private schools. For the past three years, the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) has surveyed Emirati parents on their opinions and reasons for choosing the school that their children attend. The results of the surveys have indicated that Emirati parents base their preference for a private school principally on their perception that the school will provide their children with better learning and teaching, better English language instruction and better school leadership; and to a lesser degree, on the location of the school and the affordability of the fees.
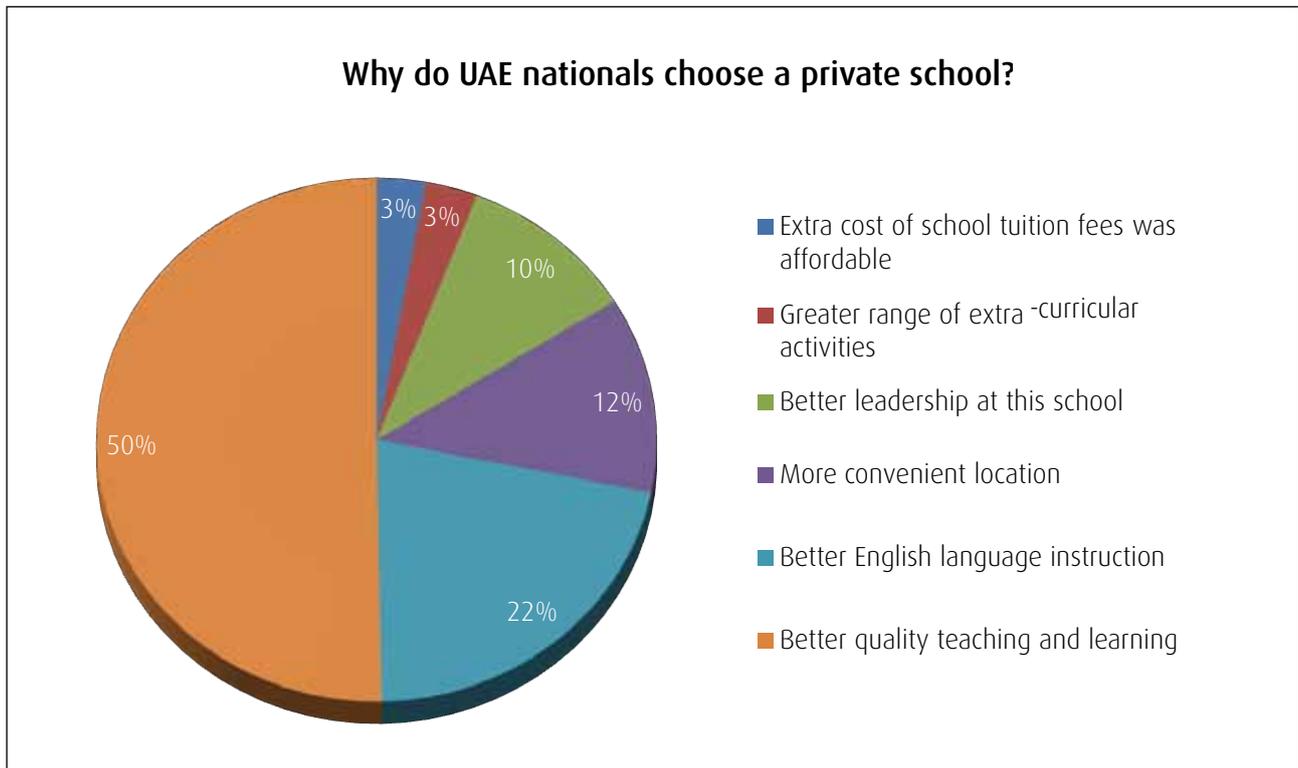
Figure 2. Responses from Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau survey of Emirati parents

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research project study is to reach out to Emirati parents in order to understand their perception of private education in Dubai. Such insights will provide a better understanding of the circumstances that lead to parents' decisions with regard to school choices. The use of focus groups was chosen as the most appropriate research method as it allowed the participants to reveal their perceptions, experiences and opinions in depth and with greater detail. The study is guided by three connected research questions:

1. What is a good school?

2. What are the sources of information for choosing a specific school?

3. Why is a specific school chosen over another?

Past international research has revealed some interesting patterns among parents in choosing schools for their children. Petronio (1996), in a survey studying factors affecting parents' choice of school in an urban district in the US, found that parents build their decision on school reputation, curriculum, safe environment, location of the school and the quality of instruction. Martinez et al (1996) indicated that parents stressed the importance of discipline, while Greene (1998) reported that such choice is also based on their belief in the strength of a certain school in specific subjects. In a comparative study of parents in Paris and London, Raveaud and van Zanten (2007) found that middle-class parents shared similar views of what is good education – supporting the intellectual growth of the students, good academic results and a happy experience.

Budgets play a major role in restricting parents in their school choice, as wealthier parents have more advantage in choosing a better school (Howe, 2002). Both Petronio (1996) and Howe (2002) concluded in their studies that when parents lack reliable sources of information on the quality of schools, they tend to depend on their social network to gain information on the best schools.

Masood et al. (2010) in a quantitative study conducted in Abu Dhabi, identified a set of school factors that play a role in determining parents' satisfaction with subjects taught in schools. The study revealed that significant predictors of parents' satisfaction with certain subjects taught in Abu Dhabi schools included the following: teachers and teaching; parents' participation and involvement; assessment and reporting; communication; school facilities and resources; overall effectiveness; and school environment and support services; as well as parents' demographics of income, education, and nationality.

This is the first qualitative research project on the topic of school choice in the region and is expected to serve as a reference paper for further social research by academics and others with an interest in the area of education within Dubai. The study has employed more qualitative research instruments, including focus groups which allowed for better personal interaction with the participating parents, thus producing a more real-life landscape going forward.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A team of researchers from KHDA conducted ten focus groups during the month of May 2011, to explore Emirati parents' perceptions and views of choosing a private school for their children. It is usually at this time in the year when parents are deciding on their school choice and start registering their children in grade 1.

The focus group, as a qualitative research method, is suitable to explore participants' perceptions and opinions in depth. Focus groups are defined as 'guided group discussions of selected topics' (Ruane, 2005, p.157). The social interaction between the group members enriches the conversation. The focus group sessions are repeated to identify patterns and commonly-held beliefs and opinions.

Ten Dubai private schools were chosen as a representative sample of the type of schools preferred by Emirati parents. The target group for this study was Emirati parents having a child in a kindergarten class going on to grade 1 in the next academic year. This group was chosen as they are at the stage of deciding the kind of school and curriculum that they want for their child. It is a major decision that has a significant impact on their child's future life. The schools wrote to the parents and invited them to participate in the focus groups. A total of 75 parents participated in the ten focus group sessions. The number of participants for each focus group ranged from three to thirteen. The participants were predominantly mothers (65) with a minority of fathers (10).

Two trained moderators conducted each focus group. One moderated the session using a protocol while the other audio-taped the session and took notes. The protocol consisted of an introduction, the main questions of the session and an ending. The aim of using a protocol was to ensure consistency between the different focus group sessions. The transcriptions were revised by two researchers to make sure that no part of the dialogue was missed or misrepresented in the transcript. The transcriptions were then translated from Arabic into English. The translation attempted to capture the original cultural meaning from the Arabic as much as possible (Simon, 1996). The final transcripts were coded for common recurring themes between the different focus groups.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 WHY CHOOSE A PRIVATE SCHOOL?

All parents confirmed that it is a social trend for Emiratis in Dubai to enrol their children in a private school. Most of the parents maintain that private schools offer their children better education.

"We chose to pay for our children's education even though we have the option of free education because we want more for our children," said one parent.

"We chose to pay for our children's education"

Some felt that their experience of public school education was negative, and they aspired to provide their children with a better environment. Yet other parents defended public schools and stressed that public schools have seen a lot of improvement in the past few years. They attributed the improvement to the new inspection system imposed by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA). Parents agreed that the inspection provided a good degree of transparency into how schools were performing. They also understood that in reality there is no one school that completely fits their needs; as one father explained: "We rarely find a school that balances all our requirements so we choose a school that is closer to our academic requirements."

"We rarely find a school that balances all our requirements"

One mother asserted: "It is just difficult to find all elements in one school. You give up something for another."

Most of the parents preferred private education to government education for socio-economic reasons. All fathers stressed the point that children going to private schools come from families with a better social background.

"It's the kind of children that I want my son to be around," one father said.

Many parents also believe that the parents who send their children to a private school are more actively engaged in their children's education.

The parents were under the impression that private schools classes are smaller. One mother said: "The class size in the private school is smaller. I want the teacher to give individual attention to my child in the class. The teacher won't be able to control the class if she has too many students."

The parents expect the number of children in the class ideally to be in the range of 15 to 20 students.

More fathers mentioned school fees than did mothers during the focus groups. They identified budget as the major restriction in choosing one private school over another. One parent stressed: "Some schools are better but the fees are so high that we can't afford it, especially for a parent of four or five children."

Most parents complained about the high school fees but felt that they had no other choice.

Overall, parents felt that private schools offered their children a more controlled and safe environment that limited opportunities for students to misbehave. One participant suggested that: "In private schools their monitoring system and CCTV system is good."

Another participant continued by saying: "The school building plays a role. We want the students to be comfortable. The bathrooms are clean etc. Also we consider the canteen and food being served to the students. This is not provided in the government schools; at least this is our impression."

Another distinctive feature of private schools is the fact that most of them cater for children from kindergarten to grade 12 in the one school. The parents feel reassured that their children will progress from the primary section to the secondary section in one location. One mother summed this up by saying: "We prefer private schools because in a private school the child stays in the school for the duration of his school years while in a government school he has to move from cycle one to cycle two to secondary school."

"In a private school the child stays in the school for the duration of his school years"

The location of the school was not prominently mentioned in the parents' discussions. Most parents reported that they may consider the location of the school with their first child's admission to school but once they are comfortable with a specific school, they were ready to travel every morning and afternoon from one part of Dubai to another.

"A school location is a secondary option in choosing a school," said one parent.

"The location of the school is not important"

"The location of the school is not important. What is important is the quality of education the student gets," echoed another.

From the discussions, the parents acknowledged their choice of private school as an important decision for their children's future. They expected the private school to provide a safe and secure environment. The parents believed that only a few schools catered for their needs: therefore most of the Emirati students are concentrated in a small number of schools that accommodate such needs.

4.2 WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR SUCH A DECISION?

In choosing a school for their children, Emirati parents consider many factors. Such a decision is taken very seriously by the parents and they use different sources of information to help them make the final choice. Overall, parents reported that they mainly rely on word of mouth, by asking other parents including work colleagues and other family members about their experience of different schools. One mother reported: "In choosing the school my children attend, we asked my husband's friend and they praised this school."

"We ask around and acquaintances tell us about their experience"

Another parent stressed this point by explaining: "We ask around and acquaintances tell us about their experience; how the school is managed, how the children are taught and the kind of teachers at the school. Where can we get information except this way?"

When they were prompted about other sources of information some parents mentioned that they rely on the reputation that a school has built in the local community. One of the parents reported: "The school I chose has a good reputation and graduated many generations of students."

Some went further by asking alumni about their school experience. Many of the mothers participating in the focus group resorted to online forums to get other parents' opinions and experiences about private schools in general and details about specific schools in particular. Such a method was exclusively used by mothers.

Opinions were often verified by a personal visit to the different schools. One mother reported that she would go early in the morning to watch how orderly the children would get off the bus in the morning and in the afternoon and if she liked what she saw then she would enter the school premises and meet the school administration staff and teachers. She stated: "I pay a visit to the school and inspect how the children get off the bus in the morning and get on the bus in the afternoon. School safety is important to me."

Another source of information is DSIB school inspection reports. Their reports are published each year and rate schools based on inspection visits. The parents had mixed and somewhat contradictory perceptions about the DSIB reports as a source of information that would influence their decision. A small number of parents were vaguely aware of the reports, while the majority were able to discuss them in detail. One father stated: "Inspection reports are very important especially after they started focusing on the Arabic and Islamic this year. We follow up the inspection reports of our school every year.
We are not sure about how fair are the ratings."

"We follow up the inspection reports of our school every year. We are not sure about how fair are the ratings"

The interviewed parents actively sought information about the private schools in Dubai. Parents mostly depended on their social network for gaining information. DSIB reports were another resource identified by the parents but few understood the criteria of the assessment system for the rating the schools obtained in the published reports.

4.3 WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL?

Teaching and learning

Parents indicated that a teacher should teach in their field; some parents had noticed that some schools hire teachers who are not qualified for the subjects they are teaching. One parent mentioned teachers' qualifications: "What we notice is that private schools hire low-wage teachers without considering their qualifications."

Most of the parents were of the opinion that the teachers are completely responsible for the children's education. Many of them do not like their children to have homework. One mother explained this point by saying: "I am searching for a school that helps my children to be independent and do their homework alone. I don't want to face problems with them when they don't understand the curriculum and I am not qualified to teach them."

> "I am searching for a school that helps my children to be independent"

The parents believed in the importance of diversity in teaching methods that accommodate the needs of students with varying abilities.

Parents expect the teachers to be firm but also to exercise some degree of leniency with the students. Many parents mentioned extra-curricular activities that support the learning of their children. One father strongly echoed the belief that: "Extra-curricular activities develop the child and build his character."

A negative practice of schools is private tuition, as one parent said: "Some schools put a lot of pressure on the students. They expect them to take private tuition to pass the exams."

The first point raised in all the focus groups for what parents seek in a private school was English language instruction. Most parents believe that good attainment in English language is vital for their children's future. Two main reasons were presented: the first is for admission to higher education institutions such as universities, as the main language of instruction in local and overseas higher education institutions is English. One parent mentioned the university entrance exam, stating that: "After graduating from grade 12 we are reassured that our children will pass the university entrance exam. No one will ask them about Arabic language or Islamic studies."

> "English language is a job requirement"

The other reason most parents discussed was the need for English language in the workplace; as one mother pointed out: "I work in a human resources department and English language is a job requirement. The first thing they ask about in a job interview is proficiency in English language."

While parents stressed the importance of English language, they also stressed the value of Arabic language and Islamic Education. Most parents expressed the dilemma they face in private schools. All parents wanted a balanced curriculum between English and Arabic languages, as one parent indicated: "We are looking for a school that provides a balance between Arabic and English," and another parent supported this view by stating: "The future generations need to grasp both languages" – yet in reality often have to choose between the two, as one mother revealed: "Everyone would agree that Arabic language is most important. It is just difficult to find all elements in one school. You give up something for another."

One of the mothers had noticed that: "Some of the children of my relatives and friends speak very good English and they don't know the simplest vocabulary in Arabic. It is a shame."

"My daughter is so much better in English and French than in Arabic"

Another mother discussed her experience with her daughter: "I've complained to the administration about the level of Arabic language instruction in KG classes. My daughter is so much better in English and French than in Arabic."

Parents focused on the teacher for providing their children with the best instruction. They believed that teachers should have a holistic view of the children that accommodates their educational needs and personal growth. The English language instruction was one of the main reasons for choosing private schools as it is required for educational use and for the workplace. While parents wanted a balance between Arabic and English languages, their experience revealed this as challenging and in most cases it is difficult to find such a balance in the schools.

Cultural values

Parents expressed different views when it came to the cultural values they wanted in the schools. All parents aspired to provide their children with good Islamic values and strong national identity. They realised that school plays a role in developing the cultural values needed to build their national identity. One mother expressed the view that: "We want the school to help our children become better citizens and to teach them how to pray. The students need a break to perform prayer. It is an element that encouraged me to choose this school."

"We want the school to help our children become better citizens"

Some parents were frustrated by the holidays celebrated by some schools. A few mothers mentioned the celebration of Christmas and Easter. One mother said: "When a child comes home and asks about Easter, we try to tell him that we don't have such a celebration in our religion. We try to explain that this is different for us as Muslims, but the child asks then why do we have a school holiday?"

Some parents were concerned about the mixed classes. They want boys' and girls' classes to be segregated, especially at the secondary level as one mother stated: "We also want separation between boys and girls. I don't understand how they mix boys and girls at grade 11 and 12. We don't approve of such conduct."

Parents were of the view that the school environment could help in preserving cultural values and national identity but they were frustrated about some practices that took place in some schools.

School leadership

All parents strongly believed that good leadership of a school leads to better performance. The parents expect the school administration to be well qualified to run the school. A few parents mentioned the importance of the presence of a vision and a mission that guides the school as one mother said: "I like it when I read the mission and vision of a school. It means the school has clear objectives."

"I like it when I read the mission and vision of a school. It means the school has clear objectives"

Another feature of a good school is felt to be the quality of response to parents' complaints. One father reported that a good measure to judge the quality of a school is the availability of administration staff to meet with a parent, and how they would respond to a parent's grievance or complaint. He said: "On the first day of school I make a point of visiting the school administration office to check how they would respond to me and how easy it is to be able to meet the school principal."

Two-way communication with the school administration and quick response to parents' comments and complaints is really appreciated by the parents, as one mother pointed out: "We can decide the quality of a school by how the administration responds to our complaints. Even if they inform us that our children are doing something wrong, we will accept it and try to fix it together."

Some parents noticed that at some schools there is a rift between the school administration and the teachers. Good school leaders know how to handle the teachers' concerns and how to motivate them to do their best. One mother narrated an incident in one school that suffered from a few teachers mistreating the students and the administration was able to completely deal with such behaviour: "The new principal was able to deal with the matter. Now we don't hear of such incidents."

Many parents pointed to the active role of a school leader to provide the students with a caring and understanding environment. One mother explained this by saying: "The administration and the principal cares about the students and treats them like their children."

Parents understand that students also need discipline but expect the school leadership to be fair and involve the parents when needed.

Parents understood the value of school leadership in the quality of education. The three main components of leadership that parents stressed were: supporting of a caring and safe environment, good communication with parents, and support for teachers.

4.4 DO PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS MATCH REALITY?

The findings from the focus groups clearly show that parents believe that private schools offer a better education for their children due to improved teaching and learning and English language instruction. Yet these beliefs may be based on perceptions rather than on evidence. The judgements from school inspections provide one source of objective evidence as to the relative quality of private versus public education for Emirati students.

The DSIB provides an overall rating of each school inspected: either unsatisfactory, acceptable, good or outstanding. Eight of the ten private schools from which the parents of students were sampled for the focus groups were rated as acceptable and the remaining two were rated good. In comparison, of the 29 public schools in Dubai that enrol Grade 1 students, a total of 14 were rated at least as good, with 13 acceptable and 2 rated as unsatisfactory. These figures clearly demonstrate that DSIB considers public schools at this level to be at least on a par, if not better, than this selection of private schools. The perception of parents that private schools offer a better education does not seem to be matched by the objective assessment of school inspections.

4.5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study's findings regarding parent choice were highly consistent with the DSIB parents' survey. It further clarified the aspects of teaching and learning that motivated Emirati parents to choose private schools. The aspects mentioned in the focus groups were the qualification of the teaching staff and teaching that caters for students' different abilities. The parents did not discuss teaching in great detail and this could be explained by the fact the sample was of parents of children in kindergarten.

The study also provided additional evidence in support of English language instruction as an incentive for choosing private schools, since in the focus groups, parents placed high emphasis on English language proficiency. Focus group sessions also revealed that 'leadership' was key in choosing schools. They also elaborated on the elements of leadership they deem ideal for the school: better communication, teacher development, and providing a safe environment for their children. Quality of education is more important than the location, as they were willing to send their children to schools further away so long as the quality was superior. Tuition fees were a concern as budget was considered a barrier in choosing schools.

The study was also consistent with international research studies conducted in other countries. Emirati parents' decisions to choose a private school depended on their perception about a school's reputation, following Petronio (1996) and Martinez et al. (1996). While Greene (1998) reported that parents' perceptions about the strength of different subjects influenced their decision, in this study English language was the main subject that Emirati parents considered in choosing a private school. The distinctive feature of the parents' view in this research project was the importance of cultural values in their decision. They expected the schools to be guardians of social values and to cater for the specific cultural needs of Emiratis.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The trend of Emiratis towards choosing private schools for the education of their children has been growing strongly. Participating parents showed a keen interest in providing the best education for their children. The parents were in favour of private schools since they thought these schools were better at accommodating their children's needs than were public schools. Parents pointed out that they preferred the arrangement of private schools that provided the entire education for their children from KG through grade 12 at the one school rather than the public system which has separate schools for KG, first cycle, second cycle and secondary levels.

Parents expect private schools to provide a safe and secure environment. They believe that only a few schools cater for their needs. Therefore most of the UAE students are concentrated in a smaller number of schools that accommodate such needs.

Parents mostly used their social network to gain information about Dubai schools. Some parents found DSIB reports useful, together with other resources, in making the final decision with regards to their child's enrolment in a private school.

Parents realise the importance of teachers to provide good education. They expect teachers to be caring and to accommodate the different needs of the children. English language was a motivator for choosing private schools, for the needs of the children in higher education and the future workplace. A balance between Arabic and English languages was challenging to find in private schools.

Parents view that school leadership adds to the value and quality of education in the private schools by providing a caring environment, good communication and teacher support.
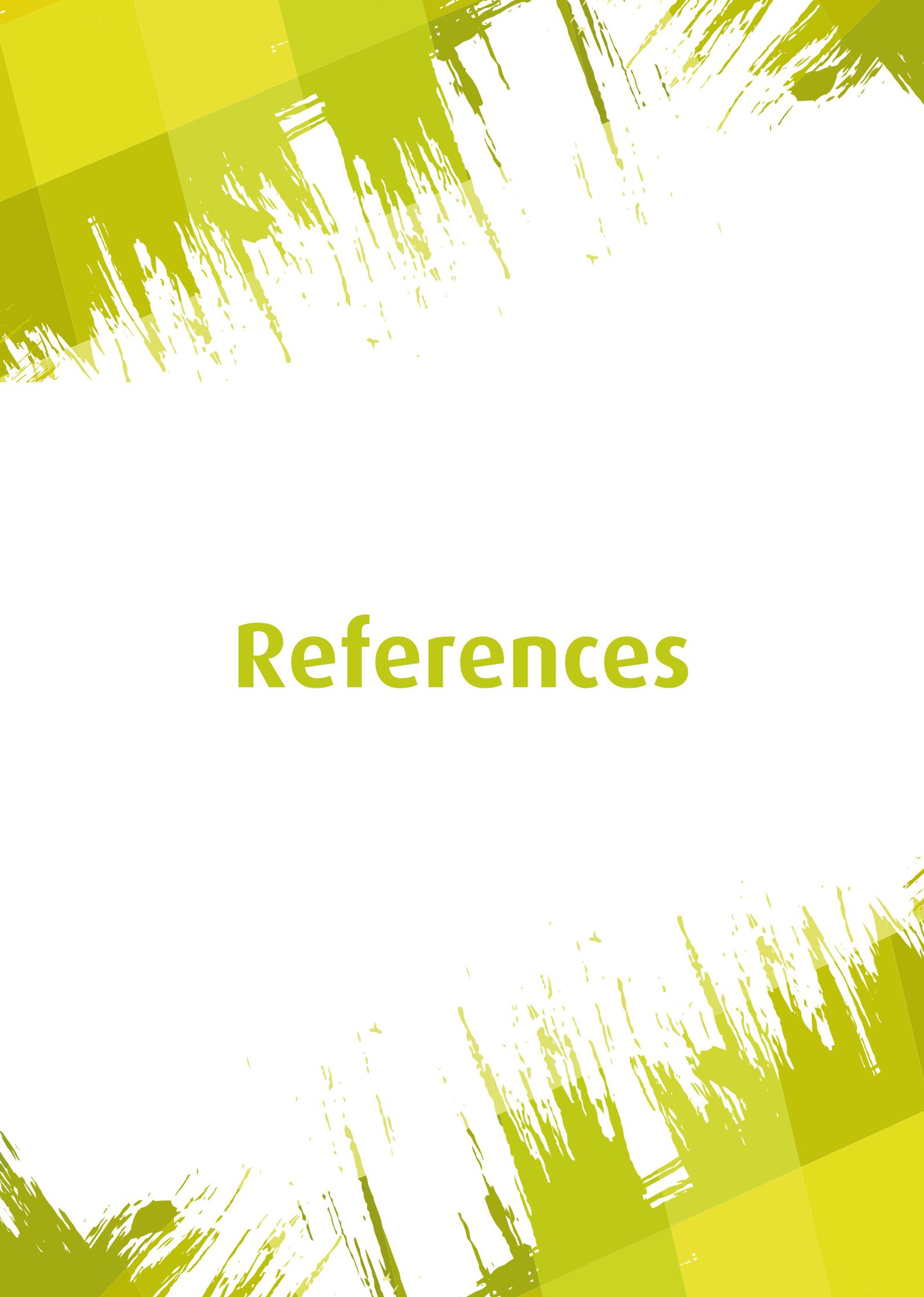
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