Investigating Best Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Practices in Exemplary British Schools in UAE.

التحقيق من افضل المناهج من ناحية التدريس و افضل ممارسات التقييم في المدارس البريطانية كعينة في الامارات العربية المتحدة للدراسة

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Abstract

Educators and educational researchers in the UAE, more recently have turned their attention to how to achieve great schools. The schools that are doing good, make sure to keep creating opportunities to maintain their ongoing development, they strive to move on to be outstanding. Similarly the schools that are struggling in making progress need to develop the understanding of what is involved in being successful schools and what are the implications of the criteria used by Dubai School Inspection Bureau (DSIB) in Inspection Framework, to achieve the transformation. The focus of this study is to investigate the implication of three criteria from the DSIB Inspection Framework 2015-16: Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment. Based on the inspection reports British Schools have the highest percentage of achieving outstanding rating among other curricula. So far (at the time of writing), out of 29 very good and outstanding schools 19 schools are offering British Curriculum. The fact that British Curriculum is in close harmony with the DSIB inspections and is able to promote quality education has guided the researcher to select the British schools as samples for the study. In order to investigate the successful implementation of the focused standards in the inspection framework, the researcher included the interviews of the school heads and document analysis to figure out significant features of school organisation and the best practices relating to the standards. This study involved a desk study of school reformation, school development literature, and processes implied in school inspections, also the identification of initiatives by KHDA in order to support schools in their development and the visits to schools, to carry out semi structured interviews.

The major results of the study indicated that the success to achieving an effective transformation requires a very strong self-evaluation or self-assessment mechanism in place. The schools should be able to identify the areas for improvement, and based on the priority and urgency level, the leaders develop their school improvement plan around it till they achieve. Another important finding was that external professional support in terms of getting membership of accrediting organisations like BSO and BSME and CIS push successful schools even further to the excellence. Along with inspections, these organisations also provide continuous professional development trainings, so the member schools are now linked with international educational communities. Yet another significant finding indicates that the successful incorporation of external examinations, like GL PTE TIMSS and PISA, allow schools to assess their quality of

education in the international perspective therefore the schools are in position to moderate their future policies and actions to support their ongoing development. The progress for the outstanding schools, in major subjects like Mathematics, Science, Reading and Language acquisition, is the rising curve; nevertheless, most of the outstanding schools are in process of developing effective mechanism for better Arabic and Islamic education.

Keywords: School Improvement, DSIB Inspection framework, Curriculum developing, Teaching methods, assessment processes.

الملخص

تغيرت نظرة التربويين و الباحثين في مجال التربية والتعليم في دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة في الآونة الأخيرة جل اهتمامهم الى كيفية و مدى انجاز التقدم في المدارس بحيث يكون التطور و التقدم التربوي فيها كبير: يجب خلق الفرص للحفاظ على مدى التقدم و التطور التربوي وهناك المدارس التي تصارع و تكافح للتحقيق تقدم و تطور في المجال التربوي و التعليمي لتكون مدارس ناجحة و مدى تاثرها بالمعايير التي يستخدمها مكتب دبي التفتيش المدرسي (جهاز الرقابة المدرسية) في إطار التفتيش لخلق التغير فيها وتركز هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف و استكشاف مدى الآثار المترتبة على ثلاثة معايير ضمن إطار التفتيش المدرسي جهاز الرقابة المدرسية 2015-16: المناهج والتدريس والتقييم. وبناء على تقارير الرقابة المدرسية فان المدارس البريطانية لديها أعلى نسبة من تحقيق تصنيف المتميز بين المناهج الأخرى. وحتى الآن (وقت الكتابة)، من أصل 29 مدرسة جيدة جدا والمرضيه 19 مدرسة أن المنهج البريطاني في وئام وثيق مع معايير جهاز الرقابة المدرسية وقادر على ترويج و تحسين نوعية التعليم و هذه الاسباب دفعت الباحث لتحديد المدارس البريطانية كعينات للدراسة. لاستكشاف مدى نجاح و تطبيق معايير الرقابة المدرسية قام الباحث بعمل مقابلات مع قادة المدارس و كذلك تحليل الوثائق لمعرفة ميزات التنظيم المدرسي و افضل الممارسات لتحقيق معايير الرقابة المدرسية تضمنت الدراسة دراسة حالة الاصلاح المدرسي و تطوير التعليم العام والاجراءات المطبقة في العمليات التفتيشيه و التعريف بالمبادارت من قبل KHDA لدعم المدارس ضمن عملية التطوير و زيارات المدارس لاجراء المقابلات النتائج الرئيسية للدراسة تشير الى نجاح عملية التحول و التطوير الفعال في المدارس يتطلب تقييم ذاتي صادق و الية لتنفيذ التقييم الذاتي ليكون فعال و صادق المدارس يجب ان تكون قادرة على تحديد و تعريف الاماكن التي بحاجة الى التطوير معتمدة على الاولوية والحالة الطارئة بحيث تكون ضمن خطة تطوير المدرسة التي يضعها قادة المدارس الدعم المهني الخارجي للحصول على عضوية اعتماد من قبل المؤسسات الخارجية مثل **BSO and BSME and CIS** يدفع المدارس الناجحة الى التميز و هذه المؤسسات توفر تدريبات التنمية المهنية المستمرة و تكون عضوة ضمن مجتمعات تعليمية عالمية واحدى نتائج الدراسة المتميزة كان ايجاد التعاون لاجراء الامتحانات الخارجية من قبل المدراس مثل **GL PTE TIMSS and PISA** يسمح للمدارس تقييم جودة التعليم فيها بالنسبة الى المنظور العالمي و المعايير العالمية و يمنحها فرصة لتعديل السياسات المستقبلية و الاجراءات لدعم المستمر لعملية التطور التقدم في المستوى الاكاديمي للمواد الرئسية الرياضيات و العلوم و اللغات يتجهة للافضل و الان تركزالمدارس على مادتي اللغة العربية و التربية الاسلامية لتحسين المستوى فيهما و اجراء التطوير الفعال لذلك.

كلمات البحث:

. تحسين المدارس، إطار التفتيش جهاز الرقابة المدرسية، المناهج النامية، طرق التدريس، وعمليات التقييم

Dedication

This research is dedicated to my beloved children

JUMANA and ABBAS

For making my life so beautiful and meaningful. They are my best friends who bring out the best in me.

Along with

To my most respected Research Supervisor

Prof. Sufian Forawi

For being a great teacher and having faith in my capabilities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Education systems are inherently multifaceted (Mourshed et al. 2010). No systems are equipped with the exact similar conditions and do not face the exact same challenges, yet it is difficult to draw parallels between them. Nevertheless, curriculum, teaching and assessment are fundamental elements and building blocks for school reforms in order to raise the quality of education. In their very popular study entitled 'how the world's most improved school systems keep getting better', Mourshed et al. (2010) studied the transformation of school performance around the world, analysing the experiences of 20 school systems (575 interventions) that have achieved sustained and widespread success as measured by national and international standards of assessment. In their report they have identified six interventions, all given their centrality to teaching and learning, these interventions occurred with equal frequency across all transformational journeys. The six interventions are 1) Revising curriculum and standards; 2) Assessing student learning; 3) Utilizing student data to guide delivery; 4) Building technical skills of teachers and principals; 5) Reviewing reward and remunerations structure; 6) Establishing policy documents and education laws.

The UAE leadership has also voiced their determination to become among the first-rate education systems in the world. This subsequently calls for 'a complete transformation of the current education system and teaching method' (Vision, 2021).

To achieve the national agenda target, private schools have aligned it with their school development plan to prepare themselves to bring about the required change. In the light of inspection reports 2015-2016, an increased number of private schools has achieved outstanding ranking, which also demonstrates the increased level of their readiness in embracing the target. Among the private schools, few schools have constantly improved their education standards or have sustained their improvement, while some of the schools have already undertaken a journey of improvement. But, there exist schools that have stagnated or regressed in their performance, and require professional support and guidance for adopting a different approach. Jackson & Davis (2000) claim that 'in addition to structural changes in classroom and schools, educators

must also make substantial, far-reaching changes in curriculum, student assessment and instruction (teaching) to improve students learning'.

The curriculum is 'what' a student learns, teaching is 'how' to make students learn and assessment answers 'how well' the student has learned. There is a clear alignment of processes one can observe. Therefore, addressing curriculum role and its development and design is pertinent, before embarking on the discussion of its effective delivery in the classroom and the measurable outcomes. These are the fundamentals of an education systems need to get right in the first place in order to improve student performance and compete at international standards. The study will also be useful for one school to learn from the existing best practices in the exemplary schools and create specific interventions to adjust these elements to their context to raise the quality of education.

1.1. Background of the Research

The statistics in the 'school inspection key findings' year 2016 (KHDA, 2016) demonstrates that 28 schools have improved in their overall performance for good or better. This means that there is a significant improvement in the provision of quality education in Dubai since the first inspection in the year 2008-09.

The provision of inspection framework to every school, as to 'What' practices and systems are looked into during the inspection process, the detailed descriptors of each standard have led most schools towards developing effective self- evaluation process, which resulted in an adequate action plan for the development of those schools. The KHDA seems to be committed to providing support to all schools by distributing useful resources, for instance, the DSIB Self Evaluation online document (KHDA, 2016), through which the schools can measure their own performances and design contextual-appropriate strategies to raise education standards. Most schools did their best in building capacity and using their potential to become successful in attaining the ranking a level higher. KHDA is also creating potential initiatives and opportunities, like 'What Works, Lighthouse project and the upcoming 'The Abundance Group project' (KHDA, 2016), for the schools to improve the education standards by collaborating with successful schools. In this sense, it can be securely deduced that the British education system is in very much harmony with those performance standards that KHDA spells out in their

inspection framework. It can also be concluded that both the reforms emphasized effective curriculum development, teaching strategies and productive assessment design processes. The curriculum, teaching and assessment triad had become a primary and a very powerful tool for the governments to make decisions about the quality of school performances.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Distinctive patterns emerged when statistic of schools was analysed in ranking category, out of 149 schools, 16 schools are outstanding, 12 of them are rated as very good, and 57 schools were categorized as good schools; whereas, 56 schools are performing at an acceptable level and 7 schools are weak (DSIB, 2016). As stated previously, the study is not focused on the arguments about a thin line which categorizes schools into different rating categories, nor does it intend to address the quality issues of the inspection process, instead, using data available on KHDA's official website, the researcher tends to highlight only two significant features from the key findings to relate to the purpose of this study, and thus a statement of problem:

1. The number of schools which are providing good or better quality of education and rated as 'very good and good'(excluding the outstanding schools), is alarmingly close to the figure showing the number of schools which are not performing adequately and rated as 'acceptable and weak'.

2. From the range of curricula offered by the private schools in Dubai, British curriculum remained the most popular curriculum for mainly two reasons. Firstly, 50 out of 173 schools are providing British Curriculum, which makes British Curriculum, one of the two major providers of education in Dubai. Another reason is that British Curriculum is proved to be the best education quality provider in Dubai. It is not only the size that is big but the quality of education supersedes all other education systems in Dubai. The statistic shows, out of 16 outstanding schools 10 are British schools, among 13 very good schools 9 are the British Schools, 21 schools out 57 'good' schools are British Schools, remaining British schools are operating at an acceptable level, there is no British school performing at 'weak' level. (DSIB, 2016).

The above context creates a situation where exist schools, that, despite being provided with crystal clear instructions in the form of UAE Inspection framework (DSIB, 2016) and ample support from DSIB, still struggle meeting an adequate level of rating. The provision of education quality remains in question if the students' achievement remains low in National and international assessment systems. Inspection framework document advocates the educators in low performing schools 'What' is required of them, but the real struggle for them is to internalize 'How' to reach there. On the other hand, the fortunate situation arises from the same context where many schools have made a dramatic improvement and brought about required changes in organizing their systems. This study investigates those exemplary schools and seeks to understand the factors and practices, in the chosen areas of the study, working for them in raising or sustaining quality education.

From the range of performance spectrum, the outstanding, very good and good rated British schools are chosen to investigate their practices in three areas from DSIB's inspection framework: curriculum and teaching and assessment.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to investigate the best performing education systems in the UAE to unlock the practices that are making them outstanding providers of education in the region. The study focuses curriculum implementation, instructional systems and assessment designs. The study is strictly confined to the above elements of education; the quality of inspection or its impact on schools are not addressed as a primary concern in this study. Having said that, it is important to take into account the findings of this study as best practices in the areas of curriculum development, instructional systems and assessment designs, with the perspectives of inspection reports.

The study is conducted to answer the following questions:

1. How the outstanding British schools organize their systems to be able to provide best quality education in Dubai?
2. What best practices in the areas of curriculum development, teaching and assessment prevail in the outstanding British schools?

Studies have proved that Curriculum Alignment with Teaching and Assessment has a direct impact on students' achievement. Researchers have pointed out that the Adopting research-based practices in the above areas will not only improve students' achievements but also help schools to continuing development process to meet outstanding performance standards.

1.5. Structure of Dissertation

This document is divided into five main chapters. Chapter one provides the definition of the key concepts, background and significance of the study to highlight the purpose of the study, research questions and scope of this study. Chapter two is dedicated to the Literature Review that develops the contextual understanding, background and its relevance to the study; this primarily includes the UK education reform, the key ideas, theories, and analysis of the studies emphasizing the role of curriculum development, teaching and instructions, and their mutual dependence one another, on raising students' achievement and schools development. Mainly from the perspective of DSIB inspections, all schools prepare the way to achieve national target 2021. Chapter Three outlines the methodology used including how different data are collected, the details of sampling, instruments employed, the analysing process and the validity factors are described. In Chapter Four, data analysis and results are presented. Finally, Chapter Five elucidates conclusion, discussion of the study findings and report recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section of the literature review is comprised of various interlinked components: curriculum, teaching and assessment practices. For contextual appropriateness, it is inevitable to look at them in a frame of reference which is the inspection of private schools in Dubai. Inspections for school effectiveness and improvement in Dubai follow a framework of common performance standards for private schools. This framework has become a cornerstone for every private school in Dubai, in order to build and sustain their improvement plans. Therefore, in this section, the literature evolves by linking related aspects of the background and contextual information to the topic of the study.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Education in every sense is the foundation of development (Ozturk, 2001). Its importance cannot be overstated in nation building, especially in times when countries are moving out of the industrial age and into the information age. Economic efficiency in today's competitive world market and social sustainability can only be achieved through quality education in schools. Schools prepare children for 'adult success' in the twenty- first century (Huitt, 2009). The challenge for the school is to play dual roles. Firstly, schools are responsible for preparing students academically and helping them achieve their best under the standardized tests. The desired outcome of the school is measured by the student performance on these tests; therefore the primary focus of school remains improving their performance through improving classroom teaching practices (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Schools across the nation are striving to improve student achievement; therefore they invest heavily in improving curriculum development, teaching practices and assessment processes to meet the standards for learning established by the ministry of Education. The ultimate goal is to improve student achievement.

The term 'student achievement' refers to student academic performances under the state-mandated assessments in various subject areas. Achievement is an evidence of what a student has learned and can do. Achievement does not equate ability, as ability describes a student's capacity to learn, independent of what has been achieved. Assessments (Standardized testing) do

not measure ability but inform students' achievement of certain age appropriate or grade appropriate curricular objectives. (NWEA, 2012).

In the light of recent studies, curriculum, teaching and assessment are completely interrelated. Acknowledging the fact that curriculum, teaching and assessment are a collection of bits from the whole school system. The theories related to each standard are explicitly discussed in the following subheadings. Nevertheless, it is inevitable to establish the significant relation of these standards with student achievement. The better the teachers teach standards and assess the learning periodically, the better the results of the students are, vice versa, the quality of student achievement reflect the quality of teaching and learning processes in the school.

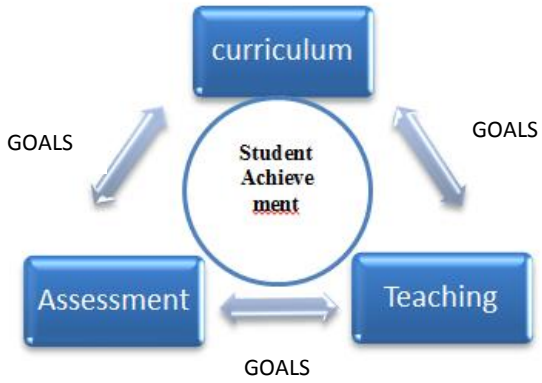


Figure 1: Curriculum-Teaching-Assessment: Interconnectedness

The focus of change in improving student performance through classroom teaching practices is generally addressed as 'schools reforms' (Huitt, 2009). The role which schools play, takes a holistic approach in which a broader range of desired student outcomes (e.g. emotional and social awareness and skills, moral character development) are expected, as guided by the theories of Gardner (1995) and Goleman (1995). Huitt (2009) suggests labeling the efforts along these lines as 'school revisioning'. The efforts are implies designing a rich curriculum that fulfills the demand of time, and in accordance development of professional skills to deliver that curriculum and continuous assessing the quality to meet international standards of education.

2.1.1. Teaching and Learning Theories

Just thirty to forty years ago, works of researchers in the field of cognitive sciences were kept far removed from the classroom. The revolution of 'scientific collaboration' has made the connection between basic research and the educational practice more visible; i.e. it leads to very different approaches to the design of curriculum, teaching, and assessment than those of that were practiced earlier (Bransford et al, 2000).

The science of learning has a history of four decades, in late nineteenth century, when human minds were studied systematically through scientific methods, learning human consciousness through introspecting by subjects' reflection on their thought processes were among the earliest attempt. After that, a school of behaviourism emerged ascertaining that in psychology the studies focus on observable human behaviours and their stimuli that control them. Motivation was conceptualized as a driving force to learn. And that motivation will be driven by drives like rewards and punishments (Skinner, 1950). This school of thought was further reformed over time, psychologists also started taking into account the mental status, as a hypothetical factor when explaining various phenomena, in addition to using behaviour as data. In the late 1950s a new field of learning science emerged: cognitive science (psychology), it approached learning from the perspectives of multidisciplinary fields, that include several branches of psychology, anthropology, neuroscience, computer science, philosophy, linguistics. It is then, become possible for the scientists to test their theories. Most recently learning with understanding, a new science of learning, gained the huge attention of practitioners. Learning with understanding emphasise on the creating useable knowledge, which is much more than a memorizing list of fragmented facts and concepts. It focuses on developing connected and organised knowledge around important concepts; the knowledge is 'conditionalized' to specify where it is applicable and is transferable. The science of learning with understanding leads the scientist towards studying the processes of knowing (e.g Piaget 1978; Vigotsky's, 1978).

The science of learning with understanding has helped practitioners to rethink what is taught, how it is taught and how learning is assessed. In the light of scientific studies, learning with understanding, active learners can improve their ability to understand complex subject matter and be able to transfer their new knowledge to new settings. New developments in the science of learning provide room to establish connections between goals for learning and teaching

practices. Based on a solid research foundation for learning and teaching, Brandsford (2000) mentions three key findings on learning principles and teaching implications:

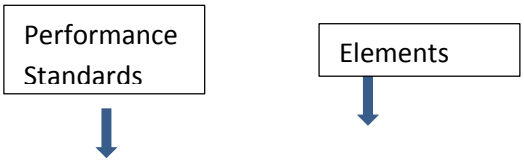
- Research emphasizes that the students as active learners (Dewey, 1998), organize and interpret information they based on their prior knowledge, they come to schools with a range of prior knowledge, skills, beliefs and concepts which directly impact on the way they perceive their environment, everything that they notice incorporates into their existing view. Therefore if students' preconceived understanding is not engaged in the classroom teaching, they may fail to learn new concepts and information that are taught. In order to actively inquiring into students thinking and building a more formal understanding of subject matter, the teacher must create conditions and tasks in the classroom under which students thinking becomes visible to them, their teachers and peers. The right use of formative assessments can guide modification in students' thinking.

- "The research also establishes that deep understanding of subject matter transforms factual knowledge into usable knowledge" Bransford et al. (2000), which is a key to developing competence. The factual information organised into a conceptual framework allows students to successfully transfer it to new situations and learn new related information more quickly. Teaching implication requires teachers to be experts in their subject areas themselves, they must be familiar with the terms of discourse in the discipline and understand the relationship between information and concepts and how they are formed to organise that information in the discipline. It also requires teachers to involve in the active coordination of the curriculum development and design, as in-depth study in various domains requires ideas to be carried beyond on a single school year.
- The third principle of learning states that children should be given the opportunity to analyse and monitor their own understanding carefully, in order to become independent learners. Research has proved that meta-cognition can be taught to the children, which, requires engaging them in monitoring their own understanding by explaining it to themselves, predicting outcomes, noticing failures in understanding concepts, planning ahead and allocating time and memory. Teaching implication for this principle is to integrate metacognitive skills into the curriculum in various subject areas. It must be standard features of the curriculum in schools.

Expert teachers have a deep understanding of subject matter and its structure; in addition, they know the kind of challenges that students are likely to face when learning new concepts. They equally have the outstanding pedagogical knowledge, they know how to tap into students existing knowledge in order to help them organise new information meaningfully, and how to assess the learning productively (Bransford et al., 2000). They keep their students motivated by engaging them in challenging tasks, challenges at the proper level of difficulty to keep them motivated and sustain their motivation. Nevertheless, teachers can teach only when students desire to learn. (Erwin, 2010)They make students see the usefulness of what they are learning and how best can they use this information in solving problems. They enhance students' capability to transfer knowledge to new problems and settings, and students can think beyond the problem and think a variation on the problem. They also teach their students how to monitor and regulate their understanding and become responsible for their own progress.

2.1.2. DSIB Inspection Framework

Based on proven best practices that help schools revisioning efforts, along with the regulatory purpose, DSIB has established a framework of 6 standards that regulates the quality of education in Dubai schools. The inspection process enforces the school leaders to get engaged in self-evaluation process to improve the quality of education. The standards in inspection framework along with the criteria and their description provide the school's goal to become better and focus on developing school improvement plan (Figure 2).



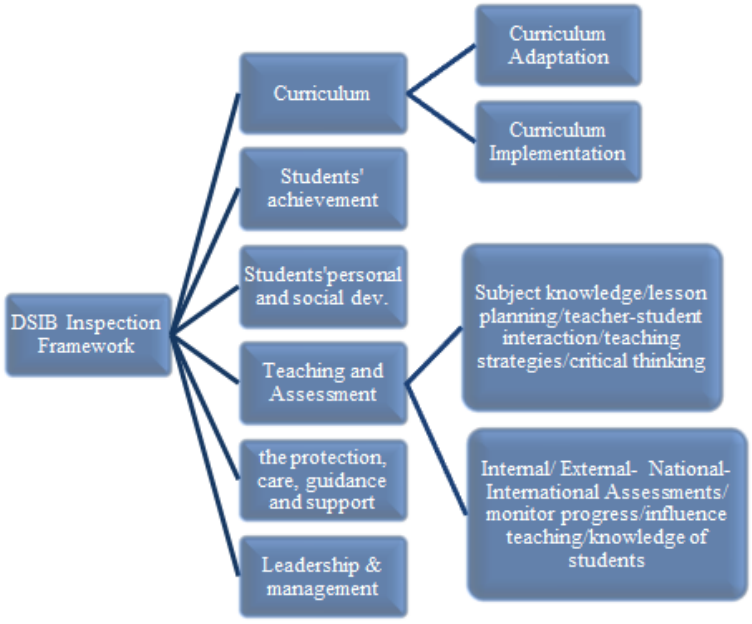


Figure 2 : DSIB Performance Standards for school evaluation

Mourshed et al. (2010) quote 'savvy leaders often take advantage of critical external and internal reports on student outcomes to help them push through their reform agenda.' An instructional leader understands the fact that international competitiveness is constantly raising the bar on education, what worked a few years ago might become irrelevant today. Accordingly, he plans interventions to meet international standards of education. With getting the fundamentals right, he develops a mantel map to fit all changes together as a coherent whole for improvement or sustaining improvement. Once the right interventions implemented, and pursued with discipline and forward momentum, the improvement can be achieved at all performance levels in as short as six years (Mourshed et al. 2010).

2.2. Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment and Student Achievement

The process of curriculum development to improve students' achievement starts with integrating standards into a curriculum. Standards, instructions and assessments are interdependent entities of a curriculum; if the academic standards into the curriculum are not coherent and consistent, effective instructional practice loses its effectiveness; conversely, outlining high academic standards in teaching will be useless if they are taught by traditional and outdated teaching practices. High academic standards must be aligned with effective instructional practices to achieve learning outcomes. Furthermore, a common curriculum with high academic standards

that are aligned with effective teaching methods and appropriate assessments is critical to school improvement (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Marzano, 2003). The common curriculum benefits in whole school development as it dictates changes in school policies and practices for greater success in students' academic achievements.

2.2.1. Curriculum

Conditions that promote positive schooling experiences are supported when all students "have access to challenging curriculum and their educational programs are based on high expectations that acknowledge each student's potential and ultimate contribution to society" (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2000, p. 2).

The factors that indicate the standard of curriculum in Dubai inspection framework ascertains that all students have an access to challenging curriculum, the factors include: Curriculum design and implementation (continuity and progression; rationale, balance and compliance; curricular choices; cross-curricular links; review and development) and Curriculum adaptation (Modification of curriculum to meet the needs of all groups of students; enhancement, enterprise and innovation; and Links with Emirati culture and UAE society).

The curriculum includes everything that affects what happens in the classroom and consequently affects students learning. Curriculum standards are the educational requirements in each subject area at each grade level that students are expected to learn and teachers are expected to teach. Tyler (2013) elaborates further, "A standard-based curriculum includes not only goals, objectives and standards, but everything that is done to enable attainment of those outcomes." From the perspective of school improvement, curriculum development is considered as indispensable, the academic standards of students' achievements must drive other changes in the school, for it to become successful. A curriculum's broad scope is comprised of informed decision making while using academic standards for planning instructions and assessments, teachers' professional development, the use of technology and allocation of other resources.

One of the six common interventions most improved educational systems made is 'revising standards and curriculum' i.e. defining what students should know, understand, and be able to do, and creating the accompanying teaching content (Mourshed, 2010) .

Research indicates that curriculum, teaching and assessment, metaphorically a triad, requires an alignment to point a school towards improved student achievement. The term 'alignment', in education connected to curriculum or instruction implies a process in which the content of teachers' instruction is lined up with the national curriculum standards (Porter, 2002).

2.2.1.1 Curriculum Mapping, Alignment and Integration

Curriculum mapping is used to evaluate the link between the curriculum content and the learning outcomes (Jacobs, 2004), in most schools, the curriculum map is a workable document to review the consistency in progress of classroom teaching within a particular school year. The teachers use a curriculum map to illustrate the content topics and their learning outcomes, the main points of teaching, activities, resources and assessment strategies for different topics (Lam & Tsui, 2013). Alignment refers to the degree of correspondence among the objectives, instruction, and assessment. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) elucidate the concept, that, "Typically, the degree of alignment is determined by comparing objectives with assessments, objectives with instructions, and instructions with assessments."

Effective teaching requires intense planning considering the pace, sequence and scope of their instructions; they need to focus on the question: What do students need from my class to be successful at the next level in their lives? (Jacobs, 2004), to answer this question teacher needs to plan content with consistency, progressing through a series of lessons, the teacher also needs to communicate and connect with other teachers about their lessons that they plan to teach around the same time, and find out if that has any relevance to the lesson they may be planning to teach. Why is this kind of collaboration so important? A simple answer to this is that education does not happen in isolation, nor does the teaching. It is a way to bring together all parts of the whole, and planning not just for a year but over the entire journey from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The purpose of curriculum mapping is to shape curriculum, identify the gaps and repetition in a discipline, and align the content areas with the National Curriculum Framework.

Curriculum mapping is a tool to cohering the curriculum vertically and horizontally. Vertical coherence implies learning progression, continuity, logical sequence and purposeful structure; it ensures what each student learns in one lesson and prepares them for the next lesson. Whereas,

horizontal coherence prevents curriculum inconsistency and disparity in the same grade of different sections, the curriculum has to be consistent and break even for all the sections of the same class, the absence of horizontal alignment may leave some students disadvantaged, if the teacher in their section teaches far less content and teaches it poorly in comparison with some other teacher teaching a similar grade, who covers a lot of content and also makes learning fun for the students.

Yet another form of making learning connection is through curriculum integration (Jacobs, 2006); successful curriculum mapping reveals the opportunity to make connections through plan integration, because most of our standards are written within subject areas, and the best way to design a curriculum is to look at one subject through various other subjects and identify learning connections between them. Educators involved in curriculum design use different approaches to facilitate meaningful learning, such as Parallel Disciplines (see appendix 7). In this approach, teachers, after curriculum mapping, make minor adjustments to teaching lessons that have similar components, and make decisions to teaching the contents of different subjects concurrently, to provide more learning connections. Another option they opt for is called a multi-disciplinary approach, in which two or three subjects that complement each other integrate into a joint unit of study. Yet another option is interdisciplinary - this approach focuses on broad themes such as the environment and collaborates, and combines, disciplines in a joint focus (Jacobs, 2004).

2.2.1.2 Instructional Planning

‘The better the teacher plans the better the teacher,’ (Walsh 1992, p. 97). Successful instructional planning is a reflective practice, in which teachers reflect on what and how they will teach. It constitutes establishing priorities, learning goals and objectives for students. A written lesson plan demonstrates teachers’ priorities concerning objectives of the lesson, time, resources and activities.

Orlich (2013) suggests teachers to use Bloom’s taxonomy (see Appendix 8) as their guide in instructional planning in order to fit their objectives in 3 most broad instructional domains. (Bloom 1984) classifies these areas in these categories: cognitive, affective and psychomotor.

This classification is hierarchical; therefore, each domain is categories ranging from fairly simple to more complex. These taxonomies can be used to decide the objectives, how to teach them (developing questions and learning exercises) and how to evaluate (outcomes) the effectiveness of teaching in the classroom (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). Performance objectives are also an integral part of lesson planning, these statements display what you want your students to do (Mager, 1997), and these statements prescribe students' observable performance under specific conditions and the level of minimal acceptability of students performance.

Instructional plan varies widely in style and degree of specificity. Regardless of any form or size, lesson plans help teachers to choose the content and strategies to teach predefined learning goals in most effective ways, as they need to plan for a wide range of abilities in their classrooms (Lynch & Warner, 2008).

In a holistic instructional plan, a teacher must consider the following components as defined by Orlich (2013) Student characteristics, standards being met, goals, unit/theme, the time allotted, specific objectives, cognitive level check, assignments, special needs, assessments, reteaching as needed (see Appendix 8). The formats and templates are limitless; schools adopt one that fits their cultural and political needs; nevertheless, the essential elements of lesson plan cannot be missed.

2.2.1.3. Differentiated Instructions

Differentiated Instruction is a 'multi-methodology' instruction (Orlich, et al. 2013). To address the diverse nature of students' population, teachers' goal is to reach every student in the classroom. To achieve this goal the teacher has to use a broad spectrum of teaching styles, models and methods and incorporate them into their lesson planning. Hegie et al. (2006) propose creating a learning community in the classroom in which teachers provide students a safe environment by developing a trusting relationship with all their students, and ultimately be able to create a climate of intellectual inquiry. For the students with disabilities, there should be extended lesson plans which are their personal and 'individual educational plans' (IEPs) (Orlich et al. 2013). Equity demands from teachers that they each child in their classrooms must learn and develop, moving from his individual point A to point B. Some students may perform beyond expectations. Teachers' duty is to create such learning environment and make sure that each student reaches the basic objectives in every lesson.

Varying learning styles and individual differences (Threeton & Walter, 2009; Slack & Norwich 2007; Dembo & Howard, 2007) requires teachers fully developed an understanding of three theories on instructional multi-methodology: Brain-Based (Hemisphericity) information processing, learning preferences and multiple intelligences.

Hemisphericity implies the occurrence of different types of mental functions in the left or right hemisphere (Orlich, 2013). Each side of the brain emphasises specific functions, as in, left cerebral hemisphere is involved verbal, logical, analytical and convergent thinking, whereas, right brain engages in creativity. It is important for a teacher to understand that their instructions must enhance the use of both sides of the brain. Effective instructional planning involves both sides of the brain by keeping balanced outcomes and learning experience (Baker & Martin 1998; Eden, Wood, & Stein, 2003), studies prove that when the right side of the brain is involved in learning experiences, the effectiveness of left- side brain functions enhances.

Second, learning Preference, it falls between mental ability and personality (Orlich et al. 2013). Students' cultural background and their experiences largely influence the way they learn new knowledge. It is defined as the cognitive, affective and physiological characteristics that students display in their classroom interaction. In one sense, it is close to schema theory in which students fit the new knowledge that they learn into a meaningful pattern, sometimes schema are disorganised or plain wrong in which case it hinders learning. To accommodate diversities at level teachers use a diverse array of teaching styles.

The third theory, multiple intelligences, is laid on the foundation of three principles that Gardner (1999) establishes. First intelligence is not fixed at birth, it is dynamic. Second, intelligence can be enhanced through effective learning experiences. Third, intelligence has many multiple attitudes. Howard Gardner (1999) identifies eight basic intelligences in human: Verbal/ linguistic, logical/ mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinaesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist.

Effective lessons have a wide variety of teaching methods and techniques. If a teacher adopts the concept of multi-methodology her classroom will have instructional rich environment (Hattie,

2009). Difficult and challenging content can be taught effectively if the lesson is planned keeping in mind all the difference in students' abilities and preferences.

In a nutshell, expert teachers use approaches that accommodate differences in students' learning styles and intelligences (Sternberg, 1994). They are flexible in their planning and implementation, though, initially they have incorporated multiple methods in lesson plans, they enrich and manipulate their plan according to the needs they assess in that particular day, they do it very effortlessly because they have planned beforehand for such unpredictable situations, students with no errors receive enrichment activities in their classrooms to broaden their learning; whereas, who are in need of additional support to strengthen their understanding are given the activities to help them reach the basic goal of the lesson.

2.2.2. Teaching

In their report, Mckinsy (2007) quotes "The quality of education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers." The main driver of the variation in student learning at school is the quality of the teachers. Mckinsey studied the achievements of best-performing school systems as defined by PISA results, the findings are unsurprisingly centred on the quality of teaching (instruction). Below is an overview of the findings of that report. The improvement in student performance is directly related to the quality of the teachers. The evidence showed that the negative impact of poor teaching on children in early years of schooling is severe and loss is irreversible. Peske & Haycock (2006) suggests that students placed with high performing teachers will progress three times as fast as those placed with low-performing teachers. High performing teachers get right people to become their teachers, they develop those teachers to become effective instructors and they enable the system and develop support for children to get benefit from the excellent instruction. Besides rigorous standards and assessments differentiated support for teachers and students is fundamental to educational systems to succeed.

The teaching standard's indicators in the inspection framework are as follows: teachers' knowledge of their subjects and how students learn them; lesson planning, the learning environment and the use of time and resources; teacher–student interactions including the use of questioning and dialogue; teaching strategies to meet the needs of individuals and groups of

students; teaching to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation and independent learning skills.

Teaching pedagogies Lee S. Shulman (2005) articulated why pedagogy is so fundamental: Pedagogies that bridge theory and practice are never simple. They entail highly complex performances of observation and analysis, reading and interpretation, question and answer, conjecture and refutation, proposal and response, problem and hypothesis, query and evidence, individual invention and collective deliberation... One thing is clear: signature pedagogies make a difference. They form habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of the hand."

2.2.2.1. Reflective Teaching

In the words of Hattie (2009), 'Teachers are a single most important aspect of school-based learning'. They are the artist and technically creative people in school. They are aware of the science behind the techniques (teaching skills) they use, they know when and where to use those techniques. They also use their scientific aspect in their carefully planned lessons that reflect an understanding of various teaching techniques. To gain the desired outcome they plan each technique very skillfully.

They are ones who are making important decisions: instructional decisions. The choices they make affect their students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills development. Grade-level content's and process's appropriateness is the decision that teachers make for their students. Making effective decisions about "What" (content) is taught is grade-level appropriate and "how" (processes) to accomplish the content stresses out individual excellence.

In a holistic model of teaching factors related to learners are placed in the centre of two-tiered circles, surrounded by three groups of enabling factors which can enhance or hinder their learning process. The three factors are: learning perspectives (includes learning theories i.e. developmental, behavioural and cognitive), procedural aspect (comprised of planning, lesson design, classroom dynamics, instructional techniques assessment of learning and curriculum implementation) and attitudinal aspects (Equity, active learning supportive environments and commitments). Based on the interaction of all these aspects and perspectives an expert teacher makes instructional decision making.

2.2.3. Assessment

Assessments and the feedbacks are integral to both teaching and learning. It reflects the quality of students thinking and the content they have learned. It also mirrors the quality of instruction in the classroom. The nature and the purpose of assessments have an impact on specific cognitive activities. Effective teachers continually seek the opportunity to learn about students' understanding in order to make it relevant to current learning tasks. They align their assessment practice with their instructional goals of the depth of understanding. Effective assessment design helps teachers to rethink their teaching practice.

Assessment Performance standard in the DSIB framework is broken down into following indicators and elements: internal assessment processes; external, national and international benchmarking; analysis of assessment data to monitor students' progress; use of assessment information to influence teaching, the curriculum and students' progress, teachers' knowledge of, and support for, students' learning.

Assessment of student achievement plays a vital role in instruction; the main goal of assessment is to improve learning. Some studies advocates that the difference between Assessment of learning and assessment for learning is that the latter's priority, in its design and implementation, lies in serving the purpose of raising students' academic standards, by identifying their goals, diagnose their strengths and weaknesses, providing them constructive feedback and facilitating to achieve more, this kind of assessment is widely known as formative assessments. In contrast, the assessment of learning serves accountability purpose, grading or certifying competencies and confirming achievements, generally known as summative assessments (Black, et al. 2004; Guskey, 2003).

Whereas, Ecclestone et al. (2010) based on their extensive three-year study, focusing the teachers evaluation of formative assessments and their effects on teaching and learning, in education colleges, involving 49 teachers and 58 students, claim the above definitions as irrelevant to current practices of assessments, and present the notion of 'instrumentalism' which implies dominance of assessment instruments over the teaching and learning process and the learning outcomes.

The compliance with those instruments have created a merger between summative and formative assessments, where students are coached to improve their summative assessments, committing a large proportion of teaching-learning time on summative assignments, on the other hand, in some

education systems summative multiple choice tests in the subjects like language and numeracy raise questions about the validity of those assessments and credibility of their results. The case of Finland Education system is exemplary to consolidate the idea of fear-free learning. The teachers in Finland develop and administer assessment tools in their respective subjects based on the objectives in the curriculum. There are no national tests for students until they reach their matriculation level (FNBE, 2016).

2.2.3.1. External Benchmarking

External benchmarking is also a valuable source due to its distinctive characteristics; schools have been using external benchmarking examinations in addition to TIMSS and PISA to ensure they have reliable, regular assessment information against which they can benchmark their students' academic outcomes. Extebernal benchmarking test items are written by experts, and specialists review for bias and field- tested for flaws. 'They are technically excellent in questions' (Orlich, 2013). The 'data' is extensively technical; they provide very useful and extensive data on norming, validity, and reliability. They are cost efficient, since the costs of tests have long been recovered, and they are in a position to deliver the highest technical proficiency. The data these international competitive tests provide are very easy-to-use, they provide printouts for class records, students' individual reports and reports to parents. They provide scores in percentiles, grade equivalencies, and stanines for use in comparing students' scores for norming groups. They show mastery or non-mastery of specific skills and objectives (Orlich, 2013). Therefore, the accountability through external inspection systems in many countries has prompted schools to incorporate External Benchmarks Examinations as an integral component in their school development plans.

2.2.3.2. Assessments in the Classroom

Assessment helps teachers to monitor and guide students learning. It is a continuous process to improve student achievement. Assessment is a broad range of processes (Millar. Linn, & Gronlund 2009) to gather information about students growing competence. Teachers make a value judgement based on how well the students have performed. Assessments in the classroom include paper-pencil tests, observations and performance ratings. Teachers administer assessments for a number of purposes: placement, diagnosis, formative and Summative assessments. Formative Assessments are the most important kinds of assessments. They verify

that the learning is occurring and the results used to provide feedback to students; Summative assessment, on the other hand, is a process of overviewing previous learning (Black, 1998). Generally, it is given at the end of term period, to certify completion of programs and classes.

Orlich (2013) has outlined the four areas teachers assess in the classroom and the tools and methods that can be employed for the assessments. First, teachers assess different domains of learning by different assessment methods. Second, to assess students' knowledge and conceptual understanding, the best practice is to ask students explain the concepts in their own words or identify or create examples of that concept. Teachers also assess students thinking by creating assessments that involve multiple-choice tests, problem-solving exercises and explanations. Third, teachers assess students' skills by a wide variety of tools, they are subject specified, like in math, various kinds of paper-pencil tests may be appropriate; in physical education, the demonstration is a right choice. For arts and compositions Portfolio Assessment is the right choice. Finally, teachers assess students' attitude in relation to students' interdependency in the class, anecdotal records, and checklists and attitude inventories are very useful assessment tools for the purpose.

These assessments measure all of the intended outcomes. The curriculum standards, teaching and assessments all inform one another. The classroom assessments directly affect teaching strategies.

2.2.3.4. Using Data with Students

Substantial researches establish that relevant, timely and constructive feedback is one of the most important factors for improving student achievement (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock 2001; Hattie, 2009). Therefore, teachers must provide the quickest possible feedback (Orlich, 2013). To provide a formative feedback, teachers must have a clear understanding of standards student is expected to achieve and be able to judge the quality of work against those standards (Sadler, 1998). It is also very important for the students to hold the same understanding of the standards as does the teachers (Orlich, 2013). Written feedback about performance is a powerful means of increasing student achievement, it helps students to reflect on their own performance and achievements. They are likely to take responsibility for their own learning if the expectations are shared.

2.3. Schools' Performances Evaluation

2.3.1. External Evaluation and Inspection Process

Researchers and education practitioners have identified hundreds of factors that influence student achievement either by hindrance or enhancement over decades (Walberg & Paik, 2000; Huitt et al, 2009). These researches play a major role in education practices, some of these published studies have been the basis of educational reform while other studies were conducted following reforms. Researchers, in general, develop conceptual and theoretical frameworks based on previous studies; they provide key findings and summaries of the studies. They observe and analyse the collected data and draw out implications and they publish findings to attempt to improve educational processes and outcomes (Mortimore, 2000). The educators, subsequently, try to blend the wisdom of theories and best practices based on those key findings and develop common indicators and standards against which the quality of school performances can be measured. Organisations that studied school performances across the globe use those common indicators to study the best practices in depth and the 'right conditions' that facilitates high achievement in schools.

In efforts to enhance the quality of education in developed or developing countries, governments, that are concerned about the quality of education provided in schools, make informed decisions and take actions; Majority of the countries have set up the evaluation system that evaluates school performance against common indicators; for that matter, 'Performance Frameworks' are developed that hold all the stakeholders accountable for school performance on the same standards. One of the two purposes of such evaluation remains to facilitate continuous improvement of organisational structure and systems and to incorporate best practices which ultimately raise student achievement. Another one, yet the most important one, is to utilizing data to guide their educational policy (CDE, 2013). The educational successes are measured against those common standards, and consequently, the outcome data are reported to the public and educators (e.g. Colorado Education Accountability Act of 2009; Ofsted framework; DSIB inspection framework). In the setting of U.K. Ofsted inspectors will have to follow certain principals and regulation avoid biases and prejudices, and thus increase the credibility of the inspection process, the data gathered against an inspection framework are gathered from a range of evidence. Under the common set of inspection criteria (framework) across a range of types of

provision, comparison of different inspection reports for the users is made quick and easy (OFSTED, 2015).

Certainly, not every nation has incorporated Inspection model for increasing the quality of education, education systems that have incorporated some other kinds of quality improvement systems, they measure the effectiveness based on the international comparison assessments or standardized test-based schools evaluations. In the U.S., No Child Left Behind (NCLB), tests-based accountability model is an example of school performance measurement based on state high-stakes testing. School inspections, in Finland, were abolished in the early 1990s, in addition, there are no exams until the age 16, and quality assurance is based on Self-evaluation of schools and national evaluations of learning outcomes. The aim of national evaluations of learning outcomes is to investigate how well the objectives have been reached as set in the core curricula and qualification requirements, these evaluations are not used for ranking schools (CIMO, 2013). Given the national education policy, nevertheless, Finland national board of education (FNBE) is committed to keeping up with the modern trends in education and economy. In their statistical yearbook of education, FNBE produces the analysis of Finnish education and training system; this analysis is based on the international education indicators by OECD's statistical data in their annual publication 'Education at a Glance'.

2.3.2. Internal Evaluation and Self-assessment Process

In their 2011's issue, 'Education at glance' suggested 29 countries employ some form of accountability in education in order to enabling school improvement process. It could be either of the models of inspection or school self-evaluation or the combination of both.

Self-evaluation: The systems cultivate ownership in schools for improvement through introducing self-evaluation for schools and making performance data more available. In the review of evaluation and assessment framework, OECD (2016) presents their key policy document in the section of school evaluation. The policy looks at achieving a closer alignment between self-evaluation and external evaluation.

Self-evaluation implies being responsive to the school's specific needs and circumstances. It is more a tool for managing improvement for developing opportunities to support their initiatives and create greater rigor in the process (OECD, 2016).

2.2.3. International Competitiveness

To monitor the quality of their educational system and analyse the effectiveness of that system in a global context, increasing number of countries are participating in successive International Comparative Assessments in major subjects. The comparative data and their analysis have helped different users in education at great length: Governments, by comparing the results over time in their own countries and those in other countries are able to set policy targets against measurable goals and accordingly sanction development projects, the information also enable them to assess the impact of their existing educational policies; educational providers, use that information to direct their course of action to encourage improvement in results, they evaluate the achievement progress over time and initiate new goals and policies to drive better results in future, their energy, focus and time are invested in closing the gaps in students' achievement, their school improvement plans concentrate on fostering conditions that enable improved students achievement; researchers and educators use the international database to investigate factors associate with high achievement, they conduct studies to better understand the context of schools and classroom cultures in which students learn best.

International Assessments, such as Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) organised by Organisation for Economic Development (OECD), and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study and Progress in international reading literacy study.(TIMSS & PIRLS) organised by International Association for Educational Assessment (IEA), provide an authoritative compilation of international comparisons in the subject of Literacy, Mathematics and Science.

TIMSS by IEA, administered every four years, assesses Mathematics (Number, Algebra and Geometry) and Science (Earth Science, Biology and Chemistry) achievements at the fourth and eighth grades, the content knowledge are assessed in knowing, applying and reasoning cognitive domains (IEA, 2015). PIRLS by IEA measures the achievement of Reading Literacy of fourth-grade students; it assesses two purposes of reading: reading for literary experience and reading to acquire and use knowledge. PISA by OECD evaluates worldwide education systems by assessing the competencies of students of 15 years in reading, mathematics and science. Pisa claims that the test items are not directly linked to the school curriculum, i.e. it investigates how well the student is equipped to apply the knowledge and skills in real-life situations (OECD, 2016).

These international standards of assessments have helped many school systems achieved significant improvement. The universal aspects and the context-specific aspects of their reform journeys are studied intensively by educational researchers to understand the change processes in school and sustainable school transformation. These studies have helped school leaders to study systems with similar starting conditions and their journeys towards sustained improvement.

2.4. Private Schools in Dubai

A study conducted by National Education Association (NEA) to investigate the relationship between organisational characteristics and students learning point that student achievement is higher in schools that exhibit the belief that all students can achieve under 'right conditions' (Hawley, 2007).

DSIB through their inspection, regulate the quality of education in private schools in Dubai. The regulatory act helps schools to focus their efforts and resources on creating the right conditions, which in turn promote learning standards in school. There has been a significant improvement recorded in the quality of education since the inspection started in 2008-09, as reported in DSIB School Inspection Key Findings (2016). In 2016, there are 173 private schools in Dubai that cater to 253,319 students by offering 17 different curricula. 16% of the inspected schools population of students are receiving good or better quality of education. Every year the number of improved schools is growing (DSIB, 2016).

2.4.1. British Schools in Dubai

Out of 65 UK schools, 50 schools have been inspected in the year 2015-2016. These schools provide British education to over 75,794 students. The performance of the British Schools in Dubai is exemplary. DSIB (2016) reports that 20 British schools are performing at an above expectation level in meeting national agenda target.

In the table below are the schools that provide education at very good and outstanding standards, as inspected by DSIB (DSIB 2016).

Outstanding Schools	**Very Good Schools**
Kings school Dubai	Deira International School
Dubai College	Dubai British School(VG)

Dubai English Speaking Private College	Dubai English Speaking School
GEMS Jumeirah Primary School	GEMS Wellington Academy
GEMS Wellington International School	GEMS Wellington Primary School
Jumeirah College	Horizons English School
Jumeirah English Speaking School	The School of Research Science
Jumeirah English Speaking School (Br)	The Winchester School
Repton School Dubai (UK-IB)	Jebel Ali School
GEMS Royal Dubai School	

Table 1: List of very good and outstanding British schools in Dubai 2015-16

2.4.2. Significance of British Educational System

Cambridge International examination system is the largest curriculum provider for international programs across the globe according to ISC Market Intelligence reports. Every year nearly a million Cambridge learners from 10,000 schools in 160 countries take their Cambridge International examinations. Alone this year (2016) entries for Cambridge IGCSEs has observed an 8% increase from 145 countries (CIE, 2016).

On the contrary is the situation in Britain, the previous secretary of State in the UK has passed a verdict in favour of a tougher exam. They decide to back off IGCSE. 2000 state schools in the UK will give up IGCSEs from next year (from the time of writing this), even to an extent where IGCSEs will not be in performance tables. Apparently, a drastic change in British Education arena is expected to emerge in the UK by an introduction of new British National Curriculum.

In the context of Dubai, The Department for Education (Britain) approved a partnership between the Dubai School Inspection Bureau and CfBT to conduct inspections of British schools overseas in Dubai (Ofsted 2015).

2.4.3. British Curriculum

The British Curriculum is organised into the following key stages:

- Key Stage 1: Ages five to seven (Years 1-2) ⇨ Early Years
- Key Stage 2: Ages seven to 11 (Years 3-6) ⇨ Primary
- Key Stage 3: Ages 11-14 (Years 7-9) ⇨ Secondary 1
- Key Stage 4: Ages 14-16 (Years 10-11) ⇨ Secondary 2
- Key Stage 5: Ages 16-19 (Years 12-13) ⇨ Advanced

The main subject areas include English, mathematic, sciences, geography, history, art and modern languages.

The new national curriculum came into force in September 2015. It offers far more specific age-related content with an increased expectation of attainment in all subjects. It implies that the students are to be challenged within the set of objectives instead of moving into the objectives from the year above. Changes to the content of all subjects make British National Curriculum a tougher choice and challenge for overseas British schools overseas, as the expectations are higher in each year group than what it was previously.

When assessing writing a greater importance is given to spelling, handwriting, punctuation and grammar. In Math, the children are expected to deal with bigger numbers from an earlier age (for example, numbers to 100 in Year 1 as opposed to numbers to 20 previously) and some concepts are now being taught in earlier year groups than was previously the case (DfE, 2014).

2.4.4. Continuous Professional Development

Studies establish that top performing schools relentlessly find ways to improve what happens in the classroom. Teachers, as individuals, need to become aware of specific weaknesses in their own practice and the mindset underlying it. They need to gain an understanding of specific best practices, teachers self-motivation to develop professionally are the essence of effective teachers. These three things are necessary to happen at the same time.

In England, teachers during their teacher training courses spend two-thirds of the time teaching in school. Expert teachers are given reduced teaching loads in order to coach their colleagues. Professional learning communities, where teachers work together, and their lessons are planned

jointly and they observe each other's lessons to provide constructive feedback and reflection on their instructional practice, create a culture of collaboration.

2.4.5. Assessment Processes in British Curriculum

Cambridge International examination (CIE) provides two assessment options in Primary and secondary 1:

1 Progression Tests (marked in schools)
2 Checkpoint (marked by Cambridge examiners)
3 Cambridge ICT Starters

CIE offers two assessments in Secondary 2:

1 Cambridge IGCSE
2 Cambridge O Level

CIE awards two assessments in Advance level:

1 Cambridge International AS & A Level
2 Cambridge Pre-U

British Curriculum is overseeing a cultural shift by introducing new curriculum and the removal of levels. (Lilly, J. Shoveller, S. 2014). Schools are given ownership over developing their assessment processes and acquire new tracking software that enables schools monitoring academic progress across year groups and overtime.

The Final Report of the Commission on assessment without levels (DfE, 2015) consolidates the importance of formative assessments in the British Curriculum, John McIntosh in the report states that It goes without saying that assessment goes hand-in-hand with the curriculum, but it is high-quality formative assessment that goes to the very heart of good teaching. The changes to the national curriculum and its assessment aim to support better curriculum coherence in the system. The report (DfE, 2015) suggests a radical cultural and pedagogical change is required to successfully implement the new national curriculum. The in-class formative assessments, in turn, support high-quality, in-depth teaching. Eliminating levels aim at enriching learning, and pupil motivation. This change also enables teachers to become professionally effective.

Below is the table taken from a British school's website to illustrate the structure of assessment without levels.

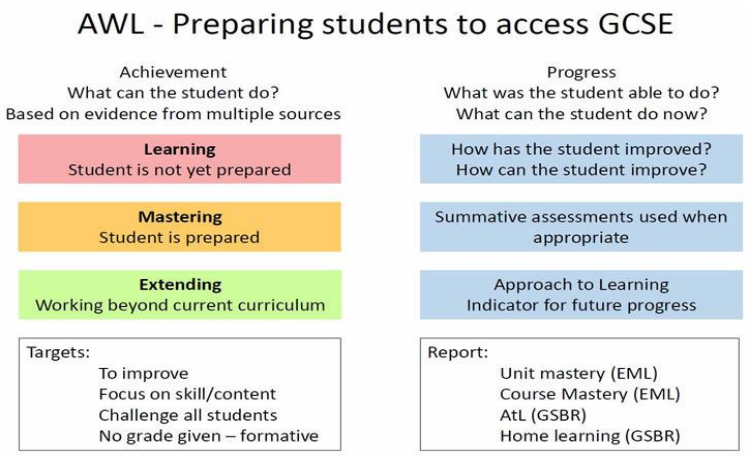


Figure 3: Organisation of Assessments without Levels

Courtesy: The Wellington Academy: UK

The commission report (2014) also includes the guidelines for:

1 Writing assessment policies by schools, in line with the 'purposes and principles of assessment without levels'.
2 Data collection and reporting
3 Evaluating external assessment systems
4 Accountability and inspection
5 A fully inclusive approach to assessment
6 Teacher education

The new curriculum and its assessment process have a strong focus on basic skills, in addition to the freedom for teachers to choose best teaching approaches (DfE, 2014). Around 2000 local authorities in the UK are teaching this curriculum, schools in Dubai are yet to accommodate this new curriculum since most of the schools are still using level based APP (Assessing Pupil Progress).

Conclusion

On the basis of effective learning outcomes, schools are judged on their performances. Different assessment tools in the form of performance standards are embedded in DSIB's inspection framework. The inspection process is linked with the school's self-assessment process. The schools that are strong in their self-assessment process create a strong alignment between the DSIB inspection and the self-assessment process. Usually, these schools scale up their performances by successfully implementing the goals they set for themselves. They define responsibilities, execute empowerment and develop competencies on the basis of information they collect from the inspection reports and the performance indicators from their School development plan.

The inspection process and the self-assessments reinforce the improvement of classroom practice and student learning. Teachers should be involved in steering school's self-assessment and are given responsibilities as collective efforts. Teachers should be evaluated for the continuous improvement of teaching practices. They should be supported in their capacity building through adequate professional training. Student assessments require considerable attention to ensure sound strategies to assess student performance against the learning standards. The curriculum is consisted of the learning standards which defines the knowledge and skills students are expected to achieve and the assessments ensure the attainment of those standards. Hence, it is inevitable to build teachers' capacity in assessing against standards and to align educational standards and teaching and assessment in their lesson planning.

To gain additional information on student achievement, schools opt for external assessments in addition to the summative assessments. These external assessments provide high reliability. These assessments when combined with teacher-based assessments that assess more complex competencies increase the validity and reliability in assessing learning outcomes. The collecting and analysing of assessment data allow schools leaders and teachers understanding students better and allow them to identify the areas of improvement in relation to teaching and learning.

The student assessment data is also an indicator of how well the system is performing. School self-assessment and DSIB inspections are another two keystones in assessing system performance. Each element has its own benefits and limitations. The information gathered from these sources if put to right use by professionals, leads to achieve success in delivering quality standards.

Chapter 3: Methodology.

Considering the fact that there are limited studies investigating the best practices in accordance with the outstanding descriptors defined by KHDA in the school inspection framework, this study reports an analysis of the achievement of some of the best performing schools, by investigating their methods and procedures involved in the areas of curriculum, teaching and assessment, and exploring the effectiveness of these practices from the perceptions of educators and students. Main questions of the study are:

1) How the outstanding British Schools organize their systems to be able to provide best quality education in Dubai?
2) What are the best practices in the areas of curriculum development; teaching and assessment prevailed in the outstanding British schools?

This chapter presents the study approach and the research methods used to conduct the study. It clearly defines how the necessary data were collected, presented and analysed to address the study's questions. The researcher presents details of research instruments, data sources, data collection techniques and analytical techniques.

3.1. Research Design

This present mixed method study was conceptualized from a pragmatic theoretical paradigm (Creswell 2013; Hansel et al. 2005) to achieve the purpose of explaining and investigating best curriculum, instructional and assessment practices in the UK outstanding schools situated in the UAE, as defined by the KHDA's inspection report 2014-15, and to understand how teachers and students perceive the effectiveness of those practices.

The notion of pragmatism accentuates that both the methods of qualitative and quantitative are compatible (Howe 1988). Reams and Twale (2008 p.133) confirm that mixed methodology is "necessary to uncover information and perspective, increase corroboration of the data, and render less biased and more accurate conclusions", through mixed methodology, a complete picture of the phenomenon under study is provided, the accuracy of the data increases and it helps in developing analysis and build on the original data (Denscombe 2008). Thus, to gain the maximum benefits from both qualitative and quantitative methods; the pragmatic interpretive framework of this study employed a case study design to capturing the rich descriptive context

of the schools in line with the areas of this study and validating the facts through comparing the data and convergent findings.

Gall et al. (1996 p. 545) explained case study design as "the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon". By replicating the patterns, multiple case studies consolidate the results by replicating the patterns thereby increasing the robustness of the findings (Yin, 1994). Yin (1984) elucidated that though multiple case study design is complex but it permits induction of rich and reliable models. For this study purpose, the quantitative methodology was employed to establish the background of selected schools and including the details of DSIB's inspection reports of the year 2015 and 2016, through document analysis, that were available online in public domain; a profile of each school was generated about their best performances in the areas of studies.

The quantitative method included descriptive analysis by calculating percentages and comparing means of significant elements in two perspectives: curriculum (British and British in combination with International Baccalaureate) and the ranking of schools (outstanding and very good schools). In the same perspectives the means of various significant elements are compared, elements like nationality of the majority of teachers, teacher-student ratio, the number of accrediting organisations, the number of external exams. SPSS was employed to create tables for the analysis. When interpreting data only the relevant information was retrieved and analysed.

Document analysis was based on the online inspection reports of the all the outstanding and very good schools. The frame of reference for qualitative data analysis remained the DSIB inspection framework. Hence, the questions were developed in order to sort out the information determine best instructional, assessment and curriculum related strategies and procedures. The information was categorized in the sections of curriculum, teaching and assessment standards. Furthermore, the data was sorted into specific elements of each standard. The data was then analysed using grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin 1998), including categorization and exploring patterns across categories.

The qualitative data were collected through interviews and written responses for semi-structured questions. The questions were developed in the line DSIB's Inspection Framework and the responses were sorted in order to relate to the findings of qualitative document analysis.

Findings from the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study were integrated to reveal areas of convergence or discrepancies or providing a context for the data (Gardner 2015). Specifically, the study sought to investigate and explore the best practices in the areas of the study across all the outstanding British schools and how each school practice in its unique way, by looking for convergent areas as well as complimentary between the qualitative and quantitative findings (Croswell 2013; Gardner 2015).

The data drawn from the questions indicated the frequency of the best international practices, in the areas of study, exists or implemented in the schools, while the interview data pointed to the school leaders perceptions that are directly influencing by these practices, the qualitative data has helped in portraying, analysing and interpreting the uniqueness of real individuals and situations (Cohen et al. 2011).

It has been established earlier that the executed research design is convergent parallel design, in which the qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously and independently and then analyzed the results, by converging and compiling the findings to generate insights. The components of data collection are illustrated in the following figure.

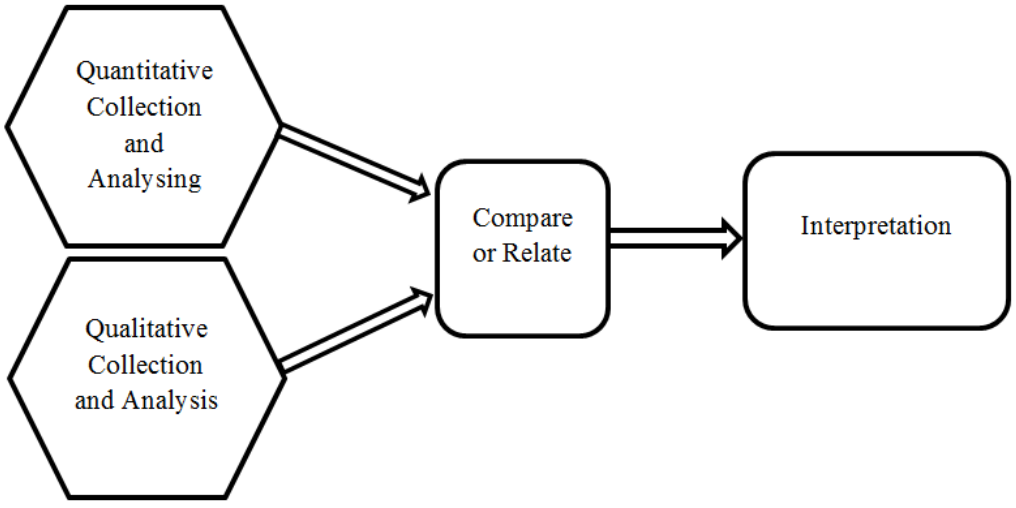


Figure 4: Convergent Parallel Design-Mixed Methodology

Data were analyzed and interpreted at two levels:

1. The case level, in which a detailed description of each case and themes within the case are provided (Creswell 1998) in order to gain familiarity with data and preliminary theory generation (Appendix: 6).
2. Thematic analysis (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2003), which is a across the cases analysis, in order to highlight meaningful similarities, variations, and site-specific experiences, and to look beyond initial impressions and see evidence through multiple lenses (Miles & Huberman 1984; Yin 1981; Yin 1984; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) (Appendices: 3, 4, 5).

3.2. Population and Sampling

This case study design leads to select specified schools in the context of UAE. Eisenhardt (1989 p.537) suggests that "the cases may be chosen to replicate previous cases or extend emergent theory". Theoretical sampling technique has been chosen for this study; from the population of 19 British outstanding schools, has been selected to choose cases which are likely to replicate or extend the emergent theory (Eisenhardt 1989). Specified population constrains unnecessary variation and sharpens external validity. Theoretical, not random, sampling focuses efforts on theoretically useful cases-i.e., those that replicate or extend theory by filling conceptual categories (Miles & Huberman 1984; Yin 1981; Yin 1984; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The total defined population, under this study, is the British Schools along with the schools providing a combination of British and International Baccalaureate (British/IB) curriculum in the UAE that are performing at an outstanding and very good schools level according to the DSIB inspection reports 2015-16.

The primary objective is to investigate the effective practices and to explore participants' perceptions about the effectiveness of those practices in the areas of curriculum, teaching and assessment. Particularly, with a focus on the efforts put in maintaining or progressing through the journey of success.

Yin (1989) explains that each case is in essence treated as an individual study that either predicts literal replication or contrasting results but for predictable reasons. This present study, predicts similar results (literal replication), variations will be recorded in accordance with the contextual uniqueness. Charmaz (2006) elucidates that saturation is "when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties". The document analysis of every school's inspection reports was based on saturation. The data mining continued until no new category (or theme) emerged.

3.3. Instrumentation

Fraenkel & Wallen (2011 p.112) define Instrumentation as "the whole process of preparing to collect data, it involves not only the selection or design of the instruments but also the procedures and the conditions under which the instruments will be administrated." Instrumentation in this mixed method design study has employed multiple data collection, i.e. the data will be collected combining the following instruments: document Analysis, questionnaires and interviews to strengthen the findings by triangulation of evidence. Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998) proposes that all mixed method designs use triangulation techniques, also the findings from a mixed method research design provide a synergistic view of evidence (Miles & Huberman 1984; Yin 1981; Yin 1984; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Mintzberg (1979, p.587) elucidates the importance of this synergy, "theory building seems to require rich description, the richness that comes from anecdote. We uncover all kinds of relationships in our hard data, but it is only through the use of this soft data that we are able to explain them".

The instruments employed for each method are measuring the frequencies of best practices employed in the areas of Curriculum, teaching and assessment, across all outstanding schools. All the quantitative data retrieved from DSIB inspection reports were saved in Microsoft EXCEL file to be statistically analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software.

3.3.1. Interviews

Merriam (2009 p.88) explains "Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them." By interviewing we enter into the educators and students perspectives (Patton 2002). Semi-structured interviews (Appendix __), were conduct with the teachers, students and curriculum heads to collect the information about their perceptions on how effective they find the methods and procedures that they have chosen to practice in the classroom, how do they perceive the impact of these practices on their work as a teacher or a curriculum head and the students perceive that impact in their lives, the strengths and the challenges that they encounter when planning for curriculum, instruction and assessments. The interview seeks to collect data on the evidence of the existing realities. Useful non-verbal communication was also recorded by taking notes during the discussion to facilitate data analysis (McMillan & Schumacher 2010).

Successful interviewing relies on efficient probing and sequence of questions (Cohen et al. 2000). The sequence of the interview questions followed the design of the questionnaire. Both the instruments were applied in tandem the participants chosen for the interview had already completed the questionnaire; this has added familiarity of the topic under study and served as a prior knowledge about the purpose of conducting this interview.

Questions were designed around the descriptors in the DSIB inspection framework; following were the questions developed to generate responses.

The guideline for the interview protocol followed the demographic information of the participant, and then the statement of the study, finally the interview semi-structured questions seeking the existing reality of the phenomena in depth.

Patton (2002) suggested an interview guide that provides a framework for discussion and consistency in collecting data from each interviewee. A request letter for participation in the research and appointment to conduct the interviews were sent to schools for solicitation. Visits were made to the leaders' offices in their organizations after taking appointments. The interview lasted between 40 to 80 minutes. Permission to record the interview was solicited and biographical information was requested. The interview was recorded using a recorder, transcribed and categorized for analysis.

The collected data through the interviews and written responses were compiled into themes, immediately following the interview (Crewel 2003, 2007). Themes emerged were grouped in the main categories of performance standards: Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment. An expert on the subject was consulted to review the formulated themes by the researcher, in order to determine the quality and effectiveness based on their evaluation. Interviews and written are transcribed, and entered into NVivo, version 11, for data analysis.

3.3.2. Document Analysis

The study also involved an analysis of documents which are publically available and provided by the schools. These sources served to triangulate data obtained from the interviews responses from the interviews and augment the data collected through document analysis. The schools were

asked to provide access to documents that extends our understanding of their curriculum, instructional and assessment practices.

Document Analysis is an effective research technique, which allows a systematic text analysis in order to make inferences about the content of documents. It is also referred as content analysis (Miller & Whicker, 1999). Content analysis research technique is equally effective for qualitative and quantitative research methods. Researcher creates categories and codes in order analyse patterns in text and develop themes to understand underlying ideas (Yang, 2008).

The researcher chose this technique to mine data from the documents through objective and systematic application of thematic rules. The data collected under the themes were then summarized and compared (Paisley, quoted in Holsti, 1969). The researcher found this technique very significant since it allowed studying the participants without interfering in their context, also, it was readily accessible.

The documents (population) include specifically the inspection reports of all the outstanding and very good schools. Documents obtained from the schools were also entered into NVivo, version 11, for analysis.

The inspection reports were analysed to collect quantitative as well as qualitative data. Quantitative Document analysis was aiming at collecting following data by analysing the frequency of events and similarity between significant elements of the curriculum, teaching and assessment standards. The aim was also to identify patterns and augment or enrich the finding of the research. The researcher evaluated the data by coding the data. The relevant data in the content was coded numerically in SPSS. Quantitative document analysis in this study explored the pattern by finding frequencies by analysing and comparing means and finding a correlation between of various significant variables (derived from the DSIB inspection reports).

The qualitative document analysis examined the feedback of the inspectors to very good and outstanding schools in the areas of curriculum, teaching and assessment. The document analysis for the qualitative purpose was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of how best practices are perceived by the inspectors. Qualitative document analysis also provided insight into diverse contexts, and highlighted underlying facts, such findings were significant in terms of studying best practices in successful schools. The categories were organised in the form of

questions that and the responses were then sorted from the inspection reports. The questions were built based on the focused standards from DSIB's inspection framework and their elements.

3.4. Pilot Study

Because of the limited number of accessible schools, it was not possible to conduct a pilot study with any of the school as that would preclude them from the final data collection. The interview questions were sent to a former principal of one of the sample schools for the quality check and validation.

3.5. Ethical Consideration

In this present study, all procedural ethical issues are taken into account. The permission was obtained by formally requesting the administrators of the schools. The outline of the study was submitted to the schools' heads, explaining the intention and condition under which the study will be carried out, it was also elucidated what is to be done with the information gathered. The autonomy of the participants was respected; the participants freely chose to take part in the study. Though the central feature of the research is to publish it, the participants were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the data received. They were also offered reciprocity in terms of allowing the participant to access the findings of the study; the findings of the study were also shared with the school management. In this multiple case study, participants in every case were treated equally, in the sense that no one is discriminated against or unjustly favoured (Creswell 2009). The participants had signed the consent form which included information as stated above. The transcript of responses from the interviews was included in the study after the verification and validation from the respondents.

Chapter 4: Results and Data Analysis

This study provides a detailed account of the findings from the three - data collection phases. Accordingly, this chapter is structured into three parts; the first part discusses findings from the qualitative document analysis, the second part presents findings from quantitative document analysis and the third part focuses on the analysis of the in-depth interview. The methodology discussed in the previous chapter has guided the process of data collection. Grounded theory codes, memos and visual demonstrations provide an insight into how the final grounded theory categories were developed. Comparison of the findings with relevant academic literature will be presented in chapter 5. The focus of this chapter is to present and discuss the results of data

To begin with, a large number of initial and tentative codes were assigned to every document analysis. Subsequently, the document analysis was conducted and assigned with focused codes. As described in the previous chapter, school names were replaced with code numbers to ensure their anonymity. They are assigned nominal numbers.

The qualitative data were analyzed generating Themes and categories based on nodes to look for the relationship among codes, their frequency in order to understand underlying concepts based on a combination of those codes.

4.1. Demographic Information

School Ranking	Type of schools	Frequency	Percentage
Outstanding Schools	Provides British Curriculum	7	70%
	Provides British and International Baccalaureate curriculum	3	30%
Very Good	Provides British Curriculum	7	78%
	Provides British and International Baccalaureate curriculum	2	32%

Table 2: List of very good and outstanding British and British/IB schools

In all, there are 73% schools from the population that is providing only British Curriculum and 27 % schools are providing the combination of British Curriculum and International Baccalaureate Curriculum.

4.1. Quality of teaching standard across all levels based on the type of school (Inspection 2015-16)

The following table compares both the types of school for teaching standards in all four levels, teaching in the foundation, primary, secondary and post 16 levels. The means of ordinal numbers are compared to analyse the strength of each type of school in teaching standard. 1 represents good and 2 represents very good and 3 represents the outstanding quality of teaching standard.

Type of School	Foundation Teaching	Primary Teaching	Secondary Teaching	Post16 Teaching
British	2.2000	1.8667	1.0000	1.1333
British and International Baccalaureate	3.0000	2.7500	2.7500	2.7500
Total	2.3684	2.0526	1.3684	1.4737

Table 3: Quality of teaching standard in British and British/IB schools (mean comparison).

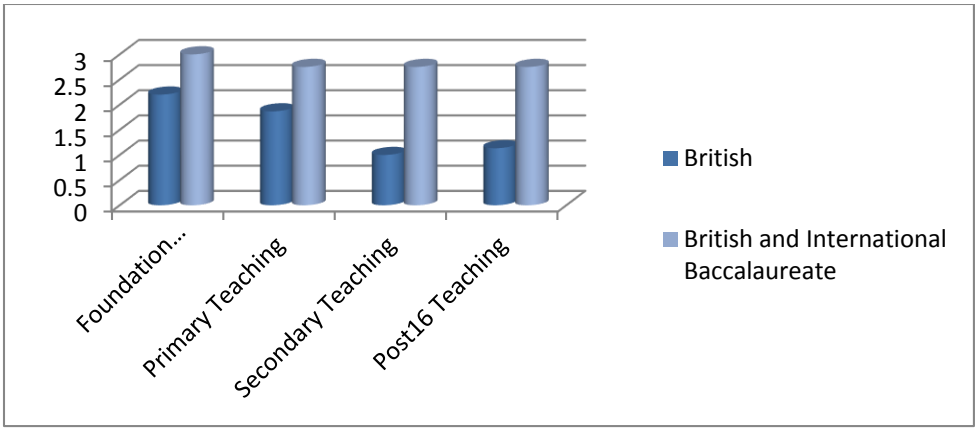


Figure 5: Quality of teaching standard in British and British/IB schools (mean comparison).

Interestingly, as self-explanatory as it is; British/IB schools performance on teaching standard shows higher on this graph according to the DSIB inspection reports.

4.2.Quality of curriculum standard across all levels based on the type of school

The following table compares the quality of curriculum development and implementation in both the types of school across all four levels, Curriculum in the foundation, primary, secondary and post 16 levels. The means of ordinal numbers are compared to analyse the strength of each type of school in curriculum standard. 1 represents good and 2 represents very good and 3 represents the outstanding quality of teaching standard.

Type of School	Foundation Curriculum	Primary Curriculum	Secondary Curriculum	Post16 Curriculum
British	2.3333	2.0667	1.3333	1.4000
British and International Baccalaureate	3.0000	3.0000	2.7500	2.7500
Total	2.4737	2.2632	1.6316	1.6842

Table 4: Quality of curriculum standard in British and British/IB schools (mean comparison).

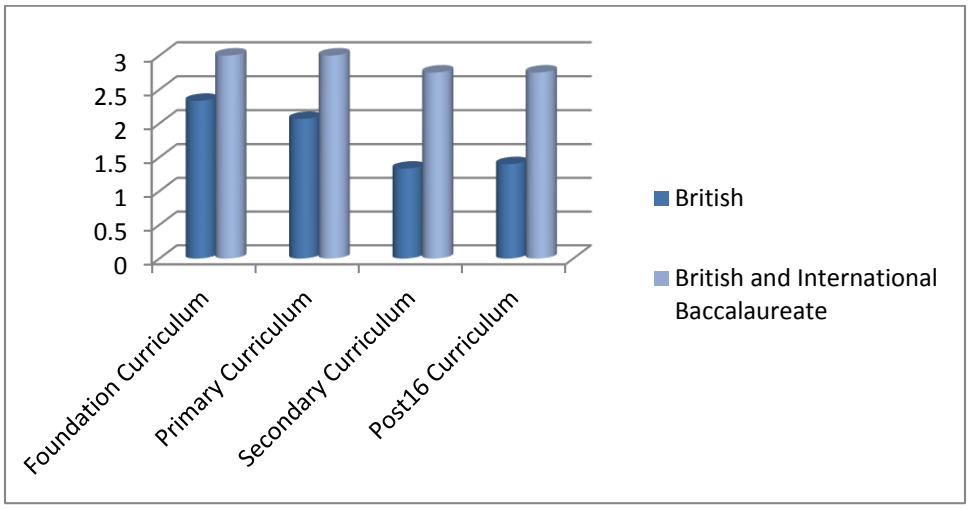


Figure 6: Quality of curriculum standard in British and British/IB schools (mean comparison).

Similarly, British /IB schools are performing better on Curriculum standard than British Schools in Dubai.

4.3.Quality of assessment Standards across all levels Bases on the type of school

The following table compares the quality of assessment processes in both the types of school across all four levels, Assessment in the foundation, primary, secondary and post 16 levels. The means of ordinal numbers are compared to analyse the strength of each type of school in assessment standard. 1 represents good and 2 represents very good and 3 represents the outstanding quality of teaching standard.

Type of School	Foundation Assessment	Primary Assessment	Secondary Assessment	Post16 Assessment
British	2.2000	1.8667	1.0000	1.1333
British and International Baccalaureate	3.0000	2.7500	2.7500	2.7500
Total	2.3684	2.0526	1.3684	1.4737

Table 5 :Quality of Assessment standard in British and British/IB schools(mean comparison).

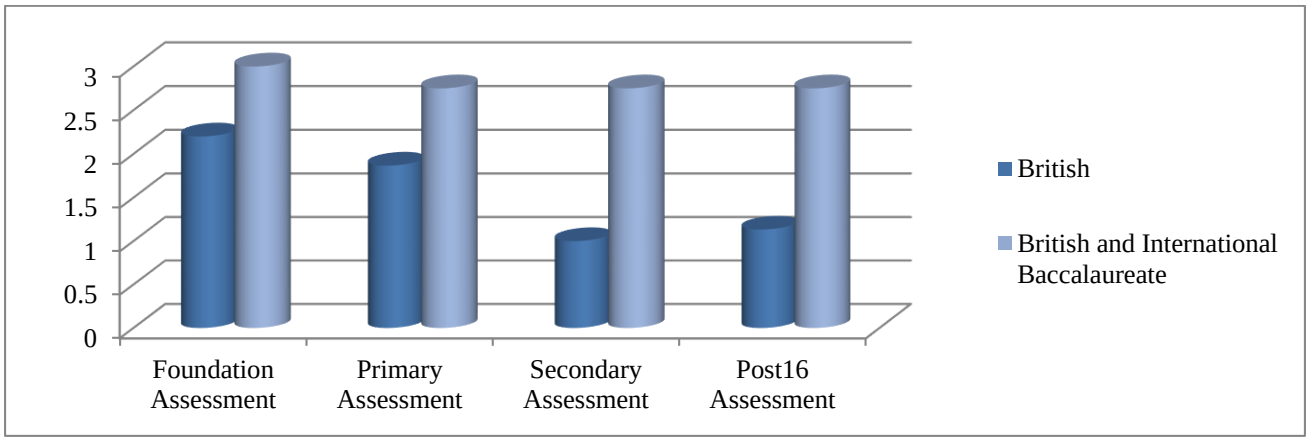


Figure 7: Quality of Assessment standard in British and British/IB schools(mean comparison).

Expectedly, the findings of this comparison match their predecessors. The quality of assessment systems, as reported by DSIB confirms, is better in the British/IB schools than its counterpart.

4.4. An overview of four significant features of outstanding and very good schools and British School and British and IB schools

	Very Good Schools	Outstanding Schools	British Schools	British and International Baccalaureate
Teacher-Student Ratio (Ratio= 1:N)	15.7778	13.3000	14.8000	13.2500
External Exams	2.7778	1.9000	2.2667	2.5000
Majority of Teachers Nationality	1.1111	1.0000	1.0667	1.0000
Accredited British Organisations	1.8889	2.0000	1.9333	2.0000

Table 6: An overview of four significant features of outstanding and very good school, and British school and British and IB schools by comparing their mean

4.4.1. Teacher-Student Ratio

The following figure compares teacher-student ratio in the classroom. Numbers entered, into the SPSS, are the number of students catered by one teacher. The purpose is to analyse the impact of external examinations to the targeted quality of the schools and the type of the schools.

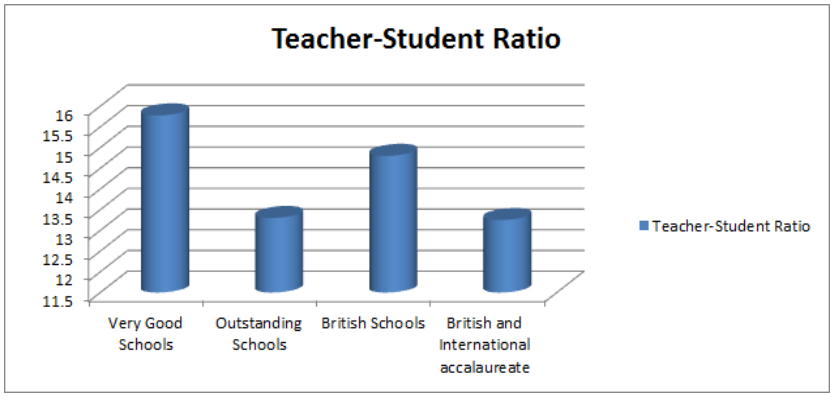


Figure 8: comparing student-teacher ratio in British and British/IB schools

The teacher-student ratio is the lowest in the schools that provide the combination of two curricula and outstanding schools; the teacher-student ratio in British schools is higher and in

very good schools the teacher-student ratio is the highest. We can safely relate the variable of teacher-student ratio to the quality of education, and make a claim here that if teacher-student ratio decreases the quality of education increases.

4.4.2. External Exams

The following figure compares the mean of a number of external exams and internal assessments employed by the schools. The ordinal numbers entered in SPSS represented the value as follows: 0= no external examination, 1= one external examination, 2= two or more external examinations and 3= four or more external examination. The purpose is to analyse the impact of external examinations to the targeted quality of the schools and the type of the schools.

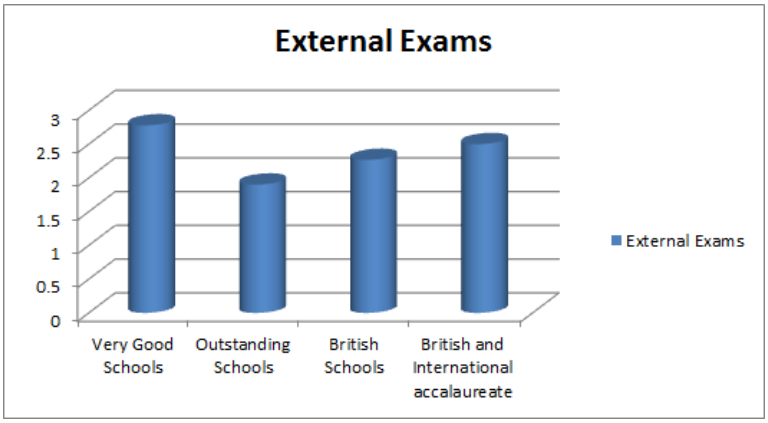


Figure 9: Comparing the range of external exams employed in each targeted type and quality of schools.

The finding from this graph shows an inconsistent relationship of employing external examinations to the quality of education. In average, the outstanding schools are employing the lesser range of external exams than the very good schools. Both the types of schools are employing a broader range of the external exams than the outstanding schools. Therefore, based on the findings no direct relation between the number of external examination and the quality of education can be established.

4.4.3. Majority of Teachers Nationality

The following figure compares the mean of the majority of teacher nationality. The numbers entered are nominal numbers depicting the nationality of the majority of teachers in school. Number 1 represents majority teachers are British, whereas number 2 suggest other nationalities.

The purpose is to analyse the impact of teacher nationality on the success of the targeted quality of the schools and the type of the schools.

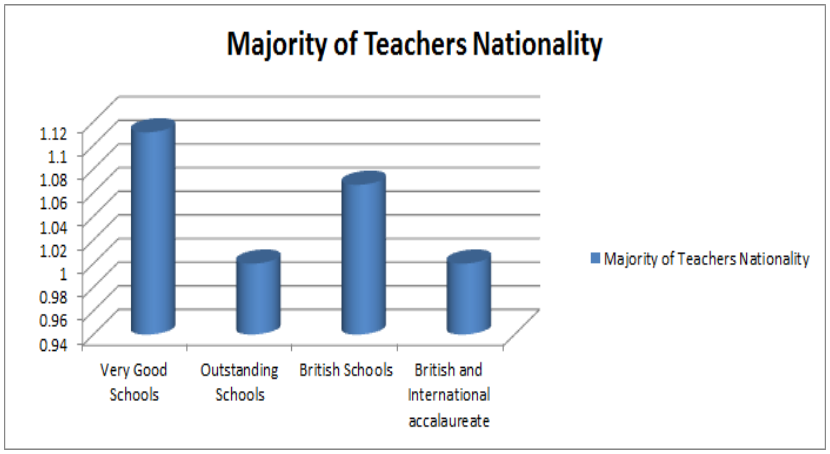


Figure 10: Comparing the average of teachers' nationality in British and British/IB schools

On average outstanding schools and the schools offering the combination of British/IB curriculum mostly employ the teachers that are British. Therefore the majority of teachers in outstanding and British/IB schools are British. Very good schools and British schools, on average, employ teachers from other nationalities. This has been established that the quality of education in British schools is directly in relation to the majority of British national teachers.

4.4.4. Accredited Organisations

The following figure is a comparison of the numbers of accredited organisations the schools are affiliated with. The value of the variable entered to SPSS is: 0= 0 affiliation, 1= one or more, 2= more than three. The purpose is to analyse the impact of accredited organisations on the success of the targeted quality of the schools and the type of the schools.

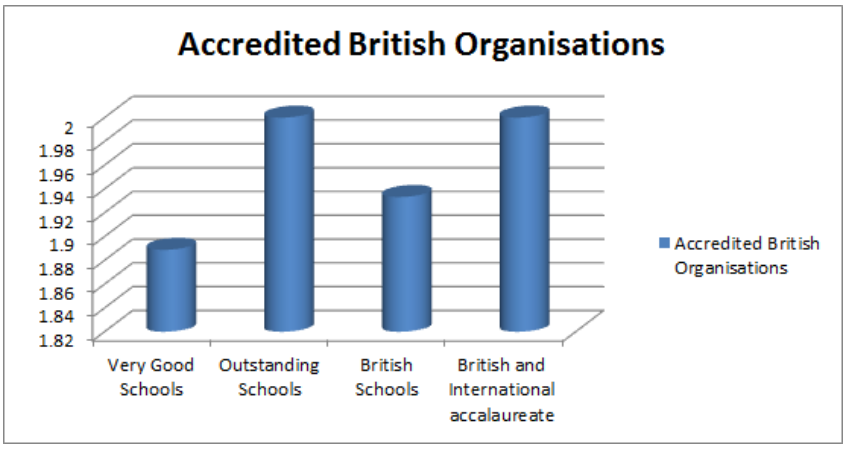


Figure 11: Comparing the range of accredited organisations in British and British/IB schools

As depicted in the figure outstanding schools and the British/IB schools are affiliated with the broader range of accredited organisations that are responsible for providing professional consultancies, external inspections, professional development programs and teaching resources.

4.5.Document Analysis of inspection Reports: Thematically and at case level

DSIB inspection reports of all outstanding and Very good schools were summarized and analysed for emerging patterns of similarity. The documents were entered in Nvivo 11, and analysed by auto coding. The categories remained the topic of this study: curriculum, teaching and assessment performance standards from inspection framework. The questions were developed after the emerging themes from the content in order to cover all the elements of best practices in those categories, the data of all 19 schools were sorted to respond to the questions.

4.5.1. Curriculum

- **Does the curriculum promote challenge and enjoyment in Learning?**

The elements of challenge and enjoyment in the curriculum were linked with the concept of a curriculum that has a clear rationale and meeting all requirements of their examination board as well as UAE national statutory requirements. It provides a balance of creative, physical and practical academic experiences that meets the needs of all students; the appropriateness of time allocation for key subjects is also a significant feature. In addition to that, it includes the provision of sports, art, drama, music and field trips sorts of enriching experiences to promote enjoyment and diversity.

For example

"Meetings between subject and phase leaders ensured that students' needs were met and anticipated. There was a very high degree of enrichment in the curriculum, based on students' needs."

"The provision of French and music, and integration of information technology greatly enriched the curriculum."

"The curriculum had a very clear rationale. It provided excellent opportunities for the development of skills in the four foundations of the school: sporting, creative, philanthropic and academic endeavor. Careful attention was paid to ensuring that the values of both Dubai and UK underpinned its programs. It was broad and balanced and met all statutory requirements."

"Sixth form students were offered a very broad and diverse range of A and AS level subjects, including psychology, media studies and sociology. Most students studied four subjects at AS level in year 12. They were able to combine science, languages and arts subjects as a result of individualised timetabling options."

"The curriculum was well-balanced and equipped students with very high standards of knowledge and developed their higher-order thinking skills.

"Adaptations ensured engagement and challenge for students, including fast track GCSEs for science and mathematics, and BTEC subjects in post-16."

- **How well the curriculum is planned to ensure the progression in all subjects? Are Cross-curricular links planned purposefully and innovatively?**

The curriculum in all the sample schools is planned to assure students' academic and life skills to be systematically built on year-by-year. Students were very well supported as they moved to the next stage of their education in the school and beyond.

Cross-curricular links were effectively planned in all the sample schools. Some schools have introduced interdisciplinary themes; many of the schools have integrated learning objectives of various subjects based on interrelated concepts.

For example

"Transition meetings to share information between the phases to support school readiness in Year 1 were well planned."

"The school enhanced every aspect of the curriculum through broad interesting themes such as that on the Second World War in Year 6. These were cross-curricular and offered opportunities to develop critical thinking skills."

"Carefully planned links between subjects were very effective and helped students to make meaningful connections in their learning. For example, students used their mathematical knowledge of probability in geography, and when working with data during work experience."

"These included STEM days to link science, technology, engineering and mathematics and a number of trips and events."

"Lessons generally were well structured, with cross-curricular links such as, the 'wow' curriculum in primary science."

- **How often is the Curriculum reviewed in relation to students' achievements and national agenda 2021?**

In all of the sample schools, the curriculum is reviewed termly and updated as part of the school's self-evaluation process. Most of the schools involve students and parental views to inform their decisions. Teachers review curriculum in relation to the students' achievements and UAE national agenda targets.

For example

"Staff evaluated the impact of the curriculum on students' academic outcomes and their personal development."

"One innovative project included older students in reviewing the TIMMS and PISA data in order to make recommendations for changes to the curriculum."

"The reviewed curriculum included the development of students' global and cultural understanding, particularly the heritage of the UAE. As a result of using international

assessments, staff had placed a greater emphasis on the development of reasoning and critical thinking skills."

- **How successfully the curriculum meet the need of all groups of students?**

In most of the sample schools students were able to make independent choices in their learning to fulfill their interests and aspirations.

For example

"In the FS, children wrote notes to The Very Hungry Caterpillar about healthy eating. The oldest students, including those with special needs, used ICT to create books and helped young readers to develop literacy skills."

"A student chose to conduct an experiment to find out how storage conditions affected the ripening of bananas. Students who chose to join the charity club took responsibility to plan and run fundraising events. Children in the Foundation Stage experienced a wide range of exciting opportunities."

"The school's rich curriculum gave students ample opportunities to make choices in lessons. In the Foundation Stage, the free-flow sessions provided children with a choice of activities."

- **How well the curriculum is developed in Arabic?**

Arabic curriculum, in many sample schools, is in need of enrichment. The curriculum does not provide a consistent progression in many schools. In most cases, the curriculum is reported to be unchallenging and did not provide enough opportunities for independent learning.

For example

"In the secondary and post-16 phases, the level of challenge for first language Arabic speakers was insufficient and the progress made by students from year to year was inconsistent".

"Opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking were not consistently provided in Islamic Education and Arabic as a first language lessons."

4.5.2. Teaching

- **How well the teachers apply their subject knowledge?**

In all sample schools most teachers are identified as experts in their subject knowledge. They teach difficult concepts with examples to which students can relate.

For example

"Across the phases, most teachers had strong subject knowledge and a well-developed understanding of pedagogy. This resulted in learner-centred teaching and high levels of engagement of students in purposeful learning experiences based on discovery, practical application and integration of skills."

"Teachers' subject knowledge was very sound. It was particularly expert in Islamic education, where modeling and explanation were strong features of lessons."

"In science, teachers' focus on practical activities embedded students' understanding of scientific concepts."

"Foundation Stage teachers had an excellent understanding of the importance of active learning to young children."

- **How effective the teachers plan the lessons, including objectives, activities and resources to promote learning?**

The lesson planning skill of the teachers is highly effective in all the outstanding schools. The objectives of the lessons are shared with the students. The teachers' use of time resources and the activities in their classroom teaching exhibit their imaginative lesson planning skills. The classroom environment is enabling for all the students which promote outstanding learning.

For example

"In all core subjects, most teachers planned engaging and interesting lessons, which in most cases took into account the differing needs of students. A wide range of resources was used across both the FS and the primary phase."

"Lessons were consistently well planned and successfully taught in stimulating learning environments. Full use was made of attractive displays on 'working walls' to support the attainment of learning targets."

"In the FS, classrooms were multi-sensory and rich with print, which enhanced the learning of younger children."

- **To ensure active and focused learning, how well teachers engage students in insightful discussions and reflection?**

The teachers use formative assessment methods to check individual students learning. They make the best use of their questioning skills to arouse students' curiosity and inspire inquiry learning. The teachers are vigilant of students learning and ask questions to check the progress in their learning.

For example

"Teachers provided what they referred to as 'cognitive wobble moments' which served to consistently challenge and question students' thinking."

"In the majority of science lessons, questioning promoted deep thought and meaningful discussion which increased the development of skills of prediction, clarification and analysis."

"Most teachers interacted well with students and promoted meaningful dialogue in lessons. High-quality questioning was a common feature of most lessons; it was generally open-ended and promoted students' higher-order thinking, active participation and reflection on learning. Teachers used probing questions effectively to check understanding and assess progress."

- **How well the teachers organize their classroom to meet the individual needs of students?**

Most of the teachers in sample schools design learning activity that effectively meets the need of individual students. They expect high from their students and keep challenging them to achieve more. They are particularly capable of supporting students with SEND.

For example

"Most teachers applied a very good range of strategies that took into consideration the individual needs of students. Differentiated activities ensured that most students, including those with SEND, were suitably challenged."

- **How well the teachers promote critical thinking, problem-solving, collaborative and Independent Learning in the classroom?**

In all the sample schools teachers make students responsible for their own learning. The students are encouraged to work collaboratively as well as independently. The students are often presented with problem statements or project work that requires them to use their critical thinking and problem solving.

For example

"Whilst planning an archeological dig in KS 2 students were unwavering and highly analytical in identifying which dig area would yield the best results."

- **How good is the quality of teaching in Arabic subject and Islamic Education**

The quality of teaching in most of the sample schools need to be raised. Teachers need intensive training in developing their teaching strategies in Arabic subject, in any schools, the Arabic teaching is confined to teaching grammar concepts.

For example

"Learning objectives were mostly challenging but success criteria were not always shared with students, particularly in science, Islamic education and Arabic."

"In Islamic education teachers' planning was weaker, lacking detail."

"However, the level of challenge in Islamic education lessons was often much lower."

"The teaching of Arabic, provided students with less challenge. Teachers did not plan and implement lessons that met sufficiently the needs of students' varying levels of competence and ability. Their questioning was often not adjusted to deepen understanding and encourage students' reflection. As a result, students made slower progress in this subject."

4.5.3. Assessment

- **How well the assessment processes are aligned to the curriculum?**

In all the sample schools the assessment processes are consistent, and the students' progress is evaluated against the school's curriculum standards.

For example

"All staff helped develop assessment materials. The 'learner review' documents gave a very comprehensive picture of students' yearly progress and attainment."

- **How is the student assessment information analyzed and compared against international benchmarks?**

All the sample schools use external benchmarks to assess the students' achievement in an international context. The assessment information is compared internally between subjects and phases to identify different levels of performance in skills and knowledge.

For example

"Teachers took account of the assessment standards on external international tests such as TIMSS and PISA, and were improving their own assessments of students' progress to reflect those standards."

"Among other new systems, the school had recently introduced an electronic portfolio system in the Foundation Stage, so that children could be compared against the Early Learning goals in England."

"The school had introduced measures to assess students' abilities using external tests and there were plans to introduce a broader range of assessments in line with the National Agenda in order to strengthen its capacity to make increasingly objective judgements about students' achievements."

"Assessment data was used to modify the curriculum and align it with UAE National Agenda requirements. In the latter phases, data were analysed by most teachers and used to set

individual targets. Regular analysis of students' records was used to check progress and to trigger interventions when necessary."

- **How well the assessment information is used to track students' progress?**

All the sample schools employ a school management system to track students' academic progress. Teachers analyse the data to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. Based on which each students profile is built, short and long-term targets are set and the performance is tracked to ensure achievement.

For example

"Assessment information was used efficiently to produce a portfolio of achievement and development data which ensured that individuals' learning journeys were tracked for progress and attainment."

"Assessment data was analysed assiduously. A new tracking system ensured that teachers and heads of department promptly responded to early signs of deviations in expected attainment. A school-wide system of colour coding helped teachers and leaders to identify and follow students' progress. Teachers held regular student progress meetings, and subject leaders maintained an overview of their cohort."

"The internal assessment data was cross-checked for validity and accuracy against international and Dubai data. The school used a UK independent assessment to benchmark all primary students' performance. Student and subject results were analysed and used to identify different levels of performance in skills and knowledge. Levels were compared internally across subjects and year groups and externally through participation in TIMSS and PIRLS."

"Attainment and progress data was analysed each term to identify trends including the achievement of different nationalities, genders and students with SEND."

- **Does the assessment information have any effects upon the quality of planning and students learning?**

All the teachers in sample schools make effective use of assessment information. They use this information to modify the curriculum and in their instructional planning. They develop learning activities and arrange resources to meet the need of every individual student.

For example

"Curriculum and lesson planning were designed to meet the needs of individual students. Both were informed by teachers' analyses of students' assessment information."

"Teachers used a wide range of assessment techniques effectively and efficiently to identify and plan to meet the needs of all different groups of students, including Emirati students, those with SEND, and to group students according to ability in mathematics."

"In the latter phases data were analysed by most teachers and used to set individual targets. Regular analysis of students' records was used to check progress and to trigger interventions when necessary."

- **How do the teachers use the assessment information in providing feedback to the students on their progress?**

The teachers in the sample schools are vigilant of the need of students in their class. They know their students strengths and weaknesses very well. They provide verbal and written feedback to the students, so the students know what and how to improve. They also develop a mechanism for students to self-evaluate their progress.

For example

"Teachers encouraged students to assess their own and others' progress through peer evaluation and positive feedback."

"Feedback to students from teachers was constructive. Written feedback was generally helpful, although teachers sometimes had difficulty in checking the progress of all students in large classes and giving extensive written feedback."

"Students routinely reflected upon the progress they made against learning objectives during lessons. Teachers provided detailed feedback on individual student strengths. Targets were set in consultations between teachers and students."

"Across the school, teachers almost always provided pertinent and helpful feedback, including innovative 'podcast' feedback in geography. Comments very occasionally focused on presentational issues to the exclusion of feedback on the accomplishment or otherwise of learning objectives and next steps."

- **How effective the assessment system and the use of assessment information are in Islamic Education and Arabic?**

In most cases, the assessment processes are not fully developed. Most of the schools are still developing better assessment data tracking mechanisms in their schools.

For example

"…However, the school did not have a robust system of exams to assess the learning of Arabic as a second language"

"In Islamic education and Arabic, assessment processes had improved, but there was still a lack of consistency in their reliability and usefulness."

"In Islamic education and Arabic, assessment processes had improved, but there was still a lack of consistency in their reliability and usefulness."

4.6. Participant responses to the Qualitative Questions

The interview questions were designed around the descriptors in the DSIB inspection framework; following were the questions developed to generate responses.

- **We all know that British Curriculum has a worldwide reputation for excellence. In your opinion, what makes British Curriculum stand out in the KHDA's inspection every year?**

British Curriculum has been tried and tested for many years, it is historically proven to deliver the best education around the world, not just in Dubai but all over the world it has been a popular

curriculum. British Curriculum is flexible in terms of developing context-based curriculum to deliver according to the needs of children.

"The British schools are the most popular schools in Dubai, in my opinion; it is because it is a tried and tested curriculum for many years since it has been around."

"… We only deliver some Cambridge programs, back to your question about curriculum we use other exam boards of British Curriculum, we have that flexibility, again to meet the needs of our children we use other British exam boards not just Cambridge…"

"Is it just the kind of people we are not we... but it is the curriculum allows us to be more receptive to change, we are always changing, we are always adaptive taking new initiatives. It is like innovation. Innovation is always there, we are open to change we can change quickly."

- **What support do you receive from your accrediting organisations like BSO, BSME, BBG, COBIS or ECIS (if any), in delivering Cambridge programs and qualifications successfully in your school specifically in the area of Professional Development (CPD) and standardized exam preparation?**

BSO inspections alongside the DSIB inspections have become mandatory for all the schools. These inspections happen every three years. They allowed schools to get strong in their self-evaluation process. BSME also provide continues development courses. In addition to these organisations in professional support, school governors play a vital role in providing critical feedback on how your school is doing. They can help in providing professional counseling and suggest the contextual appropriate ideas for overcoming the challenges. The schools also send their teachers for professional development programs and then they cascade training.

"… We are member of this BSO and we are also member of this (BSME). But what it is all about is schools self- improvement self-evaluation, that's where we are good at."

"We invested heavily, I mean, I can tell you, this week I have six governors here from the UK in my school, they are all inspectors Ofsted inspectors trained or they either one who owns schools or very expert in the field or subject and they are here as critical friends."

"We have our governors and we have our teachers, so we have lots of people, for example this Sunday one of my governors, we running our own course on leadership, master of leadership just not to do the masters but all the middle leaders must do the course so one of my governors was leading and an Arabic governor leading the course in Arabic."

- **I am interested in knowing about the appraisal process of your teachers here? Do you employ some kind of uniformed criteria against which the appraisal takes place? Or is it that teachers select individual goals for themselves and are evaluated at the end of the session based on how well they have achieved their goals?**

Specialist teachers are hired for secondary sections. For primary section, the school usually hires the teachers with good pedagogical skills. The appraisal system is based on the British teaching standards, which is modified to suit the cultural context. The annual teacher appraisal is based on teachers' self-evaluation against those standards and setting three minimal goals that link to developing their pedagogies and are aligned with school improvement plan.

"I have many primary teachers who have degree in science and then PGCE but they are purely practitioners, they love their craft and they are good at it but we have many teachers who have graduation in education that what we are looking for. For secondary we have masters or PhDs… we are paying them more."

"For appraisals we follow the British teachers standards we take their document called teachers standards, we just tweak it… to make it appropriate to our school because we have got a very strict code of ethics being in the Islamic school so we just tweak that so we have taken the British standards"

"They then take them to their leader, they met than they generalize and they that this is my class, what is it that I want to improve my own practice. So every main skill teacher must meet the general standards, they must meet them before they arrive here but then we want them not just meeting them but to be better at that."

"From the generic objectives they sit down with their line manager and then they have to set three minimal objectives but that has to link to where they need to develop their pedagogies.

Something that's in our school improvement plan, everything links back to our school improvement thing."

- **We understand that no single source of information can accurately summarize a student's achievement or progress; it requires a range of assessment practices to gather assessment information. How do you maintain to gather and use good quality assessment information?**

New British curriculum has eliminated the levels in assessments; internally the school has developed their own assessment system without levels. The formative assessments are used to report the academic progress to parents. In addition to the formative assessments, teachers use informal assessments for tracking students' progress. The external assessments provide the comparison of students' performances in main skills. In early years the profile (portfolio) is built to record students performances. In primary, the system is known as class monitoring, and in secondary, the school uses the system called four matrixes. The school management system helps the teachers to gather all assessment data, analyse and track the academic progress of students.

"We test only three times at the end of our semesters, we assess formatively six times to report to parents."

"Internally we have an assessment system which we report to parents six times a year, and we use also externally, we use GCSEs GL test, the PTE, the PTM, we do SATs not American SATs but British SATs they are external."

"…There are no levels any more it is all about competencies, deeper learning so we use in the early years we use a thing called build a profile in the primary we call class monitoring, and in secondary we use a system called four matrix, we have system to gather all the data. They put data and analyse data, we track their progress…"

- **What mechanisms and strategies are implemented to assess Pupils' Progress (APP)? How is under-performance dealt? What kinds of instructional interventions are planned to support underperforming students?**

School Management systems help to track students' academic progress, they show light codes for the analysis at a glance. A student who fails to perform is dealt in one to one meeting and if the situation is serious the parents are involved. APP are not used anymore because of the assessments system without levels (AWL).

"We have a tracking system so if the child just color like traffic lights, red emerald green so if children, show up so many red come up so teachers deal with them one to one with the child if it is serious the parents are involved, if there is older students, so we have different mechanisms, red is on danger, yellow is on target and green is making green."

"APP we don't use that any more, and I have seen people still use it but its called AWL now Assessment without levels, because the new national curriculum for secondary came this year, two years ago the primary so they don't (apply anymore)"

- **H.H. Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid launched National Agenda Target to achieve the UAE vision 2021 to become world-class education provider. Targets include UAE to be among the 15 highest performing countries in TIMSS and to be among the 20 highest performing countries in PISA. Does your school have any policy to embrace the challenge in order to achieve them?**

The school improvement plan is the starting point. The goals are in line with national agenda 2021 and they are the high on their school agenda too. The teachers are now trained to relate their teaching strategies to national agenda. It has become a cultural change in the school. Along with the content mastery, it is important to develop test taking skills. The administration in terms of the setting and procedure of the testing process needs to be looked at. The students need to be trained for online assessments and developing competencies to respond quickly in the foreign language.

"…it is very high on our agenda; it is again in our school development plan school improvement plan. Our school improvement plan is the main thing."

"…teachers relating what they are doing to national agenda, so when we do training with new staff or even returning staff part of our new introductory is as what we are trying to achieve and

how we are supporting this so it is high on our agenda so we are at it and we are getting better at it."

"…now we prepare our children for this kind of online testing, because if children are not going to see any grade or percent, so they are not too sure what it is about.. so we try to also relate it to a national agenda, we tell the parents why we are doing it,… it not that content, it is the skills, it is totally different from what (how) we normally test."

"It all online, they have got headphone on, English is not their first language so sometimes they find it very hard. So we try to prepare them."

- **How easy or difficult it is, as a British curriculum provider, to incorporate UAE ministry curriculum of teaching Arabic and Islamic education?**

The school is successfully progressing in providing exemplary British education; the significance is the school's approach to Arabic teaching. Continuous professional development (CPD) is a key to developing an effective curriculum, be it British or Arabic. This school provides equal opportunities to the Arabic staff for professional development. The Arabic teachers are trained to employ international best practices in curriculum development and teaching. The Arabic leaders and the teachers who speak good English attend the training sessions and then they cascade training for the entire Arabic staff.

"We offer that strong Arabic and strong British curriculum and we work really hard and invest in it heavily."

"we started to integrate two curriculum together, teaching pedagogy, but now we brought expats in who work with Arabic teams to get them up to that level so we have got Arabic people who create the leaders in their pedagogies who work with the teachers all the new teachers get inducted on how we do it in our style, our style of teaching Arabic is not like you see in many other schools, because we teach it hopefully in much more probably the British style we have collaborative working."

"Arabic teachers get huge amount of training as well I mean we have Arabic Governors, they come in, they work with the teachers, they get the same training sometimes we have Arabic teachers who have good English join the British training and they cascade back, they bring in

their own people to train them, there is a huge amount of money investment and time in training."

- **In your opinion, what role KHDA's inspections have played in your success in maintaining (improving to become) an outstanding position among other Schools in Dubai?**

KHDA's (DSIB) inspection is playing a very active role in Dubai schools improvement. It has an immense effect on school leadership development and the quality of education. School self-evaluation has become an integral part of the school's progress. Due to the inspection reports published on line, the schools have become accountable to parents, as they are paying for the services of the school, and now they have criteria to assure the quality of education their child gets. The inspections have made the process of school development rigorous.

"When KHDA brought in inspection, first of all there was a need, there are many private schools and nobody regulating and their opinion was, we are private schools we do what we like, parents are paying a lot of money, so parents are entitled and the students are entitled."

"Whenever there is an issue in my school, things go wrong I always say to the teachers who is important who is in the middle is the child."

"So I think that KHDA have actually by bringing in the mechanism, yeah its tough it made us the accountable to parents not so much to them."

The data analysis in this chapter highlighted few surprising insights about the sample schools. The next chapter will discuss these findings within the context of relevant literature.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions

The chapter presents the discussion on the findings, final conclusion, recommendations for additional investigation in the area of school improvement and school effectiveness and the study limitation.

5.1. Discussion

In most general terms, I started this study with an attempt to deeply investigate the best practices in Dubai British Schools that succeed to maintain or progressed to become Very Good and Outstanding schools. Alongside the analysis of documents related to school profiles and DSIB's Inspection reports available online, the schools were reached out for data collection; unfortunately the schools were not in position to supply data for the study, hence the data in the form of semi-structured interview with one school head, have sufficiently contributed to addressing the research Questions. The researcher aims to become the successor of this study and extend it to the findings deeper and thicker.

5.1.1. Recapitulation of purpose and discussing findings

This section will discuss the findings of the study and their relationship to previous work in these areas. This thesis had the aim of exploring what works really well for most of the British Schools in Dubai that had led them to succeed in the inspection process every year. The inspection framework has guided my research questions and helped focusing the attention on an essential standards in the inspection framework: curriculum, teaching and assessment. Building on the criteria for these standards were developed the interview questions and the categories under which the online documents were analysed.

The overarching findings in relation to research questions suggest that to bring about the change in response to meeting outstanding criteria of DSIB inspections, the schools need to direct their focus on creating a culture of change. Improvement requires a lot of patience and support. This leads to organising the discussion of the findings in responding to the research questions:

1) How the outstanding British schools organize their systems to be able to provide best quality education in Dubai?

2) What best practices in the areas of curriculum development, teaching and assessment prevail in the outstanding British schools?

Following is the discussion on the findings that addresses research questions in the best way possible. The titles in bullets are the significant findings from the study.

- **Flexibility of the curriculum for embracing change**

Given the first research question, which studied at the topic of how the successful school organises its systems to deliver the quality education, I found that majority of British Schools have very flexible mechanisms in organising their systems, this allows them to adopt and adapt to changes required to meet the ministries expectations and bring about required changes without causing any major changes to the ways instruction is happening. Below are few significant characteristics that can describe these successful schools in Dubai. British curriculums allow flexibility and independence at great length. This allows schools leaders to incorporate number of initiatives for the development of the school. The interviewee in this study, in the context of using different exam boards, has stated that *"…we use other exam boards of British Curriculum, we have that flexibility, again to meet the needs of our children we use other British exam boards not just Cambridge."*In another context, the interviewee stated, "*It is the curriculum (that) allows us to be more receptive to change, we are always changing…we are always adaptive taking new initiatives. It is like innovation. Innovation is always there, we are open to change we can change quickly."*

- **British schools Vs. British and IB schools (combined curriculum) in Dubai.**

If we look at the quantitative data analysis of targeted performance standards in British and British/IB Schools (Figure 5, 6 &7), an interesting pattern emerges. By comparing the mean of the performance standards (curriculum, teaching and assessment), British/IB schools are performing at much higher level than the schools providing only British Curriculum. This leads one to believe that while the administration and organisation of British Curriculum is very effective and enables the British schools to produce best results; they can become even better if the International Baccalaureate curriculum is also offered in the same school. On the face of it, if the tentative conclusions of my study are confirmed by further research then there will be a case for studying the cultural significance and organisational characteristics of the schools offering the combination of the British and IB schools in relation to schools offering only British curriculum.

- **Hiring Best Teachers**

British schools hire the best teachers who can teach their subject very well. This seems to be a very basic requirement, but as stated by the interviewee, that it is not the common practice in all the school in Dubai. The interviewee stated in the context of teachers' appraisal mechanism, she proclaimed, *"In our school particular, we use the best quality teachers we can to deliver here, that's part of our success that we "only" appoint teachers to teach the subjects in British curriculum that are either British or have experience of teaching British Curriculum, so we don't bring in teachers who know nothing about British curriculum so that's why, I think for us, we were able to deliver the British Curriculum better*," A recent KHDA initiative is very much in consistent with the finding, a project called 'The Abundance Group project,' will create a culture of collaboration between schools. A substantial amount of studies has proved limitless possibilities of professional growth and building harmony by creating professional learning communities that imply collaboration of professional learning from the experts and teaching the skills they are good at.

- **Arabic Language and Islamic Education.**

Curriculum adaptation, teaching and assessment standards in Arabic language and Islamic Education need to be addressed as a priority for most of the sample schools. In many schools the reason for not delivering effective Arabic and Islamic subjects is the teachers' underdeveloped skills. Morshed et al, (2013, pp.28) in their study discovered effective intervention patterns in developed schools through their improvement journeys from poor to fair. One such intervention was providing "motivation and scaffolding" for low-skilled teachers. This intervention includes providing teacher scripted teaching materials, providing them coaching on curriculum, the incentive for high performance. As previously established, the evidence showed that the negative impact of poor teaching on children in early years of schooling is severe and loss is irreversible. Peske & Haycock (2006) suggest that students placed with high performing teachers will progress three times as fast as those placed with low-performing teachers. If the schools have low skilled teachers, they cannot produce high student achievement. In the cases like these, professional development of the teachers should be the top priority in school development plans.

- **Professional Development Programs**

Successful schools are continuously developing their professional skills. Almost all the outstanding schools and very good British schools have established a number of professional development mechanisms. The quantitative data shows that all the outstanding schools are the members of many accredited organisations that provide schools with professional development opportunities and resources for teaching and assessments.

Although, these organisations provide productive continuous development programs periodically along with conferences and seminars which provide teachers with professional learning platform and opportunities for professional networking, but, there is a downside to it for many schools as well, that is, these training are quite expensive for many schools; in this case the schools can find local companies that are cost effective and can train their staff to international standards. Some schools also allow the accrediting organisations to run their professional development courses in their school premises to cut the cost of training for their own teachers.

According to a report published by OECD (2013), many schools have increased their investment in ICT, but the teachers are not able to use these tools systematically. The report suggests that one of the areas in which they (teachers) need more professional development is developing ICT skills for teaching.

- **Self-Evaluation**

The findings from the study interview suggest that schools self-evaluation process is the key to success for schools in raising student achievement. The interview respondent mentioned it with emphasizing that they are progressing and maintaining their success is because they are very strong in the area of self-assessment or self-evaluation or self-analysis process. The respondent also shared her conviction saying that schools, which are struggling to deliver quality education, are those who are not able to develop an effective school improvement plan. If it is developed effectively then an effective approach is required to get the goals implemented. Self-evaluation process helps leaders in making decisions about allocating resources and time. Writing the success indicators measures all the effectiveness of decision making. This finding is broadly in line with the OECD's framework for schools' evaluation.

- **Teacher-Student Ratio**

The qualitative analysis suggests that in the comparison between very good and outstanding schools a significant difference was of teacher-student ratio. The outstanding schools have smaller classes and the teacher-student ratio is smaller than the very good schools. OECD (2015) states in their report Education at a Glance that 'Larger classes are correlated with less time spent on teaching and learning, and more time spent on keeping order in the classroom. One additional student added to an average-size class is associated with a 0.5 percentage-point decrease in time spent on teaching and learning activities.'

5.2. Implications

The study offers suggestive evidence for developing self-assessment skills. Also, the schools must seek professional help for their weak areas. In the times of new British curriculum when the teachers are given the full responsibility of developing students' competencies and assessing them, the teachers need professional collaborative partners, who can become their professional critical friends. At school level and state level there should be more opportunities where the teacher can actually discuss the challenges in her classroom, and subsequently, she finds a partner school or a teacher who allows her to shadow or observe effective practices.

Suggestive evidence that this study offers is that British schools imply effective and successful organisation of educational systems. British School systems develop effective operational systems in their schools to facilitate the best learning environment and meet the ministry statuary expectations, they build mechanisms to monitor the progress of their initiatives and evaluate their effectiveness against the impact on student achievement. Seeking the contextual appropriacy, the outstanding performance of British schools in DSIB's inspections, establishes their believe that every student can achieve under 'right conditions' (Hawley 2007), and the British schools are capable of creating right conditions for most of the students in their schools despite their diverse backgrounds.

5.3. Recommendations

The following recommendations for further studies are offered for related research in the field of school improvement.

1. Given the optimizing nature of school improvement process, a series of longitudinal studies of schools, determined to improve by implementing successful self-evaluation plan, along with the success factors highlighted in this study, would document the effectiveness of current trends in school successes in the UAE.

One avenue for further study would be to conduct research into the impact of teacher licensing, a state initiative to begin in Dubai Schools. The official website posted to announce a pilot project aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning. This project is designed to achieve UAE national agenda 2021(KHDA, 2016).

Possible areas for further study are the organisational characteristics of schools that are providing British and International Baccalaureate as dual curricula in their schools. Without further research about the factors that are directly influencing better curriculum development and effective teaching and assessment practices, it will not be possible to make a conclusion about the effectiveness of schools providing British and International Baccalaureate curricula in combination.

Further research into the context-specific best practices might usefully focus in particular on teaching and assessment standards in other contexts. Like in inspection reports, one may encounter few examples of best practices, for example, in one school they have implemented ‘wow’ curriculum in their primary science and some other school is using ‘show me’ application with their Year 2 students. Exploring these practices and trying to implement them in different schools offering various curricula, and study their impact on student attainment, would be productive to achieve. “What works” an initiative by KHDA encourages schools to demonstrate and display their best strategies which are working for those schools. It is the hub of teachers’ skills development. It is recommended that a system should be in place to track the effectiveness of the same activity if implemented in other schools as well.

The following recommendations are offered for the practitioners:

Schools should be prepared to deliver education that prepares students for the 21st-century education. This means that the systems for effective teaching-learning process must be in place; this also means that schools are accredited with organisations that push schools forward in

delivering the world-class education. Finally, it means that school requires investing in their teachers' professional development.

5.4. Conclusion

The current study was conducted to determine best practices in exemplary British schools in Dubai. Which aspects of a school system reform journey are universal and which are context-specific.

This study found that the British Curriculum is able to deliver quality education because there are numerous professional development opportunities and professional networking platforms are available for the schools to account on. The hiring of a majority of British nationals to teach British curriculum accelerates the quality of education delivery.

The smaller classes increase teachers' individual attention to each student. Differentiated instruction and individualized assessments become manageable and students' progress tracking become more productive, this results in raised student achievement.

British schools have taken benefits from professional support from the accredited organisations and build their strength on self-evaluation process. Schools that are struggling or not able to make their way towards the progress need to strengthen their Self-evaluation skills. It will help the school leaders allocate their resources, time and energy into the place where it is much needed.

Lastly, British curriculum is effective, but the combination of British curriculum and International baccalaureate curricula offered in the same school, adds to its affectivity. The performance level of these schools, in the curriculum, teaching and assessment standards are higher than the schools providing only British Curriculum.

This study indicates that the features appeared significant for British schools are universal factors in school improvement process. The change, in any school that follows whichever curriculum, can be brought about by introducing the right kind of intervention in right time. A strong head and kind heart when makes a decision, it seldom sees failure.

5.5. Limitations

This study is limited because it lacks specificity. Much of the useful data could not be collected due to the non-availability of the participants with rich information. The questionnaire based on specific best practices was built by the researcher but could not be executed due to insufficient population size (Please see Appendix 3, 4 and 5). More data and tools are required to triangulate the findings. Observation and questionnaire would have been very productive data analysing tools. Unfortunately, the nature of my data does not allow me to determine the context-specific best practices and their relation to the student achievement in the areas of curriculum, teaching and assessment.

The purpose of DSIB's inspection reports is to build a culture of transparency and providing useful information and insight to the parents in specific and public in general. In addition to the fact that DSIB's inspection reports effective serve the purpose, they are found to be not so useful resource for collecting the data about the best practices in specific. Most of the comments in the inspection reports were generic and repetitive across all cases.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: University Letter

الجامعة البريطانية في دبي
The British University in Dubai
www.buid.ac.ae

13 April 2016

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that Mrs Fatema Huzefa – Student ID No. 2014201006 is a registered full-time student on the Master of Education Programme – Management Leadership and Policy in The British University in Dubai, from January 2015.

Mrs Huzefa is currently working on her dissertation and she is aiming to collect data in the instruction and assessment practices in outstanding schools. This will entail conducting interviews with senior management, administer parent/teacher questionnaires, student profiling and observations.

The British University in Dubai would like to request your support and cooperation in completing her dissertation research.

Any information given will be used solely for academic purposes.

This letter is issued on the students' request.

Yours sincerely,

Amer Alaya
Head of Student Administration

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Appendix 2: Interview Transcript

Interview Questions for studying Best Education System in the UAE

Interviewee: 007	Position: Principal
Date of Interview: October 17, 2016	Interviewer: Fatema Huzefa (2014201006)

Interview Transcript

Interviewer: **We all know that British Curriculum has a worldwide reputation for excellence. In your opinion, what makes British Curriculum stand out in the KHDA's inspection every year?**

Interviewee: *The British schools are the most popular schools in Dubai, in my opinion; it is because it is a tried and tested curriculum for many years since it has been around, In our school particular, we use the best quality teachers we can to deliver here, that's… I would say… that's part of our success that we "only" appoint teachers to teach the subjects in British curriculum that are either British or have experience of teaching British Curriculum, so we don't bring in teachers who know nothing about British curriculum so that s why I think for us we were able to deliver the British Curriculum better, from my point of view, obviously, I am British I think I am bit sort of biased but it is something being tried and tested, it is not just here in Dubai, it is worldwide, isn't it that it is successful curriculum, and I think in Dubai, over the last few years, the fact that they brought BSO which stands for British Schools overseas, we have that, we did a voluntary in 2011, and then we did again in 2014 as part of our inspection process which is mandatory now to call yourself a British school. So you know the people of Dubai, they trust the British Curriculum, they think it is sophisticated.*

BSO has been around since 2010 may be even earlier… but then it was a voluntary but now it is mandatory, if you want to call yourself a British curriculum school you have to have, it has to be done alongside the DSiB inspection. we did as voluntary thing in 2011, and we paid to have it done again three years later, it has to be done every three years, we had done it in 2014 and again next year we will do it so I think that is stand out by Ofsted, it is recognized by Ofsted.

We are the school which has a vision that we try to deliver the Arabic and British curriculum in the same way; instructionally we do it the same way. We look at cross curricular, we try to do more, as part of our school development plan, annually we try to do more linking across or else we might be overlapping too much … I am not saying that we have got absolutely perfect but we are doing that. We teach Arabic and science, we in school also use international Primary curriculum, and that allows us in primary to contextualize… you know that our schools are bit unique our expat population are pupil from the Middle East countries or locals.

Historical… tried and tested and I believe in it.

Interviewer: What support do you receive from your accrediting organisations like BSO, BSME, BBG, COBIS or ECIS (if any), in delivering Cambridge programs and qualifications successfully in your school specifically in the area of Professional Development (CPD) and standardized exam preparation?

Interviewee: *We are the members of British Schools in Middle East (BSME) and Consortium of International Schools (CIS) as well. We only deliver some Cambridge programs, back to your question about curriculum we use other exam boards of British Curriculum, we have that flexibility, again to meet the needs of our children we use other British exam boards not just Cambridge, because Cambridge programs are very much for. Because Cambridge program are very much for international or I don't know America follows Cambridge exam board or Asia do as we very much, these organisation like BSME did have their*

accreditation, I never did that because it is same as BSO neither substitute each other. But we are member of this BSO and we are also member of this (BSME). But what it is all about is schools self- improvement self-evaluation, that's where we are good at. When I came to UK there what we were doing in UK, when inspections were brought in by DSIB that what people didn't do. And the schools are failing or not doing so well are the ones still not able to survive it.

Interviewer: How effective is the CPD in your school?

Interviewee*: We invested heavily, I mean, I can tell you, this week I have six governors here from the UK in my school, they are all inspectors Ofsted inspectors trained or they either one who owns schools or very expert in the field or subject and they are here as critical friends. For they are here who me and my team can account, so that's how we know, we really are good at self-improvement. I am not saying we best but we are improving.*

Sometimes we allow them to use our premises to run courses.so use them they are quite expensive, we use other companies locally. Infinite company. We have our governors and we have our teachers, so we have lots of people, for example this Sunday one of my governors, we running our own course on leadership, master of leadership just not to do the masters but all the middle leaders must do the course so one of my governors was leading and an Arabic governor leading the course in Arabic.

Interviewer**: I am interesting in knowing about the appraisal process of your teachers here? Do you some kind of uniformed criteria against which the appraisal takes place? Or is it that teachers select individual goals for themselves and are evaluated at the end of session based on how well they have achieved their goals?**

Interviewee: *Particularly in secondary we try to have teachers that are specialists, for primary we are looking at really good practitioners, because KHDA also expects ministry that we know also requires (because they haven't got the right degree)…so I have many primary teachers who have degree in science and then PGCE but they are purely practitioners, they love their craft and they are good at it but we have many teachers who have graduation in education that what we are looking for. For secondary we have masters or PhDs we are paying them more.*

For appraisals we follow the British teachers standards we take their document called teachers standards, we just tweak it that if you like as a section on teachers' standard that's all to do with pedagogy (etc), then there is a section on teachers professional development we just tweak that to make it appropriate to our school because we have got a very strict code of ethics being in the Islamic school so we just tweak that so we have taken the British standards so main skills teachers responsibility, part of their appraisal system is that we have some generic objectives for appraisal. They then take them to their leader, they met than they generalize and they that this is my class, what is it that I want to improve my own practice. So every main skill teacher must meet the general standards, they must meet them before they arrive here but then we want them not just meeting them but to be better at that. So might assess yourself on a scale of... with the governors we set up annually we set up from the job description, what we call generic teachers appraisal, or you want to call Focus management objectives.

From the generic objectives they sit down with their line manager and then they have to set three minimal objectives but that has to link to where they need to develop their pedagogies. Something that's in our school improvement plan, everything links back to our school improvement thing.

Interviewer**:We understand that no single source of information can accurately summarize a student's achievement or progress; it requires a range of assessment practices to gather assessment information. How do you maintain to gather and use good quality assessment information?**

Interviewee: *Internally we have an assessment system which we report to parents six times a year, and we use also externally, we use GCSEs GL test, the PTE, the PTM, KHDA has told us to do them, we do SATs not American SATs but British SATs they are external. Internally we have our own system, I don't know if you understand British System there are no levels any more it is all about competencies, deeper learning so we use in the early years we use a thing called build a profile in the primary we call class monitoring, and in secondary we use a system called four matrix, we have system to gather all the data. They put data and analyse data, we track their progress. We test only three times at the end of our semesters, we assess formatively six times to report to parents.*

GCSE that's for end of year key stage four, that's once a year. Then we have A levels for year 12, then end of primary we still got what we call key stage two assess but that's just

Interviewer: What mechanisms and strategies are implemented to assess Pupils' Progress (APP)? How underperformance is dealt with? What kinds of instructional interventions are planned to support underperforming students? How special education need students are supported?

Interviewee: *We have a tracking system so if the child just colour like traffic lights, red emerald green so if children, show up so many red come up so teachers deal with them one to one with the child if it is serious the parents are involved, if there is older students, so we have different mechanisms, red is on danger, yellow is on target and green is making green.*

APP we don't use that any more, and I have seen people still use it but its called AWL now Assessment without levels, because the new national curriculum for secondary came this year, two years ago the primary so they don't, APP is.

Interviewer: Policies for Assessment Are they documented anywhere to be shared with the parents.

Interviewee: *All I said the things are in policy documents of the school, they are also shared in a family handbook so all the assessment methods are shared with the parents annually. We have many evenings where we explain all the assessment processes to the parents so here we invite parents to learn about what assessment means in year six, so secondary and primary have assessment after.*

How special needs children are supported we have special education need team, we identify students into categories, and according to the category we provide for the need if the lower is the need then that is dealt with in the classroom, if that's specific need we use sen teacher, we have got team 9 people who are specialist who deal with.

Interviewer: **What policies have been implemented for the preparation of TIMSS and PISA tests in your school?**

So TIMSS and Pisa in my point of view is very nice school improvement plan, we have had an event even for TIMSS, we now also try to prepare... because other wise of the children don't see the results they don't see why they are important they are important to us, so we change our policy regarding that now we prepare our children for this kind of online testing, because if children are not going to see any grade or percent, so they are not too sure what it is about.. so we try to also relate it to a national agenda, we tell the parents why we are doing it, the kids are not... we are just preparing for that type of test… it not that content, it is the skills, it is totally different from what we normally test. It all online, they have got headphone on, English is not their first language so sometimes they find it very hard. So we try to prepare them, we were told that by KHDA btw. The thing is that it is not fair otherwise. PTE the text that the select are greenhouse, this is really tough. We had lot of time talking about it trying to managing it, we are anxious to see what the results are.

Interviewer**: H.H. Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid launched National Agenda Target to achieve the UAE vision 2021 to become world-class education provider. Targets include UAE to be among the 15 highest performing countries in TIMSS and to be among the 20 highest performing countries in PISA. Does your school have any policy to embrace the challenge in order to achieve them?**

Interviewee: Last year they told us that we weren't better prepared, we were better prepared than most, we disscuss the national agenda with or new teachers, and you see some teachers relating what they are doing to national agenda, so it is very high on our agenda, it is again in our school development plan school improvement plan. Our school improvement plan is the main thing and the things what we do and I love that Alison teachers relating what the y are doing to national agenda, so when we do training with new staff or even returning staff part of our new introductory is as what we are trying to achieve and how we are supporting this so it is high on our agenda so we are at it and we are getting better at it.

Is it just the kind of people we are not we... but it is the curriculum allows us to be more receptive to change, we are always changing, we are always adaptive taking new initiatives. It is like innovation. Innovation is always there, we open to change we can change quickly.

Interviewer: **Do you think that all the initiatives you take for which you have to bring about changes in your school settings, are all very necessary?**

Sometimes when I look at the initiatives, I look at things and think they are not for us, obviously we cannot ignore main Agenda, I wouldn't one minute because I think that Sheikh Mohammad has got a brilliant vision for this country, and quite frankly as school we have got the leaders of the future, I don't mean the members of the royal family, I mean we have got 70 % Emiratis and other nationalities in our school who have been living here who are the future leaders I knew the population of the UAE 60 % of them are below 25 years of age. There rae many of them in my school, it is for then our we shifted to preparing those young people to – even in the UK we have been accused of not preparing our children for life after school so we are really trying. I chose to do GCSE, because that the best for our students. IB doesn't suit our type of students, but may be in 10 years or 5 years' time we all change or we will go for both, but right now I am trying to developing, you know I am trying to change the culture of our students to make sure that they can succeed. We are looking not they all want to be scientists, they all can't be scientist. We are looking at them getting better grounds in business apps and finance we offer wide range of subjects

IB is for certain types of parents certain groups of students and even in London, back in UK schools are over taught that IB because you have to be put in this frame, mindset if you like, we have got a group of mindset here like whole, you have to be in the mind set that IB is all hinges on one whole thing.

We have 99 % we have 77 % of emiratis locals, we have about another 12-15 % Arabic pupils and then we have may be another 12-15 % in an Asian subcontinent.

The founder of our school, the reason she opened the school is because she really wanted to have a school that meet the need of bilingual, we are unique we offer bilingual we offer that strong Arabic and strong British curriculum and we work really hard and invest in it heavily, I was talking to a teacher in Sharjah last night he was telling me he can't keep his staff, we teach similar methods not same as old, we have adopted or adapted how they teach it is not standing in front of the class like in the past, it is very much collaborative.

Interviewer: **How easy or difficult it is, as a British curriculum provider, to incorporate UAE ministry curriculum of teaching Arabic and Islamic education?**

Interviewee: *Additionally when we started off and I first join the school, we started to integrate two curriculum together, teaching pedagogy, but now we brought expats in who work with Arabic teams to get them up to that level so we have got Arabic people who create the leaders in their pedagogies who work with the teachers all the new teachers get inducted on how we do it in our style, our style of teaching Arabic is not like you see in many other schools, because we teach it hopefully in much more probably the British style we have collaborative working, four part lessons, all these things happening. Arabic teachers get huge amount of training as well I mean we have Arabic Governors, they come in, they work with the teachers, they get the same training sometimes we have Arabic teachers who have good English join th ebritish training and they cascade back, they bring in their own people to train them, there is a huge amount of money investment and time in training. CPD.*

Interviewer: **In your opinion, what role KHDA's inspections have played in your success in maintaining (improving to become) an outstanding position among other Schools in Dubai?**

Interviewee: *My opinion about the role in inspection, I can tell you from my experience is back in England,when they brought in Ofsted and league tables, everybody hated that in the UK, there were the grammar schools, secondary model systems and our kids were lovely but they fear to get to grammar schools but we need to care for them, but we never had high expectations and one year we got six % not just our schools, in SATs why were we at bottom of the heap because there were these league table, the sizes. So why we were being like this, so we changed that attitude, we were devastated that from Ds to Cs and Cs to Bs. and that school was very successful. The only see the same thing here. When KHDa brought in inspection, first of all there was a need, there are many private schools and nobody regulating and their opinion was, we are private schools we do what we like, parents were paying a lot of money, so parents are entitled and the students are entitled, whenever there is an issue in my school, things go wrong I always say to the teachers who is important who is in the middle is the child. Parents are paying a lot of money. So I think that KHDA have actually by bringing in the mechanism, yeah its tough it made us the accountable to parents not so much to them.*

That was the problem; there were schools in Dubai that was the problem before inspection was there was no platform for the schools for self-evaluation. May be some schools were doing that but now you knew. The school that are still not doing well is because they are still not got that good self-evaluation, self-critical, invert looking system, I mean, whatever you say you look at leadership they pull up every year in our leadership, because we are good at self-evaluating, we knew what we are at and what we need to do.

THE END

Appendix 3: Standard-based theme generating

(Sample)

	Very Good Schools	Ranking	Teaching Standards
01	School 001 (VG)	**Foundation:** Outstanding **Primary:** Good **Secondary:** **Good** **Post-16:** Good	Teachers were knowledgeable about their subjects. They were enthusiastic and able to share their knowledge with their students. They were able to enhance students' learning by providing appropriate real-life contexts. Teachers planned their lessons well. The purposes of the lessons were clear and were reviewed with the students. There was a good balance of activities from whole class to individual tasks. The teachers made use of many resources, including technology, and developed positive learning environments for most of their students. Teacher and student interactions were very strong. Students were confident in talking to their teachers, particularly in the Foundation Stage. Teachers had a range of questioning strategies that they used to good effect. Students were able to ask questions of their teachers both for support and extension. However, teachers' questioning often related to knowledge and skills. The use of open ended questions to confirm students' understanding and to develop their critical thinking skills was not consistently evident. Classrooms were well organised and managed. These features allowed teachers to use a wide range of activities. The tasks, activities, resources and the strategies ensured that for most students, a wide range of learning needs was met. Teachers challenged their students, gave time for independent research and expected students to be responsible for their learning. Lessons allowed students to work collaboratively and strategies were used to enhance such work. On some occasions too many activities were squeezed into lessons. This meant that opportunities for reflection, consolidation and critical thinking were missed or there was too little time to be meaningful. Teaching in Arabic as a first language was more effective in the primary years than in the upper phases of the school. In the primary phase, lessons were engaging and interesting. However, the teaching practices in Arabic were not suitable for all students in the upper phases of the school.
02	School 002(VG)	**Foundation:** Outstanding **Primary:** Good **Secondary:** **Good** **Post-16:** Good	Across the phases, most teachers had strong subject knowledge and a well-developed understanding of pedagogy. This resulted in learner-centred teaching and high levels of engagement of students in purposeful learning experiences based on discovery, practical application and integration of skills. Most teachers were skilful at delivering lessons that had clear expectations and stimulating content. In the Foundation Stage, there was an appropriate balance of adult and child-led activities. Lesson planning was consistently effective. In the Foundation Stage, teachers designed activities that were interesting and accelerated learning. Lessons generally were well structured, with cross-curricular links such as, the 'wow' curriculum in primary science. Learning objectives were mostly challenging but success criteria were not always shared with students, particularly in science, Islamic education and Arabic. Most teachers interacted well with students and promoted meaningful dialogue in lessons. High-quality questioning was a common feature of most lessons; it was generally open-ended and promoted students' higher-order thinking, active participation and reflection on learning. Teachers used probing questions effectively to check understanding and assess progress. Most teachers applied a very good range of strategies that took into consideration the individual needs of students. Differentiated activities ensured that most students, including those with SEND, were suitably challenged. However in a few subjects, particularly Arabic as a first language and Islamic education in the upper phases, teachers did not give enough attention to the students' varied abilities. The promotion of critical thinking, problem-solving and investigative and independent learning varied in quality. For instance, while this was a strength in secondary science, it was an area for development in post-16 mathematics. Opportunities in English for students to think critically and learn independently in Islamic education and Arabic, particularly in the upper years, were often limited. In the Foundation Stage, staff enabled children to explore for themselves. The quality of teaching in Arabic as a first language varied considerably between the primary and other phases in the school. Primary teachers had a good understanding of how students learn key language skills and provided engaging learning activities. In the upper phases, teachers were too controlling and did not provide enough scope for students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Appendix 4: Case Level Analysis (sorting and analysing data)

(Sample)

School: 007	Standard: Teaching	Ranking: Very Good

Q.7 how well the teachers apply their subject knowledge in teaching?

Most teachers, across all core subjects and both phases, had good or better knowledge of their subject and used this effectively to enhance student's learning. Teachers in FS, especially, had very good understanding of how young children learned best. Teachers of Arabic and Islamic education had embraced the best practice of their colleagues but had yet to develop their understanding of which teaching strategy would be most effective in any given situation.

Q.8 How effective the teachers plan the lessons including objectives activities and resources to promote learning?

In all core subjects, most teachers planned engaging and interesting lessons, which in most cases took into account the differing needs of students. A wide range of resources was used across both the FS and the primary phase. These resources fostered a good learning climate and motivated students to become fully engaged. Lessons were often well paced and maintained students' interest but on occasion some lessons moved forward too quickly and did not allow enough time for reflection or deeper thinking. There were supportive, colourful and informative displays in all learning areas across the school.

Q.9 To ensure active and focused learning, how well teachers engage students in insightful discussions and reflection?

Interactions between students and teachers were very positive. The quality of dialogue was a real strength and ensured thoughtful and meaningful discussions. Learning was consistently set in the context of Dubai and the UAE. Questioning, particularly in the older year groups, promoted critical thinking and elicited higher-level responses. Students increasingly used subject specific vocabulary in lessons, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

Q.10 How well the teacher organize their classroom to meet the individual needs of students?

Teachers' knowledge of students was detailed. At times, planning was insufficiently explicit and provision to meet the needs of

Appendix 4: Questionnaire for Academic Heads

***Instructions**:* This survey investigates the best teaching and assessment practices in your school. Each of the 24 statements in the survey indicates a standard performance (as described in KHDA's inspection framework) and the best methods to achieve it. The questionnaire is completely anonymous, and all information you provide will be treated confidentially. It is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time. After you carefully read each statement, decide how frequently you employ each method or strategy in your instruction and assessment practices.

Please mark

1- If you **never** practice that strategy.

2- If you **seldom** practice that strategy.

3- If you **sometimes** practice that strategy.

4- If you **frequently** practice that strategy.

5- If you **always** practice that strategy.

NO	Curriculum (Innovation & Development) Statements	**1 2 3 4 5**
1	The school followed the British National Curriculum and Early Years Foundation Stage.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
2	The curriculum has a clear rationale; the vision and mission statements are shared and referred to general staff meetings.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
3	The curriculum has been enhanced with a wide range of extra-curricular activities that help in maximizing students' learning experiences.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
4	Instructional goals and assessments are planned in line with the National (British) Curriculum Goals. So that the curriculum, instruction and assessments are all aligned.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
5	Effective activities and resources are identified for differentiated instructions by employing Bloom's Taxonomy Framework.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
6	The Unit (Lesson) Plans are developed to provide sufficient opportunities to develop students' critical thinking skills as well as engage them in independent and collaborative enquiry and research.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
7	The Unit (Lesson) Plans are developed effectively to meet the needs of all groups of students.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
8	"Scope and sequence" document (scheme) which provides a brief outline of the	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

	standards and an agreed upon teaching order and number of lessons and amount of time for my classroom instruction.	
9	The Unit Plans enable students to learn at their own speeds and make good and better progress academically in most subjects.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
10	The school follows the Ministry of Education requirements for Arabic and Islamic Education.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
11	The school provides strong instructional practices for Arabic as a first language.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
12	The curriculum for Islamic education has been implemented and modified to suit students need.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
13	The school takes advantage of the UAE locality in order to provide first-hand learning experiences.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
14	Developmental (Curriculum) map in instructional planning is employed, such as, Vertical Alignment Matrix that indicates the progression of a set of learning objectives for every subject and illustrate Cross-curricular links. There is a strong emphasis on the development of skills and knowledge in all subjects in each phase.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
15	Pacing calendars are used in a visual format in instructional planning.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
16	Benchmark assessments are developed around the learning objectives, which includes incorporating PISA and TIMMS assessment.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
17	The school has established a successful program for able, gifted and talented students that enabled them to develop their potentials.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
18	The curriculum is developed to ensure full engagements and challenges for students with special educational needs.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
19	The text books are evaluated periodically to gauge their appropriateness and relevance.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Appendix 5: Questionnaire for Teachers

***Instructions**:* This survey investigates the best teaching and assessment practices in your school. Each of the 24 statements in the survey indicates a standard performance (as described in KHDA's inspection framework) and the best methods to achieve it. The questionnaire is completely anonymous, and all information you provide will be treated confidentially. It is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time. After you carefully read each statement, decide how frequently you employ each method or strategy in your instruction and assessment practices.

Please mark

6- If you **never** practice that strategy (*method employed in 0 lessons out of 50 lessons*).

7- If you **seldom** practice that strategy (*method employed in 10 lessons out 50 lessons*).

8- If you **sometimes** practice that strategy *(method employed in 25 lessons out 50 lessons*).

9- If you **frequently** practice that strategy (*method employed in 40 lessons out 50 lessons*).

10- If you **always** practice that strategy (*method employed in 50 lessons out 50 lessons*).

No.	Statement	Response 1 2 3 4 5
1.	By way of explaining I **apply my subject knowledge in a meaningful context** for the learners by using: i.	
	ii. Creative maps, thinking maps, mind maps	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iii. Strong analogies.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iv. Practical examples.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	v. Current extra informational sources to link the learning to real-world event. (From outside the text books).	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	vi. Activities to link the subject with other areas of learning (integrating areas of subjects other than my subject).	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	Others if any:	
2.	When I plan my lessons I make it imaginative; I consider to include the following (elements) while planning my lesson:	**1 2 3 4 5**
	i. Range of strategies to stimulate curiosity (thinking differently).	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	ii. Clear goals for each lessons (purpose and pace)	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iii. Expected outcomes for each lesson.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iv. Blooms taxonomy in writing lesson's objectives.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	v. Differentiated objectives, activities, and homework for various group of learners.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	vi. Range of teaching strategies applicable to the content or skill to be taught.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

	vii.	Transitions, from activity to activity by increasing the difficulty.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	viii.	Visual aids and practical activities.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	ix.	Lots of higher order questions.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	x.	Thinking time.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	xi.	Tasks that require group work/ collaborative learning (e.g. think, pair, share).	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	xii.	Tasks that require minimal or no adult supervision.(Investigate and independence).	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	xiii.	Questions (or any assessment tool) to assess students' learning against the objectives of the lesson (Evaluate).	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	xiv.	What went well and how to deliver this lesson better next time. (Record and Reflect).	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	What else does your lesson planning consist of:		
3.	Understanding that **Dialogues and questioning** challenges students thinking and engage them in insightful discussions, I use following techniques to generate active learning in my classroom:		**1 2 3 4 5**
	i.	Planning key questions for each class.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	ii.	Auditing my questions consciously to challenge thinking.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iii.	Using "hinge" questions on the important concept to assess students' understanding, before moving on in the lesson	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iv.	Encouraging students to develop essential questions of their own.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	v.	Employing more than one response technique during instruction.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	vi.	Giving them time to reflect on their own understanding after listening to others answers to the questions.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	What are the other effective ways you are using to promote active and focused learning?		
4.	4.1) The learning content chosen in my class match well to the needs of individual students and groups with differing learning needs and abilities. In my lessons:		**1 2 3 4 5**
	i.	Multiple texts and teaching material, based on varying difficulty levels, are provided for students to meet the needs of each child in my class.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	ii.	Various instruction delivery formats are used such as video, readings, lectures, audio or hands on activity for the students to access the content.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iii.	Students have opportunities to choose the content based on interest.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iv.	Students are taught to self-monitor and pinpoint what they do and do not understand.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	v.	I encourage learners to build their own timeline of progress.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

	Other ways of differentiating content that you practice in your classroom:	
	4.2) Students make sense of the content by processing it. "Reflection", a powerful skill is developed by using strategies such as:	**1 2 3 4 5**
	i. Think-Pair-Share	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	ii. Journaling	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iii. Partner talk	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iv. Literature Circles	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	v. Save the last word	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	Other ways of differentiating process that you practice in your classroom:	
	4.3) Products are aligned to learning targets; they demonstrate clear academic criteria that students understood the concept. The students show how their product address the academic criteria by:	**1 2 3 4 5**
	i. Students are provided three or four choices for product option.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	ii. Students are provided an open-ended choice to propose their own design to demonstrate their understanding.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	Other ways of differentiating product that you practice in your classroom:	
5.	I have high expectations for my entire class, following strategies indicate that Expectations are high in my class:	**1 2 3 4 5**
	i. The course outline or an overview plan of the year that addresses content and assignments is given to the students and parents.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	ii. I set high expectations for all my students on individual basis.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iii. I teach students to set their own learning goals.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iv. I help students to identify strategies for achieving their goals.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	v. The examples of high standards of work are displayed to stimulate thinking and questioning.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	vi. The students are given the success criteria or performance indicators for all their assignments.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	vii. Students review and give feedback on their peers' work using the rubric provided or developed by the student.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	viii. The efforts of students are recognized when they mastered content or skills, through various forms of appreciation.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	In what other ways you communicate high expectations to your students:	

6.	Critical thinking and independent learning are always encouraged in my classroom, I develop the strategies to ensure that:	**1 2 3 4 5**
	i. My students are able to save and retrieve information in a variety of format using technology.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	ii. My students are engaged in investigating the topic deeper in and outside the classroom.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iii. My students are assigned problems and they are allowed to solve it independently.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iv. Using guiding questions, my students are engaged in discussions and collaborative work.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	v. My students are able to reuse and build upon the work of others.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	vi. My students are able to form learning networks to contrast ideas and experiences with other learners.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	vii. My students are able to publish their creativity.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	What are the other ways you employ to foster critical thinking and independent learning among your students?	
7.	The assessment information is reliable and comprehensive. It provides students' academic progress in line with the school's curriculum standards and expectations. In my classroom:	**1 2 3 4 5**
	i. I use APP (Assessing Pupils Progress) to track students' academic progress over time.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	ii. Students' progress tracking is organised by learning objectives, skills or units to show progress towards the larger annual goal.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iii. I analyse students' progress data to make judgments about their strengths and weaknesses.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iv. Students are able to see their progress on a tracking sheet (in soft-copy or hard-copy format).	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	v. I use assessment information from external exams to compare my students' achievement with international benchmarks.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	vi. I encourage students to review previous achievements regularly to get a sense of scale and pace of their achievement.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	Please mention if you use assessment information for other purposes as well	
8.	When analysing internal and external assessment Data I take into account:	**1 2 3 4 5**
	i. Were there items on the assessment that refer to content the teacher has not yet covered.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	ii. Which standards covered on the assessment have students mastered	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

	iii. Are there content and/or skills included on the assessment that the majority of students did not master	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iv. Are there content and/or skills included on the assessment that a distinct group of students did not master	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	v. Are there specific students who did not show mastery of the majority of the content and/skills on the assessment as a whole	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	vi. Are there specific students who showed clear mastery of the majority of the content and/or skills	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	vii. What is the level of rigor for commonly missed items on the assessment	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	viii. Were there specific items that were missed by many students in the class	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	ix. When items were commonly missed, was there a trend in the incorrect responses (i.e. 70% of students chose "B" when the correct answer was "D")?	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	How differently do you analyse the assessment information	
9.	Variety of Formative and Summative Assessments are employed to gauge student understanding, in my classroom:	**1 2 3 4 5**
	i. I create quizzes and develop questions to deepen	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	ii. Data are also collected of Summative Assessments like projects, essays, end of unit/year assessments to determine student's progress for analysis and interpretation of students' progress.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iii. Evidences are collected in Students' portfolio for evaluating students' academic achievement over time.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	What are the other strategies that you use when planning/developing formative and summative assessments?	
10.	Feedback to students is constructive in lessons and assessments:	**1 2 3 4 5**
	i. Marking and Feedback are specifically related to the learning objective and generated success criteria.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	ii. Marking and feedback are parts of an on-going dialogue between me and the student.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iii. Marking and feedback involve student to identify and correct mistakes, then self-correction of errors.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	iv. I allow specific time for children to read, reflect and respond to marking.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

	v. The feedback and written comments is to give recognition and praise for student's achievement and clear strategies for improvement.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	vi. I mark and give feedback before we start the next lesson.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
	What strategies do you use to provide constructive feedback to students?	

DEMOGRAPHICS: Please indicate your category below. These surveys are anonymous. This information will be used to categorize the data by group			
25.	Please indicate your gender.	Male O	Female O
26.	Please indicate grade level you teach.	☐ k-6 ☐ 6-8 ☐ 9-12 ☐ other	
27.	What is the highest degree you hold?	☐ BA ☐ MA or MS ☐ Ph. D. or Ed. D.	
28.	What is your major Or Subject Taught		
29.	What College Year Or Years Taught		

Appendix 6: Document Requested from Schools

The following Documents will be reviewed for the analysis and generalize best practices:

1. British National Curriculum Framework
2. School Action Plan
3. Curriculum Mapping (Cross-Curricular links)
4. Sequencing and Scope Document
5. Unit Plan (Specific Subject/s- Grade)
6. Assessment Scheduling/ Mechanism (formative/summative/PISA-TIMMS)
7. Students' Progress Tracking Document

Appendix 7: Parallel Discipline

Curriculum Map (Trimester)

	September				October				Noverber				Assessments	
	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8	Wk 9	Wk 10	Wk 11	Wk 12	Formative	Summative
Language Arts (Chapters from prescribed book)													*Unit test *Explore * Quizz/ Presentations *Portfolio Assessment	Benchmarks (Covered Specific Learning Objectives)
Word Analysis														
Grammar Mechanics														
Writing														
Social Studies														
Science														
Math														

Appendix 8: Blooms' Taxonomy

The Taxonomy Table (Objectives & Assessments)

Adapted from "A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (2001)" by Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R.

		The Cognitive Process Dimension Basic → Advance					
		Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyse	Evaluate	Create
The Knowledge Dimension Basic ↓ Advance	Factual Knowledge		(e.g.) Reading Objective R 1.1 Test 1.1				
	Conceptual Knowledge						
	Procedural Knowledge						
	Meta Cognition Knowledge						