

More early education suggested ^[1]

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Source: The National

Format: Article

Publication Date: 2 Feb 2011

EXCERPTS

The emirate needs more public nursery schools and more funding for early-childhood education, according to a report that education officials will present today to the Dubai School of Government.

It is estimated that only 0.1 per cent of the country's GDP is spent on early-childhood education and care.

"With low state expenditure and few requirements placed on early learning providers, both quality and equity may be weak," wrote Juman Karaman, head of projects at the Knowledge and Human Development Authority, in her policy brief that will be presented at today's forum.

Less than two per cent of nurseries and 10.2 per cent of kindergartens in the emirate are funded by Government, according to a study commissioned by the development authority.

The study, titled Early Childhood Education in Dubai, was led by Dr John Bennett, a former education specialist for the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco).

The majority of the research was conducted between 2009 and 2010. Several other government departments gave their support to the research process.

The presentation will largely be based on Dr Bennett's findings.

According to the study, Dubai lacks the variety of government-provided early childhood education services that other countries provide: family day-care homes, drop-in services, parent support groups for stay-at-home mothers, play groups and family centres.

In the past 15 years, only five public nursery schools have been set up in Dubai, and there are only around 27 in the country.

In the private sector, there were 82 licensed nurseries catering to 7,551 children in 2009.

By contrast, only two public nursery schools were established in the same period, catering to 43 children.

Additionally, there is no regulation of education standards in private nurseries, which are the only option for most parents who choose to pursue formal early childhood education.

The development authority's study found that the majority of staff at these nurseries do not have a post-secondary level qualification for teaching.

About 26 per cent of teachers in Dubai's nurseries were found to have only a high school diploma, while 18.5 per cent had not even finished high school.

Moza al Shoomi, director of the Child Department at the Ministry of Social Affairs, said the department was actively promoting formal education, even for children below the age of 3.

- reprinted from The National

Region: International ^[2]

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