

Methodology for Reviewing the KHDA Policy Framework in Operation

Given Dubai's unique political context, discussed earlier, it was decided that it would be best that policy makers only provide oversight of the highly privatized education landscape. This was attributable to the fact that traditional engineering solutions, like training teachers, modifying curricula, funding for school activities, consultancy services, were not available interventions for a *public* authority in a diverse *private* sector. Indeed, the KHDA refrained from these kinds of investments on principle. So, based on the policy framework provided by the World Bank report, the KHDA developed an approach whose objective was to promote greater accountability, incentives, and competition, which, when working together would help achieve the greater objective of fostering the development of a high performing private education sector.

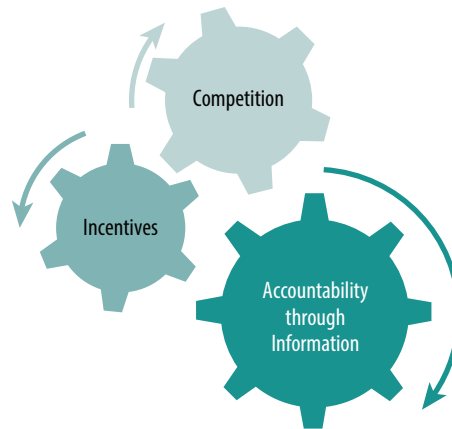
Proof of the advantages of using of these kinds of strategies is still relatively limited in the literature (though the evidence base is admittedly growing).¹ So, in order to assess the KHDA approach, and reflect on its achievements as well as suggest possible areas for refinement, the research question addressed is whether these constituent components are functioning as anticipated: does greater accountability stemming from information being made more available, as well as explicit incentives introduced by KHDA, lead to a more competitive, high performing education system?

To confirm or challenge whether the assumptions in the underlying theories of change of each part of this approach are in fact correct, we looked at empirical evidence combing the data gathered from the responses by parents, teachers, school heads and owners to surveys undertaken in Dubai in October 2013.

The methodology we have employed is straightforward: a mixed methods approach using some quantitative and mostly qualitative data, both of which were collected and analyzed. First, though, to gain practical insights into the KHDA approach, we undertook a review of the literature on governance as well as the private education sector. In order to

FIGURE 9

How the Constituents Elements Function Together



Source: Authors.

appreciate to what extent the mechanisms outlined in the *Road Not Traveled* were in operation in Dubai, we designed a series of questionnaires for the four identifiably different stakeholders of the private education sector in Dubai: parents, teachers, school heads, and school owners. The objective of these questions was to explore the dimensions and influence of these mechanisms on the respective stakeholders. As a result, the questionnaires required the development of an appropriate range of questions including closed ('yes/no'), Likert-scale, and open-ended formats.

With assistance from the KHDA counterpart team on the ground, two teams from the World Bank (each with Arabic-speakers) visited 20 different private schools in Dubai² over the course of three weeks, including schools at the primary, middle, and high school level, of various curricula (Indian, US, English, etc.), at very different price-points in terms of fees, and with various ratings (Outstanding, Good, etc.). The interviews were usually held with randomly-chosen parents (seen alone or in groups up to 8 or so), with teachers usually seen in groups, and with one or more of the school heads. We saw only one or two school owners. In brief, this is an intentional sample which we believe is a good representation of the school network in the Emirate, though probably not fully acceptable in terms of statistical significance.

The responses to these questionnaires, when coded and compiled into databases, were then analyzed for correlations and trends. Our findings follow.

Endnotes

1. See (Bruns et al., 2011) for examples.
2. Schools that participated included: Al Eman Private School, Al Ittihad Private School (Jumeirah), Al Rashid Al Saleh Private School, Apple International School, Deira International School, Dubai Arabian American Private School, Emirates International School (Meadows), GEMS Dubai American Academy, Greenfield Community School, His Highness Shaikh Rashid Al Maktoum Pakistani School, JSS International School, Jumeirah English Speaking School (JESS) Arabian Ranches, Lycee Georges Pompidou Primary School, Queen International School, School of Modern Skills, Sheffield Private School, the Indian High School, the Kindergarten Starters, and the Philippine School.