

LANGUAGE POLICY IN DUBAI'S SCHOOLS: FROM THEORY INTO PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

The qualitative research aims at exploring the language policy in Dubai's schools and highlight the areas that can be improved from theory to practice. There was the use of a Survey, Semi-Structured Interviews, and Secondary Data (Policy Documents). Purposive sampling was used to choose research participants with Survey Participants being taken from education professionals or those who closely work in fields related to education. This was done to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected. The theoretical framework was based on approaches such as the Language Policy and Planning (LPP), Critical Language Policy (CLP), and Language Management Theory (LMT). These helped the researcher have a firm basis to develop the academic project and understand some of the language policy dynamics currently happening in the UAE. The outcome of the research showed huge potential for language policy research. Some of the issues that were noted to hinder the implementation of effective language policy in the UAE include poor communication of language policy across the school community, staffing issues, the lack of resources, the absence of many different native languages in the mainstream curriculum, and the mismatch between the policy expectations and the actual level of student's aptitude. The solutions highlighted in this study include the setting of clear goals for the language policy that is shared with the policy designers and the policy users, the increased involvement of language teachers with the school leaders in the design and review process of the language policy, continuous professional development of language teachers among others.

***Keywords:** Policy, Language Policy, Language Planning Policy, Monolingualism, Bilingualism, Multilingualism*

INTRODUCTION

Background and context

Language policy is a disputed topic with no universal definition. It is part of traditional language planning. Previous research emphasizes the relevance of language policy in addressing socio-cultural disparities and promoting community inclusivity. Thus, it is a social construct with many characteristics. Language policy can also be textual or cultural, depending on the circumstances.

Language policy in the UAE is also challenged. The UAE has seven Emirates and has seen an incredible economic transition. Its diversified population produces a unique environment. The American Curriculum, British Curriculum, International Baccalaureate, and Ministry of Education (MOE) Curriculum compete due to the UAE's rapid growth and diversity. All these systems follow the MOE's vision and plan for quality and efficiency in education. varied school systems have varied and similar approaches to establishing and executing educational policies. In this context, Findlow (2006) highlights that in Dubai, there exists a significant presence of many cultural backgrounds, leading to a competitive environment among schools to attract multilingual students who want to maintain their original languages. This competition arises against the prevailing backdrop of English serving as the lingua franca in the majority of international schools. However, the UAE prioritizes Arabic as the Emirati people's mother tongue [4].

Since Arabic is the language of Arab heritage, religion, and identity, it is ubiquitous in schools [10]. Unchecked English language growth might be detrimental to learning Arabic and the nation's values, traditions, and identity.

Problem Statement

As language policy evolves, Goundar (2017) emphasizes the importance of ongoing study. Language policy in the UAE is problematic because many schools only teach Arabic and English, ignoring several native languages. This policy contradicts multilingual society. Language policy implementation in schools is equally problematic for kids, parents, and other stakeholders. This highlights the social justice issue that should underpin language policy [8]. The country's diversity requires schools to manage language teaching and learning by establishing and implementing effective language policies that support school systems and meet context-specific objectives. Prinsloo (2011) then emphasizes the importance of basing language policy on usage rather than politicians' assumptions. Language policy design must examine numerous elements relevant to its immediate environment [8]. Global and national circumstances, the school's audience, and local socio-cultural norms are considerations. The MOE and KHDA oversee all Dubai schools. They set school rules, including language policies and teaching and learning standards [3]. Thus, schools must create language policies that meet KHDA and MOE regulations and community demands. Middle and senior school leaders help create and administer a language policy. However, the obligation to teach Arabic as a first and additional language in all UAE schools and the rapid popularity and growth of English, which is being conscripted in schools nationwide, often make implementation difficult. These problems may cause a gap between theory and practice since the language policy document may not be adopted.

Research Goal

The study examines Dubai schools' language policy and suggests ways to enhance it.

Research Questions

Three questions will guide the research:

1. Which gaps exist between the language policy paper and implementation?
2. What hinders language policy implementation in Dubai international schools?
3. Can school leaders overcome language policy implementation challenges?

Study Importance

This study is important since it will inform educational stakeholders on UAE school language policy implementation. The diverse local context has caused many ambiguities and inefficient language policy measures. This research attempts to highlight these issues and provide ways to improve language learning practices. In particular, the research will help international schools in Dubai understand the language policy formulation, implementation, and review process, as well as the key issues school leaders confront, and possible solutions based on the data.

Literature Review:

This section will examine language policy and related research using a comprehensive literature review. Baumeister & Leary (1997) define systematic literature review as identifying issues and critically assessing a study's findings. A Literature Review broadens study questions and replies with practical applications. Siddaway (2019) lists seven steps in a systematic literature review: scoping, planning, identification, screening, eligibility, and data collecting strategy. This study report studied and discussed several earlier studies, however they all focused on language policy formulation and the design and review process. No study has examined the obstacles of implementing language policy in foreign schools and possible remedies, leaving a void in theory.

This work is valuable since it considers language policy theory and practice generally. It offers proposals for future school language policy makers.

Policy Success Elements

Schools must consider various factors while creating language rules. These include policy background, instructors as policy subjects, actors, text, and conduct, standards, and learning policies. This research work focuses on translating policy texts into actions and ideas into contextualized practices. A successful educational policy recognizes multiple cultures, including communities, traditions, and histories, which coexist in schools. Educational policy planners neglected teacher preparation and training, role changes, and important professional expertise.

This shows that the materialistic environment of the policy process is prioritized over resources, teachers, and students [2].

In contrast, (McConnell 2010) believes that successful policy preserves government policy aims, legitimizes it, builds a durable coalition, and symbolizes innovation and influence. The implementation success of these aspects can be assessed. These success criteria assess the policy's resilience, conflict, precarity, or failure based on the following elements. Policy success or failure meets Harman's description of policy as a product.

Risager (2007) agrees with Braun (2006) that culture and teachers are important factors in language policy, focusing on the language teacher, language choice and attitudes toward different languages, target language country awareness, and language ecological awareness. Due to the interaction needed between individuals, language policy can be micro-level rather than macro-level, as teachers play an important role in implementing the target language in the learning environment, choosing the language, and attitudes toward languages and dialects.

The language policy consists of primary components: practices, beliefs, and management. linguistic policy is shaped by linguistic ideology. This shows how each nation has a preferable language and how one language is more important for national unity than another, such as how English language education is now essential for the country's economy. The UAE prioritizes language policy initiatives that position Arabic as the essential language for identity and culture and English as the important language for business. Language practice, the second component of language policy, underpins societal language use independent of legislation. Third, language management involves managing and influencing language practices. Also, the language policy should analyze official policy documents since real language practices indicate authentic language policy.

Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) postulated that The Language Planning Policy is the first one and is the classical approach, the second one is the language management approach, the third one is the domain approach and the fourth one is

the critical approach. The classical approach continues in the tradition of language planning [7].

The language policy assumptions are criticized by many researchers like Kwon (2020) who claims that over-attributes language loss to native speakers' failure to realize that their language survives any linguistic onslaught from dominant languages. Social, neocolonial, economic, political, and technological elements that cause language loss are neglected. This weakens Spolsky's arguments for a more holistic approach to language policy dynamics.

Shohamy (2006) suggests a more complex debate that lowers the gap between beliefs and practices to develop Spolsky's paradigm. This led to the concept of “de facto language policies” that link ideology and practices through standardized language test mechanisms. With Arabic as a mandated subject and schools' dedication, the UAE illustrates this process. However, most foreign schools teach English and require it for university and career applications. Shohamy (2006) highlights the link between language tests and language management forms that may not be in language policy but are powerful in language practices.

One issue with Shohamy (2006)'s "de facto language policies" is that private schools have their own language policy norms. Kim (2015) claims that private educational institutions have an overbearing impact and promote English, which can replace "de facto language policies" with Private Education as De Facto Policy.

Do All International Schools Have Language Policies?

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has boosted language policy and planning measures in recent years because it is intent on investing in English language education at all levels (public and private). Even if Emiratis make up 20–25% of the population, the country is explicitly striving to maintain Arabic language, especially for Emirati students.

The International Baccalaureate (IB) education program standards and practices document states that all IB schools must have a meaningful language policy that enhances international-mindedness and intercultural understanding by developing students' ability to interact in many ways using more than one language. This emphasizes bilingualism and multilingualism, and the IB school must establish, execute, share, and review the language policy.

The language policy of an IB school must describe how all school members participate in its execution. All IB institutions worldwide must follow these rules. In contrast, British and American schools have no guidelines for language policy formulation and execution, which can lead to confusion and personalisation.

Some schools don't even have a language policy. The technique and data gathering sections will elaborate on this topic.

According to Corsan (1999), some high school departments cannot address all language concerns, thus they should have two language policies: one for each department and one for the school. The departmental policy emphasizes instruction and evaluation, while the whole school policy addresses critical social and cultural diversity issues. This may delay the language policy's implementation, which will focus on answering the second research question. It is also important since policy execution depends on how well it is conveyed to the school community, especially instructors who must construct the best curriculum according to the policy.

This research will highlight the importance of language policy at international schools and examine the viability of a single policy for each school system by interviewing participants.

Language Policy Issues in the UAE

Languages and heritage are linked because people use them to reflect their traditions and heritage. This makes mother tongue study and devotion critical in schools, especially multinational ones. The UAE is multilingual, yet the language policy paper only uses Arabic and English. Arab students must learn Arabic first and all other languages are optional. However, many multilingual Arab students in the UAE, especially in Dubai, learned another language in addition to Arabic, and English is the most prevalent second language.

National Ministry of Education standards require teaching languages in Dubai. It emphasizes Arabic and English, the UAE's main languages and topics. All Dubai schools must know, follow, and use this framework. Setting this framework regulates language instruction. However, educational officials may be confused about other languages taught in schools but not in the language policy. The unregulated languages are Spanish, French, and German. These languages get less emphasis than English and Arabic locally, but they're crucial at foreign schools. [2] claims that external pressure on schools to satisfy standards and frameworks overrides their unique learning goals.

Non-Arabs must also learn Arabic under a framework. This prioritizes Arabic and makes executing the language policy harder because teaching Arabic to non-Arabs is difficult. Non-native Arabic students may have an uncertain attitude toward Arabic because they will be enrolled in the subject as an additional language, which may affect their learning attitude [5].

Vision 2021 seeks to improve Arabic language learning in all UAE schools. Arabic is predicted to grow and be spoken and written everywhere throughout the country. The UAE wants to expand the Arabic language since it is the language

of communication and culture and has the potential to become the language of science and technology.

Expatriate parents may be frustrated when their children don't speak or learn their mother tongue at school. Expatriate parents may not understand that they occasionally accidentally use new language vocabulary instead of heritage language words. Multilingual society makes language policy in schools the most complicated locally and internationally. The school domain includes policy participants like teachers and pupils. This varied by ability, age, gender, level, and language competency. The British Council found that language policy implementation challenges include understanding the complexity of the policy, policy development, and management, highlighting the local context, promoting locally assessed languages, and critically evaluating the policy [6].

[11] claims that all UAE residents contribute to language conflicts, diversity, and policy. Policymakers in the UAE must evaluate the national and international settings when designing language policies, work responsibly, and respect the requirements of a varied community. They must better comprehend expatriate language policy experiences, including learning. This study will identify, study, and propose these genuine difficulties, which are prevalent at most foreign schools. Language policy gaps and issues extend beyond the English-Arabic dichotomy and Emirati pupils' multilingualism to expatriate language demands.

This paper is expected to illuminate and propose solutions to help school leaders design and implement practical language policy documents.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology and research paradigm

The Chapter describes this study's methodology. A qualitative method allows the researcher to collect extensive data from individuals. The study aims to illuminate the theoretical and practical gaps in language policy and the issues teachers, middle, and senior executives have when implemented it in Dubai's international schools. It explores ways to lessen teaching and learning obstacles.

Setting, Participants

Participants at five Dubai IB and British international schools were surveyed. Participants included senior executives, middle leaders, language heads, and teachers. Most of the forty survey participants were language teachers. About 17.5% of participants were senior leaders from schools, 15% were middle leaders, and 12.5% were language department heads. The participants came from various countries, with 50% Arab. This survey was conducted and shared using Google forms, and schools and participants received a link to participate.

Two language department heads and two senior leaders participated in semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted in person and by Zoom video call. To get the most information from interviewees, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews online and offline. Participants must have led the languages department at the selected schools for five or more years or been in a senior leadership post for three years. For confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher will refer to the research participants as (X, Y, Z, and A). Participant (X) is a senior leader (Head of Secondary) at an International Baccalaureate School, participant (Y) is a senior leader (Deputy's head), participant (Z) is a Head of Languages at a British school, and participant (A) is a head of languages at an International B. The lack of a language policy in other school systems led to more IB students.

Instrumentation

It can be emphasized that instrumentation—the equipment or means by which researchers quantify variables during data collection—is essential for scientific studies. Instrumentation involves instrument design, selection, building, and evaluation, as well as how a researcher ensures trustworthy and valid results.

Audios from the semi-structured interview were retained and transcribed. All questions were categorized as comparable or different, and data from IB and British Curriculum schools were compared. This attempted to determine whether the educational system implemented the language policy better. Data analysis was interpretive. It'll happen in the next chapter.

Survey: Instrument One

Nine English and Arabic questions included in the poll. The questions asked about foreign school language policy implementation issues and why they exist. The questionnaire sought solutions to these issues. The survey has five open-ended and four multiple-choice items. Three research topics addressed language policy implementation issues and solutions, which guided all questions. Participants shared their thoughts, experiences, and opinions using open-ended questions. Some questions sought replies that illuminated other topics that could be included in this study's recommendations. Appendix A contains survey questions.

These qualitative tools collect descriptive, non-numerical, holistic, and rich data. All participant replies to all questions were highlighted and analyzed to generate survey data.

Instrument 2: Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview illuminated the issues. The semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask more questions based on participant responses. See appendix (B) for interview questions.

Instrument 3: Policy Documents.

It was impressive that the researcher obtained language policy documents from International Baccalaureate schools. Many British and American schools have never heard of language policy. All IB schools must have a language policy that aligns with the vision, mission, and philosophy. This level meets the organization's international teaching and learning standards. IB schools must have a written language policy that fits students' needs and reflects the IB's vision and mission.

Data analysis

Any research project needs data analysis. It aids data summarization. Researchers use analytical and logical thinking to analyze data to find patterns, correlations, and trends.

Data analysis

As known, qualitative researchers often have large data sets for quantitative research. A rather large data collection was organized by subject, theme, question response type, and other factors in this study. A table was built to organize data into themes and diagrams like pie charts and tables for data presentation and analysis. Diagrams and percentages were used to analyze survey data, while in-depth interview data was thematically analyzed.

Survey: Description

The researcher calculated percentages per response using descriptive statistics on survey data. Descriptive statistics help researchers justify quantification. However, descriptive statistics was mostly employed to analyze data, while qualitative qualities were utilized to convey it, replacing percentages with phrases like “most, an equal number of, less than, fewer.”

Interview: Theme analysis

Thematic analysis was important to this study's data analysis. [2] contend that many qualitative researchers underestimate thematic analysis. There is minimal literature on how to conduct a thorough thematic analysis in academia due to its peripheral approach compared to other major data analysis methodologies. Researchers used topic analysis on interview transcripts. The method enables the

researcher to thoroughly evaluate interview data to uncover similar themes—recurring concepts, topics, patterns of meaning, and ideas.

Policy documents: Discourse analysis

Discourse Analysis is defined as the study of natural language in any social situation. Qualitative discourse analysis helps us understand human experience noting its meaningfulness in its own language. It only has meaning when humans assign shared uses. The researcher interpreted policy papers using discourse analysis. Policy documents have no validity unless educational stakeholders give them a common use meaning.

Ethics in Research

Before being considered by the researcher, all subjects had to give informed consent and volunteer. Participants knew the study's purpose before taking the survey. Research participants were kept anonymous and confidential per University Research Ethics rules. Participants were informed of the survey's goal in the description.

The interviews had 10 predetermined questions that needed detailed responses and allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions. All in-depth interviews were conducted in a relaxed setting. In-depth interviews went well, and the researcher clarified any difficult questions. This study did not name respondents to maintain anonymity, and all recorded material will be safely maintained before being deleted once the University acknowledges that the researcher has completed studies (See appendix C).

The two schools gave the researcher permission to utilize their policy documents in this study, and one of their top officials informed them that their policy documents would be analyzed and criticized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stats from the survey

The poll focuses on the first two research questions. Each of the nine questions received 40 responses from senior executives, middle leaders, head of languages, and language teachers. The researcher will present and analyze the findings using other scholars' arguments.

Language teachers were the most participants, followed by senior leaders, middle leaders, and language heads. This diverse group of language leaders, teachers, and learners ensured data reliability and validity. The second question showed that most participants work at schools with an active language policy, which represents most of the overall responses. This is a positive sign that many

international schools in Dubai pay attention to language policy. Few individuals said their school's language policy is being designed, and fewer said it doesn't exist. The chart follows:

Page 36 shows that international schools need a language policy to govern language teaching and learning, with a focus on bilingualism and multilingualism.

When answering the third question, "Do schools need a language policy?" "Most responders stressed school language policies. This question sought participants' opinions on language policy's importance. Like the second question, most participants indicated a language policy is extremely important, while a minority said it is somewhat essential, but no one answered it is not important. This shows that you understand how the language policy guides and manages language teaching and learning at UAE international schools.

Answer Question 4: Who designs language policy at your school? There was mixed feedback from questionnaire respondents. This was important because it showed the school language policies' authenticity and efficiency.

A higher number of participants stating that senior leaders (SLT), curriculum designers, and teachers design language policies at international schools shows a lack of knowledge about the process. Another few answered it's the SLT and department head's role, while another few said it's the head of languages' role. However, a few respondents referred to this position in the job description of SLT members, while some said they didn't know about this procedure or who should be involved. These conflicting responses reveal a lack of communication about policy design and language policy design at international schools. It highlights the disparity between the language policy statement and actual practices and the dysfunctional communication between school officials and language teachers, which must be addressed.

The language policy's implementers are as important as its designers. From start to finish, everyone must know the process. Thus, school administrators and teachers should create the language policy. The ideal team should include some SLT members, the head of languages, curriculum coordinators (if relevant), and language teachers to draft and construct the language policy. Language instructors must be involved because they will apply the policy with students, they know better than any school leader. Based on their practical experience and students' needs analysis, teachers can provide the best language policy input.

Fifth question: How is language policy conveyed across the school? The table shows that schools distribute language policy documents in various ways. Regular department meetings are the most popular means of explaining language policy, according to staff responses. Since this figure does not have a majority, most teachers are not attending meetings while regular department meetings strengthen

schools, teaching, and collaboration. The position of disseminating the language policy through department meetings has no majority, thus most instructors do not hear it discussed in their meetings. Additionally, department meetings, shared drives, and emails only reach school employees, cutting students and parents out of language policy communication.

School language policy is also communicated through professional development and training. A small sample of instructors who judge this technique effective will get to discuss the policy paper, raise issues, and gain clarification. This strategy is less effective than department meetings because it may only happen once or twice a year, thus workers are not reminded of the policy and implementation procedure. Like the orientation or induction week at the start of the school year.

Some schools post their policies on their website, which is beneficial. Since many people don't visit the school website, this strategy is useless for communicating language policy to the community. Due to unfamiliarity, some stakeholders may not find the policy paper on a school's website or think it's important. A crucial document must be presented and discussed to the school community, including instructors, students, and parents. The school community includes kids who will be affected by the policy [2].

However, few individuals reported that their schools do not convey their language policy, which is alarming. Consideration of language policy as a product rather than a process is problematic. Designing policies without communicating them to the school community is pointless. The language policy's principal purpose is to guide school language teaching and learning. Refusing to share the policy with the school community shows that schools are not interested in implementing it and cannot evaluate their success without actual language practices.

Staff and parents should be informed of language policy through department meetings, professional development, emails, shared drives, and information sessions. Communication with language teachers must be regular and consistent to maximize policy implementation.

It may be communicated with parents once or twice a year during school information meetings utilizing more than emails, shared drives, and the school website. For more people to grasp the language policy's aims and work toward them through a clear and simple implementation procedure, it must be adequately stated. Effective policy communication will bridge the gap between policy documents and practice. It will inform school stakeholders of language expectations and boost language policy success.

Answering the sixth question: "Do you think the language policy is followed?" A big proportion of participants claimed language policy is taught and applied in

language classes. A large percentage indicated what is taught and applied is partially related to the language policy, while a smaller number claimed the policy is not liked with the practices. These comments reflect the varying levels of language policy implementation at international schools and suggest that school administrators are paying more attention to it.

However, there should be reasons for not applying the policy and only selling it. Poor policy communication across the school and misunderstanding of policy aims and expectations may be one explanation. The answers to the next question illuminated the primary reasons Dubai international schools fail to apply the language policy.

Language policies are appropriate and transparent if they have a clear objective and vision. Otherwise, they are just documents with no impact. The leadership team clarifies the aim and policy applicability. Leaders must involve language teachers, department heads, and other stakeholders in design. Education practitioners need regular CPD and departmental meetings to communicate language policy updates and opinions. Professional development may occur in the school community as people learn from each other. As learners work toward a common goal, the teaching staff and leadership team form a professional learning community.

Because it's cheap and effective, this professional development is preferred by schools and happens routinely. This reflective practice promotes a positive change in the school environment and culture, where everyone is involved and responsible for achieving the school's goals and implementing its policies. Hosting external professional development sessions that can gather language teachers from different Dubai schools and train them on the language policy's use and implementation is also effective.

Regular policy review is a reflective technique for improvement. After receiving feedback from practitioners, monitoring the policy's implementation across the school, and analyzing the data, policymakers must make the necessary changes to make the policy more applicable and meaningful.

Interview data

Four participants controlled this topic and shared that language policy at foreign schools must be illuminated as a significant subject and essential aspect for the appropriate, coordinated, and managed teaching and learning of languages. Only one participant (Z) has not participated in the language policy formulation process with the language teachers. The language team at participant (Z)'s school was less active in design. In the other three schools, top executives, the head of languages, and all language teachers design policies, which is good. This suggests that engaging the head of languages and language teachers in the planning process is still important. Sharing the policy with teachers begins with their participation

in the planning process. Participant (X) underlined the necessity of discussing the language policy with parents, adding that new parents who wish to join the school should know it, especially in this global world and technology that allows individuals to travel at any time. She suggested including one teacher from all subjects in designing the language policy because she believes that “every teacher is a language teacher” and that the IB philosophy states that “Culture 4: The school implements, communicates, and regularly reviews a language policy that helps to foster intercultural understanding through communication.”

Participants (X) and (Z) explained that the successful language strategy has two parts: one for native speakers and one for non-native speakers. Participant (Y) described the concept of teaching and studying languages, the school's support for native language speakers, and the high school's language course rules. Participant (A) said the national context, language behaviours, and language support are the most important parts of the language policy. Although three of the four participants follow the same system and curriculum, these responses show how far and how different they were in recognizing the policy's essential aspects. This shows that the policies were not designed to clear standards, so we asked about a unified language policy across Dubai's international schools, which all the participants declined due to implementation challenges.

However, participant (X) suggested creating a single language policy for international schools that follow Dubai's system, such as British and IB schools. This can be difficult because every school has a different setting and needs a unique policy to meet their needs. Schools can share subheadings and sections (the key elements) for tailored content. Participant X added that schools may create a fully unified Arabic language policy as mandated and aligned by the MOE framework and expectations not only in Dubai but across the UAE, and another policy for schools that follow the same curriculum that can be tweaked as needed. This inventive and novel solution may improve Dubai's international schools' language policy design and implementation.

The first gap between the policy document and actual practices was teachers' lack of time to always refer to the policy document and make sure their practices are aligned with the statements in the document, as some classroom practices are not mentioned in the policy for many reasons. Most schools prefer the easier approach that teachers have been familiar with for years, so they don't check and follow the policy. Another reason is the rapid development and updates that occur throughout the year and need to be addressed in the classrooms even if not in the policy.

The policy must be flexible and modifiable to accommodate recent events like the COVID-19 outbreak, which drove educational institutions to find alternate solutions. The review process must occur often throughout the year.

When parents, especially in middle and high schools, take responsibility for their children's language choice more than their teachers, they don't always follow their advice. Participant (Y) noted that parents can be difficult when they receive the language policy and verify what the school should give for language learning. They may grow more dependent on teachers and not take responsibility for their children's education.

Participant (Y) proposed hiring learning assistants to help Arabic teaching and learning and providing tailored programs for students who require extra support to close the theory-practice gap. These learning aids also help teach other languages. This method is offered because learning assistants cost less than full-time teachers and can help teachers and middle leaders fill learning gaps. Participant (X) recommended offering mother languages as Extra-Curricular Activities (ECA) after school to help kids who cannot study them during the school day practice them. Schools can also provide mother language courses from authorized institutions associated with the school and followed up by staff.

Participant (X) underlined the need of consistently evaluating the language policy to remedy gaps and get teachers on board. She advised including parents and students in the review. This inclusive procedure will include parents' and students' perspectives in the policy, making institutional stakeholders more accountable and responsible school members.

Data from policy documents

As the policy documents used in this study are from two separate schools that are not international schools in Dubai, the researcher will refer to the older school, which has been open for over 10 years, as school. The newer school (P) operates for four years and follows the IB system. The numerous policy document divisions reflect the confusion and ambiguity we saw in the interview responses. The eleven-page school policy (J) is more comprehensive. The first page featured the school's vision, mission, and basic principles, followed by the policy. However, school (P) summarized a four-page policy without an introduction, vision, mission, or goals. A concise policy statement replaces all of these. School (J) supplied thorough information about the school context and the policy document's purpose following IB program standards and practices for language policy design and implementation. School (P) provided quick clarifications about its vision and mission.

School J's policy states that the school community is a resource for language acquisition and that pupils must learn at least one language other than their home tongue. The school develops three languages—Arabic, English, and French—despite having pupils from several countries. Some students' native languages aren't listed. This explains why some survey respondents said the policy document 'slack of transparency and inapplicable statements cause the gap between it and practices. The school policy (P) only describes the divisions of Arabic and English

across the school and does not mention any other languages students can learn at this school, which is a poor practice that shows a lack of experience in language policy design. In addition, school (P)'s policy document states that it offers English language acquisition courses for non-native English speakers in the primary and middle stages, but all students study English as a first language, which creates challenges for teachers and students and increases language barriers.

The school's language policy (J) details language practices and support expectations. It specifies the tasks of language teachers, department heads, and school leaders.

EAL, Arabic, and mother language maintenance are part of language support, as are language classroom methods. Teachers benefit from this policy information and can better perform their duties.

Middle school (G6-G9) pupils must study Arabic, English, and French, with only EAL students free from French. This makes the approach appear coercive, limits learners' options, and discourages language learner preference.

School (J) includes entrance requirements, such as an English proficiency test but not Arabic or French. This reveals that English is more important to school leaders and the language policy than Arabic and other languages, even though Arabic is required in all Dubai schools. The policy mentions Arabic support, but it does not require an admission assessment for Arabic proficiency level, which creates gaps between policy documents and actual practices and challenges Arabic language teachers when they receive students without prior knowledge of their levels. School (J) lacks policy review information, despite school (P) highlighting it in their policy. The role is narrowed to IB coordinators and pedagogical leadership team, with no mention of language teachers' role in policy design or review, or frequency of review. This is despite clear guidelines in the IB education publication "reviewing a language policy."

Discussion

The research found that language teachers made up most participants, followed by senior leaders, middle leaders, and language heads. Despite language instructors' prominence, school officials make language policy choices, leaving out critical stakeholders. This makes the language policymaking elitist. This contradicts the linguistic Management Theory, which emphasizes sustainable linguistic problem-solving. Centralizing language policymaking to educational officials without language teachers generates a broken system. With the start of the 21st century, [10] states that "language planning" has given way to "language management". Language management theory (LMT) has been broadly defined as language activities and communication or "behavior towards language." Institutions or education directors like the Ministry of Education, which makes

language teaching and learning decisions in a country, are responsible for these activities. Language management cannot be effective without proactive stakeholder involvement, especially language teachers.

When answering the third question, "Do schools need a language policy?" "Most responders stressed school language policies. This question sought participants' opinions on language policy's importance. It was stated that an effective language strategy in schools requires skill, cooperation from stakeholders like parents, and other considerations. [2] suggest that schools must consider numerous factors while creating educational policies like language rules. These include policy background, instructors as policy subjects, actors, text, and conduct, standards, and learning policies. Interviewees all stressed the importance of language policy, and educational institutions have policy documents to prove it. This emphasizes that language policy should be inclusive and that authorities should better comprehend expatriate language policy experiences.

Only a fifth of respondents believe senior leaders (SLT), curriculum designers, and instructors design language policy at foreign schools. The education ministry and other stakeholders are involved in language policy drafting at foreign schools; therefore, this shows a lack of awareness. This can be argued as a good policy preserves government policy aims, legitimizes it, builds a durable coalition, and symbolizes innovation and influence. These elements can be measured by their implementation success and go against what a fifth of respondents called language policy's source. This shows the gaps between the policy text and real practices, including stakeholders' lack of information about who designs language policy documents. This contradicts several interviewees' claims that language policy belongs to all educational stakeholders, who should provide input on the policy text to make it viable.

The policy paper and actual behaviours differed, according to interview data. The first gap was instructors' lack of time to always go to the policy document and make sure their activities match its words, as some classroom practices are not specified in the policy for several reasons. Language policy is also not implemented effectively in schools due to the lack of a uniform document for multiple curriculums, language prejudice, and language teachers' propensity to teach topics they know.

This generates a dysfunctional language learning environment because merging language practice and policy to succeed and achieve optimal language policy outcomes.

Dubai language policy issues are addressed. Participant (Y) advised that schools hire learning assistants to help Arabic teaching and learning and create tailored programs for kids who require more support. These learning aids also help teach other languages. This option was offered because learning assistants cost less than full-time teachers and can help teachers and middle leaders cover

learning gaps. LAs will be key stakeholders in the language policy's implementation since many education-related stakeholders are involved. Also, it can depend on how people interpret the regulation offers for flexibility and chances to implement multilingual education. In an interview, participant (X) suggested offering mother languages as Extra-Curricular Activities (ECA) after school to help children who cannot study them at school practice them. Using mother languages as ECAs for translanguaging has obvious drawbacks. Examples include the resources needed and pupils' lack of willingness to utilize languages they may not use in social situations.

Schools have various views on policy documents when analysing them. Institutional language policy documents show how the school community is a resource to improve language learning and how students must learn at least one language other than their mother tongue, but language choice is difficult. Despite Dubai's multilingualism, schools prioritize Arabic, French, and English. This linguistic contradiction must be resolved for Dubai schools to effectively execute the language policy [1]. Without that adjustment, [9] predicts linguistic paradoxes and conflicts.

CONCLUSION

Due to the country's variety and wide range of nationalities and linguistic interests, UAE international schools (particularly Dubai) have paid more attention to language policy. Monolingualism, bilingualism, and multilingualism are important in language policy, teaching, and learning at foreign schools. Continuous efforts are made to address them in language policy and practice. Many theories and research have identified language policy planning, management, and design. Critical Language Policy and Language Management Theory strive to value and illuminate language policy.

According to the report, not all foreign schools in Dubai have a language strategy, and those that do are not implementing it successfully for various reasons. The UAE's multilingual, multi-curricula, multi-cultural, multi-national nature, and the ministry of education and KHDA's language teaching rules, notably for Arabic and English, make implementation difficult. The dominance of English over all other languages in Dubai, the poor communication of language policy across the school community, staffing issues, the lack of resources, the absence of many native languages in the mainstream curriculum, and the mismatch between policy expectations and student level have added to the challenges of implementing the language policy.

This study suggests creating clear language policy goals and sharing them with policy creators and users. This should involve language instructors and school leaders in language policy design and review. Schools should promote language teacher professional development, language symposiums, and meaningful departmental gatherings to share ideas, concerns, and language best

practices. To ensure all stakeholders obey the language policy, regular monitoring and assessment should be done. Teams in Dubai schools that follow the same system should collaborate to create the best language policy document for Arabic and all other languages so that clusters of schools can implement the common language strategy more consistently.

Finally, schools must develop policies for numerous reasons, but the most important is knowing why and what results they want. After defining key performance metrics, schools should treat language policy as an integral aspect of educational standards rather than a regular product. It will make language policy a consistent, continuous, and meaningful process for educational stakeholders.

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