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An exploratory study investigating the factors which explain Abu Dhabi Education Council's (Adec) English curriculum choice in grade 10/11 public high schools and the challenges its implementation poses for teachers

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Submitted by Rose (Ann) Stockwell to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Education in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (EdD TESOL). This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and then no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other university.

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Since embarking on the EdD my mother has passed away and my father developed Alzheimer's. I thank them for their support in times past and hope, in some small, way I've done them proud.

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the factors which explain Abu Dhabi Education Council's (Adec) English curriculum choice in grade ten and eleven public high schools in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It investigates the challenges its implementation poses for teachers personally and professionally.

The study is exploratory and interpretive and is based on the perceptions of 12 male teachers; 6 Arab teachers of English and 6 "native" English speaking teachers at 3 boys' public high schools in the Abu Dhabi emirate. Data were gathered through lengthy semi-structured interviews with teachers, analysis of Adec curriculum and assessment documentation as well as open, non-participant classroom observations.

The findings show the current curriculum, modelled on that used in NSW mainstream schools in Australia up until the end of 2014 is an inappropriate choice for students learning English as a foreign/second language in a school environment where all other subjects are taught in Arabic. This in turn provides a range of challenges for teachers who are unable to implement the course content as it was intended or the learner / learning-centred pedagogical approaches promoted by the curriculum and assessment documentation.

The study recommends a realistic assessment of students' language needs be undertaken as a top priority and, based on these findings, English classes streamed according to students' language proficiency; with curriculum and assessment designed to reflect the various stages of learning. Ability grouping would enable specialist teachers to target areas of strength and weakness, thus countering the boredom and frustration currently experienced by many students. The study also recommends future stakeholder consultation, an in-depth orientation for newly hired teachers and professional development for incumbent teachers in scaffolded language instruction.

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ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

Abbreviation Acronym	In full
ADEC	Abu Dhabi Education Council
AKR	Arab Knowledge Report
AKR: UAE	Arab Knowledge Report: UAE Case Study
CEPA	Common Educational Proficiency Assessment
Cycle 1	Grades 1-5 (ages 6-10)
Cycle 2	Grades 6-9 (ages 11-15)
Cycle Three	Grades 10-12 (ages 16-18)
DET	Department of Education and Training
ECART	English Continuous Assessment Rich Task
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EMSA	External Measurement of Student Achievement
EMT	English Medium Teacher
ESL	English as a Second Language
FNC	Federal National Council of the UAE
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IST	Integrated Strand Task
L1	First language or mother tongue
L2	Second language

LT	Licensed Teacher
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOE	Ministry of Education
NSM	New School Model
NSW	New South Wales
PD	Professional Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPP	Private-Public Partnership
SCAD	Statistics Centre Abu Dhabi
TIMSS	Trends in International Maths and Science Study
UFP	University Foundation Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Abu Dhabi Education Council's strategic plan (2009-2018) unveiled by its then director, Al Khaili in June 2009, outlined a range of educational reform initiatives to combat the endemic underperformance of students in the emirate's high schools, blamed on uninspiring curricula and teacher-centred classrooms. Their main aim was to promote a bilingual, problem solving/critical thinking[1] approach to learning at primary and secondary level which would endow students with 21st century learning skills and so benefit them regardless of their chosen career path. According to Al Khaili (2009), "Being able to communicate effectively in both English and Arabic isn't a luxury. It's a necessity. […] Arabic and English fluency together with improved maths and leadership skills are integral to working life whether a student chooses to go to university or not".

1.1 THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Having only established a formalised education system some forty years previously, an immediate obstacle to the implementation of the raft of rapid-fire educational reforms was the country's lack of experience in developing and delivering such innovations. In order to expedite the process, in 2007 Adec approached the international arm of the Department of Education and Training (DET) in NSW[2], Australia to design an English curriculum together with inquiry based, Science, IT and Maths curricula (in English) for grade 10 students in the UAE. The curricula produced closely resembled those being used in mainstream NSW schools at the time. It also formed public-private partnerships (PPPs) with several overseas companies, based in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the UK whose brief it was to bring "educational experts" to the UAE to assist local teachers in putting the new constructivist curricula into practice. Incumbent staff received no professional development (PD) prior to the adoption of the change proposal and the expectation was that "on the job" training would be sufficient for their needs.

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[1] Defined as analytical thinking which encourages students to analyse, critique, judge, compare and contrast, evaluate, and assess (Adapted from Colwell, 2006, p. 207).
[2] NSW = New South Wales

Due to the inability of both teachers and students to access the course material and function at this level of English, the science curriculum reverted to Arabic soon after its introduction and, although the focus of the study is the English curriculum, is worthy of note[3]. The English curriculum in grade 10 and now grade 11 is in its seventh year of operation. Despite undergoing several changes, specifically with regard to how it is assessed and the decision to sideline Arab teachers of English (ATEs) in favour of "native" English speaking teachers (EMTs), changes in classroom practice as well as student achievement and their approach to learning remain intangible (Ohan 2010, cited in Bardsley, 2010a; Warnica, 2010). This calls into question the wisdom of adopting a mainstream[4] English curriculum from Australia, designed for teachers and students whose mother tongue is English, in a context where students have Gulf Arabic as their mother tongue, speak Gulf Arabic at home and have limited opportunities, or some argue, need, to apply the curriculum content outside the classroom (Grigorenko, 2007).

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

> Schools are facing intensifying and simultaneous demands:
> a) for improvement of current performance, b) for adoption of priorities relinquished by other community organisations, and c) for innovation to meet future educational challenges. They are, in fact, being urged into a paradigm shift in pedagogy. Nevertheless, despite bold plans and rich resources in the literature, deep and sustained change remains partial and scattered (Haseloff, 2007, p.81).

Between 2008 and 2011, I worked for one of the PPP providers in two boys' and two girls' Cycle Three public schools as an ESL Trainer for local staff and saw first-hand the challenges the change proposal presented. It became immediately evident that because teachers had not had access to the necessary professional development, their English language skills and practical knowledge of learner and learning-centred classrooms were not sufficient to cope

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[3] Whilst Maths and IT might use English teaching materials, they are translated into Arabic and exam papers are printed in both English and Arabic.

[4] Here, mainstream English environment refers to an English curriculum designed for students with English as their mother tongue, taught in an English speaking country where students use English both inside and outside the classroom on a daily basis.

with the demands of the innovation and the "on the job" training approach advocated by Adec was not an effective one. Despite the fact that from that moment I questioned the ethical nature of my role in the schools, my job afforded me countless rewarding opportunities to work with local staff and students both inside and outside the classroom. Such experiences I truly cherish, am humbled by and grateful for what they have taught me. From a research perspective, my job also gave me the chance to observe the English curriculum unfolding in grade 10 and 11 from a more objective standpoint as I was not directly involved in its day to day delivery. Initially, my intention was to investigate the impact of the reform from both a male and female perspective but after initial groundwork and continued reports on the underperformance of boys in the country's public schools, decided my focus should be on them.

After leaving the PPP, I taught on the English university foundation programme (UFP) at UAE University. This programme caters for approximately 80% of students whose English is not sufficient to enable them to cope with the academic language demands of faculty study and who need to undertake remedial English study prior (Salem & Swan, 2014). I worked with level one students because, although students came from all over the country, I was interested to see if I would notice any difference in the Adec students' ability in English over that time; whether the Adec curriculum had raised students' awareness of what it meant to think critically, to problem solve and to be a global citizen (key features of the curriculum and one of the reasons it was chosen over a skills based English as a foreign language (EFL) programme[5]).

As an informal and subjective measure, students who had experienced the Adec curriculum seemed more confident expressing themselves orally, if not accurately, in English and this could be due to the fact that their teachers at school were EMTs and did not speak Arabic. Other than this, however, there seemed to be little improvement. Ironically, even though the UFP English programme in level one does provide opportunities for students to

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[5] EFL is used to denote the studying of English as a subject when all other communication is in the student's first language; in this case Arabic. The UAE is a complex case. Due to the high number of expatriates living in the country, English has become the lingua franca and so, to all intents and purposes, could be conceived as a second or additional language ESL, EAL, especially as it used as the medium of instruction in tertiary education (Troudi, 2009, p.200-201).

demonstrate the skills promoted by the Adec curriculum above, most of the course is spent covering basic grammatical structures and lexical items considered vital for university study which have not been covered in students' high school English programmes, whether they are from Adec schools or not.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The decision to introduce a mainstream English curriculum in an essentially EFL/ESL environment, where all other subjects are taught in Arabic, makes the UAE education system unique. This is because no other country with a similar demographic or in similar circumstances has employed such an approach (Adec spokesperson, July 2012) and, as a result, research on comparable models in other parts of the world is not readily available.

Despite initial publicity when it was first introduced, little has been written about the innovation since. It is hoped this study will shed light on the challenges the curriculum choice has posed for teachers to implement and students to fulfil. These factors are significant, especially as lack of engagement with the curriculum is one of the reasons cited for the alarming non-completion rate of male students in the country's high schools and which, in turn, is impacting negatively on the UAE's bid to Emiratise its workforce (Swan, 2014).

The findings of this study will also be of significance if the Federal National Council's (FNC) decision to dismantle university English foundation programmes by 2018 comes to pass and their role becomes the responsibility of schools (Al Hammeli & Underwood, 2014; Salem & Swan, 2014). In this case, it will be imperative that whatever curriculum model takes it place be designed with the needs of Emirati students in mind. Needs, which, up until now, seem to have been ignored and resulted in low student achievement as a consequence.

1.4 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

There is little published research on curriculum change in public schools in the Gulf (Ridge, 2010; Troudi & Alwan, 2010, p.110) and even less on how innovations are implemented in the classroom. This study contributes to the area by showing the gap between the "reality" of policy makers and what is actually happening on the ground in schools, thereby

highlighting the folly of top-down mandates and the urgent need for extensive consultation with all local stakeholders in order to design and implement homegrown curriculum and assessment solutions to meet the needs of Emirati youth. As Ridge (2009) states:

> Without policies based on locally derived research, the UAE
> […] will be unable to address their own distinct educational
> needs. Local research gives insights, shows nuances and
> reveals gaps not identified by large cross-national studies
> such as the TIMSS. (p.2)

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study is threefold: 1) to explore the factors impinging on Adec's decision to implement a progressive mainstream English curriculum from overseas in the UAE 2) to document the challenges male teachers face regarding delivery and assessment of this curriculum, as well as their views on its appropriateness for the local context and 3) how they feel they are viewed professionally and personally as both "native" and expatriate Arab teachers of English.

The research questions are:

1) What factors explain Adec's current English curriculum choice in grade 10/11?

2) What are the challenges faced by male teachers in implementing the Adec grade 10/11 curriculum?

3) What are the challenges faced by male expatriate Arab teachers of English in this time of curriculum reform?

1.6 STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis is organised as follows:

Chapter One: The introduction – This chapter briefly explains the nature of the problem under investigation and the reason for wanting to investigate aspects of it more thoroughly. It also details the research questions and the possible contribution the study might make to the limited published research on the implementation of educational reforms in the region.

Chapter Two: Context - The macro context provides a background to the country's socio-economic and educational development whilst the micro context deals with the regional education council, English curriculum, public schools, staff and students. Details regarding the schools and teachers participating in the study are also given.

Chapter Three: The literature review - The conceptual framework for the study is presented as well as a critical review of literature published on the research topic. This section aims to deepen understanding of the issues surrounding the Adec English curriculum reform.

Chapter Four: Methodology - This section explains the research framework; its philosophical underpinnings, research questions, design, methods for data gathering and analysis as well as the study's limitations.

Chapter Five: Results and discussion - This chapter provides presentation, discussion and interpretation of research data and analysis.

Chapter Six: Implications, recommendations and reflection - The final chapter summarises of main findings of the research, discusses its implications, provides recommendations and makes suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT

This chapter describes the research context from an educational perspective. It provides a background to the education system in general terms and to the schools, teachers and students selected for the study.

2.1 MACRO CONTEXT: THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), together with Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, is part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Declared a federal state on 2nd December 1971, it consists of seven semi-autonomous sheikhdoms and is located in the Arabian Gulf.

2.1.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

In the last forty years the country has experienced rapid and phenomenal advancement; particularly in terms of modernisation and urbanisation due to discovery of oil in the mid-1960s (Martin & O'Brien 2011). Its small indigenous population meant rapid expansion of the country's infrastructure could only be achieved by employing overseas labour and this situation has continued ever since. In 2014 the population of the Emirates stood at 9.44 million with Emiratis accounting for around 13% of the inhabitants[6]. Even though Arabic is the national language, English has become the language of communication in many areas of commerce.

2.1.2 EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

The discovery of oil in 1966 and the Emirates' independence in 1971 have been the major catalysts for change in education in the UAE over the last four decades. Prior to independence, twenty per cent of the population was literate and education was extremely informal. Teachers called *mutawa* (male) *mutawa'a* (female) taught religious texts to children in local communities. In 1953 the first systematic approach to education using curricula from Jordan and Kuwait was introduced but formalised education was not fully realised until Independence (Salem, 2009).

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[6] http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/united-arab-emirates-population/

Education for males and females was viewed as one of the priorities of the newly formed federation. The Ministry of Education was established in 1972, a year after Independence although it did not fully adopt its own curriculum until 1985 and relied on curricula from countries in the region in the meantime (Al Qassimi, 2011, cited in ECSSR, 2011; Farah & Ridge, 2009). As a result of formalised education, literacy rates have risen dramatically from 65% in the 1970s to 94% in 2012, making the Emirates the most literate nation in the Arab world (SCAD, 2012, cited in The National Staff 2012a/b; Thomas, 2012). In the nineties English was made the medium of instruction at Emirati federal universities. Since the mid-2000s there has been a strong and not entirely welcome push to make English the medium of instruction in schools instead of just another a subject to be studied as it was in the past (Al Suwaidi, 2012; Lootah & Lootah, 2010; Shaheen, 2009 a/b).

2.2 MICRO CONTEXT: ABU DHABI EMIRATE

Education is seen as fundamental to the future of the country's largest emirate, Abu Dhabi and home to 42% of the population and capital, Abu Dhabi city (Nolan, 2012). In its Economic Vision 2030 launched in early 2009, the government outlined its intentions to develop a "highly skilled workforce to increase its economic might" (Morgan, 2009, p. 1). In order to realise this goal, the government has made education an open sector where overseas establishments work alongside the domestic public sector. Now, as before, curricula are being imported from overseas but where they were once had Arab origins, they now hail from predominantly English speaking countries.

2.2.1 THE ABU DHABI EDUCATION COUNCIL (ADEC)

The newly formed Abu Dhabi Education Council, (Adec), established in 2005, is one example of the domestic public sector working alongside foreign counterparts. Its overarching directors are Emirati and it works closely with the Ministry of Education, yet Adec employs the services of overseas educational advisors; all of whom collaborate in the supervision, planning, design and implementation of curriculum reform in the Emirate geared to meet the needs of the 21st century economy.

Adec curriculum reforms were first implemented in grades 6-9 (Cycle 2 schools) in 2005 and from 2008 in grades 10-12, (Cycle Three schools). From September 2010, the most ambitious of all the reform initiatives, a bilingual approach to teaching and learning was introduced into Cycle 1 schools, (grades 1-3); the New School Model (NSM). Whilst the NSM is not the focus of this research study, a basic understanding of it is needed to fully grasp the rationale behind the implementation of PPPs in Cycle Three schools.

In the NSM "native" English speaking teachers trained predominantly in the west co-teach with Emirati/expatriate Arab teachers to deliver a tailor made early childhood years curriculum. It was Adec's intention to have this model together with grade appropriate curricula in all K-12 public schools by June 2016 (see Figure 1), however, the timeframe for the roll out has been re-assessed. Grades 6-9 will now no longer migrate together but grade by grade per the approach used in Cycle1 schools The NSM should reach grade 10 by 2017-2018 or thereabouts.

Figure 1: Migration to the New School Model (Adec 2009b, p.7)

In the planning discussions prior to the implementation of the NSM, Adec calculated that 67,000 grade 12 students would graduate in the years 2009-2015 without having experienced the impact of the bilingual, learner /learning-centred approach the NSM promoted. A decision was made to target these older students, whilst the foundations to the NSM were laid, "necessitating a separate focused program" which would involve intensive study in English (Adec, 2009b, p.8) (see Figure 2). Although this stop-gap solution was well-intentioned, it was implemented with minimal community consultation and without seeking local teachers' views on what might work best in the Abu Dhabi school context (Warnica, 2010).

Approximately 67K graduating students[1] will miss the full impact of the migration, necessitating a separate focused program

Number of National Students by Grade[2]
2008-2016, including Gender Division (M%=Share of Males)

School Year	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
KG1								
KG2								
Grade 1								
Grade 2								
Grade 3								
Grade 4								
Grade 5								
Grade 6	9,219 (48%)							
Grade 7	10,023 (48%)	9,219 (48%)						
Grade 8	9,298 (47%)	10,023 (48%)	9,219 (48%)					
Grade 9	10,696 (46%)	9,298 (47%)	10,023 (48%)	9,219 (48%)				
Grade 10	10,422 (43%)	10,696 (46%)	9,298 (47%)	10,023 (48%)	9,219 (48%)			
Grade 11	9,040 (40%)	10,422 (43%)	10,696 (46%)	9,298 (47%)	10,023 (48%)	9,219 (48%)		
Grade 12	8,394 (40%)	9,040 (40%)	10,422 (43%)	10,696 (46%)	9,298 (47%)	10,023 (48%)	9,219 (48%)	

A rapid improvement program needs to address the performance of ≈67,000 students expected to graduate by the time the P-12 reform strategy is fully implemented

Student Groups: Students graduating before full implementation of reforms | Students expected to receive the full benefits of the reforms

1) Nationals form around 63% in Grades 9-12, 80% in Grades 6-8 (school year 2008-2009) and 72% of the total graduating students (around 48K National students) during the period
2) Forecast is based on 2008-2009 enrollment data. As a simplifying assumption, we considered no churn to private schools and no drop-outs
Source: ADEC 2008

Abu Dhabi Education Council   8

Figure 2: Approximately 67K graduating students will miss the full impact of the NSM, Adec strategic plan P-12 (2009, p.8)

2.2.2 THE ADEC ENGLISH CURRICULUM IN GRADE 10-11

Prior to the introduction of the Adec curriculum in 2008, students studied English for 6 x 45 minute periods a week using a textbook in a traditional, teacher-centred classroom.

Exercises were completed in lock step and chunks of language were memorised to be recited in end of chapter tests or summative exams.

The Adec English curriculum, in contrast, is a learner /learning-centred curriculum which is thematically based and does not follow a set textbook. In 2009 the school day was extended to accommodate a further 4 periods, making a total of 10 x 40/45 minute periods a week. The English curriculum is backward planned which means students are made aware of assessment tasks they are expected to complete by the end of each trimester together with associated performance criteria. According to the Adec Learning Plan (2011b) (Appendix 1) in trimesters one and three students engage in in-depth study of a particular topic. The year this study took place grade 10 topics comprised: the cultural family and the world around us. For grade 11, students focused on: a healthy society and citizenship and civic responsibility. Stimulus material is used to engage students in the topic. Students then design 3-5 research questions based on a particular aspect of the topic that has piqued their interest and so embark on an inquiry based journey to find answers to them. This becomes their ECART or English continuous assessment rich task. A substantial amount of class time is devoted to ECART as students are expected to complete a detailed journal describing the research process. The trimester culminates with the students presenting their research and/or possibly some sort of product; a poster or artefact. This becomes part of their overall grade. In the year of this study, formative assessment accounted for (60%) of the student's overall mark.

In addition, teachers monitor their students formally and informally throughout the trimester. Students are required to complete 2 formal in-class assessments or ISTs (integrated strand tasks) each semester. These are incorporated in an attempt to provide explicit teaching and learning on a selection of language skills. During trimester 2 students concentrate these skills and the focus is on "developing a critical response". Areas for development include "editing", "reading/listening for meaning", "analyzing language and structure" and so forth (Adec, 2011a) (Appendix 2).

Summative external exams, the EMSA (External Measurement of Student Achievement) are designed and published by Pearson in collaboration with Adec. They bear similarities to

national literacy assessments conducted in Australia in that they are designed with mainstream students in mind (Appendix 3). Their purpose is to provoke individualised responses to poetry, prose and visual text; the text types that students have studied during the year and also to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their critical and analytical skills. Student responses are computer analysed and sent to schools in the hope they will be used to inform future planning.

2.2.3 ADEC PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Public schools in Abu Dhabi emirate number 305 (Adec, 2010a, p. 13). Kindergarten education, available for students between the ages of 3 ½ - 5 ½, is voluntary. Compulsory education begins in Cycle 1 (grades 1-5) and continues through to Cycle 2 (grades 6-9). In 2012 school was made compulsory until grade 10 (Cycle Three - grades 10-12). Previously students could leave school at fourteen (Ahmed, 2012c). Because many government schools constructed 30-40 years ago are no longer suitable to meet the needs of Adec's Strategic Plan 2009-2018, a vigorous new school build programme has been instigated across the emirate with the intention of completing at least ten new schools year. Several Cycle 2 and 3 schools have merged and moved into new premises. The schools boast state of the art facilities, including an auditorium, swimming pool, library, computer and science laboratories as well as a canteen and independent study areas.

2.2.4 ADEC PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

Hiring male Emirati teachers to work in public high schools has proven to be a perennial challenge since the early days of education in the UAE (Al Qutami, 2012, cited in Salem, 2012). For this reason, staff employed to teach boys English in the public school system in the UAE have typically been expatriate Arabs drawn from the surrounding Arab nations. A study conducted by Ridge (2010) in Ras Al Khaimah, (one of the smaller emirates), showed that male employees were predominantly from Egypt (31%), Jordan (21%) and Syria (14%); with 8 per cent from other Arab countries. Adec's (2010) publication, Education Statistics First, shows 60% of teachers are non-national, hailing from Egypt, Jordan, Syria and a range of other Arabic speaking countries. It does not say whether they are male or female. Perhaps, initially employed because of their close proximity to the UAE, as well as "being

culturally closest to Emirati society" (Findlow, 2000, cited in Raven, 2011, p.137), expatriate Arab teachers have come under attack for employing "outdated methods", for their lack of teaching qualifications[7] and, with particular reference to male teachers, for exploiting students by encouraging them to attend their private tuition sessions in exchange for marks (Farah, 2011; Ridge, 2010; Shaw, 2006; Swan, 2010). The majority are on annual contracts and every year sees some fall victim to the non-renewal process. This situation led the then director general of Adec, Al Khaili (2011) to comment, "We are in a good position in terms of legislation and financial resources but the shortcoming is in terms of human capital" (Ahmed, 2011c).

Perhaps it was the perceived inability or unwillingness of expatriate Arab teachers of English to adapt their pedagogy to meet the demands of the curriculum innovations that led Adec to reconsider the staffing situation. In 2009, one year into the PPP project, Adec announced its decision to employ "native" English speakers; primarily from the USA[8] to teach in grade 12. Staff employed in this capacity were initially known as Licensed Teachers (LTs). Soon after Adec decided that all English teachers in grade 10-12 were to be "native" English speakers and their title changed to English medium teacher (EMT), in accordance with the title used in the NSM. The rationale behind the decision to hire "native" English speakers likely surrounded the perception that as such they would be better qualified to deliver a mainstream English curriculum than their Arab counterparts and this, in turn, would expedite the impact of the reforms initiated in 2008. There is no documentation which states this directly, however.

In a concerted effort to emiratise its teaching force, Adec has been paying close attention to the teacher education programmes currently on offer for nationals at Abu Dhabi Emirate's tertiary institutions. In 2012 it announced that Emirates College of Advanced Education (ECAE), which is affiliated to Adec and received accreditation from the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) in 2012, was the only teacher education programme producing graduates suitably equipped to teach the New School Model (Adec,

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[7] Only 46% are trained according to a UNESCO report, 2010, in the Arab Knowledge Report, 2011, p.37).
[8] www.teachaway.com

2012)[9]. This has serious implications for other federal institutions who offer teacher education programmes. It may also have impacted negatively on enrolments of males wishing to study education. A series of articles in the national press at the beginning of 2015 indicate the lack of Emirati male teachers is still of national concern (Malek, 2015)

2.2.5 PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

According to data produced by Adec, there were an estimated 30,000 students in grade 10-12 public schools (academic year 2011-2012), (Adec, 2009b). Overall, girls consistently outperform boys in the region (Ahmed, 2011b; Pennington, 2013). Research by the ECSSR (Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research) blames "uninspiring school environments, lack of interesting relevant subject options and an absence of counselling" for the worrying drop-out rate for boys (cited in Ahmed, 2011a). In 2011 the drop-out rate was 22% for males and 14% for females but decreasing and by grade 12, one in five students had dropped out (Helal, 2011). In 2015, however, a higher number of girl high school drop outs were recorded. Adec research shows that 50,000 adults have not graduated from high school (Ali, 2011, cited in Ahmed, 2011f; Swan, 2012b).

When students enter grade 11 they elect to follow the science or arts stream. Surprisingly, this is not dependent on their exam results but from personal choice. According to Al Quabaisi (2013) somewhere in the region of 80% of male students choose to follow the arts stream (cited in Salem, 2013). A study by the education advisory group, Parthenon showed this two-tier system was restricting students' study pathways and not providing the range of subjects needed to meet the needs of the knowledge economy (Parthenon Group Analysis, cited in Ahmed 2011d). In November 2013 the Minister of Education announced the decision to abolish the system at a session of the FNC (cited in Salem, 2013) but this has not yet occurred (Swan, 2014).

Another reason boys drop out is because they still have access to some government jobs with minimal qualifications and this "kills their motivation to do well" (Al Mahdi, 2011, cited

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[9] ECAE is the only institute in the UAE training the next generation of high quality Emirati teachers […]. The College is the first teachers' training college that prepares capable teachers who compete with their peers at an international level (Adec, 2012b)

in Ahmed 2011b). Press reports reveal that Emirati students envisage themselves working in the public sector where they receive higher salaries, wide-ranging benefits and work fewer hours. According to the Executive Director of National Workforce Development, "If children [are] not groomed early to adapt to market needs, unemployment [will] become a critical problem in the country" (Al Mulla, 2011, cited in Ahmed 2011e). The AKR: UAE case study[10] (2011) polled 6,000 students in the Arab World, including 1,375 Emirati students, 629 of whom were boys. Researchers found that "Emirati pupils' complacency may have tempered their ambitions and hampered their career development" with almost 25 per cent showing a score of zero in the "future planning skills" section which included questions about life ambition and career drive (Abdulla, 2010; Ahmed 2012a).

Currently, students do not have access to careers guidance and Adec's intention to introduce counselling in Cycle Three schools from September 2012 (Ahmed, 2011e) has not yet been realised. In the meantime, job fairs serve as a useful way to alert young people to opportunities in the private sector. It is hoped that initiatives such as these, together with the changes in study pathways will encourage more boys to stay in the education system and engage in university study. According to reports, if the government wants a literate and skilled society, the dropout rate for Emirati students must be halved within 5 years (Helal, 2009; Helal in Ahmed 2011a).

2.3 BACKGROUND TO THE SCHOOLS, STUDENTS AND TEACHERS USED AS A FOCUS FOR THIS STUDY

The following section provides background detail on the schools, teachers and students which were the subject of this study.

2.3.1 SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

Three boys' schools were selected for the study. All were part of the PPP project and in city, suburban and desert locations in Abu Dhabi emirate. Each school principal has a senior management team (SMT), comprising a vice-principal and social worker together with a number of non-teaching staff such as the school nurse, librarian, lab technician, caretaker,

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[10] AKR: UAE case study refers to the UAE specific case study conducted for the Arab Knowledge Report (2011). This acronym will be used to refer to this case study in future.

cleaners and school guard. The number of students attending ranges from 300 – 500. Class sizes are between 12 and 23, with lower numbers evident in the science stream. The student demographic is predominantly Emirati with the classes in the city school comprising approximately 20% non-national students.

2.3.2 ENGLISH TEACHERS

Two of the schools have English faculty staffrooms but the design and layout of the third; a new school builds means teachers cannot fit in one staffroom so are spread around the school. Each subject has an unofficial head of curriculum who takes on the responsibility of coordinating his department. This is an administrative title only and currently does not attract an increment in salary. English teachers comprise a mixture of ATEs and EMTs; twelve of whom were selected to participate in this study. The six ATEs hail from Arabic speaking countries in the region. All possess a bachelor's degree in English. Three have postgraduate TESOL qualifications and between 12 and 20 years' experience. All but one have worked on the Adec reform since it began in 2008. Five of the six EMTs are American and one British. They all have a bachelor's degree in either English, history or liberal arts. Four out of 6 of them have them a master's qualification and 5 are certified to teach ESL. They have between 4 and 35 years of teaching experience.

ATEs teach between 18 and 21 (45 minute periods a week). Four out of six of the EMTs teach 30 x 45-50 minute periods a week with one teaching 20 and another 26. This teaching load is considerably higher than that of their Arab colleagues. Other than expected attendance at school meetings, teachers have no other extra-curricular activities in addition to their teaching duties as after school clubs are not a feature of the education system in the region.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this chapter is to critically review literature relevant to the research topic and associated research questions. The chapter will be divided into two sections. Section one will provide the conceptual framework for the first question by evaluating the rationale for and impact of three teaching and learning models on English language curriculum, assessment and pedagogy implemented in the emirates to date; the teacher-centred, learner-centred and learning-centred approaches.

The second section will address literature relevant to research questions 2 and 3. The conceptual framework for the literature critique will reference the work of Fullan (1982), Snyder, Bolin and Zumwalt (1992) and Akkary & Rizk (2011) which explores the challenges teachers face when implementing new curricula, assessment and pedagogical approaches in general terms and in the Gulf region in particular. It will also review research on the challenges faced by non-native teachers of English in times of curriculum reform.

Where possible studies based in the UAE and Gulf region are given precedence but due to the limited research available locally, internationally conducted research studies are also cited. This serves to illustrate the universal challenges posed by language curriculum change and to put the UAE case in perspective. Another dilemma is that the curriculum under investigation is a mainstream English curriculum, typical of that seen in high schools in an English speaking country, in this case Australia, and not one designed to be implemented with students in multi-level heterogeneous classrooms overseas. This means the literature review cannot simply be approached from an English language teaching perspective, and so considers research dealing with mainstream educational theory before moving on to explore its impact on English language policy in the region. It should be noted that in the UAE, information regarding educational innovation and associated policy is invariably provided by national press releases. As a result, media references are cited more frequently than might be considered customary in an academic paper (Alwan, 2006, p.75; Gardner, 1995).

Key terms include: curriculum, assessment, implementation, pedagogical expertise, pedagogical approaches and teacher status

3.1 THE POINT OF DEPARTURE

First, a critique of the literature surrounding major curriculum theories will be undertaken in order to come closer to understanding the rationale behind the pedagogical approach promoted by the current Adec English curriculum. Perhaps the Abu Dhabi Government's 10 year Strategic Plan (2009-2018) serves as a good place to start. In it, education takes precedence and "strategic priority 1" is to:

> **Elevate [public] School Quality in Abu Dhabi to International Standards**
> We plan far-reaching innovations: new curriculum and teaching methods [together with] training for teachers and principals. […] Over the longer term, Abu Dhabi's reformed education system will be characterised by academic excellence to support the Emirate's vision of becoming a vibrant society and achieving economic diversification and growth; a system where all students will be equipped with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary to embark on further learning, to enter the workforce and to become life-long learners; one where students will be prepared to contribute to, and be competitive in, the global society while preserving national identity, local culture and traditions. (Al Khaili, 2012, cited in Adec 2012a, p. 7)

This statement gives the impression that education in the Emirates, like many other countries, is:

> at least partly about the overall aims that society has for itself and how these aims are realised in practice. It cannot, therefore, be a neutral, technical exercise, but is invariably a deeply ethical, political and cultural one bound up with ideas about the good society and how life can be worthwhile (Winch & Gingell, 2004, Preface).

If this is so, it follows that educational reform and associated curriculum innovation stem from the nation's vested interest in advancing social and economic development whilst, at the same time, kindling a desire to "ignite the human imagination" (McKernan, 2008, p.3). In the current economic climate, such advancement hinges on the creation of a knowledge based society as well as an innovative workforce (Nolan, 2012).

3.2 CURRICULUM AND CURRICULUM DEFINITIONS

In a public or government school context education is structured through the curriculum and the subjects represented within it. The word "structured" suggests something concrete, deliberate and static. To an extent this is true. If a curriculum is based on knowledge valued by society, however, it must also reflect its inherent dynamism and emergent processes. This combination of the deliberate and the uncertain has meant that, as an area of study, curriculum has been viewed as "fragmentary" and "confusing" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004, p.1) and thus, difficult to define.

Marsh & Willis (2007) agree that a definition of curriculum is "no easy matter" (p.8) and in the opening chapter of their book on curriculum, critically review eight attempts to capture its essence. Whilst it is an interesting exercise, the origins of the definitions and the reason for the inclusion or selection of these eight at the expense of over a hundred others are not given. Such an undertaking also serves as a valuable reminder that "definitions of the word curriculum do not solve curricular problems; but they do suggest perspectives from which to view them" (Stenhouse, 1975, p.1). One such perspective is Connelly & Clandinin's (1988) organic interpretation:

> Curriculum can become one's life course of action. It can mean the paths we have followed and the paths we intend to follow. In this broad sense, curriculum can be viewed as a person's life experience (cited in McKernan, 2008, p.12).

Another narrower, functional definition is proposed by Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2000), suggesting curriculum is:

> A document of an official nature, published by a leading or central educational authority in order to serve as a framework or a set of guidelines for the teaching of a subject are […] in a broad and varied context (p.185).

Graves (1996), on the other hand, views curriculum holistically as: "the philosophy, purposes, design and implementation of the whole program" (p.3) and Popkewitz (1997) provides a somewhat Orwellian interpretation:

> [Curriculum is] a particular, historically formed knowledge that inscribes rules and standards by which we "reason"

> about the world and our "self" as a productive member of
> that world […]

> Curriculum is a disciplining technology that directs how the
> individual is to act, feel, talk and "see" the world and "self".
> As such, curriculum is a form of social regulation (p.132).

Ornstein & Hunkins (2004) are of the opinion that the dynamism necessary for societal change mentioned above should, by association, be reflected in curriculum change and believe that the study of curriculum is "crucial to the health of not only schools but also the total society" (p.1). None of the definitions above seems to capture this "dynamism", however, which could be why they also omit to envisage the curriculum in action, mention any form of reflective activity once it is enacted or suggest who should be held accountable for its success or failure. In this regard Stenhouse's (1975) definition of curriculum stands apart, which he describes thus:

> An attempt to communicate the essential principles and
> features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is
> open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation
> into practice (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 4).

Although broad, this definition is particularly valuable, for it emphasises three main points; 1) that a curriculum is based on educational principles 2) that it is open to interpretation and 3) that it is genuinely practicable. All notions which are fundamental to the research questions posed in this study of the Adec English curriculum in grade 10 and 11, and notions which invite a research response.

3.3 CURRICULUM APPROACHES OR MODELS

In order to reach a more explicit understanding of Stenhouse's (1975) curriculum definition as it relates to this study, it is important to establish its orientation or perspective. This is commonly understood as the curriculum approach or model. Curriculum models "help designers to systematically and transparently map out the rationale for the use of particular teaching, learning and assessment approaches" (O'Neill, 2010, p.1). O'Neill's statement is of significance here because the rationale behind the chosen curriculum, as well as the associated assessment, pedagogical expertise and recommended teaching strategies required to implement it are key areas under investigation in this study. In addition, these

four aspects are recognised by other curriculum theorists such as Kliebard (cited in Gilbert 2010, p. 510), Marsh & Willis (2007, p.14-15), Pellegrino, (2006) and Pollard, (2010) as being inextricably linked.

Writers on curriculum theory frequently begin by describing curriculum models from two polarised and seemingly simplistic perspectives, namely those which follow the product approach, (where the aim is mass transference of knowledge) and those which adhere to the process approach, (where the focus is individual as well as societal development; and latterly, transformation). Very soon, however, they acknowledge the elements of overlap and issues arising when attempting to isolate the individual features of both (O'Neill, 2010, p.3). In recognition of this dilemma, the following section will critique literature on three curriculum approaches that have been widely used in education over the last 40 years. Broadly described as "teacher-centred", "learner-centred" and "learning-centred", these approaches have been selected for critique due to the significant impact they have had and continue to have on teaching and learning in the UAE. In keeping with the aims of the study mentioned in the introduction and in the above paragraph, each model will not only be considered in terms of curriculum rationale but in terms of their inherent assessment styles and associated pedagogical "trademarks", first from a generic educational perspective and then from an English language learning outlook.

3.4. THE TEACHER-CENTRED MODEL: CURRICULUM

According to Viberts & Shields (2003) the product model views education through a "rational/technical lens", where its purpose is the transmission of a "given, fixed, and taken for granted curriculum to the greatest number of students" (p.228). The only demand made of them is to retain specific information contained in their textbook for periodic tests. This has resulted in the product model being labelled "memorisation-based" and resulted in classrooms Windschitl (2002) describes as "impoverished resource environments" (p.135).

The teacher-centred or transmission model has been the mainstay of teaching and learning in the UAE since formalised education was introduced some forty years ago, and, despite curriculum innovation in the 80s and 90s promoting learner-centred pedagogical approaches, continues to reign supreme (Alwan, 1995 cited in Alwan, 2006, p.26). Ornstein

& Hunkins (2004) suggest "an individual's approach to curriculum reflects that person's view of the world, including what the person perceives as reality, the values he or she deems important, and the amount of knowledge he or she possesses (p.2). In view of this argument, identifying possible reasons for the domination of the transmission model in the UAE is a valuable exercise.

A study by Zureik (2005), which explored the success and failure patterns in the public high schools of the emirate of Sharjah (UAE) argues that the school is seen to be "an agent of the 'conservative' elements in society and has the responsibility of producing students who accept its dominant values, thrive in the world of business and successfully compete in the labour market" (p.10). Yet, Pink (2011) (cited in Haesler, 2011) maintains the product model provides an outdated 20th century view of the labour market as many tasks which required the ability to reason "logically, sequentially and speedily" and were once marks of professional success can now be automated or outsourced. The MENA World Bank Development Report of 2008[11] also commented on the inability of "curriculum as fact" models to produce the labour force required to meet the demands of the 21st century market in the Gulf region, stating, "If they [students] are rewarded for copying what someone has already done, they learn to devalue novelty and have no practice in producing new ideas and products. Since innovation and novelty dominate competition in the business world, this anachronistic memorisation-based curriculum must be abolished" (Crotty 2009). These comments suggest that it is not only the curriculum that is at fault but the way it is assessed too.

3.4.1 THE TEACHER-CENTRED MODEL: ASSESSMENT

Traditional assessments are focused on things that learners should be able to do and/or habits formed as a result of instruction and rote-memorisation. Not surprisingly, 88.9% of teachers polled in the AKR: UAE (2011) agree with the statement "we must focus on the memorising characteristic of students to achieve success in their studies" (p.307). Although rote-memorisation has its place in providing valuable foundational or subsidiary knowledge (Dufficy, 2005, p.30), to use it as the sole measure of a child's academic performance is

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[11] This report will be referred to as the MENA report (2008) from now on.

limiting as well as misleading. Loughrey (1999), for example, found UAE school exam results in English showed high scores when in fact real language attainment was very low. An observation endorsed in studies by Guefrachi & Troudi (2000) and Al Mansouri (2001) (cited in Alwan, 2006, p. 32). Up until 2010 teachers in the region used end-of-year exam as the "primary determinant of student achievement" (AKR: UAE, 2011, p.307). This, in turn, has resulted in a "guiding interest in grades on standardised tests as a form of 'cultural capital'" (Vibert & Shields, 2003, p.227).

The knowledge that the high stakes test, the CEPA (Common Educational Proficiency Assessment), which uses a standard multiple choice, reading comprehension and essay writing format, determines exiting grade 12 students' entry to university, reinforces and promotes traditional views of teaching and learning. A study exploring obstacles to curriculum reform in Jordan and the UAE conducted by Dakkak (2011) concluded that, in order to secure students' admission to university, "rational teachers and students [...] need not focus on any of the 'knowledge economy' skills highlighted in the reform efforts (ie: critical thinking, problem solving, etc.)" (p.2) as these abilities are not tested in admission exams.

3.4.2 THE TEACHER-CENTRED CURRICULUM MODEL: PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

In keeping with this idea the pedagogical approaches used in the teacher-centred model "condition" the students to learn only that which the teacher considers of value. In all likelihood the teacher in this scenario has also been "conditioned" to view certain knowledge as valuable because it is in a course textbook endorsed by a superior power, such as the country's ministry of education, for example.

In a study of over a thousand classrooms in the US, Goodlad (1984) found "an extraordinary sameness of learning" where teachers' "bland repetitive procedures of lecturing, questioning, monitoring and quizzing" (cited in Windschitl, 2002, p.150) presented the "right answers" as well as the "right ways to solve problems". In keeping with these findings, the Adec teacher survey (2010) showed that the IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) shaped "some" or "a great deal" of classroom discourse in 86% of classes in Abu Dhabi public schools (p.55). Jackson (1992) likens IRF to the "wind and rain that doubtless contribute to

the slow weathering of the pupil's psyche" (p.48). Research conducted in the US by Oakes (2000) found most teachers, administrators and parents expected an educative classroom to be quiet and orderly with students seated and not talking to each other. Engagement meant that students were attentive but without speaking gesturing, building things or moving about (cited in Windschitl, 2002, p. 151). Again, these findings are endorsed by the AKR: UAE (2011) data which shows 79% of teachers surveyed used the "educational method" of "keeping silence in the classroom and punishing disobedience" in "all" classes (p.307) indicating any knowledge students bring to class is paid scant regard.

3.4.2.1 THE TEACHER-CENTRED MODEL: ENGLISH LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

In terms of English language education teachers in the UAE have favoured the "grammar translation" and "audio-lingual" approach (Alwan, 2006, p. 24-25) which mirrors behaviourist principles such as imitation, practice, feedback on success and habit formation (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 9). Monem et al. (2001) say this method predominates in Egypt, for example, because the majority of teachers are non-native English speakers (NNESTs), not properly trained and tend to teach in the way they learnt English (cited in Raouf, 2010, p.15). Understandably, this method is preferred by teachers with limited language proficiency as language drills provide a "correct form" and absolve the teacher from having to evaluate the linguistic merits of other possible responses.

The capacity for such kind of teaching to stunt students' creativity is demonstrated in a US study undertaken by McLane & Graziano (1987). They found students who had previously experienced lock-step teaching and learning, enrolled on an extra-curricular writing programme based on whole language instruction and authentic tasks, were so concerned about making mistakes they were unable to write uninhibitedly until several months into the programme (cited in Windschitl, 2002, p. 151). The thousands of students who attend remedial English courses at universities in the UAE (see section 1.2) are products of such an approach and this in itself demonstrates its lack of success as a method for improving local students' English skills (Al Mahrooqi, 2012). Since the late 1970s English language curriculum reform policy documents in the UAE have purported to be taking a learner-centred approach in the hope of improving student outcomes in general as well as their

communication skills in English. The extent to which this has been implemented is explored in the sections on the pedagogical approaches associated with the learner-centred curriculum that follow.

3.5 THE LEARNER-CENTRED CURRICULUM MODEL: CURRICULUM

Finding statements claiming the learner-centred model has grown from a dissatisfaction with traditional approaches is relatively easy. Isolating a definition for a learner-centred curriculum in the literature is more problematic. In keeping with this critique, Chung & Walsh (2000) challenge the "consensus use of the term child-centred" saying one "does not exist" (p.215). Their research reveals more than forty meanings which acknowledge the introduction of the phrase has been influenced by developmentalism. With this in mind, Kliebard's (1995), "curriculum in harmony with the child's real interests, needs, and learning patterns" is chosen here as a representative definition (cited in Chung & Walsh, 2000, p. 216). It should be noted, however, that in high schools where content driven courses are the norm, it seems students are rarely afforded this luxury.

The learner-centred perspective challenges the behaviourist view and instead sees learners as biologically endowed with what is often described in the literature as an information processing capacity (Gagne, 1985, cited in Shuh & Barab, 2008, p.77) enabling them to build on their strengths and to develop strategies to counter their weaknesses (Vibert & Shields, 2003, p.228). Learner-centred curriculum design incorporates opportunities to cultivate skills which are a pre-requisite for the development of others. The learning journey is staged and provides opportunity for students to discover, see relationships, problem solve, make decisions, reflect on their actions and to develop and engage in an inner dialogue which assists them in selecting the appropriate "tool" when engaged on individual, group and possibly differentiated tasks (Ausubel, 1977, cited in Shuh & Barab, 2008, p.77). The implication here is, that, as we are all individually "wired", we do not have the same previous experiences to draw on (schemata) and therefore, may not arrive at the answer in the same way or in the same amount of time (Bruner (1990).

The student as an active and influential participant in the learning process places it at odds with approaches to teaching and learning which have typically been used in the UAE. The

AKR: UAE (2011) study which tested a range of cognitive skills showed 92% of Emirati students were unprepared to "become involved in the knowledge society" (p.337). The report also criticised the assessment process for the same reason, advocating assessment which tested application of knowledge; the features of which are discussed in the next section.

3.5.1 THE LEARNER-CENTRED MODEL: ASSESSMENT

To ensure that students have developed the cognitive skills associated with the learner-centred curriculum they need to be evaluated on how well they apply them. That assessment and instruction are no longer "conceived as *curiously separate* in both time and purpose" but seen as linked is a positive step (Graue, 1992, cited in Shepard, 2000, p.4), however, once again isolating an operational definition for learner-centred assessment is problematic (Dunn & Mulvenon, 2009). For the purposes of this study, it refers to assessment that is "specifically intended to provide feedback on performance to improve and accelerate learning"[12] (Sadler, 1998, cited in Shepard, 2000, p.14).

As can be seen, this definition is broad, as is the associated range of tools required to: establish students' existing knowledge (pre-instructional assessment), keep track of their accomplishments (ongoing assessment) and gather evidence that learning goals have been achieved (post-instructional assessment). Performance tasks with pre-specified performance criteria such as presentations and projects; self-assessment and reflective journals are used as an indication of learning and marked using rubrics. Some critics argue it is impossible to measure a student's internal thought processes as they are unobservable and are sceptical about the qualitative nature of such assessment design (Dunn & Mulvenon, 2009; Pellegrino, 2006). Others, such as Wiggins & McTighe (2005) claim that it is possible if instructional design is based on the evidence needed to document student learning or "backward planned". When the learning outcomes for a course, plus associated assessment tasks are known the teacher can concentrate on providing students with the necessary tools to accomplish them (Richards, 2013).

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[12] Sadler (1998) gives this as a definition of formative assessment. The Adec curriculum describes this kind of assessment as "continuous assessment".

This is not a new concept. Its logic was first described by the educationalist, Tyler more than 50 years ago (Tyler, 1949) and is the approach adopted by Adec to assess the current English curriculum. For learner-centred assessment to be effective it requires teachers to be highly attuned to the individual capabilities of their students, to use data to drive their instruction and, more importantly, who are trained and monitored in its execution (Redfield & Rousseau, 1981, p. 244). When the learning culture is one where assessment is seen as an occasion for "meting out rewards and punishments" rather than a "source of insight", the situation is further complicated (Shepard, 2000, p. 10). Whilst teachers in the UAE have attempted to implement aspects of learner-centred assessment, in the form of projects and presentations in the past, the process enjoyed little of the rigour mentioned by Sandler (1998) and Redfield & Rousseau (1981) above. Until students entered grade 12 there was no school-wide policy on marks allocation; whether a student passed or failed seemed to be up to the individual discretion of the school and the generosity of the teachers (Hokal & Shaw, 1999, p.176).

3.5.2 THE LEARNER-CENTRED CURRICULUM MODEL: PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

Pedagogical approaches associated with learner-centred curricula include not only those which assist students in making connections between what they know and what they are coming to know but also inculcate an awareness of the mental processes involved on this journey. A range of strategies thought to develop students' cognitive processes include activating prior knowledge, researching, visualising, classifying, note-taking, summarising, planning, deduction, induction, inferencing and metacognition (Borich, 1996). In a mainstream classroom context, they frequently serve as awareness-raising exercises for students before they move into the more conceptually and academically demanding activities. They also give teachers an indication of their students' range of knowledge on a topic; including any misconceptions they might have and this informs the teacher's instructional design.

Teachers' lack of training in the delivery and assessment of learner-centred curricula in the UAE was acknowledged by the AKR: UAE (2011) as a contributing factor to its non-implementation. When teachers were asked to rate their potential in providing various skills

to students, for example, they believed their highest potential was in training students in "lesson memorisation"(49.3%) and "memorising rules and laws of scientific material" (46.2%) whilst "solving problems" and "using their knowledge in different situations", scored 34.4% and 34.8% respectively (p.379). Zureik's (2005) findings showed that schools in his UAE study paid "lip service" to the student-centred model and noted that principals and teachers who showed a genuine interest in student-centred learning gave "all kinds of reasons why their attempts have not been successful" (p.12).

This is a common finding in response to initiatives introducing student-centred learning and opportunities for the development of higher order cognitive skills in the region. Convincing teachers that designing learning around the needs of the students is a valid form of pedagogy remains one of the biggest stumbling blocks in regional educational reform processes and, as a result, the nurturing of such skills in students remains inadequately rewarded in schools (El Haichour, 2005, cited in the MENA report, 2008, p.88; Ridge, Farah & Shami, 2013). The adoption of a learner-centred model has also proved problematic for English language education. The following section explains why.

3.5.2.1 THE LEARNER-CENTRED MODEL: ENGLISH LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

Since its inception in the 1970s, a method loosely termed, communicative language teaching (CLT), has been the approach most closely associated with learner-centredness. Interpreted myriad different ways, Spada (2007) describes it as "a meaning-based, learner-centered approach to L2 teaching where fluency is given priority over accuracy and the emphasis is on the comprehension and production of messages, not the teaching or correction of language form" (p.272). According to Scrivener (2005), it is "based on the belief that learners will learn best if they participate in meaningful communication" (p. 38).

The rationale for using such an approach presupposes the students are in an environment where speaking in English is a necessity, such as a mainstream school with English as the medium of instruction or they are of a level suitable to engage in such interaction, which ideally would be an "upper-intermediate" multilingual class in an English language school. These learning conditions stand in stark contrast to TESEP (Tertiary, Secondary and Primary)

contexts which are constrained by their educational setting and where English is taught as a subject once or twice a week as part of a wider curriculum. In the case of secondary schools, they are generally poorly resourced, the classes are usually large, monolingual and students are grouped according to age not ability. The teacher usually shares the students' mother tongue and his/her teaching qualifications plus command of English are uncertain. In this scenario, it is likely that only a small percentage of the lesson will be conducted in English. In addition, with little motivation to use the language outside the classroom, pair or group work activities are likely to take place in the students' L1 (Adapted from Maley, 2001). Despite being better resourced, public schools in the UAE fall into the TESEP category by definition and, by association, into a deficit model

Studies by Alwan (2006) and Suliman (2000) indicate that although the UAE wanted to implement CLT as it is described by Spada (2007) and Scrivener (2005) above, and curriculum innovations in the 1990s advocated the situational model of CLT, there was little evidence of uptake in the classroom. Teachers in the UAE as well as many other countries questioned its suitability for their learning contexts (Al Mahrooqi, 2012; Ellis, 1996; Hu, 2002) and soon returned to traditional teaching approaches. This is unfortunate as research by Savignon (1972) and others, including that of Montgomery & Eisenstein (1985), however, showed students who engaged in a combination of audio-lingual exercises and communicative activities made substantial gains over those who only experienced the former (cited in Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 121).

3.6 THE LEARNING-CENTRED MODEL: CURRICULUM

The previous section on the learner-centred model emphasises the individual's journey in his/her knowledge development and only touches on how it might occur through engagement with others. The learning-centred model, in contrast, places an emphasis on the interconnectedness of society, culture, the school, the teacher and the learner; in other words, the real world. One which Dewey (1938), Lave (1998) (cited in Anderson, 1996) and Young (1989) say has all too frequently been ignored. The curriculum has overarching teaching and learning objectives, which the teacher facilitates, but the students play a vital role in determining how the objectives are met and which are "integral to conceptual

development […] and the co-construction of knowledge (Palincsar, 1998, p.348). The rationale for such an approach is the desire to foster free expression and the cultivation of individual thought rather than an unquestioning acceptance of the imposition of set facts from above (Zureik, 2005, p.11). In this way, just as the teacher-centred curriculum is in the business of "transmission, the learner-centred model interested in "acquisition", the learning-centred curriculum is seen as "transformative".

Some, such as Vibert & Shields (2003) take issue with this saying the learning-centred curriculum rarely engages students in projects which are critical of officially sanctioned knowledge. This shows little awareness of the education systems in other contexts, however. It would be worthwhile asking parents of Emirati students whether they feel "modern concepts" such as "human rights, citizen rights and environmental protection" (AKR: UAE, 2011, p. 306), recently added to the curriculum, are questioning officially sanctioned knowledge. In April 2014, a "youth risk behavior survey" conducted by Adec in grades 10-12, which seemed to "mirror closely" one from the US, caused uproar when students were asked about drug use, carrying weapons and homosexuality without their parents' consent (Al Nowais, 2014).

Another feature of the learning-centred model does not seem to be able to decide whether it is driven by sociocultural theory and the work of Vygotsky, Leontiev and Luria (Lantolf, 2007) or constructivism. Literature on education seems to use the terms interchangeably and cherry-pick aspects of both approaches in order to suit its needs. At one moment, the learning-centred model emphasises the importance of social participation, relationships between novice and expert, activity setting and historical change. At the next, it concerns itself with how knowledge is constructed as a result of the learner's interaction with the environment, either alone or with others; suggesting it is influenced by both. Packer & Goicoechea (2000) say that this is not surprising given the "relatively unarticulated nature" of the "ontological assumptions" on which both socioculturalism and constructivsm are based (p.227). This in turn leads to curriculum content that is idealised, not clearly defined, often culturally inappropriate and ultimately unrealisable despite any noble intentions (Pedersen & Liu, 2003).

In order not to get weighed down in the discussion, this study takes the view the two approaches are complementary and can be reconciled from a pedagogical perspective. This is because the eclectic range of approaches to teaching, learning and assessment can be interpreted as falling within the parameters of sociocultural theory or indeed cognitive constructivism "nested" in social constructivism depending on how they are enacted in the classroom.

3.6.1 THE LEARNING-CENTRED MODEL: ASSESSMENT

Although there are overlaps between learner-centred and learning-centred assessment, by its nature, assessment of authentic pedagogy, differs in its emphasis on real-life application and the importance of student collaboration in task achievement. Observing and assessing students' application of acquired knowledge in authentic contexts is seen as more valuable to society than the testing of an individual's discrete skills.

Calfee & Perfumo, 1993 (cited in Roelofs & Terwel, 1999) suggest student portfolios which are useful as they provide "an opportunity for richer, more authentic and more valid assessment of student achievement" (p.206). Other examples include, learning logs, interviews, group projects and performances, metacognitive reflection and group solving tasks; all of which according to advocates of "authentic assessment" give opportunities for students to construct meaning, reflect on its significance and self-assess to determine their own strengths and weaknesses (Burke, 1997). Again, the rationale behind such forms of assessment is relatively simple to grasp but the application, fulfilment and grading of such tasks are not nearly so straightforward; especially for students whose conceptual skills may be limited and teachers whose belief systems could be in conflict with such a method of assessment.

3.6.2 THE LEARNING-CENTRED MODEL: PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

The same kind of issues arise when we consider the pedagogical approaches associated with the learning-centred model. This is because it is interpreted differently by different people, thus making its features difficult to characterise. Some also argue, that whether students are listening to a lecture or participating in a collaborative exercise, "all pedagogy results in

some kind of 'construction' by learners" (Windschitl, 2002, p.136). Whilst there is truth in this argument and cognitive perspectives have certainly played an integral part in the development of the learning-centred model, it detracts from the socially mediated nature of the constructivism under discussion in this section which sees learning as "increasing one's ability to participate with others in meaningful activity" and views knowledge as "primarily a cultural product" (Vygotsky, 1978). There is, therefore, a clear acknowledgement that as the world is in a continual state of change, it follows that how we teach and learn about it should be constantly changing too. In contrast to external discipline and learning through texts, students engage in real world scenarios, learning through collaborative experience and creating communities of practice. Instead of predictable outcomes, differentiated responses are encouraged and celebrated.

In order to "ground" the features of constructivism in a practical sense, Windschitl (2002) helpfully gives examples of the pedagogical approaches one might see in a learning-centred classroom. They include, activation of prior knowledge, problem solving, differentiation, group work as well as opportunities for students to develop metacognitive skills, to apply knowledge and to think reflectively. Several of these strategies are closely associated with cognitive constructivism as mentioned in the learner-centred approach. The difference in the learning-centred curriculum model is the emphasis placed on student/student, student/teacher participation and the potential of the activities listed above to increase knowledge generation because of this aspect.

Given a sociocultural emphasis, pedagogy is mediated, in that the teacher or more expert peers model strategies and knowledge-making in the process of task completion. They scaffold learning not by teaching "where the child is at" but by providing guided challenges within the student's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky 1978, cited in Dufficy, 2005, p. 22). ZPD is defined as the "cognitive region, which lies just beyond what a child can do alone. Anything that the child can learn with the assistance and support of a teacher, peers and the instructional environment is said to lie within the ZPD" (Wilhem et al., 2001, p.16). An important feature of the sociocultural model and one which diverges from the constructivist approach is that students are frequently explicitly taught the skills necessary to complete a task and may be guided in their attempts to complete the task independently

by the teacher or a more experienced other. The emphasis on teacher modelling has led critics to label it as another example of transmission, however Vygotsky (1978, p.128) is at pains to point out that students do not simply copy the teacher but "transform" the learning content through mutual negotiation to suit their needs and values.

Small group tasks involving such negotiation of meaning have proven to be particularly beneficial to student achievement. Sardamalia & Bereiter (1989) found that when students explained their thinking to their peers it led to deeper cognitive processing (cited in Palincsar, 1998, p. 349). There were caveats, however. There had to be some requirement for the students to "manipulate" the information or "transform" it in some way before responding; suggesting the use of higher order skills. Simply requiring a student to demonstrate remembering or understanding did not result in the same gains. Also of relevance to this study, was the finding that elaborate explanations of questions correlated negatively with achievement. A possible reason could be that these were required by weaker students, yet, despite this, they still had difficulty grasping the concept (Pressley et al., 1992). There is no way of knowing with certainty but if students in the study were in a mainstream schooling environment and receiving information in a second language, their attention could well have been on processing the language contained in the message rather than the message itself.

3.6.2.1 THE LEARNING-CENTRED MODEL: ENGLISH LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

> "It is hard to imagine a more significant challenge to social constructivism than promoting meaningful learning for all children, especially for those who are linguistically and culturally diverse" (Palincsar, 1998, p.368).

Ironically, in many mainstream schools where English is the medium of instruction but students may come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, English courses are taught by teachers who may not necessarily have a background in TESOL pedagogy. There seems to be a assumption that because they are English teachers they will somehow be endowed with the necessary skills to guide ESL students in the deconstruction of literary texts (eg: novels and poetry), the understanding of literary language devices (metaphors, idioms and so forth) and the analysis of visual text (film, TV and the web). In addition, there is an

expectation that student engagement in their multi-level classes will be maintained through differentiated tasks providing opportunities to think critically and discuss a range of topics in multi-ability groups. Based on such tasks, students will then compose written texts requiring them to inform or persuade their readers; all features of the mainstream English curricula Adec has chosen to employ in its high schools since 2008.

This study argues that this decision has proven a huge disservice to students in the region because, in doing so, it has failed to truly appreciate the cognitive, conceptual and socio-cultural demands of academic study in English on Emirati students and the training required by teachers to implement it. The findings of a survey by Adec (2010) which canvassed responses to the curriculum of approximately 1000 teachers; 257 of whom taught English add weight to this argument. Results showed teachers perceived 97.3% of students had "serious difficulties reading English" and, not surprisingly then, 91.9% of students "lack[ed] knowledge and skills to learn what you [the teachers] are trying to teach. These figures may also explain why the survey showed that only 24% of teachers gave their students opportunities to "discuss and debate ideas with students responding to each other" "a great deal". These findings are in keeping with those made in this study and will be dealt with in more detail in chapter 5.

3.7 DO WE HAVE TO CHOOSE?

The previous sections have critiqued literature on the rationale underpinning three approaches to teaching and learning, chosen because they have been implemented to a greater or lesser degree in the UAE to date[13]. Zureik (2005) points out that no school or educational system is driven by only one perspective but says, "[…] it is the nature of the mixture that defines the type of educational practice that becomes prevalent in a given society" (p.12). According to Harmer (2001) the nature of the mixture is likely to be based on a "pragmatic eclecticism" (p. 97). As such, the above models should not be seen as dualistic or positive and negative but rather viewed as overlapping, situation-dependent and thus, fit for purpose (Marsh & Willis, 2007, p.15; Ornstein & Hunkins 1988, p.2).

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[13] No mention of the critical pedagogy model has been made here as currently there is no indication that the UAE education system is preparing to embrace this approach.

In 1970, Schwab argued against "inveterate, unexamined, and mistaken reliance on theory." He claimed that educators needed to create a "'polyfocal conspectus' which united elements from multiple theories, along with heuristics drawn from experience, into a coherent basis for action" (cited in Terwel, 1999, p.196). Thirty years before Schwab's comments, Dewey (1938, p.21) also wisely warned against taking an "either/or" approach. He reasoned that, although the principles of progressive education may be sound, they are abstract until the results of their application are seen and are, as such, contextually bound (Gerver, 2011; Kumaravedivelu, 2006, cited in Edge, 2006, p.20). Rejecting what has gone before could give rise to the new principles being interpreted and implemented negatively rather than positively and constructively.

This is a view held by many local educationalists who show dismay at the "razing [of] good work to the ground" and "starting from scratch" (Al Awadhi, 2010) as well as the "debating [of] systematic flaws without offering solutions" (Lootah & Lootah, 2010). In recognition of the challenge posed by the "out with the old, in with the new" mentality, Le Metais (1997) says reformers should be cognisant of the fact that:

> There is no point at which education can start with a clean slate - there are always inherited structures, pupils part-way through the process, and teachers with knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired to meet previous needs. The benefits of reforms in one aspect, for example, the curriculum, will not be fully achieved, or demonstrable until other elements (e.g. teaching styles, materials and assessment instruments) have been adapted. (p. 4)

3.8 CURRICULUM INNOVATION

At a fundamental level, the decision to reform curriculum stems from dissatisfaction with an existing situation. As the closing statement above suggests, however, the process is multifaceted. In addition, technological advancements in the last decades have impacted hugely on education; how knowledge is viewed and acquired, as well as what kind of knowledge is valued. It is easy to see that such factors have provided the impetus for recent curriculum innovation in UAE schools and many others around the world but impetus and implementation, it will be argued in the following sections, are two very different things.

According to Van den Akker (2003) any curriculum innovation can be broken down into three key areas; that which is intended, implemented and attained (cited in Ottevanger, 2013, p. 387). These concepts are mirrored, rather more romantically, by McKernan (2008) who describes them in terms of intentions, transactions and effects (p.35).

3.9 THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

As this study is approached with specific regard to the challenges confronting teachers during the implementation phase, it is timely to revisit Stenhouse's (1975) original contention which states that any worthy curriculum should be "capable of translation into practice" (p.4); (see p.5 of this chapter) and, according to Fullan (1991), "however well designed, must be implemented if it is to have any impact on students" (cited in Marsh & Willis, 2007, p.215).

It is this practical element that makes implementation arguably the most complex and problematic step in the innovation process (Marsh & Willis, 2007, p. 224) and the point at which most innovations fail (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977). In the light of this, one would expect there to be more literature on the subject but Altrichter (2005, p.1) and Fullan & Pomfret (1977, p.337) argue true consideration of curriculum implementation only tends to surface when an innovation is evaluated, by which time obstacles on the path from concept to reality have become glaringly, if belatedly, obvious.

Another reason the implementation stage is often neglected is due to developers' focus on the plan or the product and then on disseminating it to schools, often with little consideration of the context; as in the case of the Adec curriculum reforms (Warnica, 2010). The received wisdom has been that if the product is perceived as good, it will be readily embraced but Marsh & Willis (2007) disagree, saying, "Careful planning and development are obviously important to a good curriculum, but they count for nothing unless teachers are aware of what a plan calls for and how they can implement it in their classroom" (p. 213). After reviewing fifteen curriculum projects Fullan & Pomfret (1977) reported that many innovations were not implemented in the way their developers had hoped because teachers were not made fully aware of the underlying intentions. This lack of "clarity" was also one of fifteen research based interactive factors identified by Snyder, Bolin & Zumwalt

(1992) thought to affect implementation. For comprehensive coverage of these factors, see Figure 3, below.

A Characteristics of Change	B Local Characteristics	C School level factors
1) Need – Is there one recognised? 2) Clarity – Are teachers able to identify essential features of the innovation? 3) Complexity – What is the extent of the change and how difficult is it to implement? 4) Quality –Are teaching and learning materials available or is adoption* more important than implementation? Practicality – Is the innovation feasible and manageable in terms of scale? ↘	5) District - Does it have a good innovation record? 6) The adoption process – Has it been well planned? 7) District – Is administrative support available? 8) Staff development and participation Is this valued? Are opportunities provided and sustained? 9) Time-line and information systems – Is there sufficient time to gather data and evaluate it 10) School council & community – Do they approve? ↓	11) Principal – Does he support the innovation? 12) Teacher/teacher relationships – Is there a sense of collegiality amongst staff? 13) Teacher characteristics and orientation – Do the teachers possess the attitude and expertise to carry out the innovation? ↙
	IMPLEMENTATION ↑ **D External agencies**	
	14) Government agencies – Is there a congruence between local needs and the innovation? 15) External support – Is assistance from the local district readily available?	

Figure 3: Interactive factors affecting implementation (Snyder, Bolin & Zumwalt, 1992)

3.10 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In recognition of its value as a tool for identifying an array of potential challenges facing those engaged in curriculum innovation, this interactive framework and variations on it are frequently referenced in the literature (Altrichter, 2005; Fullan, 2007; Orstein & Hunkins, 2004). It will be used as a conceptual framework in this study and is based on the

assumption that if the question(s) above associated with each factor can be answered in the affirmative, it indicates the likelihood of successful implementation. If the response to the question is negative, yet the implementation still goes ahead, it presents a likely obstacle.

As this study concerns an innovation in the Gulf the findings of the *Tamam Report, a profile of school reform in the Arab World: characteristics and challenges* (Akkary & Rizk, 2011) shall also be considered. This publication documents key issues "deemed to generate critical barriers to reform attempts" (p.16) in five Arab nations and they are listed below in Table 1. As can be seen, there are similarities with those outlined in the Snyder, Bolin & Zumwalt (1992) framework but there are also differences; the uncritical adoption of western practices being one of them.

1) Innovations are adopted without a prior needs analysis, consultation with staff and are not evidence/research based.
2) Innovation is top-down and mandated policies do not address procedural issues at the micro level of the school and the practitioner
3) Implementation lacks a clear design plan and omits evaluation as an integral function of the reform process
4) Innovations in the region are limited to skill building for the implementation of limited interventions rather than for professional development for effective and sustainable improvement.
5) Western practices are adapted uncritically and without attention to cultural relevance.

Table 1: Critical barriers to reform attempts in the Arab world (Akkary & Rizk, 2011, p.16)

Before the outset, it is crucial to note that both frameworks omit the mention of students and the pivotal part they play in whether a curriculum innovation is implemented successfully. Also missing are questions surrounding incentives for teachers to enact an innovation although other studies reference one or both of these factors (Altrichter, 2005; Doyle & Ponder, 1977; Gross, Giacquinta & Bernstein, 1971; Roger & Shoemaker, 1971, cited in Marsh & Willis, 2007, p.166). The findings of this study showed that both provide significant challenges in terms of curriculum implementation in the UAE.

The frameworks above will be used to discuss implementational challenges faced by teachers with particular regard to: curriculum innovation, associated assessment procedures together with suggested pedagogical approaches and the professional expertise required to deliver them. Generic issues will be critiqued but the particular emphasis is on English curriculum innovation in the UAE context.

3.11 CHARACTERISTICS OF CHANGE

The following sections address aspects of the characteristics of change that are of particular relevance to this study

3.11.1 NEEDS ANALYSIS AND CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Like Stenhouse, (1975), this study is interested in the relationship between "intention" and "reality" and agrees that "our educational realities seldom conform to our educational intention" (p.2). If this conflict is to be minimised, consultation with concerned stakeholders prior to the curriculum conception and its subsequent design are of particular significance. Kelly, Marsh & Willis (2007) write that curriculum design, "is usually approached from one of three perspectives: the nature of the subject knowledge, the nature of society or the nature of the learner" (cited in McKernan, 2008, p.56). Frustratingly, why all three perspectives do not or cannot come into play is not elaborated upon. Understandably, applying such an approach to curriculum planning is problematic because it concerns ideologies rather than eternal truths. As such, it gives rise to all manner of conflicts and controversies which must be acknowledged then dealt with if successful implementation is to take place and true progress be made (Dewey, 1938; Johnston, 2003; Kelly, 2009).

Skilbeck (1984) advanced a five-stage school-based model for curriculum development which included 1) an analysis of the current situation 2) goal specification 3) organisation of content and programme design and development 4) creation of learning experiences and 5) feedback and evaluation (cited in McKernan, 2008). He found that teachers tend to look at the situation in which they find themselves working first before addressing goals and objectives. To a teacher this may seem logical but all too often government led innovation

uses a "vision" for the country as the driving force for change and the contextual realities are disregarded.

Waters & Vilches' (2001) needs analysis model shows overlaps with Skilbeck's (1984) curriculum development model in terms of assessing the situation (*familiarisation*) and feedback and evaluation *(integration)* but incorporates a *socialisation* stage whereby teachers are given the opportunity to comment on the potential relevance and usability of sample materials for their particular sociocultural environment before the innovation moves to the *application* stage or the "creation of learning stage" (point 4, above). Waters & Vilches (2001) see the *familiarisation* and *socialisation* stages as a place to establish "foundation building" requirements and to assist with the "ratification" of the proposed innovation. In contexts such as the UAE the incorporation of the *socialisation* stage is long overdue. This additional level of stakeholder consultation is considered crucial as it requires all parties to take a long, hard look at the realities of implementing a reform; including the professional development needs of teachers prior to enactment. Its absence in the region has meant many a reform effort has been compromised at the *application* and *integration or "potential-realising"* stages because "Arab school practitioners are disengaged from the whole reform process" and are, therefore "without interest to make any attempt at adapting their practices to the demands of mandates" (Bashur, 1982; El Amine, 2005, cited in Akkary & Rizk, 2011, p.19). Teachers interviewed in Alwan's (2006) study bear this out. "Giving feedback takes time. If no one wants to listen, why should we speak?" they said (p.139).

3.11.2 CLARITY

Fullan (2007) says that even when the need for a change is recognised, pinpointing exactly what teachers need to do differently is a "perennial problem" in the change process (p.89). According to Seahorse, Louis et al. (1999) achieving clarity requires a "sense of purpose that is explicit, shared, flexible", and one that "constantly adapts to changing circumstances" (cited in Akkary & Rizk, 2011, p.11). Unfortunately, it is the "explicit" that seems to be absent in much curriculum innovation documentation. In their protracted and oft cited study of an innovation in the US, Gross, Giacquinta & Bernstein (1971) found the majority

of teachers were unable to identify its essential features. Other studies, including those conducted in the UAE, reveal the same issue (Alwan, 2006, p.28 & p.115; Fullan, 2007, p.89), leading Suliman (2000) to paraphrase Reda (1975) thus:

> educational objectives in many Arab countries are stated in rhetorical terms, for instance, 'training a generation which believes in its country, its people, its faith,' without a word as to how one can be faithful to one's country, people, faith, etc.

He demanded that "we remove the verbose quality of the objectives and give the curriculum a limited, tangible and achievable content" (p.154-155). Up until the introduction of the Adec English curriculum in 2008, this "content" was the latest Ministry of Education issue textbook (Troudi & Alwan, 2010). Textbooks provide another challenge Fullan (2007) calls "false clarity". By staying faithful to a textbook, he says, teachers might not be addressing other policy goals; a finding in the UAE endorsed by Alwan (2006, p.110). As a result, Berman & McLaughlin (1974, 1978) say interventions do not push teachers on to new frontiers but simply become "new ways of doing the same thing" with "little improvement in educational practices and student outcomes" generated (cited in Akkary & Rizk, 2011, p. 9). As the following section shows, however, the right level of innovation complexity can act as a catalyst for change.

3.11.3 COMPLEXITY

Complexity refers to the degree of difficulty teachers perceive as associated with an innovation in terms of the new materials they will have to use, the skills they will have to learn and the strategies they will have to enact (Fullan, 2007, p.91). Fullan & Pomfret (1977) say innovations which are drawn up in consultation with teachers as well as those which provide a certain level of complexity, but not to the extent that the level of adjustment required by teachers becomes overwhelming, are the most likely to be successfully implemented. Changes considered incompatible with teachers' existing values and beliefs, impracticable or with no opportunity for experimentation on a "triability" basis, however, pose serious challenges to effective implementation (Marsh & Willis, 2007, p. 165-166).

In the 80s and 90s, the main objective of English curriculum innovation in the UAE was to increase student communicative competence, with co-construction of learning the aim in

the 2000s. Both approaches to learning have required the student-teacher role relationship to change substantially. Teachers have been asked to view their students as potentially capable of taking more responsibility for their learning and students to believe there are answers other than those sanctioned by their teachers. This has necessitated the implementation of new pedagogical approaches such as different class groupings, higher order questioning and peer teaching. Alwan's (2006) study of teachers' perceptions of English curriculum innovation to promote communicative language teaching (CLT) in the UAE, showed most found the prerequisites mentioned too complex to implement. Teachers gave the students' inability to cope with the language demands of the curriculum materials and the necessity of "skipping speaking and listening" activities because they were not assessed in the exam as reasons for non-implementation and reverting to a transmission approach. Saad's (2011) study of curriculum implementation failure in Libya reveals similar findings. In both studies teachers said they translated reading passages into Arabic for students to make up for students' inability to cope with the volume of text (p.155). Whilst the benefits of using L1 in the classroom are well documented (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003), the comments made by teachers suggest translation was not use as a scaffolding exercise but simply to enable the students to comprehend material which was otherwise inaccessible to them.

3.11.4 QUALITY AND PRACTICALITY OF CURRICULUM MATERIALS

Fullan (2007) says that lessons learnt from past large scale reform failures show "policy makers cannot simply depend on people's capacity to bring about substantial change, they need to propel the process with high quality teaching and training materials" (p.92). Decisions to innovate based on political necessity or in relation to perceived need without time for development invariably result in unsuitable or unavailable materials (Wedell, 2009). Such decisions have been features of English language reform in the UAE past and present leaving teachers have to begin new terms with materials that are "hastily authored" and, as a result, "incomplete", "unclear", "unpiloted" as well as unsupported by research (Al Nayadi, 1989 & Alwan, 1995, cited in Alwan, 2006, p. 24-28). One such example is the UAE English skills series by Phillips & Phillips (2006) introduced in grades 7-10, two years before the launch of the Adec English curriculum in 2008, and which claimed to be "learner-

centred and geared towards students going onto to study at tertiary level rather than general communication" (p.17). Batineh, Batineh & Al Muhasien (2012) collated teachers' comments made on a blog maintained by the series authors which showed that although the teachers liked the integrated skills approach in the book, they found the materials "challenging, even to their own competence" and that "a large number of students struggle with the language and have few linguistic tools to cope with it. Thus, the material is, at times, frustrating to teachers and students alike" (p.31).

This lack of consideration to contextual suitability according to Charles & Pelligrin (1973) shows a naïve expectation that teachers will enact materials lacking "ecological validity" (cited in Doyle & Ponder 1977, p.5) and this remains an important barrier to innovation. In the Middle East, Bashur (2011) blames the situation on "Arab educational reformers who have blindly implemented policies, strategies and theories and transplanted western models in their own contexts without attention to the peculiarities of their culture or foreseeing challenges that would emerge from the interaction of these innovations with local contextual factors" (cited in Akkary & Rizk, 2011, p.25).

3.11.5 QUALITY AND PRACTICALITY OF THE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Perhaps the most significant contextual factor standing in the way of innovation around the world and, certainly in the UAE, has been the mismatch between curriculum content and assessment (Wedell, 2009). This situation has come about locally because policy makers have continually failed to create what Farah & Ridge (2009, p.3) call a "natural synergy" between curriculum change and changes in assessment, so, despite the introduction of learner-centred, communicative curricula in the 80s and 90s, students' English knowledge was tested by means of a written exam based on course book content as it had been in the past (Dakkak, 2011; Snow & Katz, 2008). This meant the students' main goal was "passing the exam, not mastering the language" (T9, cited in Alwan, 2006, p.121). With no quantifiable reward for embracing learner-centred approaches, teachers and students felt discouraged from engaging with them (Farah & Ridge, 2009).

Attempts to introduce formative or continuous assessment where students apply conceptual knowledge gathered in lessons through presentations and projects, marked by

means of rubrics have been largely unsuccessful in the UAE. When asked to produce a model, poster or presentation, the work submitted is often not the student's own. The AKR: UAE (2011) report acknowledges that in the absence of an educational system that promotes the development of cognitive skills, such as problem solving, written communication and information processing skills, "What is really happening is copying and pasting information or even asking for help from centres specialized in preparing research for students" (p.336). Little wonder that respondents in Dakkak's (2011) interviews with educational stakeholders in the UAE and Jordan revealed such tasks were viewed by teachers as "a joke".

This situation has led many teachers to simply pay lip-service to requests to use "modern assessment methods" (AKR: UAE, 2011, p. 308) and when asked, 69.6% and 71.5% of teachers placed "much importance" on 1) "steady improvement of results" and 2)"correct answers on the exam paper", respectively. In addition an overwhelming 98.6% of teachers used tests and exams to assess student achievement whereas only 12.3% of teachers said they "discuss[ed] student achievement relat[ed] to the concept of the lessons" in "all" lessons (p.375).

Adec has changed its assessment procedures to reflect course content in grades 10 and 11, placing a greater emphasis on continuous/formative assessment than on the final exam, From having previously assessed students' work on its form and accuracy, English teachers are now expected to use a range of no less than fourteen assessment strategies; including checklists, Likert scales, observation, peer assessment and questionnaires. An additional issue, is that students still sit the Ministry of Education issued university entrance exam, the CEPA in grade 12. As a consequence high-stakes testing continues to be revered in the eyes of the local community and Adec's attempts to change the established assessment system are further undermined (Wedell, 2009, p.25).

3.12 LOCAL CHARACTERISTICS AND SCHOOL FACTORS

The following section considers the impact local characteristics and school factors have on the implementation of change.

3.12.1 TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

According to Safadi (2008), it is not community resistance that provides the "greatest opposition" to curricular innovation in the UAE but that of incumbent teachers, saying of the Adec reforms:

> Instilling new standards for teachers will be a difficult undertaking. The process will face resistance, because unqualified teachers will certainly lose their jobs. In their battle for survival, incompetent teachers will invoke all sorts of political arguments. But they should not be allowed to disrupt the modernisation programme and their arguments should not be feared. Poor teachers are not being pushed away through a politically driven purging process - they are being asked to leave to protect future generations.

As these comments suggest, one of the major challenges provided by educational reform in the region is harnessing the manpower to drive it. These sections review literature on teacher expertise and professional development (PD) and show how they relate to the status of native (NESTs) and non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs). As the research conducted for this thesis took place in grades 10-12 boys' schools, the emphasis in the literature review will be on the male teaching population and in these grades but references to other studies are included.

3.12.2 TEACHER QUALITY

Teacher quality is widely recognised as being one of the most influential factors in creating and maintaining a successful education system. Numerous research studies have identified substantial differences in pupil achievement between high-performing and low-performing teachers (Bassett, et al., 2010; Hanushek, 2002, cited in Ridge, 2010; Sanders & Rivers, 1996, cited in Barber & Mourshed, 2007a) but such claims are then dependent on the definition of "achievement and "high performing". In a transmission based curriculum, a teacher's performance level has, by association, been closely linked to his students' pass rate. The possibilities for abuse of such a system are wide-ranging and instances of grade-massaging and private tuition in exchange for grades are well-documented in the UAE, as in other countries (Dakkak, 2011; Farah, 2011). In the learner and learning-centred models many

other factors are at play, making ascertaining what constitutes teacher quality a complex task (Levine, 2006; Thomas, 2003; Thrupp et al, 2003, cited in Ballard, 2008).

Traditionally, teacher quality has been associated with teacher education and experience. Whilst the study of Vandevoort, et al. (2004) (cited in Ballard, 2008, p.561) bears this out, again, with relation to student achievement, research conducted by the Rand Corporation (2010) in the US over a five year period showed teachers' qualifications had little influence. Fuller and Clarke (1994) also found that teacher education rarely explains variation in student performance (p.129) in Europe and the US, however, they cite a range of studies from countries in Latin America, Africa and South East Asia which suggest it does impact on teacher quality and on students' achievement. How remains "unspecified" and "inconsistent" (p.130). In some studies, access to text-books was influential, in others a teacher's level of secondary schooling and as well as their subject knowledge appeared to play a part (p.129). It could be, that in countries where the curriculum is largely based on a product-oriented, teach-test approach, familiarity with the curriculum content and ability to prepare students well for exams would be considered valuable teaching "experience" and so contribute to student performance in this way. The results of these studies and others like them show that attempting to generalise findings across countries is inadvisable. Fuller and Clarke (1994) conclude that more work needs to be done on defining and assessing the different modes of teacher education and training.

Such an undertaking is essential in the Emirates where current criticism of the limited range of pedagogical approaches employed in UAE classrooms is often attributed to lack of teacher education. The Adec teacher survey (2010) lends weight to this finding. In response to the question, "In an average class, how much time do your students spend listening to the teacher", 75% of teachers said "a great deal" (p.54). Conversely, 14.7% of teachers said in the AKR: UAE (2011) report said they "organis[ed] small group work" and 18.2% that they train[ed] students on problem solving in "all" classes. When asked to select the extent to which various educational practices were important, teachers ranked the "ability to innovate" and "taking the initiative" lowest (p.377).

Many teachers in the region entered the teaching profession expecting to be provided textbooks, projected timelines for syllabus completion and an examination schedule (Alwan, 2006; AKR: UAE, 2011, p. 378; Troudi and Alwan, 2010), not with the view they were "like artists […] only able to perform [their] work if directed by an inner creative impulse", (Russell, 1950, cited in McKernan, 2008, p.10) or with the expectation that they would have to co-create their students' learning experiences. Educationalists such as Bruner (1966) would find this seeming lack of interest by teachers to make a personal mark on the curriculum they are supposedly implementing hard to fathom.

3.12.3 TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Without teacher development, Bruner (1966) feels there can be no effective curriculum development and claims that "if the production of a curriculum cannot move, perturb and inform teachers, it will have no effect on those whom they teach" (Bruner, 1966, p.xv, cited in McKernan, 2008, p.95)

An awareness of the need to create PD opportunities to facilitate the implementation of curriculum innovation has been recognised by curriculum planners in the UAE yet the approach has been piecemeal and the standard of courses described as "absurdly and disgracefully low" (Al Nayadi, 1989, cited in Alwan, 2006, p. 164). This could go some way to explain the little evidence of uptake of CLT in the classroom but research has shown that although teachers may be exposed to a variety of strategies in PD, decisions on which to use and which to ignore will depend heavily on the educational context in which they find themselves (Freeman & Freeman, 2001, p.186) together with their beliefs about teaching and learning (Borg, 2006; Ernest 1989, cited in Pajares 1992, p.311; Tudor, 2001).

Attempts to introduce communicative language teaching in the 1980s and 90s failed, not only in the UAE but in many other countries because teachers were not convinced it was an effective approach for their educational context (see section 3.11.3). Studies conducted at the time in the UAE showed teachers "did not abide by it" and "by the mid-nineties had abandoned many aspects of [it]" (Al Nayadi, 1989, cited in Alwan, 2006, p.25; Alwan, 2006, p.26). The expectation in the 2000s that teachers in the UAE would use progressive pedagogical approaches when they had not experienced this kind of teacher training or

learning themselves was a leap of faith (Clarke 2006, p.226; Mograby, 1999, cited in Martin & O'Brien 2011, p.143; Warnica, 2010). Windschitl (2002), agrees, saying, "One of the most powerful determinants of whether constructivist approaches flourish or flounder in classrooms is the degree to which individual teachers understand the concept of constructivism" (p.138).

Akkary & Rizk (2011) believe curriculum innovation in the Arab region is not successful because localised training is not based on teachers' "readiness, needs and priorities" but is, instead, "made in congruence with the reforms' human capital requirements" (p.29). The AKR: UAE (2011) lends weight to this assertion. When teachers were asked to rate their potential in providing various 21st century skills to students, for example, "critical thinking" and "lifelong education" scored 22.7% and 26.6% respectively; showing a lack of confidence in these areas (p.379). In contrast, teachers scored themselves highly on their potential to train students in traditional methods such as memorisation.

Another factor, and arguably more important in terms of the challenge Adec faces in implementing its current reforms however, is that teachers are not convinced of the validity of pedagogical approaches it is promoting. Teachers were asked whether current curricula prepared students to "overcome future challenges", "compete externally", "cope with problems in everyday life" and "provide training that takes into account knowledge and emotional dimensions" (AKR:UAE p.375). Although the majority of respondents were in accordance, between 25-30% in each category "disagreed" or "completely disagreed" and this is worthy of note. Several factors could explain this finding. One documented in the report cites teachers' lack of training in delivering curricula of this nature which is supported by the large number of respondents still in favour of traditional teaching methods. Another is that close to 80% of teachers feel "educational reform processes put teachers under stress and decrease their ability to teach" (AKR: UAE, 2011, p.307). This last finding suggests teachers view the implementation of learning-centred pedagogy not only as a professional burden but more significantly one that is actually detrimental to their students' education. This view Doyle & Ponder (1977), Handal & Herrington (2003) and Guskey (1986) warn provides a major challenge to the future of curriculum innovation because, they say, teachers are "the final arbiters of classroom practice" (p.2), "the ones who ultimately

decide the fate of any educational enterprise" (p.65); and in the absence of commitment to an instructional innovation are easily capable of derailing its course by altering new practices "beyond recognition" (p.8).

3.12.4 TEACHER STATUS – THE NEST AND THE NNEST

In an attempt to avoid this situation some governments sideline staff they consider incapable of implementing reforms according to their specifications and choose instead to employ staff who they think can. Not surprisingly, low proficiency, non-native English language teachers (NNESTs) have frequently become victims in this process. The hiring of native English speaking assistants (ALTs) to drive the language reform in Japan in the early 2000s is one example (Johnson, 2002, p.4). The same is happening in the UAE.

For many years NNESTs in monolingual environments have been criticised for their various shortcomings: a poor command of the language, a limited didactic repertoire and an obsession with grammar; their "favourite hunting ground" (Medgyes, 1994, p.37). Horowitz' study on NNEST anxiety found that they avoided tasks which required a greater mastery of the language such as role-plays and medium-constraint or open-ended activities (Dufficy, 2005, p.57; Madrid & Cagnado, 2004, p.126). Kramsch (1993) explained this was because "NNESTs and students alike are intimidated by the native speaker norm" (cited in Cook, 1999, p.200) and for this reason Cook (1999) says, students may prefer the "fallible NNEST who presents a more achievable model" (p.200).

A study by Mouhanna (2009) showed Emirati students on a university English foundation programme with low language proficiency indicated a preference for a NNEST able to provide them with L1 support. This is an important consideration given the students in his study had CEPA scores of 150-164 whilst many students in public high schools would be struggling to reach even these minimal university entry requirements. When students identified positive aspects of having a NNEST, his ability to use Arabic was the most frequently cited. A finding also supported in a study by Coombe & Al Hamly (2007) at tertiary institutions in Kuwait and the UAE. Participants in the Mouhanna (2009) study acknowledged that their teachers had "relied heavily on the use of L1 in their ESL teaching" at school but whether this was because the students would not have been able to

understand the content of the lesson otherwise or because their teachers' poor command of English is not made clear.

When students move into tertiary education in the Emirates, however, Mouhanna (2009) found they expect to be taught by a "native" speaker because, as one of them put it, "he has a high degree", whereas "in the school he [the teacher] is a learner like us" (p.11). Coombe & Al Hamly's study (2007) revealed 47% of students preferred a native English speaking teacher (NEST), 17% a NNEST and 35.3% had no preference. Saudi university students also showed they were influenced by the "perceived professionalism" of a NEST according to research undertaken by McLaren (2009).

Yet, Syed (2003) is critical of hiring practices in the region which place native speaker status and nationality above expertise, qualifications and relevant experience, saying:

> Although foreign teachers bring diversity into the classroom, and although some use contextually situated pedagogy, there are wide gaps in the expatriate educators' knowledge of local socio-cultural communities and languages. Linguistic and cultural distance between learners and teachers is a serious factor in the Gulf EFL classroom. (Syed, 2003, p.339)

For too long, Seidlhofer (1996) claims, "there has [often] been the danger of an automatic extrapolation from competent speaker to competent teacher based on linguistic grounds alone, without taking into consideration the criteria of cultural social and pedagogic appropriacy" (cited in Arva & Medgyes, 2000, p. 369). This view is held by others such as Johnston (2003) who says, "teachers [are] held in high regard because of their own skill in the using the language not because of pedagogical knowledge" (p.20).

The commentary provided during the Teach Away promotional recruitment video for Adec teachers is guilty of conveying the same message; showing the "native" English speaking specialist consultant advising newly recruited NESTs to:

> bring less from home than you think. [...] I brought a suitcase full of professional materials, most of which I didn't use [...]. Come light [...]. Come with a smile. Come with a sense of adventure [...] (Lacey (2011)

Perhaps it is comments such as these which compelled Kirkpatrick (2006) to make his withering attack on untrained NESTs and demand to know "in what other profession would a lack of relevant knowledge and experience be touted as an advantage?" Research into perceptions of NESTs by students, fellow NESTs and NNESTs continues this theme, portraying NESTs as under-qualified, informal, flexible, cheerful and confident. They are likely to be less concerned about error correction, less likely to be taken seriously, use more authentic language and are able to provide more accurate cultural information about English speaking countries (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002; Madrid & Canado, 2004; Medgyes, 1994; Ustunluoglu, 2007).

These descriptions typically characterise EFL teachers who may not necessarily have a university recognised mainstream teaching diploma or licence as it is known in the States and likely work in an English language school with small, homogenous groups of students. A mainstream teaching qualification is a prerequisite for employment with Adec due to the fact that teachers are working in public high schools and in large classes with students of different language levels. The irony is that although they were employed as part of Adec's "drive to deliver excellence in schools across the Emirate of Abu Dhabi" (Adec, 2009a), the majority of NESTs who come to the UAE are unable to speak Arabic and may have no experience of working with EFL students.

The proliferation of English in schools and, by association, the spread of western culture in the UAE has been much criticised in the local press of late with members of the Federal National Council claiming that teaching in English was a "violation of the [country's] constitution" (Al Rahoomi & Al Baher, 2013, cited in Issa, 2013). Mindful, of the importance the government has placed on the preservation of Arabic, national identity, heritage and culture in the UAE; its desire that the UAE be a hub for the knowledge economy and in keeping with current research on the intellectual benefits associated with bilingualism (Bialystok & Martin-Rhee, 2004; Kovacs, 2009; Freeman, 2007, cited in Gallagher, 2011), Adec have made it a stated objective of the New School Model.

In recognition of the inherent advantages of a bilingual, bicultural and multi-competent society much recent research shows NNESTs in a very different light to that presented in

3.12.4. Studies reveal that although teachers and students readily discern differences between native and non-native teachers in methodology, classroom management, cultural knowledge and a variety of other factors, they also recognise that "different does not imply better or worse" (Arva & Medgyes, 2000, p.358). In fact, non-native English speakers in a monolingual environment are largely seen as good role models, aware of the need for students to perform well in national high-stakes tests, knowledgeable about associated exam techniques, suppliers of level appropriate information about the English language, sensitive to the learners' needs and better anticipators of language learning difficulties (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002; Madrid & Canado, 2004; Medgyes, 1994; Senior, 2006; Ustunluoglu, 2007). All factors which are of particular relevance in the UAE public school context.

As a result, Matsuda (1999) argues NESTs and NNESTs should not be seen as discrete, competitive or subtractive entities but rather NNESTs should be recognised for the positive contribution they can make to the learning environment (Fathelbab, 2009). The challenge in recent years for male secondary school teachers of English in the UAE, however, has been to convince their employer (Adec) of this fact. In the meantime, unfortunately, their terms of employment and remuneration remain substantially lower than "native" English speaking teachers and their jobs under constant threat (Ridge, 2010, p.24).

3.13 SUMMARY

This chapter has critiqued literature on educational theory surrounding the development of three major curriculum models used in the UAE. It has also explored studies relating to curricular innovation and possible barriers to its successful implementation. The impetus for this study is the relatively recent introduction of a learner /learning-centred English curriculum model in what has traditionally been a teacher-centred environment and the challenges such a decision has provided for newly hired and incumbent teachers. The following chapter describes the research design.

CHAPTER 4 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 THE ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY

Underpinning all research efforts are core assumptions which inform the researcher's choice of research questions, methodology, methods and even sources (Grix 2004, p.5). These assumptions are based on the researcher's view of social reality and how s/he comes to know that reality; his/her ontological and epistemological position (Krauss 2005. p. 759).

The ontological perspective for this thesis is anti-foundationalism which assumes the world does not exist independently of our knowledge of it but rather reality is socially and discursively constructed by human actors (Grix 2004, p.61). As such, each of us experiences the world from a position of relativism; the way we think life is and the part we have to play in it. A person's position gives them a particular way of noticing their reality; a way of grasping it or interacting with it. For example, if we consider a classroom, a builder might notice the structure, a teacher the students, an economist the teacher:student ratio and a politician whether his party's ideals are being promoted through the curriculum. When each walks away from the classroom they have a different interpretation of or perspective on it. This notion has given rise to the expression, "multiple realities" (Krauss 2005, p.760). The view that knowledge is established through the meanings attached to phenomena aligns itself with an interpretivist epistemology. In this study, uncritical exploratory methodology and qualitative data gathering approaches are used to gain a deeper understanding of our social life world.

4.2 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO THE STUDY

> Qualitative researchers accept the fact that research is ideologically driven. There is no value-free or bias free design. The qualitative researcher early on identifies his or her biases and articulates the ideology or conceptual frame for the study. By identifying one's biases, one can see easily where the questions that guide the study are crafted (Janesick, 2000, cited in Holliday, 2009 p.47)

When one considers the brief history of educational development in the UAE as outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, it could be construed that a natural tendency would be to take a critical

stance towards the topic under investigation; to problematise the issue of English language provision and the borrowing of overseas curricula in public high schools in the UAE, with the hope of effecting change in educational policy and transforming teachers' and students' lives.

The learning environment in the UAE is unique and one about which I could never hope to know or understand as much as local educationalists and policy makers. Not only that, I do not share the same background culture, religion or teaching and learning experiences of the indigenous population. A critical perspective could very easily be dismissed as yet another imposition of overseas ideology; one that seeks to transform those whose only perceived oppressor is the supposed liberator.

For this reason it seemed more constructive to view the issue through an interpretative lens, one where the data is obtained through assuming contextualised, interactive and time-dependent relationships with the study's subjects and which relies on participants' views of the situation being studied (Creswell, 2003, cited in Mackenzie & Knipe 2006). Participants are viewed as "initiators of their own actions, with free will and creativity, producing their own environments" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 8) and whose actions are guided by voluntarism.

This is not to suggest that the researcher comes to the topic of investigation as a "blank slate", but rather arrives as a well-prepared, "concerned and experienced insider" (Hokal & Shaw, 1999) whose interaction with participants allows a deeper, richer conceptualisation of the phenomenon to emerge. In the final analysis, however, the results are context-dependent, subjective and value-laden (Dornyei, 2007). Although the researcher stands back to observe, s/he is also the one who interprets the information and so is in control of what comes out of the research and this makes replication of the study impossible. With reflexivity, however, the researcher remains open to the experience; allows it to change her as well as her global view and in so doing, leads to a greater understanding of our social world.

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

On the basis of reading undertaken, a general understanding of the nature of the problem, and the goal of exploring aspects of the Adec English curriculum innovation, the following research questions were posed:

> 1) What factors explain Adec's current English curriculum choice in grade 10/11?

> 2) What are the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the ADEC grade 10/11 curriculum?

> 3) What are the challenges faced by expatriate ATEs in this time of curriculum reform?

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The methodology or frame of reference for how we seek out new knowledge is influenced by its overarching theoretical perspective. Due to the relatively recent introduction of the Adec reforms and the little research available on the subject of the study, the approach taken is exploratory. Exploratory research serves to satisfy a curiosity or general ignorance in some way, to familiarise the researcher with the phenomenon under investigation and so leads to a better understanding of it (Babbie, 2013, p.43). This form of exploratory research employs idiographic inquiry in an endeavour to come to a closer realisation of how individuals construe their unique environment in relation to the research problem. Such a flexible approach to inquiry allows for responses which are rich, culturally salient and unanticipated and enables the researcher to put faces on the data. Available research on recent curriculum innovation and implementation in the UAE has tended towards survey methodology (Akkary & Rizk, 2011) where teachers are asked to say, for example, how often they have conversations with colleagues about managing classroom behaviour, use group work or write lessons on the board (Adec, 2010b; AKR: UAE, 2011). Whilst resulting percentages might be of interest to a positivist or policy maker (Gorard, 2004, cited in Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006), an interpretive exploratory researcher wants to understand what the teacher and student converse about, how they organise group work and why they

write the lesson on the board. Reading for the literature review and my experience of working in a selection of UAE public schools had provided glimpses into this world but I wanted to comprehend it from the perspective of Arab teachers of English (ATEs) and "native" English teachers (EMTs) who inhabited it; the participants in this study.

4.5 THE SAMPLE

When "the main goal of sampling is to find individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation so as to maximise what we can learn" (Dornyei, 2007), researchers employ non-probability sampling. This deliberate intervention on the sampling process is termed "purposive sampling" and by virtue of being "unashamedly selective" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 115), enables the researcher to predetermine, to a greater or lesser degree, the particular group(s) of people, setting(s) and process(es) s/he will study. This study used purposive sampling and an element of opportunistic sampling, as defined by Ritchie & Lewis (2012, p.81). How this came about is explained below.

4.5.1 SAMPLING OF SCHOOLS

Initially, with their principals' approval, 3 girls' and 3 boys', grade 6-12 or 10-12 schools were selected for the study. Almost immediately, it became apparent that this was not a viable option, however. Girls' schools started later in the morning and the study took place near the end of the school year. This in turn limited my access to female teachers and meant that timetabled English classes were often "borrowed" by teachers of other subjects in order to prepare their students for their final exams. As a result the decision was made to conduct the study with boys' schools only. These were situated in different areas of the city and the ratio of national to non-national students depended on their location. The three schools had been part of the PPP project and had had the same overseas provider. I had taught at two of the schools during my time with the PPP project and was familiar with the third (School details 2.2.2)

4.5.2 SAMPLING OF GRADES

Grade 10 and 11 English classes were chosen specifically because the focus of the study was the Adec English curriculum provision in Cycle Three schools. Students in grade 12 do not study the Adec curriculum in isolation. As this is their last year of schooling, many direct their attention to the MoE exams and the university entrance exam (CEPA). This is known to impact on the degree to which the Adec curriculum is implemented (Lange, 2013) and for this reason grade 12 was discounted as a research option.

4.5.3 SAMPLING OF TEACHERS - EMTS

The English department spokesperson in each of the three schools was approached and the purpose of the study explained. I asked him to suggest two EMTs in grade 10 and 11 who would be best placed to assist me with my study. After checking the timetables, we approached the staff in question. I spoke to each of them informally to gauge their interest and willingness to participate in the study. I informed them they would be interviewed twice, prior to and after a lesson visit. During this process several of the six EMTs expressed their relief that someone was researching the Adec English provision in Cycle Three.

4.5.4 SAMPLING OF TEACHERS - ATES

Again, the English department spokesperson in each of the three schools was approached in the manner explained above. As some of the Arab teachers of English in two of the schools were known to me, I approached them individually to ask if they would be willing to assist in the study. Again, I found a sample of 6 teachers in the three schools. I thought it would be particularly useful to "see" the reform from the perspectives of the ATEs; especially as they were the ones who implemented the grade 10 Adec English curriculum when it was introduced in 2008 and whose positions had since been filled by EMTs. My understanding, prior to commencing the study, was that no ATEs would be teaching grades 10 and 11 and this had been factored into my research design. Once I arrived at the schools, however, I discovered that two out of the three principals had exerted their influence over the staffing situation and managed to retain some of their ATEs in the upper grades. This situation provided an unforeseen opportunity in that it enabled me to get a broader range of responses in terms of the challenges teachers faced in implementing the English

curriculum in these particular grades as well as satisfy the scope of my original research questions aimed at the ATEs specifically. Before they agreed to participate, ATEs talked at length about issues of confidentiality and wanted my assurance that their identities would be concealed. (See section 4.9 Ethical considerations)

4.6 RESEARCH METHODS

In the case of this exploratory study three methods considered most likely to be effective in answering the research questions were selected. They included semi-structured interviews, lesson visits and document analyses. There now follows a brief overview of these methods together with an explanation of why they were chosen for this study and how they were implemented in relation to it.

4.6.1 INTERVIEWS

Interviews are used as one of the main methods of data collection in qualitative interpretative research. Punch (2005) says their multi-sensory nature provides a very good way of accessing and understanding "people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality" (p.169). Most people are familiar with the interview genre and its myriad possibilities for direction, spontaneity, confusion and clarification. Its versatility makes it an attractive research method for all manner of studies (Dornyei, 2007).

There are several different types of interview and are classified according to the degree of structure. Structured interviews tend to be scripted. Although deviation from the script is possible, according to Fontana & Frey (1994), this type of interview "stresses rational rather than emotional responses" (cited in Punch, 2005). At the other end of the continuum are unstructured interviews. Here the interviewer attempts to be as unobtrusive as possible (Denscombe, 2011) as this might limit the field of inquiry.

4.6.1.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The data in this study were gathered by means of semi-structured interviews. Kvale (1996) defines this approach to interviewing as, a "professional conversation". The purpose of which is: "to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to

interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (p.5). This style of interview was chosen as it was compatible with the exploratory nature of the study in that it allowed participants to elaborate on the guiding questions uninhibitedly and for new themes to emerge.

4.6.1.2 PILOT INTERVIEWS

A pilot interview was arranged with three EMTs. One, who had arrived in the first wave of teachers employed by Adec in 2009, gave a full interview. The other two, who were in the first year of their contracts, read the questions and commented on them. Due to the limited number of ATEs in Cycle 2 and 3 schools only one full pilot interview was conducted. Each interview lasted just under an hour. The main purpose of the pilot was to see if the questions were easily comprehensible, in a logical sequence and elicited a response that would assist in answering the research questions. When I first showed the interviewees the question sheet, I felt they might be concerned that there were too many questions but feedback suggested that teachers were able to read the questions quickly and then speak to them readily.

Certain questions were reworded in order to minimise possible ambiguity, whilst others were collapsed as they provoked a similar response. The EMTs who read the questions pointed out there were not any dealing with classroom management which, they felt, provided the biggest challenge in terms of implementing the curriculum. I took their comments on board but had already given this some consideration. I did not want to ask a question about classroom management directly, as I felt I would be leading the interviewee instead wanted to see if they it emerged during the interviews.

By their nature, semi-structured interviews allow for a translatable but, at the same time, individual response. Each person gave slightly different feedback on the interviews and this led to amendments in the wording of questions but the general feeling was that the questions gave them a voice to express their views and they felt that interviewees would be appreciative of this opportunity. They suggested that I allowed myself an hour with each participant.

4.6.1.3 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES – EMT INTERVIEW ONE

Based on the literature surrounding the implementation of curriculum innovations in general and Adec specifically, topics for discussion were structured under three broad headings; curriculum, assessment and pedagogical development / teacher education. In each section 10, 4 and 6 questions posed respectively, making 20 in total (Dornyei, 2007; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) (Appendix 4). Participants read the questions for one of the categories and then spoke to it. The intention was not to interrupt the interviewee but to allow them the latitude to respond freely, referring to the prompts if they so wished. Some respondents made no reference to the questions again and simply talked in general terms about the words "curriculum", for example, and its inherent challenges as they perceived them in the given context. Others referred to the suggested topics specifically at times and tangentially at others. Some provided anecdotes to illustrate a point they were making. Many used humour. Each respondent approached the process in a different way and the emphasis in their responses and the way they were delivered allowed their personalities to come through. The interviews were recorded and as I listened to the interviewee speak made notes on an "interview protocol" (Cresswell, 2013). This served as a reminder to ask for further clarification of a convenient juncture. If the opportunity to interject presented itself naturally, I would take advantage of the opportunity. Often my queries were answered as the person continued to speak and the need to probe further dissipated.   The interviews varied in length from 16 minutes to 33 minutes.

4.6.1.4 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES – EMT INTERVIEW TWO

A second interview with each EMT took place after the lesson visit. Questions again, fell under three broad categories. In section one there were 4, section two 11 and section three 5 making 20 in total (Appendix 5). First teachers were asked to comment on the lesson visit; the students' levels of engagement, whether having a visitor in the room had made a difference to the dynamic, whether or how they had changed their classroom practice since being in the UAE and so forth. This acted as a form of member check and it also gave teachers the opportunity to explain why and how the pedagogical approaches they used differed from their typical professional practice. The second category of questions

specifically addressed several pedagogical approaches promoted by the Adec curriculum and the challenges they posed they posed for teachers when implementing them in their classes generally. In the final section EMTs were asked whether they had been asked for feedback on the curriculum and to comment on their morale.

It was felt that if these questions had been asked prior to the lesson visit, they might have had a bearing on the content and instructional strategies chosen by the teacher to present on the day of the visit. If teachers had prepared lessons especially for the visit, this would have decreased the likelihood of me obtaining a fair representation of their daily reality. These second interviews lasted between 20 and 50 minutes.

4.6.1.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES – ATE INTERVIEW

The main purpose of the interviews with ATEs was to gather data on research question three. Teachers were asked to speak about the particular challenges they faced personally and professionally as Arab teachers of English at this time of educational reform. Other questions were designed to gather data regarding criticism surrounding the way English had been taught in the country prior to the Adec reform as it was thought this information would also assist in answering research question one. There were 6 overarching questions in total (Appendix 6). As some of the ATEs also taught grade 10 and 11, I also asked them to consider various questions from the EMT interviews where appropriate; those surrounding curriculum choice, pedagogical approaches and assessment, for example. The sensitive nature of these interviews meant that ethical considerations were taken seriously and these are addressed in section 4.9 (Cresswell, 2013, p.173; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). ATE interviews lasted from 55 minutes to almost 2 hours.

4.6.2 OBSERVATION

Like interviewing, research methods involving observation take a variety of forms with the level of structure and degree of observer participation determined by the researcher's intention (Punch, 2005). The focus of observation can also vary and might include facts, events or behaviours. Simply put, observation provides researchers with the opportunity to gather "live data from naturally occurring social situations" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison,

2007, p. 397) and thus, provides them with a deeper more immediate understanding of the physical, human, interactional and organisational settings their participants inhabit.

4.6.2.1 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES – OBSERVATION

The intention of using open, non-participant observation (Seliger & Shohamy, 2003, p.161) in this study was to "see" the curriculum enacted in a naturalistic setting through the eyes of the researcher (Ritchie & Lewis, 2012, p.35) (see 4.6.1.4). In order to avoid the evaluative connotation of the word "observation", it was replaced by the phrase "classroom visit". Due to time constraints only one visit per EMT was possible (six in total). Teachers had been made aware of and agreed to the classroom visit from the outset of the research project and had been asked to "go about their business" during the visit as they might on any other day. In recognition of the fact that I was already changing the class dynamic by simply being in the classroom, I sat at the back and did not interact with the students. Very infrequently I stood up to get a better view of what students were doing but only if they were engaged in work and could do so unobtrusively. On one occasion I did speak to students engaged in independent internet research in the school library. In this situation it was clear this behaviour would not impact on the flow of the lesson. During the lesson visits, I kept a running record of events that "naturally unfolded" (Punch, 2005, p.179) in terms of the classroom environment and from both teacher's and students' perspectives. Fortuitously, the lesson visits afforded me the chance to observe classes showcasing a cross section of curricular and assessment activities. These, together with the interview data gave valuable insights into the challenges teachers faced and assisted in creating a more substantive picture (Berg, 2004, p.5) of the teacher's, students' and curriculum reality.

4.6.3 DOCUMENTARY DATA ANALYSIS

Whilst documentary data provide a rich source of information for researchers to tap, Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007, p. 201) raise concerns about the validity and reliability of documents written for a particular purpose, agenda or audience that does not include researchers. Denscombe (2011) warns that even if they are, this does not provide an "absolute guarantee" and suggests that background checks are done on a document's provenance (p.222). For studies where the focus of the research is the data alone, this is of

particular importance. More frequently, however, document analysis is used in conjunction with other methods; generally interviewing and observation and serves to triangulate the data (Punch, 2005, p.184).

4.6.3.1 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES – DOCUMENTARY DATA

The purpose of engaging in documentary analysis for this study was twofold. First, documents were selected in order to gather information pertaining to the rationale behind the Adec English curriculum; the first research question. These included official curriculum and assessment documentation from both NSW and Adec, educational case studies undertaken in the region by the World Bank, MBR & UNDP[14] as well as press releases of relevance (Appendix 1, 2, 3, 7, 15, 16 & 17). In addition, during their interviews, teachers had commented on the unwieldy nature of the Adec English curriculum and assessment documentation, designed to guide them in their lesson programming and choice of continuous assessment tasks. An analysis of these documents added what Berg (2004) calls "another line of sight" (p.5) on the data and enabled me to interpret their remarks with greater awareness of their reality.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The following sections document the how the interview data, observation and documentation were analysed.

4.7.1 INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis involved Weber's *verstehen* approach; the concept of "understanding something in its context" (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010, p.25). The intention here was to enable me to grasp the phenomenon under investigation more comprehensively. This was done by systematically examining the data gathered and involved "reflective reconstruction and interpretation of the action of others" (p.25). Management of the interview data and

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[14] MBR = the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation. UNDP = United Nations Development Programme.

its subsequent analysis was carried out with reference to the work of Radnor (2001) and Ritchie & Lewis (2012).

4.7.1.1 INTERVIEW DATA GATHERING AND TRANSCRIPTION

Data were gathered over a period of three months. In all cases the interviews took place in teachers' free lessons on the school premises; in classrooms, staff rooms and break out areas wherever there was a place available. This meant that there were sometimes interruptions which came in the form of bells ringing to signify the end of lessons, students moving from class to class or a teacher being called to the administration office part-way through an interview. As Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) say "the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life; it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable" (p.267). Although somewhat distracting, these events gave a true sense of the school atmosphere and did not impact on the overall quality and audibility of the voice recordings. Two devices were used to record the material; a digital voice recorder and an MP3 player. In addition, I took notes on an interview protocol which mirrored that of the question prompts interviewees used to guide their responses. Two ATEs refused to be recorded. I transcribed their interviews by hand. One ATE fell victim to the non-renewal process and left the school at short notice. He sent me his contribution by email. I transcribed the three remaining ATE sound files myself. All EMTs agreed to be recorded.

The EMTs' numbered interview sound files were sent to a transcription company with the request that they were transcribed verbatim but without hesitations and redundancies (Appendix 8). This meant the omission of "Uh" and "you know" in the following utterance, "Uh, you know, as long as there are clear guidelines, you know", for example. I listened to each sound file with the transcription. Words the transcriber had been unable to identify were marked in the transcription at the point they occurred; [0:09:35]. Generally speaking these were work related acronyms, such as "Adec", "ECART" and so forth. This process enabled me to reacquaint myself with the participants, their contributions, their tone and emphasis. I transcribed ATE interviews from recordings and detailed notes.

4.7.1.2 IDENTIFICATION OF TOPICS AND INDEXING OF THEMES

Listening to the sound files enabled me to identify and mark overarching and reoccurring themes. The process was made somewhat easier by the fact that the interview had been organised thematically although it allowed for participants to deviate from it whenever they wished. Assigning themes was enabled by first establishing a thematic index as per Ritchie & Lewis (2012, p. 223) who argue that "indexing" "fits" better with the data. The thematic index for the part 1 interview questions used in this study is included and was based on the interview questions asked (Appendix 9). Although numerical indexes are given alongside the textual reference, I found them a hindrance and relied on textual references instead as they it held more meaning for me (Appendix 10).

Question 1 in section II on "assessment", for example, asked the participants "What are your thoughts regarding the assessment system?" In this case, an index descriptor thought to be appropriate to this theme was "general challenges" and a referenced by "A" on the interview transcripts. Whilst reading the transcripts assessment sub-themes emerged which related to specific forms of assessment; continuous assessment (ECART, IST), for example. These sub-themes were given indexes, the transcripts re-read and analysed accordingly. Table 2 shows the index of themes and sub-themes that emanated from participants' discussion of the ECART continuous assessment.

Example of interview question:		
II Assessment 1) What are your thoughts regarding the assessment system?		
Themes and sub-themes index		
II Assessment	**Index**	**Index**
1) Challenges posed by assessment in general	A	2.1
Challenges posed by ECART requirements (for students)	ECART S	2.1 E S
• reading difficulties	Reading	2.1 E R
• lack of research skills	Research	2.1 E R+
• plagiarism	Plagiarism	2.1 E P
• outsourcing tasks	Outsourcing	2.1 E BS

Table 2: Indexing of themes and sub-themes based on interview data

Figure 4 shows how the above themes and sub-themes were organised to assist with writing about the challenges surrounding ECART assessment in the result and discussion chapter. Question 3 in the assessment section concerned library resources. Several participants' responses made links between students' lack of research skills and library usage so these comments were linked in here.
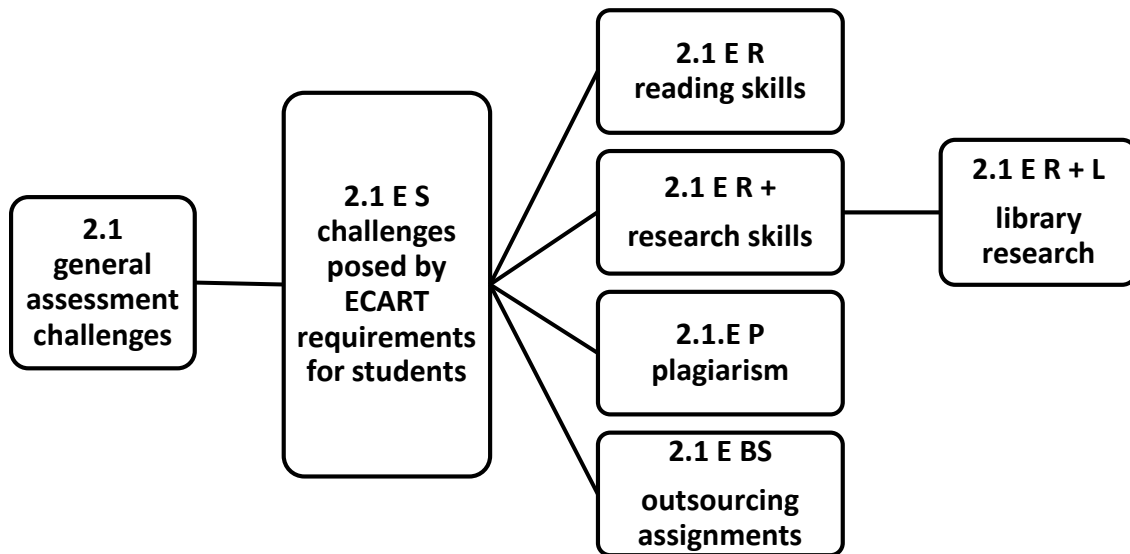
Figure 4: Themes and sub-themes surrounding the implementation of the ECART task

4.7.1.3 ASSIGNING DATA TO THEMATIC SETS

When the interviews had been read several times, data pertaining to particular themes and related sub-themes were copied and pasted into separate thematic files. The original interview transcription file was left untouched. This maintained its integrity and meant that thematic data could be easily put back into context which assisted with overall interpretation of the data. This was done by typing a word or phrase using the "Find" option in "MS Word". Sometimes the same data could be applied to multiple locations and if this were the case, a note was made, such as "have put in 'morale' section" at the end of the extracted data. This enabled important associations and relationships amongst the data to be maintained (Appendix 11).

4.7.1.4 INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Throughout this process meaning was being attributed to the data and an interpretation of what was said or observed recorded in the form of indexed handwritten notes. With further refining of the themes and sub-themes, re-reading transcripts, and studying patterns, pictures emerged of the participants' social world and their perspectives on it. At times explicit reasons given by the participants provided an explanation for those perspectives. At others an underlying logic was constructed inferentially by piecing together evidence from the interview data, classroom visits, the document analysis and cross-referencing these with extant studies and literature. Information of use was highlighted and a note was made, such as "cross-ref Gross et al 1971 on realistic assessment of needs (p. 5)", for example.

4.7.2 OBSERVATION – DATA ANALYSIS

During the open, non-participant classroom visits (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989) I made notes on a prepared pro-forma. It had three columns. The first two were to detail teacher and students comments and the third to describe the environment. The intention here was to record an interpretation of the class dynamic together with examples of critical thinking, collaborative learning and differentiation. These pedagogical approaches were only seen on occasions and for the most part the classes were teacher-led. In effect, then, the pro-forma simply served as a record of events which meant it was not coded but used to "illuminate" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.397) the data gathered during the post-visit interview (Appendix 12). I did not make unsolicited remarks on my observations during the second interview, rather I asked the participants to lead the commentary on the lesson. Only occasionally did I use my observations to develop on something they said. The observations helped to clarify any "issues of perception" which Denscombe (2011) says can be influenced by familiarity, past experiences or the researcher's current state (p.198). Chiefly the observation notes were used to exemplify interview data in Chapter 5.

4.7.3 DOCUMENTARY DATA – ANALYSIS

The case studies together with curriculum and assessment documents chosen for analysis were produced by official organisations and therefore considered more likely to be

authentic, authoritative, representative and research-based (Denscombe, 2011, p. 222). Having said that, there is also an acknowledgement that data included in or omitted from these case studies would have been predetermined by the organisations funding their publication. Notwithstanding this challenge to the documents' credibility, all were read closely and extracts in them selected based on their relevance to the research questions. This process involved a subjective analysis and the researcher's interpretation which, arguably, compromised the intended meaning of the documentation further. Angen's (2000) comments are of importance below.

4. 8 TRUSTWORTHINESS: TRIANGULATION AND REFLEXIVITY

> Interpretive researchers assume that reality as we can know it is construed intra-subjectively and inter-subjectively through the meanings and understandings garnered from our social world. There can be no understanding without interpretation (Angen, 2000, p. 385)

In the light of these comments by Angen (2000), there is also an assumption that our interpretations are located in time and space and that the truth of our interpretation is, therefore, continually open to negotiation and reinterpretation. This raises issues for the validation of interpretative research. There are numerous perspectives on how this validation might be achieved. Cresswell & Miller (2000) outlined eight specific techniques, at least two of which Cresswell (2013) believes must be employed in any valid study (p. 253). These include triangulation and clarifying researcher bias or reflexivity.

4.8.1 TRIANGULATION

Berg (2004) says each research method "imposes a certain perspective on reality" (p.4) and warns researchers to be aware of the assumptions they make when they decide to employ one method over another. This study obtained its data from three sources: semi-structured interviews before and after open, non-participant classroom observations as well as a document analysis. The interview which took place with EMTs after the classroom visit dealt specifically with the lesson visit and gave me an opportunity to understand the reality of the experience from the teacher's point of view. It should be stated that the purpose of triangulating methods in this study was not to arrive at a "convergent meaning" (Lincoln &

Guba, 1988, cited in Angen, 2000, p.384). Rather, these three lines of sight enabled me to stand back and take stock of the nature of the problem; to view it from different perspectives. This helped in "refining, broadening and strengthening conceptual linkages to the research questions (Goetz & Le Compte, 1984, cited in Berg, p. 6).

4.8.2 REFLEXIVITY

Whilst triangulation enabled me to contemplate the nature of the problem from a range of outlooks, my understanding of it was always going to be subjective. The issue of subjectivity provides another dilemma for interpretive researchers as they attempt to establish the credibility of their research. It is hard for critics to understand how the closeness researchers develop with their participants in order to come to a better understanding of their social life world, for example, allows them to function objectively throughout the research process (Pring, 2000, p.33). My relationship with the local staff and the school context enabled me to gain access to a social life world that I would not otherwise have had. I was aware of the trust the participants were placing in me and I felt the obligation to represent them accurately weigh heavily on my shoulders. Nonetheless, I also acknowledged I came to the situation with "values, attitudes, perceptions, opinions, actions, feelings etc" and that all of these were "feeding into the situation being studied" (Cohen 2007, p. 310). Engaging in reflexivity, in other words, the "conscious self-understanding of the research process" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, cited in Wainright 1997) assisted here. It required me to continually scrutinise my sense of and response to the research topic, context and participants and how these changed over time.

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Approval to conduct the research was sought from the University of Exeter. The certificate of approval obliges the recipient to adhere to the Code of Ethics and Conduct set out by Chair of the Ethics Committee; features of which include obtaining informed consent, showing respect for each participant and ensuring the confidentiality of any data collected (Appendix 13).

In order to conduct research in Adec schools a research proposal application must be completed and forwarded to the Adec head office. The researcher can only proceed once approval is received (Appendix 14).

Before commencing the research project, an appointment was made with each of the principals in the three schools involved. At the meetings I explained my intentions and asked for their permission to enter the school, interview a selection of staff and visit classrooms. After sighting the Adec letter, they kindly granted their approval. I explained my research intention to the teachers who had agreed to form part of the study in principle assuring them I would not proceed without their informed consent, guaranteeing the confidentiality of any data collected, promising to represent them honestly and reaffirming their right to withdraw from the process at any time. Once they had agreed to participate and signed the necessary documentation, all associated computer files and digital recordings were coded either numerically or with pseudonyms.

Despite this, I still have reservations about the extent to which I can protect the identity of the Arab teachers in particular and this concerns me greatly. I feel that even though I may use pseudonyms, the details of the school context and various other characteristics would make it possible to identify them. Teachers placed their trust in me by speaking openly about what were obviously sensitive issues. One teacher showed his anxiety by asking me not to include a certain part of the interview, two others showed theirs by refusing to allow their interviews to be recorded. For this reason, I feel it was imperative to follow Berg's (2004) advice and tread with extreme caution when discussing the subjects and their setting in chapter 2 of this thesis (p.65).

4.10 LIMITATIONS

Several limitation presented during the research process and these are addressed below:

4.10.1 MEMBER CHECKING

A possible limitation of the study is that the interview data was not member checked. Member checking involves sharing data a researcher has previously gathered from a respondent with him or her for the purposes of correcting errors or providing additional

information. It is viewed as a core technique for establishing the validity of an account (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited in Richards, 2003, p.287). From the interpretative researcher's perspective its usefulness in establishing credibility is brought into question. As stated, the interviews were conducted in busy schools during teachers' free periods. Background noise on the sound files attests to the nature of these environments. To have asked a participant to read a transcript of his interview whilst sitting in a coffee shop or at home, dislocated from the initial event and then verify it as a true version of events stands in conflict with a basic premise of interpretative research; that there is no fixed reality. Understanding is co-created in a particular time-related context which cannot be repeated (Angen, 2000, p. 383).

4.10.2 TRANSCRIPTION

Kvale (2007) takes this idea further saying:

> Transcribing involves translating from an oral language with its own set of rules, to a written language with another set of rules. Transcripts are not copies or representations of some original reality, they are interpretative constructions that are useful tools for given purposes. Transcripts are decontextualised conversations; abstractions from the original landscape from which they are derived. (p.98)

This suggests that by transferring the data from one format to another their validity is somehow compromised. An additional limitation in the context of this study was that the method for recording the interview data varied depending on the personal preference of the participants. Some participants did not want their views to be recorded and this required me to make notes whilst they talked. There was a slight advantage here in that these participants had English as an additional language which meant that although there were no issues with comprehensibility or intelligibility their delivery was much more measured and this enabled me to write down what they were saying verbatim.

During the research process another participant fell victim to non-renewal process. This meant I was unable to conduct the interview in person. He very kindly answered the

interview questions and emailed them to me. I would have liked to follow up this initial response with further questions, as I would have done ordinarily in a face to face encounter but his personal circumstances precluded me from doing so.

4.10.3 NOTE TAKING DURING CLASSROOM VISITS

A limitation of the study is that the post classroom visit interviews did not take place immediately after the lesson visit as most staff were teaching back to back lessons and so the recollection of events was displaced (Richards, 2003, p. 115). The words I had used when describing the purpose of my visit to teachers was to "see the curriculum in action". I had told them not to prepare a special lesson; that I was not there in a judgmental capacity and just wanted to see their reality firsthand. This, of course, was easier said than done. It required me to constantly reflect on my thought processes in order to remain an objective recorder of events (Denscombe, 2011; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 208).

4.10.4 DATA NOT GATHERED FROM ALL STAKEHOLDERS

In my original research design I had intended to gather data on the challenges of implementing the Adec English curriculum from both male and female teachers. This proved impossible logistically. In addition, other stakeholders in the boys' schools, such as students, parents, principals and administration staff, were not canvassed for their perspectives on the challenges the curriculum innovation posed. The reporting of any stakeholder attitudes towards the curriculum innovation or the teaching staff are, therefore, as the teachers perceived them, not directly expressed by the stakeholders themselves. These factors are recognised as further limitations of the study.

4.11 SUMMARY

> In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution. The irony of this situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or society at large, however great

their technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the
problems of greatest human concern (Schon 1987, p. 1).

This interpretive exploratory study delved into the social life worlds of a small group of male teachers involved in a curriculum innovation in three different schools. Its intention was to come to a closer understanding of the challenges they faced personally and professionally in implementing a change proposal. The investigation was approached through semi-structured interviews, classroom visits and document analysis. Due the richly contextualised, intra-subjective and inter-subjective nature of the inquiry, generalisation from the findings is neither possible nor intended.

CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter explores the data with relevance to the research questions posed. Although the focus of the study surrounds the challenges both EMTs and ATEs faced in implementing the Adec English curriculum, (research questions 2 and 3), it was felt that a fuller understanding of these challenges could only be achieved by first exploring the factors which had impacted on and explain Adec's current curriculum choice in the first instance, (research question 1).

Findings pertaining to research question one were gathered from two main sources of data: 1) information collected during in-depth interviews with ATEs who had experienced the Ministry of Education English curriculum in grades 10/11 prior to the Adec reform and 2) documentary data, examples of which are given in section 4.6.3.1.

ATE interview data provided a valuable context for the current Adec curriculum by highlighting 1) the negative impact of traditional pedagogical approaches on students' English performance pre-Adec reform and 2) the influence the seemingly irrelevant curriculum had had on students' engagement and motivation to learn English. Both of these factors meant students were ill-equipped to cope with the demands of university study where this was the medium of instruction and the labour market. Documentary data analysis showed two factors impinging on Adec's English curriculum choice: 1) the apparent influence of the knowledge economy and the place of English within it 2) the resulting need to appropriate an already established curriculum from an English speaking country overseas in order to promote the development of high-level communication, critical thinking and collaborative skills required to work effectively in today's labour force.

Research questions two and three were answered by analysing data gathered from in-depth interviews with both ATEs and EMTs, classroom visits and examination of curriculum and assessment documentation. The findings showed that the challenges faced by both ATEs and EMTs in implementing the Adec grade 10/11 curriculum fell into the following categories: 1) challenges surrounding teachers' interpretation of the curriculum and assessment documentation with regard to its clarity and complexity 2) curriculum materials; their availability, quality and suitability 3) practical challenges posed by the

promoted pedagogical framework and assessment system together with lack of meaningful student data on which to base teaching and learning 4) obstacles to effective classroom management including community and school factors and 5) general challenges faced by participants both personally and professionally as EMTs and ATEs.

5.1 THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IN GRADE 10/11 PRE-ADEC REFORM

The impetus behind the Adec change proposal appears to have been driven by several factors. One of them was the continued attack on the local education system, from both internal and external sources, due to the continued underperformance of students in the UAE in all curriculum areas, including English (AKR: UAE, 2011; Dakkak, 2011; The MENA Report, 2008; Ridge, 2009).

5.1.1 PEDAGOGICAL AND ASSESSMENT APPROACHES PRE-REFORM

ATEs who had taught in the UAE before the introduction of the current Adec reforms responded to this criticism. They were eager to point out that before the introduction of the Adec curriculum, students studied English just like any other subject, simply to succeed. The language had none of the status it now enjoys due to its perceived importance for global communication. Teachers also drew attention to the influence of the school culture and the demands made on them by their supervisors in determining what was taught and how:

> The way they [students] learnt in the past, it is criticised by some people. It doesn't mean it was not good because you learn in the way it is found in your school and the teacher teaches you according to the instructions given to him. […] The way of teaching depends on the syllabus.

The idea that teachers of English were technicians implementing prescribed curricular goals with little opportunity for creative input is discussed in Alwan's (2006) study on curriculum change in the UAE. Teachers also commented on the cultural capital placed on exam marks and how the test driven nature of the curriculum shaped their pedagogical approach as well as their students' motivation to learn. Ahmed said:

> In the past, teachers, students and families relied on textbooks and lessons were test directed. […] The system was, and still is, in many Arab countries, searching for marks.

For ATEs, returning high grades in exams gave the perception that students were learning although they recognised the reality was quite different. As "students didn't have the ability to write on their own" Ibrahim said, they were given a number of passages to learn by heart to replicate in the exam. The fact that teachers did not speak out gives some indication of the power differential between ATEs, who perceived their contract renewal depended on their students' pass rate, and their Emirati employers (Al Zeini, 2008; Ridge, 2014). This is unfortunate as it has perpetuated pedagogical approaches dependent on lecturing, grammar-translation and rote-learning. Unlike the Chinese who use memorisation with understanding; a process of questioning, discriminating and reflection (Hu, 2002, p. 101), whether or not the students were able to apply the knowledge learned in class was given little consideration. This in turn appears to have impacted negatively on students' participation and their ability to express themselves in English.

5.1.2 THE IMPACT OF PREVIOUS CURRICULA ON THE STUDY OF ENGLISH

Teachers felt students' lack of engagement in class was not only affected by the teacher-centred pedagogical approach and corrupt assessment system mentioned above (Hokal & Shaw, 1999, Swan 2012a) but further exacerbated by an English curriculum that had little relevance to their daily lives.

5.1.2.1 STUDENTS' LACK OF MOTIVATION

Alaa blamed the limited opportunities for students to use English outside the classroom other than for shopping or communicating with their maids as contributing factors to the lack of motivation to improve their proficiency. He felt that if students had studied English with university in mind in the past:

> It will be different for them. […] because I have seen many people of the UAE speak English very well and I remember once I met one of my students and asked about the score of IELTS and I was shocked when I know it was 6 so the student himself if he feels this subject or topic is important to him and he will use it in the future he will exert much effort.

His comments highlight the importance for policy makers of identifying meaningful goals for second language learning and, by so doing, provide a reality check. This is because, for the majority of students throughout the world who learn English as a subject by "drip-feed" for just a few hours a week, as is the case in the UAE, advanced levels of English rarely result (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

Other teachers felt easy access to well-paid jobs in the military or police despite minimal educational qualifications had reduced the perceived need for males to study and also contributed to the high non-completion rate referenced in Chapter Two. The legacy of this lack of competition in the job market has meant students with low cognitive skills are more likely to possess a "degree of self-confidence and a positive perception of self-capacity" which may not match their actual ability (Fariz, 2011, cited in Ahmed, 2012a). Al Sheikh & Elhoweris (2011) and Khamis et al. (2008) feel it is the undeserved status afforded boys in Emirati society that has played a key role in leading to this unwarranted sense of entitlement. Another contributing factor is the absence of career counselling at high school which has also exacerbated students' lack of knowledge regarding job choices and continues to do so today (Al Mazroui, 2012, cited in Ahmed, 2012a; Al Muhshen, 2012, cited in Swan, 2012c).

Interview data showed that the teacher-centred learning environment, pre-Adec reform, did not take into consideration whether male students perceived English as important, necessary or relevant for their daily lives. ATEs said their lesson content was governed by the text-book and not the interests of the students. In keeping with this study, research by Sulaiman (2006) discovered uninspiring curriculum materials were repeatedly cited as the reason for student disengagement and Zureik (2005) found English lessons were those most frequently missed by Emirati high school students. These factors are of significance as they reveal the inability of the English provision pre-reform to stir most students' interest in language learning for either the workplace or university and assist in explaining the acknowledged need for change.

5.1.2.2 THE MISMATCH BETWEEN THE SCHOOL CURRICULA AND STUDENTS' NEEDS

For those students who were interested in attending higher education, pre-Adec reform, the curriculum did not provide opportunities to develop the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1979) necessary for them to engage in university study in English, Ibrahim said. Students only realised this when it was too late and they needed to embark on a two year English foundation programme before entering faculty:

> The students' level was not good. They only discovered when they went to university […] when students had to get 5.5 [in IELTS].

Local university students interviewed by Salem (2011) were also surprised by the demands made of them when they entered tertiary education saying, "In school we had no chance to be creative; we were told to learn this and memorise that. In university you have to be independent. [...] We went to university and we got shocked". Whilst the world outside had changed dramatically, (nowhere perhaps is this more evident than in the UAE), schools in the region it seems had altered little. Although many adolescents demonstrated their ability to cope with responsibility, autonomy and challenge in complex peer and family relationships in their daily lives, schools, in contrast, offered them minimal opportunities in this regard and high levels of demotivation and disengagement were the unfortunate consequences (Rudduck & Demetriou, 2003).

5.1.3 THE PERCEIVED NEED FOR CHANGE – 21ST CENTURY SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

The findings above gathered during interviews with ATEs provide their perspectives on the need for change in English language education in the Abu Dhabi emirate. The documentary data analysed appears to offer a similar rationale. A damning report on the state of public education, commissioned by its then minister HH Sheikh Nahyan Al Nahyan in 2005, listed unsuitable curricula, inappropriate assessment and lack of teacher expertise as major impediments to educational progress (Macpherson, et al., 2007, p.3). In addition, the MENA report (2008) published data on education systems across the region as they stood in the mid-2000s and included analysis of the international large scale assessment TIMSS (2003). Although it had not participated in the 2003 assessment, the low scores returned by its Gulf

neighbours in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait alerted the UAE to deficiencies in its own education system.

The report's findings advocated wide-ranging reforms aimed at developing "complex" communication, "expert thinking" and academic skill areas previously reserved for the elite saying they were necessary to meet the demands of the knowledge economy (Levy & Murnane, 2004, cited in the MENA Report, 2008, p. 86-87). As a result, Hassan (2008), who succeeded HH Sheikh Nahyan Al Nahyan as education minister, revealed he and ministry staff spent months studying the features of various curricula worldwide, using a team of foreign consultants as guides (KHDA, 2010; Von Zastrow, 2008) before forging ahead with a decision to implement a learning-centred curriculum from overseas. There is no evidence to show either an analysis of students' or teachers' professional development needs was conducted prior which suggests the innovation was based on "symbolic, triumphalist action" rather than consideration of its appropriateness for the UAE teaching and learning context (Goodlad, 2001, cited in Wedell & Malderez, 2013, p.202). The implications of which will be revealed in the coming sections.

5.1.4 THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE ADEC CURRICULUM CHOICE

Documentary data analysis shows the Adec English curriculum for grades 10-12 was imported directly (but in an adapted version) from the mainstream Stage 4 & 5 (grades 7-10) outcomes-based English curriculum published by the then Department of Education and Training, NSW in Australia (DET NSW, 2002[15]). The overseas arm of the organisation, DEC International, claimed on its website it had won the tender to develop a curriculum from K-12 for Adec with the aim of:

> improving education in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, supporting
> national development and lifting students' achievement levels
> to international standards

Sahlberg (2012) describes the misguided need for countries to make international comparisons with education systems that bear no resemblance to their own as an "illness" damaging schools worldwide. He holds responsible governments who, on receiving the

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[15] Now called DEC; Department of Education and Communities

results of large-scale assessments like PISA, decide they want their own education system to emulate that of top-performers like Finland, Singapore or in this case Australia and uses the UAE as a "concrete example" (cited in Stewart, 2012).

The reason for the success of the NSW system according to Sahlberg (2012) rested on the fact it was "designed for their schools and their teachers and their thinking" (cited in Stewart, 2012), however, the following statement on the DEC International website (2007), suggests it was not averse to recreating the system elsewhere. DEC International says it fulfilled Adec's requirements by producing curriculum:

> content in the form of the knowledge, skills and values appropriate for students' learning in the Emirate;
>
> content arranged into strands, which highlighted how the curriculum was conceptualized
>
> standards, benchmarks, teaching strategies and assessment procedures.

The fact that the emirate asked Australia to develop "content in the form of the knowledge, skills and values appropriate for students' learning in the Emirate" infers it was also prepared to accept Australia's interpretation of the nature of subject knowledge, society and learner; its curriculum ideology.

The rationale for the Adec English curriculum adds further weight to this argument:

> In their study of English, students focus on a range of textual forms, encompassing written, spoken and visual texts of varying complexity. They learn to recognise and use a diversity of approaches and texts to meet the literacy demands for sophisticated social, cultural and aesthetic engagement, higher-order thinking and lifelong learning. They develop their appreciation of the imaginative and the affective. They recognise the ways in which texts convey, interpret and reflect perspectives of the self and the world. Importantly, they develop strategies for effective speaking, listening, reading, viewing, writing, monitoring and evaluating their own learning (Adec, 2008, p.8)

The aims of which are to enable students to:

- Communicate in English thoughtfully, imaginatively and effectively
- Compose and respond to texts in a range of modes and media
- Value and enjoy English as a language in which to express their ideas and feelings
- Consider the role of English as a global language
  (Adec applied English curriculum documents 2008, p.7)

The rationale and aims which inform the current Adec English curriculum clearly show the expectation that Emirati students should function in English at a highly proficient level, just as mainstream students might in Australia. Given that up until the implementation of the reform agenda in Abu Dhabi emirate in 2008, learning English at a school level was seen as the development of a set of discrete language skills to be used in scripted dialogues, reading and writing and not viewed as a vehicle for expressing individual thought or for critical analysis, this has proven a highly ambitious goal.

5.1.5 THE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH UNDERPINNING THE ADEC CURRICULUM

The explanation for the pedagogical approach informing the curriculum innovation was provided by Adec's then curriculum department head, Siler (2008) who described his vision for education in the emirate:

> The biggest change surrounds the content and the way it's delivered. [...] Under the new curriculum the child is at the centre of the learning process. The teacher is still the director but the students are actively doing things, trying to discover things, that's the big shift. [...] What they referred to as the curriculum was simply the content of a textbook. [...] We come at it from a different way: let's get that well mapped out. Once we've got that mapped out, then let's look for resources that can help us get there (cited in Lewis, 2008)

What the "that" in "let's get *that* well mapped out" refers to is not clear but the inference appears to be the content of the curriculum documents; namely, the standards, strands, indicators and content which will be analysed in the next section. The rationale behind this approach, according to Siler, was to improve student achievement:

> If I know how to problem-solve in groups with colleagues, I have a far greater skill than a bunch of facts stuffed in my head. Getting the information is not difficult, using it is important and that's the change really. We're trying to reach students to use information rather than just collecting it (cited in Lewis, 2008)

Although these comments explained the catalysts for change in the Abu Dhabi education system, significantly they failed to offer any advice on how teachers might apply the pedagogical approaches Adec had in mind. Instead, Siler (2008) suggested, training would be provided by the PPP English curriculum experts. Despite training provided, teachers faced often insurmountable challenges in implementing the curriculum as described above in the classroom and these are dealt with in section 5.2 and 5.3.

5.1.6 AN ANALYSIS OF THE ADEC CURRICULUM STANDARDS AND STRANDS

An analysis of the curriculum aims (see above) was undertaken in order to provide a more wide-ranging understanding of Adec's English curriculum choice; to show the links amongst its surface features, the deep learning to be undertaken by the students and the pedagogical expertise required by the teachers involved in its implementation. The curriculum aims are broken down into overarching *standards* and *strands.* Standards describe the knowledge, skills and understanding students are expected to achieve at the end of each grade level[16] and *strands* refer to "the knowledge base for the curriculum" (Adec, 2008, p.9).

The term *standards* immediately causes confusion because in the NSW curriculum knowledge, skills and understanding are referred to as *outcomes*. Outcomes based education (OBE) and standards based curricula (SBC) provide very different road maps to their final destination. On closer examination, however, the difference is explained by terminology rather than ideology as will be shown below.

Donnelly (2007) describes outcomes-based education (OBE) as a constructivist approach to learning which focuses on the desirable understandings, dispositions, attitudes and

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[16] See Appendix 15 for the complete grade 10 and 11 standards

capabilities students are expected to have by the end of their schooling. These are not finite bodies of knowledge but knowledge that is co-constructed by students and teachers in real time, through critical thinking, collaboration and differentiated instruction. In keeping with this idea, greater importance is placed on formative assessment and students generally complete one "stage" of learning over a period of two years. Education based on standards (SBC), on the other hand, has established discipline or content knowledge at its core, curriculum descriptors which are concise and measurable, a greater focus on direct teaching with explicit instruction which relates to specific year levels.

The following are outcomes number 10 from the NSW curriculum for grades 7-8 and 9-10, respectively; a student:

> identifies, considers and appreciates cultural expression in texts
>
> questions, challenges and evaluates cultural assumptions in texts and their effects on meaning

This is an extract from the Adec standards for grade 10:

> They [students] consider cultural contexts and how values and attitudes are transmitted through texts.

As can be seen the parallels in the wording of the NSW outcomes and the Adec standard show three things; one, how closely the two curricula resemble each other in intent; two, the Adec *standard* above is clearly not referencing a finite body of knowledge, as per the SBC model and three, as a consequence, the myriad ways this outcome could be interpreted by teachers when planning their instructional design.

To expand the ways in which teachers could construe the outcomes still further, the curriculum is then divided into three interrelated *strands*[17] as mentioned above: 1) talking and listening 2) reading and viewing 3) writing. An extract from the *talking and listening* strand follows:

> Students communicate in critical, interpretive and imaginative texts in formal and informal situations. […] They conduct much of

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[17] For a complete version of the strands and content see Appendix 16

their classroom work in English to practise and refine communication of their higher-order thinking and of their learning

There are two *indicators* under each strand supposedly narrowing the focus of study within the language skill strand and the overall standard. Fifteen bullet points under the indicators itemise the *content* or what is to be taught in each strand; making 45 "items" across the three strands to be taught by the end of each grade level.

Excerpts from the curriculum documentation, such as those above, are included in this chapter as they give insights into the rationale behind Adec's curriculum choice. To all intents and purposes, its standards and strands provide students with opportunities to function as mainstream English speakers, to develop global awareness and to view their world critically. Yet, how teachers are to create those opportunities, particularly as they are operating in what is essentially an English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom environment, remains elusive.

Interestingly, OBE was abandoned in the States in favour of SBC in the mid-nineties; with the Federation of Teachers criticising the former as "ambiguous, difficult to measure and low in academic content" (Shanker, 1993). This is not an isolated view. Educators in the UK, Australia and Canada have described OBE as "unwieldy and cumbersome", "flawed and superficial", as well as "frustrating and difficult", respectively (cited in Donnelly, 2007). Some argue this is because constructivism is a theory of learning rather than of teaching and that whilst it might seem initially attractive, "deep-rooted problems arise when attempts are made to apply it" (Cobb, Yackel & Wood, 1988, p. 87).

Overall, it appears Adec's curriculum choice has been influenced by an idealised view of English language education conveyed in the curriculum documentation provided by its overseas creators, without first giving consideration as to how it could be applied in practice in the local context.

The following two sections, which explore the lack of assessment procedures at the curriculum's inception as well as the documents overlooked in the curriculum design, are included as they illustrate this point further.

5.1.7 FORMALISATION OF THE ADEC ENGLISH LEARNING PLAN AND ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

When the curriculum was introduced in 2008, assessment documentation simply instructed teachers to work towards a particular text type with their students and one that would be summatively assessed yet provided no information about how marks would be allocated. As a result, PPP English consultants created marking rubrics and trained teachers in their use. Since that time both curriculum and associated assessment documentation have been expanded on considerably. The major additions are the Learning Plan which was introduced in 2010 to support a pedagogical framework whose intention was "to develop rich inquiry-based teaching and learning" (Adec, 2011b, p.2) and the 50 page Continuous Assessment booklet which presents formalised performance criteria and marking rubrics[18]. (See also section 2.2.2). In order to provide a quick-fix, Adec again borrowed its new assessment model from one used in Australia, this time from Queensland, meaning it has a curriculum from one state but evaluates it with an assessment system hailing from another. The irony of this decision was not lost on ATE Alaa and led him to question whether those driving the reform were actually "specialised in education or not. […] Really! I am speaking with you frankly," he said.

The introduction of the new assessment system has had a dramatic effect on the way the curriculum is taught and, because it is "backward planned", means two trimesters of the year are devoted to the completion of research and presentation tasks. Once more it appears, Adec's decision to employ an assessment tool used in mainstream Australian schools is driven by a desire to see students functioning as "native" English speakers might and again ignoring the linguistic and conceptual difficulties students might encounter when attempting to fulfil task performance criteria pitched at this level. The innumerable challenges the assessment process provides were discussed by the study's participants at length (see section 5.2.4)

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[18] Extracts from both documents can be seen in Appendix 1, 2 & 17.

5.1.8 DOCUMENTS OVERLOOKED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADEC CURRICULUM

Significantly, two publications designed specifically to assist ESL learners in accessing the mainstream English curriculum in NSW were not utilised in the Adec curriculum design. The first is the *NSW Education Department's Intensive English Programs Curriculum Framework for secondary ESL students* (2004), the contents of which all new migrants of high school age study for anything up to a year in preparation for their entry into mainstream education. The second, the *ESL Scales,* was published by Curriculum Corporation in 1994. It is a hundred page document, developed and validated by ACER (the Australian Centre for Educational Research) to assist teachers in designing programmes for ESL students in their mainstream English classes. The outcomes and indicators in these scales are used to assess these students' achievements and are published alongside the mainstream English curriculum outcomes and indicators for ease of reference.

There are three possible explanations for Adec's decision not to include these documents in the curriculum development process. One, those involved were unaware such materials existed and lacked knowledge of second language acquisition (SLA) research and approaches to teaching ESL students. Two, if consultation with ESL experts did take place, Adec chose not to act upon the advice received. Perhaps this was a reaction to previous initiatives which had supposedly embraced SLA yet were unsuccessful nevertheless. Three, as has been suggested earlier, Adec imagined that by introducing a mainstream English curriculum its students would somehow become "mainstream" English speakers.

The previous sections suggest Adec's curriculum choice was driven by a combination of factors; the lack of success traditional teaching approaches had had in improving students' language levels, the inability of previous English curricula to prepare them for university or the world of work and not least, the belief that the implementation of a mainstream curriculum would furnish grade 10/11 students with the necessary skills to communicate effectively, think critically and work collaboratively in English and, by so doing, fulfil the goals of the Abu Dhabi Government's 10 year Strategic Plan (2009-2018) (see section 3.1). Sections 5.2 and 5.3 explore the challenges ATEs and EMTs face in their endeavour to meet these expectations.

5.2 CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

The following sections explore the subsequent challenges teachers this decision posed for teachers in terms of implementation and references a selection of Snyder, Bolin & Zumwalt's (1992) fifteen "characteristics of change" (see section 3.11).

5.2.1 CHALLENGES SURROUNDING THE 'CLARITY' OF THE INNOVATION

According to Fullan (2007) issues surrounding the "clarity" or goals of an innovation appear in "virtually every study of [curriculum] change" (p.89). Similarly, this one identified several key challenges; teachers' understanding of the word "curriculum" was one of them.

5.2.1.1 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM 'CURRICULUM'

This difficulty was anticipated. As EMTs hailed from a variety of English speaking environments each with a different education system, it was reasonable to expect that their interpretations of the word "curriculum" might be at variance. As a consequence, they were asked to verbalise what the term meant to them. Peter said:

> There's not really a specific [Adec] curriculum. In the States what Adec refers to as a curriculum, we'd refer to as standards, because a true curriculum would modify [differentiate] and it would give exactly what to do each day; whereas this is more a set of standards to achieve by the end of the course.

According to Ali, the word curriculum meant:

> What is going to be taught and how it's taught, that's basically what curriculum is.
> **Interviewer: Does that include the materials as well?**
> It definitely does.

Five out of six of the EMTs interviewed hailed from the US where standards based curricula (SBC) were used (see section 5.1.5). The comments above suggest that for them the term "curriculum" signified something far more prescriptive than that provided the Adec documentation. This lack of clear direction caused tension from the outset. Prospective teachers also had experienced difficulty accessing specific details regarding curriculum content as a post from an online discussion forum attests:

> This is the link to the British National Curriculum for English […] for grades 11 and 12 […]. Is this the curriculum that Adec is following for these grades? […] I would still like to have an idea of general curricular aims. Could anyone provide some direction?

Posts of this nature indicate teachers were confused by the absence of information and that what they managed to find did not fit with their extant understanding of curriculum. Spillane (2002) says such dissonance can interfere with teachers' ability to implement an innovation as it is intended. For this reason, according to Wedell (2005) preliminary staff training is more effective when designed with recognition of their prior experiences. In most cases, however, teachers reported their orientation to the Adec English curriculum seemed to pose more questions than answers.

5.2.1.2 UNSATISFACTORY ORIENTATION TO CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTS

In their descriptions of the sessions teachers revealed an unevenness in the training they received, saying their expectations were not met. This dissatisfaction gave rise to anxieties surrounding the nature of the curriculum, associated pedagogical approaches and modes of assessment which, as will be shown in subsequent sections, proved to be major challenges once the term started. Michael was unimpressed by the brevity of his orientation session, saying, "They [Adec] gave us 20 minutes, which was already a little disheartening". He also felt the information supplied on the orientation led him to believe the students had a higher level of proficiency.

> To help explain it, they had maybe five or ten minutes of group work trying to define the rubric that they were using for it. But again, [it] didn't feel like much to truly understand it. Then they brought someone in from a model [girls'] school. They said, "[…] for our model ECART [is] our girls are doing things such as planning their own fashion shows." So immediately I got this sense that the level of students was going to be a lot higher than I eventually found out that it was.

Above Michael makes reference to a *model girls'* school. These are important distinctions. One, there is a huge divide between the academic achievement of girls and boys, described as "one of the most extreme in the world" by Barber, et al. (2007). Why girls continually outperform boys is not within the scope of this study but worthy of further research. Two,

pupils at model schools are selected based on academic achievement. They do not represent the student demographic at the majority of Cycle Three public schools in the UAE. Adec's use of non-representative data to advertise teaching positions and on its subsequent orientation programmes has been criticised vehemently in online forums penned by teachers who felt they had been duped into taking on the role of an EMT in grade 10-12 as a result of false advertising.

5.2.1.3 CHALLENGES POSED BY THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

EMTs reported teaching anything from a week to months before gaining access to the English curriculum and assessment documentation. Reasons for this varied. One, a US trained elementary teacher said he was transferred at a moment's notice to work in Cycle Three. Another, Paul, hired to teach grade 12, was suddenly given grade 10 and 11 classes mid-way through the year, saying:

> That's how I was introduced to the [grade 10/11] curriculum document. I'd never seen it before. I was in the classroom for days before I saw any curriculum documents at all. Then, by talking to the local Arab teachers, I got more and more curriculum. I don't think I actually got the Adec curriculum, the Integrated Strand Tasks [ISTs], and the [vocabulary]. I didn't get that until much later in that second trimester. So it was not good. It was a bad experience

Paul's reference to the assistance he received from ATEs is just one example of the help extended EMTs by local staff. The fact that he, an EMT, credits ATEs with having the expertise to provide him curriculum support is significant, particularly as it was these same teachers who were given the task of implementing the Adec English curriculum when it was first introduced in 2008 and began the academic year with no training in terms of how the new curriculum documentation should be interpreted or implemented in either English or Arabic.

Once EMTs did have access to the documents, they struggled to identify an explicit sense of purpose or tangible, achievable content, describing them as "abstract", "vague" and "universal". Several teachers said they only referred to them obliquely in their planning for

this reason. Other teachers complained the documents were too dense and the fact that it was borrowed from another context added further complications. Jim said:

> I have never seen a worse case of cut and paste. Everybody's damn ideal how to do something and put [it] together in the most convoluted document. Please! Adopt a damn philosophy. Figure out how you're going to implement it. Let the teachers know what they're going to do and how they're going to be held accountable for it and leave it at that. More words, bigger words and fancier words do not make a more intelligent document.

Ali agreed, saying the ill-defined nature of the documents meant they were open to conflicting interpretations.:

> It was tough. First of all, it's 50 to 60 pages […]; regarding ECART and the continuous assessment. If you had three different people who read it, they would have three different ideas on what it means

These comments are worthy of note. If experienced teachers had difficulty understanding the curriculum requirements it terms of classroom contingencies, it indicates the issues would inevitably arise when it came to implementing them in the classroom (Doyle & Ponder (1977). All EMTs in this study wanted to have a much clearer picture of the innovation and their role in it. Ali said:

> I would have liked to receive a session […] that explicitly tells us exactly what we should be teaching, how we should be grading them, what rubrics we should be using. Instead of a pack of papers dumped on our desk - "This is it."

This top-down mandate considered lofty statements of principle and specifications of desired outcomes but had ignored possible issues surrounding instructional methods and other procedural matters at the micro level of the school and practitioner. Such shortcomings were also identified by Akkary & Rizk (2011) in their study of educational reform in the region and indicate a need for an in-depth orientation programme for new teachers.

5.2.2 CHALLENGES SURROUNDING THE 'COMPLEXITY' OF THE INNOVATION

The extent to which teachers are confronted by the utilisation of new materials, the learning of new skills and the expectation that they alter their existing beliefs regarding teaching and learning is referred to as "complexity" in innovation literature (Fullan, 2007; Snyder, Bolin & Zumwalt, 1992). The complexity faced by teachers interviewed for this study differs in that, teachers hired from overseas were employed by Adec specifically because they already had experience of teaching high school in an English speaking context and, by association, the prerequisite skills to thrive in a learning-centred/social constructivist classroom. Adec's belief that these factors made EMTs perfectly placed to give the curriculum in grade 10-12 the kick-start it had lacked since its introduction in 142 public schools in 2008 (Lewis, 2008) proved to be misplaced.

5.2.2.1 CONFLICT BETWEEN THE CURRICULUM AIMS AND THE REALITIES OF THE CLASSROOM

What became immediately apparent to the EMTs when they met their classes for the first time and, in turn, became the biggest challenge they faced altogether was the huge chasm that existed between the expectations outlined in the Adec curriculum documentation and the extremely low proficiency levels of the students. Michael a licensed teacher from the US with an MA TESOL said felt he had been misled at his interview in the US and during the orientation session with Adec:

> I asked, "Will this be ESL?" "No, no, no this is not ESL. You will be teaching English literature and critical thinking and discussion" […] like I would be back in the States. I've heard it through various channels. I remember […] hearing it at that 20 minute training that we had on the Adec curriculum right before school started. It's been repeated here and there. That hasn't been the case at all, which is fine, if I was allowed to teach true ESL or even sheltered instruction. That would be fabulous but I can't because of what is being asked or what is expected

Ornstein & Hunkins (2004) warn that for successful implementation to occur "innovation must be manageable and feasible for the average teacher. We cannot innovate ideas concerning critical thinking or problem solving when students cannot read or write basic

English or refuse to behave in class" (p.305). In its enthusiasm to mimic a mainstream English teaching and learning environment Adec had failed to consider whether its reform was either manageable or feasible and had given new teachers a very different impression of the realities they would face.   As a consequence, EMTs felt that any strategic advantage they possessed in terms of pedagogical expertise gained overseas was immediately countered by the challenges they faced in delivering and assessing a curriculum both cognitively and linguistically beyond the capabilities of their students. This impacted heavily on their morale and motivation.

5.2.3 CHALLENGES SURROUNDING THE CURRICULUM MATERIALS

Another challenge EMTs soon discovered surrounded curriculum materials; their availability, their quality and their suitability for their students' level as well as the cultural context.

5.2.3.1 THE LACK OF QUALITY TEACHING MATERIALS

The lack of teaching materials has been a major criticism of the Adec curriculum since its inception in 2008. When asked to comment, teachers were uniformly scathing. Ali said:

> I never knew a school system existed where the teachers had to create every document. I didn't know that was possible, but we're doing the best we can. […] We don't have an Adec curriculum for Cycle Three really. We basically create our own.

There are several explanations for this situation. The first and most obvious one is that much of the discourse regarding the inadequacy of the education system in the country pre-reform surrounded local teachers' apparent obsession with the textbook and their need to follow it to the letter. As local teachers were the ones to implement the new English curriculum in 2008, for Adec to have then provided them with a textbook could have sent out the wrong message. The fact that the majority of Arab English teachers had never before been expected to interpret curriculum documents, compile a scheme of work or create all their own materials, however, was paid scant regard. Added to which, Adec failed to consider that most schools lacked the basic infrastructure to print or photocopy the

thousands of worksheets required. This in turn caused tension throughout the community, for teachers, parents and students alike.

Seven years on, teachers' comments suggest the situation has changed little. EMTs agreed that it was a teacher's job to source, design and produce work specifically designed for their students but were surprised there were so few Adec resources available for them to adapt. David described those that were, of "very poor" quality. As a result, teachers in the same department developed and shared their own resources or used social media to exchange materials they had created with colleagues from other schools. This situation suggests Adec had not taken advantage of a valuable an opportunity to create a centralised database for the collation of materials which would greatly assist its teachers.

5.2.3.2 THE CHALLENGE OF SOURCING MATERIALS SUITABLE FOR THE STUDENTS' LEVEL

Several teachers said they enjoyed looking for authentic materials online to present the Adec topics in innovative ways but found it stressful as well as time-consuming to adapt them so that they were appropriate for the students' level. Peter said:

> I'm always constantly having to figure out how to break this down to their level. Once we've accomplished that it works pretty well but those extra steps are difficult with a short amount of time to prepare. Hopefully, next year we'll be able to do it a bit better. […] I feel like I've been […] behind the game the entire year. I don't feel like I've been an effective teacher but those aspects are not necessarily in my control

Other teachers said some kind of core text they could use as a foundation and then adapt to meet the varied needs of their students would be helpful but qualified this by saying before a text could be produced there would need to be extensive research done in order to ensure the materials created were of a suitable language level and suitable in terms of content. The fact that this has not happened after seven years could indicate Adec is waiting for the students advancing grade by grade through the NSM to reach Cycle Three and exhibit the requisite linguistic and conceptual skills to cope with the demands of the grade 10/11 curriculum. In the meantime, students in Cycle Three who have not experienced the NSM struggle against the odds to reach a new understanding of what English lessons now "are" and their role in them. According to David, this feeling of dislocation means "the lost

generation continues to get further lost"[19]. His comment highlights Adec's seeming unwillingness to come to terms with the impossibility of the current situation confronting teachers and students.

5.2.3.3 THE CHALLENGES OF SOURCING SUITABLE MATERIALS IN TERMS OF CULTURAL AND RELIGION

To all intents and purposes, the Adec curriculum content has been designed with "cultural equivalencing" in mind; a term coined by Lim (1991) to describe how curriculum materials are used to teach English whilst honouring a host country's culture and so avoid being accused of using English as a medium to export western thinking (cited in Clarke, 2008, p. 129; Pennycook, 2001). Whilst the choice of themes might appear sensitive to the cultural context, Hassan, an ATE questioned the rationale behind students studying topics about Arabic heritage and culture in English classes[20]:

> It is a huge dilemma. You know, teaching a topic such as citizenship or national identity or whatever can be taught in Arabic with better results.

Another long serving ATE in the UAE, Waleed, said that even though some of the EMTs were of the same religion as the students, the fact that they were not of the same language and cultural background created a barrier between them and the students when it came to discussing certain topics in class:

> [the students] don't expect me to offend them so they speak their mind but when they talk to an LT [EMT] they are very cautious and they would not accept anything about their society from him. They may accept it from me because I have the same culture. I speak the same language. I am from the same religion so they trust me. So they wouldn't accept

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[19] A reference to Ohan's (2010) comments on ineffectual educational reforms "We're losing our young generation. It has an impact on society, on Emiratisation, on economic success. […] The students coming out of high school are still deficient in basic disciplines, especially language, mathematics and sciences" (cited in Bardsley, 2010a).

[20] See section 2.2.2 for a breakdown of the themes.

anyone else to talk about this because he doesn't belong to the same culture. This is very important. This is why I always tell my LT colleagues, please be very careful when you talk about social issues, religious issues or critical issues.

Although this comment is made from the perspective of the teacher rather than the pupils themselves, the suggestion that local students might be wary of their western teachers' motives when engaging with them in the discussion of apparently controversial issues, challenges the wisdom of hiring EMTs. Particularly when the development of critical thinking is one of the curriculum drivers. A study by Kostoulas-Makrakis (2005) on pre-service Emirati teachers' views of Europe and Europeans showed that negative stereotypes predominated and her research may give an indication of the views held by the students mentioned above. EMTs were equally mindful of the limitations of discussing topics with which they were unfamiliar. Shortly after his contract began, Michael recalled:

The theme for 10th grade was 'The Emirati family' which was already difficult enough because it was my first trimester; my first couple of months in the UAE. I felt like I was supposed to teach them [the students] what the Emirati family was all about and I had no clue

These comments also highlight the dilemma the UAE faces in its struggle to attract Emirati male role models into the teaching profession. The implications of which are discussed in 6.2.9.

5.2.4 THE PRACTICALITIES OF IMPLEMENTING THE CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The following sections address the day to day realities for teachers in implementing the curriculum and assessment framework. As the curriculum is backward planned teachers spent much of their time working with students towards an end goal / assessment outcome (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Teachers talked at length about the numerous challenges this presented. The following section explores the ECART and ISTs.

5.2.4.1 TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT OF THE RESEARCH BASED TASK - ECART

The Adec assessment documentation suggests students will a) engage in deep inquiry of a topic b) apply high order thinking skills c) develop skills in the application of English (Adec, 2011a, p.3). The ECART[21] clearly provides these opportunities on paper, however, the reality of facilitating students' individually designed research projects provoked this comment from Paul:

> The second most difficult challenge to implementing this curriculum is the research portion of the curriculum. […] I think ECART is a joke. It's a joke. I don't think it gives any indication of any learning. There's no learning.

David was of a similar opinion:

> […] The ECART is just totally, utterly inappropriate. They [the students] hate it and none of us particularly like teaching it.

Research over the past fifty years shows inquiry based learning with insufficient guidance places a huge cognitive burden on students' shoulders and rather than increasing engagement has a detrimental effect on less able learners who have limited prior knowledge on which to base their learning decisions (Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006). This is an important consideration for Emirati students, who, despite having never experienced such an approach to learning, are not only required to conduct research and present their findings but to do so in a foreign language. An expectation Lootah & Lootah (2010) criticise vehemently, claiming it denies Arabic L1 students the right to interact "normally with the educational process". Whilst teachers acknowledged the insurmountable linguistic difficulties students faced, they also drew attention to the negative impact of the local learning culture on the process. As the following sections show, low reading levels, lack of experience in research based activities, the subsequent tendency for students to plagiarise and easy access to study centres producing assessment task responses on demand all acted as major obstacles to the satisfactory completion of the ECART.

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[21] See section 2.2 for a description of the English continuous assessment rich task (ECART)

5.2.4.1.1 CHALLENGES POSED BY THE READING PROFICIENCY LEVELS OF STUDENTS

> […] second graders in the United States can read and comprehend better than my eleventh graders here. That's just an honest assessment. It just goes to show how much work they haven't [done], and where they need to be, and what we're asking them to do is ridiculous!

Teachers said that between 5 to 20 per cent of their students could make an attempt to work towards the ECART independently but, generally speaking, the work produced was of a low standard. As Ali's comment above shows, one of the major hurdles was the inability of students to read in English; either to decode and/or to comprehend. Findings in keeping with a UAE based research study by Freimuth (2014) and a situation further complicated by the inconsistency in orthographies of Arabic and English (Lervag & Aukrust, 2010).

During a visit to Ali's grade 11 class, a student came to the board to write the sentence "Hamad and Ali are going to school". The boy, by the name of Hamad was unable to spell "Ali" and wrote "Ale". When the students shouted out to him to write the letter "i", he hesitated, giving the impression he had difficulty grasping that this letter corresponded with the sound "ee". A study by Saigh & Schmitt (2012) found Arabic students had difficulties in differentiating vowel sounds; with short vowels providing a greater challenge. Waleed said in-house reading assessments conducted at the beginning of the academic year had shown the same issue and that 50% of grade 10 students were not confident in their alphabet. Anecdotal evidence from students on university foundation English programmes showed they were not taught the relationship between letters and sounds in their school English classes. This could explain some of the confusion many students face when writing, reading and spelling and clearly highlights why teachers feel the ECART research task is inappropriate for their students. Peter summed up the situation for his students:

> At these guys' level, handing them a dictionary would be way over their heads, even now. We're still working on basic letters and stuff.

5.2.4.1.2 LACK OF TRAINING IN RESEARCH BASED ACTIVITIES

Michael said his students loved to "leaf through books", adding that although this was an improvement on his first attempts at encouraging his students to work independently, he was not confident that saying "Okay, go find a book that is good for your topic that you chose and do some research" would result in a fruitful outcome. Jim felt that "culturally, they [the schools] haven't really figured out how to use libraries here" and that students needed library sessions to be train them in how to use the classification system and in identifying relevant data. He said students were better at finding information on the internet but that only his "advanced" students researched in English. Most students read the information in Arabic. Peter also thought that teaching should concentrate on basic skills rather than the teaching of research skills:

> [...] Actually sitting down [...] with a PowerPoint presentation and showing them [...], "This is how you do research"? They don't have those language skills yet. Maybe in seven years when you've got the ones who have been taught the Adec curriculum at the lower levels to finally get up to here we'll be able to start doing this. But at the current rate, we need to do a lot more remedial work

Up until recently, libraries in most public schools were unattractive, under-resourced, under-utilised and invariably given low ratings in school inspections undertaken by overseas monitoring agencies (Ahmed, 2012b). The Adec reforms have meant a lot more money has been spent on buying both fiction and non-fiction texts, improving the ICT equipment to include flat screen TVs, a reliable internet connection and access to banks of computers for group or independent study. The addition of majilis cushions and other forms of decoration have made the library a comfortable and informal place for teachers to bring their classes. Despite this, Peter still felt they lacked basic resources to match the students' disparate reading levels:

> They [Adec] suggested several e-readers that are online but they've provided no resources, writing matter, no readers or text. We generate everything ourselves. [...] Even if we have a text that we can pull from an outside source, because most mainstream stuff is still

above their level, we have to rewrite it, redraft it to their level. That is a process that takes quite a bit of time.

A class visit saw grade 11 students begin their final ECART project for the year in their school library. The teacher talked them through their assessment booklet and explained how they should approach the task. The sample he showed students had been substantially reduced from the original and overwhelming 22 page booklet created by his provider to a more manageable 8 page document. The activity required the students to listen intently. Some were visibly restless, suggesting they did not understand what was being said, but were not disruptive. Once the students were on the computers, I spoke to some of them. One questioned the usefulness of studying a topic on "disasters" [natural disaster preparation] and said his brother was studying the same topic in primary 5. He felt the task was far too difficult for his brother so he had written his ECART for him. Another student I spoke to said he understood "nothing" he read in English which meant that internet research was done in Arabic. Further casting doubt on the notion that undertaking an independent research project would develop his English skills as Adec might have hoped.

5.2.4.1.3 ISSUES SURROUNDING PLAGIARISM

Jim said students who undertook internet research in Arabic would often then "hit Google Translator" to convert the page into English and then pass the work up as part of their ECART. Educational plagiarism is a global problem and often surrounds students' lack of confidence when it comes to expressing someone else's thoughts in their own words. This issue increases exponentially if the expectation is that these thoughts are expressed in a foreign language (Wheeler & Anderson, 2011). All teachers said this was a regular occurrence in their classes and expressed their frustration that students should have to complete tasks based on an unrealistic expectations of their abilities. Paul said:

> The vast majority of kids copy paste things from the internet. I don't even think it's a question of laziness. It's because that's all they can do.

5.2.4.1.4 EASY ACCESS TO STUDY CENTRES PRODUCING ECART TASKS ON DEMAND

Another option available for students in need of a ready-made assessment was to pay for a ghost writer. All teachers were well aware this was happening. Hassan said:

> They [the students] just try to grasp the title. Then they go and tell it to the man in the bookshop and of course it goes twisted further. […] And they bring me a topic and I say "What is this? I didn't ask for this." […] They just pay the 50 dirham and bring some papers and say, "This is ECART."

The AKR: UAE case study (2011) blames this phenomenon in part on school curricula but also on the learning culture of the students who still believe "the test is the only measure of learning" (p. 336) and do not take continuous assessment seriously. Whilst there may be truth in this comment, it is also seems to be missing the point. Hassan put it succinctly:

> There is no way you can ask them for more than that because you know they will not be able to do it. It's a vicious cycle and I don't see any way out.

Michael agreed saying, that because students had such low levels of English, this meant they were unable to create an "authentic product" making "the ECART itself […] a major hurdle in assessing what they [students] know". Despite this, teachers were obliged to follow the 7 page ECART inquiry process for each of the students in their classes contained in the Adec continuous assessment booklet*.* Michael expressed the futility of this situation:

> The Adec curriculum, with the way it is set up, […] I feel is just steering me towards - Did they [the students] accomplish what they needed to accomplish? Did they have the product that they need to have? […] Not much is put into, was it helpful? If not, how can we make it more helpful? […] That's getting me down.

The remarks from the previous sections show the current ECART design is inadequate both for developing students' English skills and their capacity for critical thinking. They portray the assessment process as serving an instrumental, extrinsic purpose where the students' needs and their developmental journey are incidental. The lack of consideration given to the students in the education process negates the fundamental premise of the learner or learning-centred curriculum, thus, making it one that is difficult to respect. There are serious implications for students' overall development and eventual contribution to Emirati society as a result.

5.2.4.2 COPING WITH STUDENTS' INABILITY TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF THE ECART

The situation described above put teachers in an awkward position. This was, in part, due to an imbalance in the assessment weighting which made the ECART worth 60% of the students' total mark. Ali said:

> Basically, for them to do the ECART the correct way they would
> all probably fail the class. So what we're forced to do is do most
> of it [the ECART] in the classroom

In justifying how he dealt with students' inability to produce their own writing, Michael said he provided framed sentences or framed paragraphs which they attempted, to a greater or lesser degree, to complete independently. David was more direct, saying:

> What we end up doing is just lashing it all up on the board and
> they copy it. It is as simple as that.

This situation has come about because Adec has given no consideration to the complexity of task language or "whether learning an L2 is similar to or different from learning an L1" (Yates & Muchisky, 2003, p.139). As a result, teachers have resorted to tackling the ECART assessment in the same way as teachers pre-reform (section 5.1.1); the very approach Adec wanted to decommission. Authentic assessment is supposedly designed to connect with students' feelings and thinking about their own lives and societal issues (Marsh & Willis, 2007, p. 262), however, as Paul described how he scaffolded the diary entries in his students' ECART journals to the point of writing them for them, he said with sarcasm:

> Is that an authentic assessment? No! Is it authentic teaching? No!
> […] It's a bogus research project which just doesn't do anything. And
> the kids know it too.

5.2.4.2.1 A STORY OF SUCCESS?

On one of the class visits grade 10 students were observed completing an ECART task. Their inability to work independently due the lack of comprehension became immediately obvious. The teacher, Michael, countered this by using one of the students with good proficiency in English to translate for him, both orally and by writing key vocabulary items, such as "mountain", "jungle" and "desert" on the board in Arabic. Students were required to write these words in their ECART booklets devoting a page to each environment. They clearly struggled with this idea as well as having the freedom to design the layout of the

booklet. The translator went around to each table which seated groups of 3-4 students to explain the task in Arabic. In the meantime, some students worked, some chatted and some were off task, texting on their phones. The process was arduous. At the end of the session, the students had achieved very little and what they had produced, childlike. Michael commented on the situation independently of my observations which were not revealed to him after the lesson visit, saying the students had gone on to write their own sentences such as "Camels are good.", "They call camels the ships of the desert." He explained this approach:

> If you have the students create their own work, it would look insanely elementary, […] like you're not doing anything with them […]. If you compare my brochures with other grades, they don't look as professional. They don't look as insightful but I'm proud of them because they were the students' own work.

Allowing students to produce their own work and resisting the temptation to intervene in the process is a dilemma every teacher faces. A study by Elmore et al (1996) in Windschitl, 2002, p. 145) showed that developing students' knowledge and understanding without "displacing" that which they already have is a difficult balancing act. The standard of the work produced in by Michael's students however, begs the question whether more progress might have been made using more explicit teaching methods. Something critics of outcomes-based education argue for, as does Michael, below (Donnelly, 2007).

5.2.4.3 STUDENTS' INABILITY TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF INTEGRATED STRAND TASKS

All participants were in favour of continuous assessment as long as it was being used to drive instruction. As the ISTs were designed to assess students' language skills, teachers were not quite so disdainful about their intent. The perennial issue was, once again, the mismatch between the expectation of the task and the students' inability to meet the criteria. When Michael suggested an ESL approach would be more effective given the students' level, his English Advisor said:

> "You can teach ESL as long as it fits in the curriculum". But I feel like when the curriculum expects me to have the students […] write a two page report on something and [they] can barely speak English, I really don't have time to teach them

the basic English skills that they would need, first of all, to live and second of all, to even begin thinking about writing a paragraph on their own.

Ali explained his tactics for coping with the demands of ISTs:

First of all I sort of ignore it until I have to get to it [and] I teach them what they need to know [instead]. If they don't know a subject or a predicate, I teach them that. I teach them how to read. […] Then, about a week before I decide I'm going to do my continuous assessment task, I will prep them on something I think they should be able to do, and I give them a week of practice. Then we'll do the continuous assessment task. Then we'll go back to teaching them what they really need to know. That's how I do that, just so I can fulfil the requirement of Adec

One of the ISTs involves "writing for a purpose". Its overall objective is to "write two different text types related to the learning plan on the same theme/idea". A class visit saw a grade 11 teacher prepare his students for this IST by concentrating on one of the 4 overarching performance criteria; spelling. In summary, this involved students correcting spelling mistakes in a short extract from the Wizard of Oz which came from a primary school textbook published in the UK in 1999 and meant for grade 6. He gave them a brief synopsis of the story and immediately the students wanted to watch the film. The teacher worked through the first few examples with the students and then asked them to work independently. This was a very demanding exercise as the text was meant for students who spoke English as a first language and who would have been used the descriptive language that is part of the "fairy tale" genre. It also required students to have an awareness of homophones. Two thirds of the class were passive when it came and to giving responses and the same students answered continually. Immediately gaps in their graphophonic knowledge became evident; most particularly with regard to identifying vowel sounds (ESL Scales, 1994; Hayes-Harb, 2006). Students managed to correct "son" to "sun" but were unable to correct "weigh" to "way", which became "weyer"; "sore" to "saw", which became "sary" and "sarry" or "beautiful" which students began to spell "bi / bu / bef".

These examples highlight the dilemma facing teachers on a daily basis. For while they fully supported the principles of constructivist learning which placed their students' needs at the heart of their instructional design, they felt perpetually compromised by the unrealistic

expectations of the Adec assessment system and sourcing materials which fulfilled the task criteria but were accessible for their students. Most worked round this impossibility by differentiating the outcome. Hassan said that the only time in the academic year when both he and his students felt as they though were achieving anything was trimester 2 when he was free to design the programme "because I knew what I wanted to reach and the students knew what they needed to learn". He then commented insightfully:

> We are using a medium to reach a goal, and we cannot reach the goal if the medium is missing. It would have been better to start with the language itself not topics IN that language.

The implication here is that two out of three terms are a wasted opportunity for students to develop their English skills, and suggests the structure of the course together with the way it is assessed needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

5.2.5. CHALLENGES SURROUNDING THE END OF YEAR EXAMS

Peter explained how the undeveloped bottom-up processing mentioned above impacted on students in the exam when they faced longer reading passages:

> […] Text that's as large as a paragraph, that's very intimidating for them and it's a challenge because all their exams will throw large chunks of text at them and when you mark the exams you understand very quickly that they have no idea what it is saying.

After the grade 10 final English EMSA (External Measurement of Student Achievement), I asked to read some of the students' responses. This endorsed Peter's findings and showed most students had simply copied the prompts.

The grade 10 paper also required students to identify the poetic feature, "A tree will always listen" from a selection of 4 possible responses. Alaa wondered how students were supposed to isolate examples of simile, metaphor, personification and alliteration when they were not yet able to differentiate between a noun, verb or adjective and, in all likelihood, could not read the poem or the question (See Appendix 3). All teachers, whether EMT or ATE, talked about the inadequacies of the ECART as a form of assessment, yet ATEs talked at much greater length about the challenges they faced with regard to the final EMSA

exam, because, as Ahmed said, "The mentality of the students is still directed towards exams. ECART has nothing to do with exams". It was clear that all ATEs had scrutinised the Adec assessment documentation and past EMSA papers closely. One of their major concerns was the inconsistency between the topics taught and what was in the exam. Ahmed said:

> It's supposed to be related to the theme but which theme? Trimester 1, 2 or 3? Mostly on the 3rd trimester so what we taught in trimester 1 & 2 is useless.

An analysis of the EMSA grade 10 final exam the paper undertaken for this study showed the readings were not related to the grade 10 themes or associated vocabulary list. This situation led Alaa to suggest, with a smile, that the English exam depended on students' "general knowledge" rather than anything they learnt in class and Hassan to remark that those who wrote the papers had a "totally different interpretation of the curriculum" which hampered teachers from helping students develop the skills they needed to succeed in the exams.

The year this study took place students' EMSA scores were supposed to be included as a percentage of each student's overall final mark. Just before these data were released, however, schools received a directive from Adec to say EMSA marks were not to be used and to adjust their grades accordingly. No official reason was given. This is unfortunate as the EMSA provides a computer generated, in-depth analysis of individual student responses, designed to enable profiling of students' strengths and weaknesses. The findings suggest any analysis would simply have drawn attention to the substantial gaps in student knowledge and the inappropriateness of the curriculum for this population of learners. In all likelihood these factors influenced Adec's decision to exclude the EMSA data.

5.2.6 CHALLENGES SURROUNDING LACK OF VALID NEEDS RELATED DATA

The above sections show that, even though teachers engaged in three forms of assessment, their students' inability to meet the performance criteria meant the data generated from them did little to assist in programming for their students' needs. Michael, from a standards based curricula (SBC) background in the States, said there he was required to assess his

students both formally and informally three times a week, providing him with valuable data on their developmental journey in relation to specific skills. He acknowledged the ECART had enabled him to relinquish this level of control and allow for more open-ended responses in his classroom. At the same time, he stressed, it proved a hindrance when it came to assigning grades as the Adec marking rubrics dealt with general rather than specific terms:

> Now, I don't know who knows what. At any one time, I couldn't really tell you. I have my informal observations but I couldn't give you hard evidence. That's a real challenge formatively.

In a bid to counter this, teachers said they had given their students a variety of informal reading assessments to gauge their students' levels although they recognised the limitations of using reading assessments designed for L1 students with students who were learning it as a foreign language (Abedi, 2010). Their informal research had shown students were, on average, 4 to 5 years behind their grade level.

The lack of meaningful needs analyses, reliable instruments for gathering data and the country's past and continued inability to deal honestly with the deficits inherent in its English language programming are proving detrimental to both teachers, students and to the success of the reform. Although teachers were well aware of the political influence on Adec's curriculum choice, they felt that if an in-depth needs analysis were conducted an English language programme more relevant to their students' requirements could be implemented to much greater effect. Michael qualified his desire for a needs analysis by saying it should involve schools emirate-wide instead of "treating every school and every part of the country like it's inhabited with the same students. […] They have different needs, they have different levels and they have different language skills".

5.2.7 CHALLENGES POSED BY INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES PROMOTED IN THE CURRICULUM

The Adec curriculum expects teachers to employ a range of pedagogical approaches which encourage the development of 21st century skills. For the purposes of the study activities promoting critical thinking, differentiation and collaboration were considered.

5.2.7.1 CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITIES

References to critical thinking are frequent in the Adec 10-12 English Curriculum document (2008) although no definition is given of it. The idea behind the choice of curriculum topics and assessment tasks is that they raise students' awareness of issues affecting their community and ask them to think critically about possible solutions. During the lesson visits very few examples of activities encouraging critical thinking were observed. Teachers were asked how students coped with critical thinking linguistically and culturally. It seemed they provided another set of challenges.

5.2.7.1.1 LINGUISTIC CHALLENGES POSED BY CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITIES

Most felt their students were capable of thinking critically in Arabic but their limited language skills impeded their ability to communicate higher order thinking in English which was why Paul explained the curriculum was "a misfit for these students". Peter said:

> There are some concepts that, in Bloom's Taxonomy [are] just not in their abilities to reason right now, language-wise. I don't believe […] that they're not intelligent enough to do it. It's just that they don't have the language to express their ideas this way and they struggle really hard.

Students responded well to challenging questions related to things they were familiar with and interested in, such as cars, mobiles phones and video games, said ATE Waleed. Adding when debating these he was less concerned with the students' grammatical accuracy but whether they could make their point in English. He used examples of phrases his students used in a discussion surrounding increased levels of divorce in the UAE; "Well, teacher, we are rich", "too much money", "want new woman".

Adec's rationale for having students think critically is to develop their capacity for problem solving; a recognised the 21st century skill (Freimuth, 2014). In a high proficiency or mainstream English class such an activity would see students express their higher order thinking through the language of speculation, evaluation and suggestion which research by Redfield & Rousseau (1981) shows leads to higher student achievement. The language used by students in the example given by Waleed above, while commendable as a starting point, is limited to listing isolated vocabulary items and/or providing partially formed ideas

associated with the topic. This is because, as the data show, the time it takes to explicitly teach the language and grammatical structures required for this kind of activity has not been factored into the Adec English curriculum; something Cummins & Man (2007) view as crucial. Frustration with this situation led Michael to comment:

> They [the students] need basic skills. I think more leniency in what is expected. I think critical thinking is a good goal but there needs to be [support] for me to teach the basic English skills that they need [and a way] to integrate it into the Adec curriculum. […]That's one of the biggest problems that I've had.

5.2.7.1.2 CULTURAL CHALLENGES POSED BY CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITIES

Whilst teachers felt students were capable of thinking critically in Arabic, they also felt it was an underdeveloped skill. Ali said:

> It has to do with their culture I think, where they're basically told what to think and what to do, and are not really given the opportunity to blaze their own trail

The reasoning strategies people use to analyse problems are based on culturally valued practices in their country of origin, according to Connor & Kaplan (1987), (cited in Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996). Encouraging students to make their own decisions and to operate autonomously is not something generally practised in Emirati culture and due to the collectivist nature of the society, problems are usually solved by family members (AKR: UAE, 2011). If the student is asked about an issue outside the realm of his every day experience, it stands to reason he would have little idea how to respond to it and this could explain why Ali felt his students would not move beyond a literal interpretation:

> The students aren't really able to use inference and context clues and things like that. They need the answer to be right there in front of them. […] If I gave them a task that required critical thinking, what they would do is sit there until the bell [rang] and not do anything, to be honest.

This situation posed challenges for ECART assessment tasks, responding to visual text and written essay prompts where students were asked to have and justify their opinions. Michael used the example of the ECART topic on the "world around us" mentioned above,

saying he asked his students why tourism might be a problem in places of great natural beauty:

> They didn't see it as problem at all. [...] They seemed more eager to hear what I had to say on the subject and then regurgitate it. They wanted "All right what do you want me to say?" instead of "How am I hurting Jebel Hafeet?" or "How is Jebel Hafeet being harmed by tourists?" or what have you.

Windschitl (2002) writes of the challenges teachers face in coming to terms with and responding to the "incomplete understandings" and "naïve renditions" students exhibit in constructivist classrooms and which increase exponentially when the activities involve critical thinking. An attempt to change the grade 12 exit examination (CEPA) by increasing the frequency of higher order thinking questions by 30% resulted in a sharp increase in failures. As a result of the ensuing public outcry from parents the former version was reinstated (Lewis, 2010, cited in Dakkak, 2011).

During Paul's lesson visit, the purpose of which was to develop students' knowledge of the vocabulary list for the grade 10 topic the "world around us"[22], he showed a series of images on the data projector. The first picture was of a migrant labourer sweating in the sun. Initially, he elicited associated vocabulary, then asked the students "Who contributes more, me or him?" The question was confronting and the students seemed momentarily shocked to be asked this by a teacher. Their facial expressions and smiles gave an indication of their thought processes; was it a trick question? Of course he wants us to say him but what would happen if we say the labourer? Eventually a diplomatic student said "You. You help us to be better in English." At which point, the teacher pushed them further, "When he leaves, he will leave something behind. I am not working as hard as he is manually." A different student said, "You are teaching me to be an engineer."

The teacher then introduced the main activity of the lesson and worked through one example with the students. They were required to complete a worksheet which involved them defining three of the topic vocabulary items, identifying synonyms, giving examples

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[22] Words the vocabulary list for this topic and relevant to the lesson visit include: earn a living, commerce, economy, legacy, problems, production, finance, labour and contribution

and non-examples of each. The non-example strategy is one advocated by author of "Thinking to Learn", Pohl (2001). One example included the word "production"; synonyms included make / create; examples included: movie, food, toys, furniture and non-examples: mountain, ocean, sand, air and water. Whether water was a "product" or not caused lively debate in Arabic and English.

In the post visit interview, I asked Paul if he thought this activity had required the students to think critically. He did not think so. I then referred back to his definition of critical thinking which was:

> Critical thinking is when your brain is actively engaged generally, around some kind of good question that forces you to think for yourself to come to the answer

From my perspective, it seemed that the task had required the students to "think outside the box". Paul was still not convinced and asked, "How many of the students contributed to the discussion. How many of them engaged in the dialogue? How many people understood what I said and formed an opinion? How many?" I agreed it had not been many and they had been mostly expatriate Arab students, whose engagement and contributions in all classes I saw far outweighed that of their Emirati peers. Paul then said:

> I wasn't thinking of critical thinking when I designed that. I don't know. Critical thinking doesn't come into my thought process much when I'm planning lessons here.

His response seemed an indictment of the degree to which he had compromised his teaching practice since being in the UAE and placed a question mark over the emphasis placed on the development of critical thinking skills in English by the Adec curriculum.

5.2.7.2 DIFFERENTIATION, STREAMING AND TEAM TEACHING

Teachers spoke of Adec's expectation that they would use differentiated instruction in their mixed ability classes to meet the diverse needs of their students. In the absence of an Adec definition of differentiation, there was confusion over its "interpretation" of the term, which, teachers said, seemed to lay an emphasis on the amount of work a student did. This was in conflict with their own understanding of it and that of experts in the field such as

Tomlinson & Demirsky-Allan (2000, p.3-4)[23]. Regardless of this discrepancy, five of the 6 EMTs felt the disparate language levels of the students in their classes combined with the learning culture rendered any attempts at differentiated instruction redundant and advocated streaming students according to language ability instead.

Ali said:

> Differentiation is nice but differentiation happens before the students even step in the classroom. I feel like they should be broken up based on their skill level in English.
>
> The major challenge I think that most of us are facing is trying to teach students at varied levels in the same classroom. We have students in our classroom who are very fluent in English and are applying to universities in the United States and England. Then we have students in the same room who, you talk to them and they look at you with a blank stare. They don't know what's going on. [...] That's the most difficult part of teaching these students this curriculum.

Before the introduction of the Adec curriculum this difference in language levels had not been such an issue. Students worked in lock-step with the teacher. Those who kept pace did well and those who did not copied from them. The constructivist learning approach advocated by the Adec curriculum which promoted teaching and learning driven by students' needs and interests had exposed the inadequacies of the approach to language learning in the past but had not provided a workable solution in the classroom. Teachers talked of the advantages of streaming the students according to their language level, saying it would "affect us tremendously positively", "make an incredible difference" and, Paul said, mean "the reform might actually gain some traction and work". Peter made a play on the Adec vision, saying:

> We're expected to differentiate, they [Adec] should differentiate their expectations as well. They should differentiate their exams. They should differentiate the curriculum and the outcomes. [...]There should be a high level student English, there should be a mid-level student English, there should be a low level.

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[23] Tomlinson & Demirsky-Allan define differentiation as "a teacher's reacting responsively to a learner's needs". Teachers can differentiate the content, process, product and learning environment according to a child's readiness, interest and learning profile (p.3-4).

> Regardless of the grade level they're put in, they should be put
> into their skill level in that classroom together.

Others felt that streaming classes was not a good idea. Michael said that "intuitively" it seemed the right thing to do but as he relied heavily on more able students interpreting for him in most of his classes was concerned about classroom management issues if all the students were facing the same linguistic challenges and unable to understand his message. He also felt that streaming was against the inclusive principles of social constructivist learning. Interestingly, Watt (2000) suggests that this over-emphasis on "political correctness and affective matters to the detriment of worthwhile content" partially explained the demise of outcomes-based education in the US and its preference for a standards based approach instead (cited in Donnelly, 2007, p. 189).

Most of Arab teachers of English said streaming might seem like a possible solution to someone outside the culture but said if a student were streamed, Alaa felt:

> [he] will feel that he is inferior to his friends and it will be worse
> if they are from different tribes. In this society it cannot be done.

Although it should be stressed that this is the perspective of the teacher not the student concerned, it is an interesting viewpoint, especially because as soon as students enter university on a foundation English programme they are grouped according to level without any obvious ill effect and, from personal experience, usually relieved to know that their language needs will finally be met. Palincsar (1998) found that group harmony was not a good indicator of learning opportunities in a classroom situation and that a friend routinely acting as student's spokesperson limited his/her development (p.360). ATEs also said they would not like to teach streamed classes but when asked to elaborate this seemed to be more to do with the concern that teaching low levels would impact on their overall grade average and have consequences when it came to contract renewal. Dukak (2009) found teachers in grade 5 public schools in the UAE interacted more negatively with low achieving male students in mixed ability classes than in same ability classes. This could indicate that students were better able to cope with the demands of the tasks set in classes streamed by ability and therefore less likely to be disruptive. Such data are of significance given the

comments made by participants in this study and show streaming is an area worthy of further research.

5.2.7.2.1 TEAM-TEACHING WITH AN ARAB TEACHER OF ENGLISH (ATE)

David, an advocate of streaming also suggested team-teaching[24] with his Arab counterparts as a way as a way to combat the challenges posed by students who currently had "no access at all to the English curriculum". This approach had been used in grade 7 at his school and impacted positively on students' ability to understand the content, resulted in increased engagement and decreased classroom management issues. A finding also made by Storey et al. (2001), (cited in Carless & Walker, 2006, p. 465). David said he thought it would work well with under-performing students in the higher grades too:

> [It] would be excellent. I think you've got to get the right teachers
> in there. There's got to be an understanding of the planning, an
> understanding of how it would work, but yes, I think it would be
> a very good model. If the students can be understood with their
> Arabic, they're less likely to call out and swear and cuss, because
> we can't understand them at all so they can say what they like.
> If there's an Arabic teacher in there, it would immediately stop
> that.

Paul also endorsed team-teaching saying it was the way to "make the most substantial gains in terms of learning" but, he countered this by saying that "I don't think Adec is willing to spend that much money to get those kind of gains."

Not all teachers agreed on the idea of having two teachers in the classroom, saying it would lead to the overuse of translation and create another challenge on top of those teachers already faced; what Carless & Walker (2006) refer to as a "non-optimal" model. In keeping with David's comment above, Murata (2002) suggests that a successful duo would have a "shared teaching philosophy and compatible professional attitudes" (cited in Carless & Walker, 2006, p. 464). Ultimately, Paul saw team-teaching as a great opportunity for his own professional development; especially in terms of teaching grammar, saying at last "I

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[24] Defined by Carless & Walker (2006) as " two teachers together in the classroom, actively involved in instruction" (p. 464)

would really know what a gerund was!" Ibrahim, the ATE who had been involved with team teaching also saw its value:

> Co-teaching can be a solution to help LTs with classroom management. Arab teachers will do much better with help of LTs. They could plan together work together. It would have a good reflection on the students.

The possible success of a team teaching model in Cycle Three schools is as yet unexplored but these comments suggest teachers saw its potential in providing a possible solution to some of the classroom challenges they faced.

5.2.7.2.2 DIFFERENTIATION IN ACTION

Given that teachers' classes were not streamed according to ability, they were asked to comment on how they approached differentiated instruction in their classrooms.

Paul said he generally differentiated by created the same task for his students with three levels of difficulty but said:

> […] often even the easiest task designed for the most challenged learner is still too difficult for them to manage. The thing is I keep lowering the bar but I honestly cannot figure out how to help them.

Ali described how he differentiated for students working on public announcement posters for an ECART task. The more able wrote the information, the lesser able tackled the art work. Any improvements in English for those completing the art work were likely to be minimal but in order to meet the task requirements, he had little other option available to him.

Students in the UAE are under a societal and religious obligation to assist someone who asks them for help (Risse, 2011). Peter said differentiated worksheets had resulted in some "hilarious" situations in his class with lesser able students blindly copying the work of more able students completely oblivious to the fact that they both had different worksheets with different tasks to fulfil. The most important thing for these students, apparently, was that

the page was full and they "ha[d] done their work for the day. Thanks very much. Full marks, please" and he added:

> Differentiating has definitely resulted in some humorous instances. If you don't laugh about it, what are you going to do?

The teachers' frustrations are obvious, show the difference between differentiation in theory and in practice, particularly when it comes to teaching students with disparate language levels and again, make a strong case for streaming classes according to language ability. Teachers expressed the same hurdles in their attempts to implement collaborative learning.

5.2.7.3 COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

The Adec English Teacher Resource (2008) says:

> Collaborative teaching and learning strategies can be a powerful way of introducing new content or helping students to clarify lesson content. Use collaborative strategies in every lesson to ensure that students are active in their learning. (p. 45)

The collaborative approach is based on the premise that knowledge is a cultural product. Creating opportunities for students to participate co-operatively in problem-solving activities, for example, gives novices the chance to internalise the supportive talk and strategies demonstrated by more experienced others and so be able to undertake such tasks independently at a later stage. This makes a communicative classrooms, researchers say "empirically preferable" to those that are teacher fronted. Pennycook (2000) disagrees saying they are instead a "cultural preference" imposed by the west (cited in Hall & Eggington, 2000, p.98). The co-operative nature of the society in the UAE suggests that group work and pair work should be relatively easy to initiate here but interestingly, they do not enjoy widespread use in local classrooms (AKR: UAE 2011, p. 375). Barnes (1976) says this is because "cultures stressing continuity, stability and group identity" like that of the UAE, associate more readily with a transmission approach (cited in Senior, 2006, p. 108) and presumably one where the teacher provides the correct model of English.

5.2.7.3.1 THE CHALLENGES POSED BY GROUP WORK

Teachers had mixed feelings about the usefulness of pair and group work activities in this context for this reason, saying they "work for a short amount of time and then descend into chaos", "deteriorate into nothingness" or were a "waste of time". Proponents of group work say this can be avoided by allocating students individual roles but acknowledge they require training to function effectively in this manner (Reid, 2002). For teachers with little or no Arabic and students with limited English such training provides an obvious challenge. Michael explained issues he faced:

> The students can discuss […] wonderfully if you allow them to do it in Arabic. The problem is this is an English class and they're supposed to be trying to at least communicate in English. So if they're thinking in Arabic, which is fine, then the problem becomes: How do we get them to translate it into English without it simply being I'm thinking in Arabic and having an interpreter tell the teacher what I'm thinking? It's not helping their English skills.

Ali said he used group work probably 85% of the time; with the obvious advantage that students could help each other in Arabic. The drawback here was that students found it easier to use their phones and talk about non-work related things. He also said a representative would give the group's response in English, leaving the others to copy it. Both Michael and Ali's comments show the interdependent and uneven dynamic of such activities where some students are active, some passive; some contribute constructively and others are destructive. Carless's (2004) study of a task-based innovation in Hong Kong showed that unless required language structures to complete the task are not pre-taught or already known by students, it is very unlikely they will be able to complete it without extensive use of their mother-tongue (p.658). This brings into question the degree to which individual members of a group in this environment benefit in terms of English language development. Participant comments suggest very little.

5.2.8 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

The students' inability to cope the linguistic demands of the Adec English curriculum overall impacted negatively on classroom management and provided the major challenge all EMTs

said. Classroom management issues fell into three overlapping categories: 1) the ineffectiveness of teaching and 2) classroom management strategies from their countries of origin, due to the classroom culture and 3) the lack of support from the administration and senior management team. The lack of support for EMTs by the SMT created numerous issues and will dealt with in its own section 5.2.9.

5.2.8.1 THE NEED TO ADAPT PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED TEACHING PRACTICE

Paul said that in the US he had word-walls and posters that reinforced the curriculum in his classroom. On arrival students had a brief question to ponder, reinforcing the learning from their last session and allowing him a "segue" into the day's lesson. He had tried this approach in his first year in the UAE, he said, but it was unsuccessful. He assumed it was because the students had never been asked to work this way before. The fact that teachers did not have their own classrooms but went to students homerooms[25] added another dimension he said, as it meant students controlled the territory and made setting up an effective learning environment difficult. These findings are in keeping with those of Al Zeini's (2008) study investigating classroom management issues in the UAE.

Most EMTs commented on their students' tendency to carry on a conversation with their friends whilst the teacher was giving instructions. As a result Ali said he was no longer able to use a conventional modelling, joint construction, individual construction and reflection approach to teaching English. With 25 people talking at the same time, he only managed to "get 7 to 10% of actual instruction" and had "been forced to go from table to table to show them what to do instead of showing them all [...] at one time". This approach was observed in two of the lesson visits. It obviously required a far greater investment of energy than instructing the class as a whole and meant that students who did not know what to do were unoccupied for a large percentage of the class time.

David talked about his attempts to help students identify grammatical features in texts:

> There's [sic] often a few kids at the front who will try but
> eventually the noise will take over and you can't get through

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[25] A homeroom is a classroom where a group of students assembles with the same teacher each morning for roll call before dispersing to subject specific classrooms. This system does not apply in the UAE. Students stay in their homeroom all day and subject teachers come to them.

> to them. So, you can actually put it down in writing and say, "We do this because..." using different coloured pens for different things. [...] You *can* do that but it's very frustrating and generally, it's copy paste.

Teachers were clearly exasperated that the strategies employed successfully to scaffold English language learning in their countries of origin did not seem applicable in their current environment and so had resorted to giving students more "busy work". This had created conflict surrounding their teaching philosophies, the curriculum and the realities of the classroom. Interestingly, an investigation of 16 post-reforms in the UK Fisher (2007) also showed that innovations intended to promote learner /learning-centred classrooms all resulted in teachers employing a "more didactic approach" (cited in Gilbert, 2010). Participants in a study by Hacker & Rowe (1998) said this was because they perceived teacher-directed strategies to be more "efficient" in terms of preparation time and delivery. Findings such as these have implications for the Adec reform particularly when the EMTs' experience with student-centred learning is one of the main reasons they were employed**.**

5.2.8.2 THE NEED ADAPT PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STYLES

The classroom dynamic impacted on EMTs' approach to discipline in the classroom too. Ali said:

> I've had to yell more than I like to. I don't like to shout [...] in the classroom. I don't like to say, "Be quiet, sit down" at the top of my voice. Those are things I'm not used to doing. That's not how I was taught to teach. So there's a big adjustment I've had to go through teaching here

David pointed out that all the other lessons his students attended were held in Arabic where students were invariably silent unless called upon to respond to a question. He felt students acted out in his class in reaction to the tight rein held on them for the rest of the day. These almost uncanny extremes in student behavior were observed on many occasions not just in David's class. Cortazzi (1990) says students tend to have fixed cultural assumptions about how teachers should behave and "unexplained violations" to them, such as teachers showing their softer side, could lead to a "diminution of their perceived competence" (cited in Senior, 2006).

Intrinsically, EMTs knew that they were being judged by their principals and fellow Arab teachers on their ability to control their classes not on their social constructivist approaches to learning. For the sake of self-preservation, Paul said he adopted a much more authoritarian approach:

> I've had to do a lot of things that I really wouldn't want to do, or wouldn't do in a normal teaching job. I've slammed a lot of books down. I've been really scary. That's how it is here […] or you get eaten alive. You have to let them know. I've been reading Edward Said's "Orientalism". I don't know if you're familiar with this text but this whole stereotype of "all they understand is a bloody nose". Edward Said is working against that stereotype but I'm telling you I understand why that stereotype exists. Man, that's so not politically correct and it's on tape.

The fact that EMTs are taking on an authoritarian role in their classrooms to ensure some degree of control suggests the learning culture in the emirates is not ready for the relative freedom promoted in a student-centred classroom. This has serious implications for the potential success of the Adec educational reform which purports to have the students as its focus and employs teachers who are accustomed to acting as facilitators rather than dictators.

5.2.9 LACK OF SUPPORT FROM THE ADMINISTRATION, SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND PRINCIPALS

Paul said this management style did not always work but he had resorted to it because of the lack of a systematic approach to discipline across the school; something he saw as the responsibility of the principal and the administration. Teachers said the lack of support from the school management team severely compromised their ability to work in two out of three of the schools.

5.2.9.1 THE CHALLENGES CAUSED BY THE LACK OF A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO DISCIPLINE.

> Now, there are cameras in every single room here, and it astounds me, because there are days when I'm standing back going, "Wow! This is a madhouse", I know that someone, somewhere, is seeing what's going on in my classroom. But no-

one ever comes. These are their kids. If I was running this school, and these were my kids, from my country, there is no way that that would be going down. No way. That is the major challenge to implementing this curriculum.

The teacher who made this statement, Paul, reminisced on the 80-90% effectiveness of the restorative justice programme "Discipline with Dignity" (Curwin, Mendler & Mendler, 2008) employed at his inner-city school in the States, saying "that would never work here." Its success rested on the teacher being able to arrange a parent, teacher, student conference to discuss the nature of the behavior and agree on a resolution. Unlike their Arab counterparts, EMTs were unable to communicate with local families unless the administration assisted them with translation. Paul explained because of this students were:

> smart enough to understand that I can't call Saif Saeed's[26] father and so there is no recourse. […] The kids know that the administration does not support you and, in fact does not want you here. They [the students] know that you can't have a parent conference with their parent because you don't speak Arabic, so there's no way for you to call them and say, "Habibi Jamal is acting up and this is what his behaviour is"

EMTs realised this left them at a serious disadvantage. On one occasion Paul said he had "begged" administration to call the parents of a child who had been outside his classroom kicking the door during his English class. What happened next shocked him:

> His father came down, and the social worker explained what his child was doing, in Arabic. The man made to slap his kid, right in front of everyone in the room.

This unexpected outcome led him to surmise this was why Arabic speaking teachers got more respect:

> I don't know that this is actually true but it's my feeling that because the students know that the Arab teachers can just call their parents and say, "Your student, Mustafa Mohamed did X, Y, and Z today", and when they go home they [the students] will

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[26] All students' names are pseudonyms.

> get beaten. […] that's how they [Arab teachers] keep the
> management […]. That's what these kids have learned since KG,
> and that's what they understand.

Hassan a newly arrived ATE, however, was equally shocked saying, "It's totally different here [in comparison to country of origin] because "when you talk to a father and you find out that the kid is more polite that the father […] maybe it wasn't a good idea to call that father." From his observations, despite this, students had more respect for Arab expatriates than the EMTs. He said students took advantage of the fact that EMTs did not speak Arabic to say "gross words about them". What struck him most, Hassan said, was their "defiant" manner; that "they felt so safe saying it" "as if they had a right" and even, in some cases, expected him to translate what they had said to the EMT.

Similar instances made headline news early on in the reform but teachers found themselves with little support from Adec. Ferrandino (2010) its education advisor at the time, for example, commented, "If a teacher cannot manage a class, then perhaps they are not ready for the job" (Ahmed, 2010; Metallidis, 2010). A remark such as this, however, does not address the many complexities involved in the local learning culture, as the interview data above suggests. These include the community's perception of a school's role and the teacher's and students' place in it. As a result, issues surrounding classroom management remain a major impediment to the potential success of the Adec reforms, the implications of which are dealt with in 6.2.8.2.1.

5.2.9.2 CHALLENGES POSED BY CORRUPT ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

In addition to the lack of support over discipline issues, teachers held the school management team responsible for corrupt assessment practices. Several teachers mentioned being "strong-armed" by the administration team into giving marks to students for work that was clearly not their own, helping students during their exams and/or increasing final grades. Peter said this lack of integrity was a continual challenge but after a year at the school had a better understanding of why the situation had come about:

> If you had a person that was unbiased […] running the show, then
> I think you'd have a lot more effective implementation of the
> curriculum. However, you have a lot of culture here. You have a

lot of history, a lot of families tied into this. The families aren't necessarily going to be interested in hearing the truth of where their student is really at when it comes to their skills. They're more interested in the bottom line of a number.

As Peter's comments suggest, false reporting has long been a feature of the school system in the country, was in evidence pre-reform and is "ingrained in the education culture from way down" (Jurdi, 2012, cited in Swan, 2012a). Tackling it poses a major and some might argue insurmountable challenge for Adec.

5.2.9.3 LACK OF COMMUNICATION FROM ADEC AND FROM THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

EMTs said they understood that by virtue of working in another country they would need to adjust their expectations in many regards but found the tardy or lack of day to day communication on school matters not only frustrating but something that undermined them professionally. This was mainly due to the fact that most memos were sent in Arabic. Several EMTs said they were learning Arabic in the hope it would help them integrate more fully into the school community but were not yet proficient enough to read at that level. EMTs recognised the supportive role played by their Arab colleagues in translating documents but also acknowledged their services were not always available. Peter explained the frustration of not being "kept in the loop" when he was getting ready for an English assessment task:

> All of a sudden I'm coming in to teach an important lesson and the students are off on a field trip. Everybody knew about the field trip coming up. The students themselves did, but nobody bothered to communicate that that was happening.

The unpredictable nature of teaching is what attracts many people to the profession but the EMTs' inability to understand Arabic added yet another challenge to the others they already faced. David gave the impression that, to some degree, the EMTs had become the administration's scapegoats:

> There is no point in complaining because you would not get anywhere. What we have to realise is, it is their culture, not ours. […]. We just have to do our best and get on with it. I said to an Arabic colleague this morning, it sometimes feels we are at war

with the administration; [...] they do not particularly seem to be onside. [...] Everything gets sent out in Arabic, nothing is ever sent out in English. We [the EMTs] are always blamed for everything [...]. We [all the staff] should all be brothers in arms together, really. I can understand that there is resentment; perhaps they [the school] do not want us here. Perhaps they feel that we have been forced upon them, and I can understand that. But I would say 99.9% of the staff here are absolutely smashing, absolutely brilliant.

I have made a lot of friends. There is a little gang of us that goes off to the corner for a cigarette and we all speak in a mixture of Arabic and English. They are a good bunch. It is funny, but a lot of them have got the same complaints and moans as us, so we are in it altogether.

These comments and those made by other participants revealed that in two of the schools a tension existed between EMTs and the administration which meant they were unable to function effectively in their role. It seemed to stem from a fundamental lack of communication. This is of significance given Adec's intention to replace ATEs with EMTs in its Cycle Three schools.

5.3 CHALLENGES FACING ARAB TEACHERS OF ENGLISH (ATES)

Interviews with ATEs revealed many of the same challenges as their EMT colleagues in terms of curriculum implementation and their comments have been inserted in the appropriate sections accordingly. There were also areas of difference; in topic and in emphasis. These will be dealt with below.

5.3.1 CHALLENGING THE NEGATIVE STEREOTYPE

One of the challenges ATEs said they faced was shaking off the legacy that they were underqualified and incompetent (Karmani, 2005; Safadi, 2008) as this impacted on how they were perceived today. Waleed blamed this negative perception on the media who:

have stereotyped ideas about teachers. They never go out into the schools and ask the teachers. "The teachers don't want to work". "The teachers like things ready-made". This is not true.

ATEs said as with all change proposals the challenge was change itself and when the Adec English curriculum was introduced in 2008, it was a natural response to resist at first.

Especially as they had had not been consulted about it or orientated to it. There were no materials, no formalised assessment procedure and it was, in their words, "complete chaos". Waleed said:

> They never asked us what we think and they should because we
> are the teachers in the classroom every day with the students.

Allowing ATEs to participate in this process would have enabled them to influence and possibly effect change at a local level; target the specific needs of a school community and give them a sense of empowerment they had previously been denied (Corson, 2002; Kirk & MacDonald, 2001; Troudi & Alwan, 2010). The major stumbling block was that most did not have experience of curriculum development as an innovative and collaborative activity, and, as expatriate Arabs on annual contracts would unlikely have been afforded the status to do so anyway. Sadly, given the negative image they already had, they may also have been viewed as part of the problem not the solution.

Since those early days ATEs reflected on how the lack of structure had also given them the freedom to interpret the curriculum documentation in their own way. Something they had not experienced before in the teacher-centred curriculum. As a result, they felt they had emerged better teachers. Some had conducted professional development workshops for EMTs on topics such as student motivation and the difficulties Arab speakers faced writing in English, which, they said were well-received by their western educated colleagues.

Despite the feeling that they had developed professionally by teaching without a textbook, several ATEs mentioned they would like further training in materials creation. In addition, some ATEs' comments revealed that they had not reconciled themselves to the idea that English classes were a place to learn how to think critically or develop opinions. Notwithstanding the fact that students did not have the skills with which to express themselves at this level, Ahmed said:

> reasons, explanations, opinions – these are related to logic and
> philosophy but not to English, in my opinion.

ATEs also showed the same reservations with regard to certain assessment procedures and the notion of developing a student's capacity for reflection or "self-assessment". Alaa said:

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> It is best that we teach him how to apply this to his own life. You can assess your way of shopping, for example. You can assess your way of dealing with a problem whether it's correct or not. This is a general way of dealing with things but not in English.

These comments indicate that teachers are not fully convinced that the curriculum ideology and pedagogy driving the Adec English reform are the most effective way to improve students' language learning and may, therefore, be choosing to implement the change proposal to fit with their own beliefs about teaching and learning rather than as it was intended (Spillane (1999). This situation poses a dilemma for Adec. On the one hand it seems determined to replace ATEs with EMTs for this very reason. On the other, it recognises traditional forms of instruction are still highly regarded by the local community and this serves to "militate against radical reform in teaching and learning" (Fang & Warschauer, 2004, p.315). Thus, possibly granting ATEs a stay of execution.

5.3.2 BEING A NATIVE SPEAKER OF ENGLISH: IS IT REALLY AN ADVANTAGE?

Five out of six of the teachers had taught the Adec curriculum since its inception in 2008 and this made the perception that they were being replaced by EMTs difficult to accept. Ahmed said for him a big challenge was "working on a team of different nationalities; some of whom are native speakers". He, and others, said they would be happy to have native English speaking teachers as a colleague if they were actually qualified to teach English. He felt Adec had not paid sufficient attention to EMTs' university major, teaching certification or competency when they were recruited and simply employed them because they could speak English, saying:

> My son is in grade […]. I would like someone who is better than me to teach him English but this person is nowhere.

Alaa also questioned Adec's decision to employ EMTs, saying:

> We are replaced by someone who is supposed to but doesn't know more. How can he be from a country where he uses English every day but can't spell? […] You feel that teacher does not have the same experience as you.

Even though he had taught for 20 years, he felt that Adec did not consider him as an expert or professional but "inferior" and someone who "cannot understand the world and the new generation"; that his "experience [was] not really an experience" because he "did the same thing every year". Here the inference was he had simply taught using a textbook.

Several teachers seemed to consider the only benefit of having EMTs was that students could listen to native like speech and "to train their ears". In all other regards, however, the notion that ATEs were "inferior" to their EMT colleagues professionally seemed an unfounded perception. If anything, the fact that ATEs were bilingual and "culturally closest to Emirati society" (Findlow, 2000, cited in Raven, 2011), put them at a distinct advantage as it meant that they could communicate freely with their students, the parents, their principals and senior management team; something the EMTs had no hope of doing. The seeming unwillingness of Adec to recognise the value their ATEs bring to the reform is having a detrimental effect on it as the following section suggests.

5.3.3 BABYSITTING

All teachers commented on Adec's unrealistic expectation that EMTs could function effectively in the school without understanding Arabic and the students' background culture. Ahmed said:

> Western teachers cannot support the whole process unless they have Arabic speaking teachers with them. There would be no communication with parents, the community or field trips. They need a translator and facilitator who is the link between the administration, parents and students.

Whilst ATEs were prepared to help the EMTs with translation of school and Adec documentation, they said they often found themselves in a position where they had to intervene in EMTs' classes due to their inability to control the students. For some teachers this provoked an element of resentment. As far as they could see Adec preferred to employ EMTs, yet it was clear ATEs were better suited to teach students at this level because they understood their learning needs and how best to manage them. Several teachers commented on the EMTs' lack of initiative in setting students behavioural expectations and

the "burden" posed for ATEs because EMTs had no "code of behaviour". Ahmed said each time he taught a class shared with an EMT, "I do start from scratch to organise the class to keep them well-mannered and well-behaved".

Other teachers were happy to help with classroom management issues, saying they felt the EMTs had been put in an "impossible situation" because of the language barrier. When Waleed asked students why they were misbehaving he said "Their main complaint was, 'we don't understand what the teacher is saying. Please, translate for us.'" With many students still struggling to read a simple sentence, he added, "to start from the top using LTs [EMTs] to teacher grade 10, 11 and 12, it wasn't a wise decision."

These last carefully chosen words sum up the current challenges facing EMTs and students in Cycle Three schools. The expectation that students would be able to engage in meaningful communication with a "native" English speaker given their previous English learning experiences places the educational credentials of those in Adec who decided to follow such a model in doubt. Waleed's comments show once again the importance of consulting those working in the field before finalising the decision to adopt a curriculum innovation.

5.3.4 THE COMMUNITY'S LACK OF CONVICTION AND INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Unlike their EMT colleagues who were unable to have such conversations, ATEs said they faced the challenge of trying to convince parents in the local community that the Adec curriculum was an improvement on what had gone before[27]. Without a text-book, parents asked, what were their students learning and how were they supposed to study at home? Alaa said he devoted a lot of time to translating the ECART task criteria for parents in order to explain what it involved and how it would be assessed as they had noticed a decrease in their children's overall marks. This in turn led parents to question how well the Adec curriculum and the EMTs would prepare their children for the CEPA; the university entrance exam students take in grade 12.

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[27] It should be emphasised these are the perspectives of ATEs as data were not gathered from parents directly.

ATEs said parents were right to be concerned as EMTs "did not have any idea about what await[ed] students after high school" and it would be a "catastrophe" and "great dilemma" if they were left in charge of teaching in Cycle Three. These comments show the importance both parents and ATEs attach to summative assessment. As long as the CEPA determines students' university entry, arguably, they are right to do so.

For 80% of parents at his school, however, Waleed said, involvement in their child's education was "zero". Due to their own low levels of education, parents have understandably entrusted their children's education to the school and attempts to encourage parental participation in UAE public schools have so far been largely unsuccessful. Given the strong correlation between lack of family support and the high school drop-out rate for boys in particular (Ridge, Farah & Shami, 2013), finding a way for parents to play more of a role is an important undertaking for Adec; see section 6.2.10.

5.3.5 ANXIETY SURROUNDING CONTRACT RENEWAL

As non-nationals, the majority of ATEs in the UAE are on annual contracts. Towards the end of each school year the tension mounts in staffrooms as staff await communication informing them of their renewal status. Teachers said that if a contract was terminated, this only happened a matter of days before the end of term which left very little time to deal with administrative matters. Ahmed said:

> Even if it is a one year contract, teachers should be informed if
> they will continue or be terminated, not at the last moment
> before travel [in July at the end of the academic year]. It should
> be done in January because we do live here and rent houses, pay
> for cars by instalments have students at schools. We need to
> prepare them beforehand.

In times past when the Ministry of Education had responsibility for recruitment, non-renewal was not such an issue because, according to ATEs, unless there was a question mark over a teacher's competence, age or a serious disciplinary issue, he was generally renewed. Now Adec was in charge of the process, they said, there were "no criteria" for renewal or termination. Alaa said:

> Nothing is written down and if you listen the criteria, you will find the opposite. Some people who are old are renewed. Some people who have IELTS are fired. Some others who don't have IELTS are renewed. No transparency. […] it is like a taboo and most people don't like to speak about it.

Such unnecessary rumour-mongering could be avoided if teachers were given longer contracts and the principles of the teacher appraisal system introduced by Adec 2011 were adhered to. This would serve to minimise the uncertainty teachers described below.

5.3.6 THE CORRELATION BETWEEN JOB SECURITY AND PERFORMANCE

The constant apprehension experienced by expatriate staff in the UAE has been termed "insecurity syndrome" by Khalaf & Alkobaisi (1999) (cited in Ridge, 2014). Teachers spoke at length about how this impacted on them. Ibrahim said:

> A problem is job security. It does not give teachers the confidence to show potential. […] If a teacher feels safe, he will do much better. Most teachers do not know if they are going to be here so it reflects on us.

Teachers said they worked diligently to fulfil the requirements of the teacher appraisal system mentioned above and, as far as they could see, met the citeria in terms of English proficiency, professional development and performance in the classroom. Waleed felt teachers were doing the best they could to embrace the Adec curriculum in all areas and pointed out the overseas monitoring team had found the performance of ATEs superior to that of EMTs during their inspection at his school. Despite this, he said, ATEs' efforts were still not being rewarded either financially or professionally and added:

> […] when I see a colleague [ATE] who is highly professional. His achievement is great. He works all the year to help those kids and he is sacked. My God. What is this? Why am I doing all this? Why should I have the heartache [...]?

In order to implement the Adec change proposal with conviction, teachers need to see a "relative advantage" over what was already in place as well as feel some kind of standing or prestige attached to it (Roger and Shoemaker, 1971, cited in Marsh & Willis, 2007, p.166). Having witnessed the loss of some fine ATEs to the unfathomable non-renewal process and

the unnecessary distress it causes, it is hard to understand the logic behind it. Particularly, as an inevitable consequence is the unwillingness of teachers to invest their energy in initiatives where they are considered actors, not agents of change (Troudi & Alwan, 2010). This, in turn, impacts negatively on the quality of education Emirati students receive and unfavourably on the country's reform efforts.

5.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has interpreted the study's findings in relation to the research questions, drawing attention to the rationale behind the pedagogical approach underpinning the Adec English curriculum and highlighting some of the challenges both EMTs and ATEs face in its implementation. The following chapter explores the implications of these challenges for the reform process in further detail and provides recommendations for possible future action.

CHAPTER 6 – IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

> We trained hard but it seemed every time we were beginning
> to form up into teams we were reorganised. I was to learn
> later in life that we tend to meet any situation by
> reorganising, and what a wonderful method it can be for
> creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion,
> inefficiency, and demoralisation.
> (Gaius Pretonius, CE 66, cited in Fullan 2007, p. 107)

Adec's 10 year strategic plan launched in June 2009 set out its approach to creating "the highest quality, comprehensive system of education based on world-class standards and expertise" (Adec, 2009a). This was to be achieved by introducing new curricula which moved away from memorisation and provided students with opportunities to cultivate the analytical and problem solving skills needed to drive economic progress in the emirates. Integral to the success of this reform was the perceived need to improve the English ability of students, who, up until then had only used English as a "second language" (Al Khaili, 2009).

In order to expedite the implementation of the change proposal and to make up for any shortfall in expertise, Adec appropriated an English curriculum from NSW, Australia and a teaching staff from overseas. Hundreds of "native" English speaking teachers, predominantly from the US were hired to work on an initiative aimed at accelerating language improvement, first in grade 12 and then in grade 10 and 11 (Adec, 2009a). As a result, male Arab teachers of English, whose performance in the classroom had not brought about significant enough improvements in student achievement were sidelined to make way for them.

The findings of this study show that UAE policy makers have, like others, looked for a "magical solution" (Mickelthwait & Wooldridge, 1996, cited in Fullan, 2007, p. 235) rather than consider the impact of such a fundamental and drastic intervention. This lack of foresight has had serious implications at a number of levels; the effects of which will be discussed below together with recommendations for a possible way forward.

6.1 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The primary aims of this study were threefold. One was to understand what factors led policy makers to introduce an English curriculum designed for mainstream English speaking students in an educational environment where English is taught as a foreign language and all other subjects are conducted in Arabic. The second was to understand the challenges such a decision provided for teachers hired from overseas tasked with implementing this curriculum and three, the challenges this posed for Arab teachers of English whose place these "native" English teachers had come to take.

The study reveals a highly politicised approach to educational reform, subject to the orders of agenda driven policy makers, with pre-specified goals determined by the skill requirements of the knowledge based economy in the region rather than on the basis of needs analyses, consultation with stakeholders or any systematic inquiry (Sarason, 1990, cited in Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004, p.299). This has led to the uncritical adoption of a constructivist curriculum model without first ascertaining the feasibility of such an approach to language education in the Emirati context.

The exceptionally low levels of English and conceptual knowledge exhibited by the majority of students have created enormous challenges for teachers and meant they are unable to implement the curriculum as it was intended. The findings show schools are simply paying lip service to the constructivist pedagogical approach promoted in the curriculum and assessment documentation and, in reality, much of the content is delivered using a traditional transmission model.

6.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Adec's English curriculum choice has proven to have far reaching implications both at a policy and grass-roots level. Those concerning educational strategy will be dealt with first.

6.2.1 TOP-DOWN MANDATES: UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS AND TIMEFRAMES

> Taking action based solely on political expediency rarely leads
> to innovation and deep change (Bogotch, Townsend & Acker
> Hocevar, 2010, p. 129)

The gap between the Abu Dhabi government's declared approach to reform and the everyday realities of the classroom highlighted by this study provides serious cause for concern. The adoption of the high-profile English language change proposal initiated in Cycle Three schools in 2008 seems to have been based on the assumption that dramatic progress would be made in a very limited timeframe and suggests that implementation in this context is viewed as an event, not a process extending over a period of years or, in the case of radical changes such as those taking place in the UAE, generations (Berend, 2007, cited in Wedell, 2009, p. 18). The unrealistic expectation that students with negligible literacy skills would cope with the complex demands of the Adec curriculum has caused friction between elite power brokers eager to see a quick return on their investment and the teachers who needed time to understand the implications of the change proposal on their role in the classroom as well as training to assist in integrating those changes into their practice (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992, p.3).

Change experts Wedell & Maldarez (2013) warn "the need to shrink educational change to fit political time-scales is we believe one frequent reason for the general unsatisfactory outcomes of large-scale change initiatives" (p. 208). The findings of this study show that teachers readily identified they had been set an impossible task and felt Adec had realised this too. Rather than offering them a higher level of support, however, teachers suggested it had abandoned them and instead turned its attention to the promotion of a bilingual approach to education, the New School Model (NSM) introduced in Cycle One schools in 2010 and currently advancing through Cycle Two. The country's tendency towards having a vision of what it would like to see, driving through a reform and then abandoning it because it does not produce the desired results is a feature of educational change in the region and means that teachers tend not to throw themselves wholeheartedly behind any proposal as they know its course may be altered (Sanassian, 2011).

6.2.2 LACK OF CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Realistic expectations and time scales are integral to the successful implementation of any curriculum innovation but so too is the necessity of first consulting those who will be most affected by it. At some point in the mid-2000s UAE policy makers decided fundamental

changes to the education system were needed but, the findings show, did not communicate this until the decision to implement them was a *fait accompli.* Commentators such as Dakkak (2011) claim this was because the reforms were not homegrown but developed with foreign involvement and policy makers feared the indigenous population would receive them negatively as a result. This is a valid criticism. Particularly as the new system appeared to negate the old, to intimate that skills learnt in the past were redundant and the way they were assessed, obsolete. However, this oversight shows a lack of understanding on the government's behalf that it is local community and teacher confidence as well as student reaction to any change proposal which primarily decides its fate. As Fullan (2007) says:

> Neglect of the phenomenology of change - that is, how people actually experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended - is at the heart of spectacular lack of success in most social reforms (p.8).

It is interesting to note that the current education minister, Al Hammadi (2014) is only now, in an "unprecedented step", introducing the first ever teachers' council, comprising 277 male and female members, forty years after formalised education was introduced in the UAE, saying: "Such initiative reflects the ministry's appreciation of teachers and its intent on maintaining their role as decision-makers who will concur in planning and policy-making" (The National Staff, 2014). The findings of this study show that decisions of this kind are long overdue and the need to consult teachers regarding intended educational reform, imperative. Sadly, the latter part of Al Hammadi's (2014) statement above suggests the teachers' presence on the committee is simply a token gesture; what Smyth & Hacklock (1998) term "pseudo-participation" and "quasi-democracy" (cited in Kirk & MacDonald, 2001, p.565). Instead, teachers will have little power bestowed upon them, especially as Adec has a centralised curriculum, and once again, be expected to fall into line with ministry proposals, however, shortsighted these ideas might be.

6.2.3 CURRICULUM DECISIONS ARE NOT RESEARCH BASED

The findings indicate the current situation has come about because no realistic assessment of the context was undertaken prior to the introduction of the Adec English curriculum in 2008. Given the amount of money spent on reform initiatives in the Gulf, surprisingly little

funding is directed towards evaluative educational research it seems. Akkary & Rizk (2011) say this is because the "prevailing culture" (p.22) in the region views evaluation in terms of "inspection" or "checking for conformity with reform mandates" (p.27). Using evaluation formatively to analyse and assess future educational needs does not sit comfortably with curriculum developers reluctant to acknowledge the reasons for previous reform failures. The absence of critical reflection and the seeming inability of educational strategists to recognise the positive contribution systematic inquiry could make to policy and practice has led to the continued misrepresentation of students' performance data which, this study shows, provides a distorted image of their actual ability. This, in turn, has led to a range of uninformed curriculum decisions; the adoption of a mainstream English curriculum when many students are barely familiar with their alphabet and rank 44/65 in reading literacy (PISA, 2013, cited in Al Hameli & Underwood, 2014) being just one of them.

6.2.4 THE PERILS OF BORROWING CURRICULA FROM OVERSEAS

What is happening in Abu Dhabi emirate with regard to curriculum reform is not simply a response to minor sources of dissatisfaction in an otherwise acceptable model. It is a radical overhaul of an educational system dysfunctional since its inception in the early seventies when, in its defence, the focus was on increasing students' attendance at school rather than worrying about what they learnt once they got there[28] (Mograby, 1999, cited in Syed, 2003, p.338). Formalised education in the UAE began with curricula borrowed from neighbouring Arab countries. In the absence of evidence based research to assess the merits of this decision, stakeholder consultation or an explicit language education policy, the trend of looking outside rather than for indigenous solutions has continued into the 21st century. A situation which Al Sawafi (2007) says has led to "confusion and disarray" and the tendency to "lurch" (Ridge, 2009) from one reform to another.

This study shows that one of the main drivers for the introduction of the current language curriculum in grade 10/11 is the perceived link made by policy makers between development, modernisation and the study of English (Syed, 2003, p.338). Karmani (2005)

Between 1986 and 1996 the number of student enrolments in the UAE increased by 67.5% and the number of schools by 62%.

feels this is because they have been duped by overseas educational experts into believing the adoption and imitation of constructivist curricula from the west (and therefore in English) will succeed in inculcating Emirati students with 21st century skills.

As this study shows, these products do not necessarily "travel well" and are often sold on to "clear shelf space for new policies" (Donn & Al Manthri, 2010, p. 96). So that whilst overseas educational experts cite examples of best school practice, the reality in their classrooms is often at odds with the dynamic learning environments they describe. Australia's slide down the PISA and TIMSS league tables (Farah & Ridge, 2009; Thomson, et al., 2012) might be one of the reasons it is no longer using the curriculum it "sold" to the Abu Dhabi emirate but is, instead, in the process of implementing a newly devised national curriculum in core subjects; and one presumably designed to better meet the needs of its students and its current societal and economic needs. Allowing another country to dictate what Emirati students learn and how they learn it has meant that far from being at the cutting edge of educational reform, the UAE has been kitted out from a "baroque arsenal" (Donn & Al Manthri, 2010, p.14).

6.2.5 STUDENTS' INABILITY TO COPE WITH THE CURRICULUM DEMANDS

The findings of the study show that students cannot cope with the demands of the current Adec English curriculum for a variety of reasons. The main one is the expectation they will function in a similar fashion to a student in a mainstream English speaking environment when many of them scarcely understand what their teachers are saying and are unable to communicate with them other than at a most basic level of English. The following sections highlight the implications for teachers and students in their endeavour to engage in three pedagogical approaches promoted by Adec and targeted in this study.

6.2.5.1 CRITICAL THINKING

The English curriculum encourages students to think critically about global and local issues, however, this implies the teacher then is "no longer the only source of information" (AKR, 2011, p.17) but interacts with students in an all-in-one learning environment. It means students will no longer blindly take as fact what a teacher says. They will develop their own

opinions and learn to defend them. In a patriarchal society such as this, where religion and culture are inextricably linked and where challenges to the status quo are rarely heard of, such a development may not be viewed favourably (Hu, 2002; Gargash, 26.08.12). This issue is further exacerbated by the opinion of ATEs that students are not comfortable discussing these kinds of topics with western teachers who do not share the same cultural heritage, thus not only limiting the likelihood of a successful outcome to activities of this nature but once again bringing into focus the dilemma the country faces in terms of emiratising its teaching staff in boys' schools (see section 6.2.9).

6.2.5.2 DIFFERENTIATION

Participant responses show that due to the huge range of language ability in their classes teachers found differentiating tasks so that students could work autonomously virtually impossible. Largely, differentiation took the form of engaging the most able students to translate for the lesser able and lowering their expectations in terms of output. The study also showed that the collectivist nature of the society meant boys in particular did not respond well to material differentiated by content or process and simply copied the work from other students. Mixed ability classes work in mainstream learning environments because, generally speaking, some of the students share the language of instruction as their L1, and are, therefore, able to function independently in it or to provide assistance for students who do not. In a foreign language learning environment such as that of the UAE, the study found the disparate linguistic ability in the classes meant no one seemed to benefit; hence, teachers' enthusiasm for the introduction of streaming and/or team-teaching.

6.2.5.3 COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

In keeping with differentiation above, research shows that collaborative learning activities are chiefly of benefit to students' linguistic development when the functional language required to negotiate meaning and so fulfil the task has been explicitly taught prior (Stokes, 2001, cited in Donnelly, 2007, p.199; Van Lier, 2000, p.248). Participants in the study continually referenced the lack of time the Adec curriculum had factored into establishing this foundational knowledge, which meant most collaborative activities took place in

Arabic. Whilst the benefits of engaging in higher order tasks in one's L1 are dealt with in Chapter 3, if the purpose of collaborative activities is to improve students' English skills, they are failing to meet their target, as they provide few opportunities for students to develop basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), let alone the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) Cummins & Man (2007) show is necessary to cope with the demands of school curricula. Students' lack of understanding has led teachers to resort to a didactic approach, the very method the Adec reforms aimed to sideline.

6.2.6 THE LACK OF QUALITY TEACHING MATERIALS

The Adec English curriculum has been in operation in grade 10 since 2008. Despite this, the study finds that relevant teaching materials are still in very short supply. Fullan (2007) explains, "When adoption is more important than implementation, decisions are frequently made without the follow-up or preparation time necessary to generate adequate materials" (p.91). Whilst this observation mirrors what occurred when Adec decided to introduce its initial reforms, the fact that seven years on, it still has not addressed this situation, has no systematic approach to materials collation and teachers are left to share programmes of work with friends on social media is hard to understand. Participants accepted Adec's expectation that teachers would create some of their own materials using authentic sources such as those on the Internet, for example. Yet, the students' inability to access texts at this level means that teachers had to spend considerable time adapting and differentiating them before they came close to being usable in the classroom and this provided an additional and unnecessary stress. Interestingly, Gibbons (2009) expressly argues against such simplification of materials for ESL learners because such practices limit what is available to be learnt (cited in Creese, 2010, p. 58). ATEs had a clear advantage over EMTs in such circumstances as they were able to translate the material for students but the long term implications of assisting the students in this manner mean would mean negligible gains in their English language overall.

6.2.7 TEACHER EXPERTISE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers"

(Interview in South Korea for the McKinsey Report, Barber & Mourshed, 2007, p.16).

Since the introduction of formalised education in the UAE, issues surrounding teacher quality have posed perhaps the main obstacle to educational development in the country. This has obvious implications for the successful implementation of the Adec reform some of which were highlighted in this study and are discussed below.

6.2.7.1 THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ADEC IN EMPLOYING ARAB TEACHERS OF ENGLISH (ATES)

The endemic shortage of teachers in boys' secondary schools in the Gulf has led to the employment of what the McKinsey report authors Barber, Mourshed & Whelan (2007) call "low-calibre" teachers, mainly of expatriate Arab origin. In 2010, UNESCO put the figure of teachers qualified in education in the UAE at 46% (AKR, 2011, p. 37). A study conducted in Dubai and the Northern Emirates by Ridge (2010) showed Arab teachers had subject degrees with no teaching qualifications or degrees from teacher education programmes but had neither completed a supervised period of teaching practice nor a probationary period (p.19).

Findings such as those above have meant the standard of teaching in Emirati public schools is frequently cited as a major concern in local press reports and in 2005 was described as "appalling" by the then Minister of Education (Bardsley, 2010b, 11.02.10). In boys' schools, where 22 per cent of students do not finish their secondary education, that concern increases exponentially (Ahmed, 2011a; Badri 1997, cited in Shaw & Hokal, 1999, p. 174). The high drop-out rate is sometimes attributed to the need for males to find work in order to support their families financially (Ahmed, 2013; Al Murawwi, 2012, cited in Kannan, 2012) but negative recollections of the classroom, including experiences of physical punishment (Clarke, 2006, p. 231; Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005, p. 4) are cited by most males as the reason for non-completion and why they would not consider joining the teaching profession now (Dickson & Le Roux, 2012; National Editorial, 2011).

The inability of ATEs to shake off this unfavorable image has had serious implications for them, the main one being Adec's decision, from 2009, to replace them with "native" English speaking teachers. ATEs who participated in this study felt Adec's perception that "native" speakers were better qualified to deliver a mainstream English was unjustified, particularly

as they had taught the curriculum since its inception, were familiar with Adec's expectations and felt suitably qualified to implement it accordingly. Not only that, they could communicate with the students and maintain discipline in the classroom. Yet, the fact that some of the teachers do not believe higher order thinking skills should be taught through the medium of English, their continued focus on the requirements of the final exam as a measure of student learning and their perpetuation of an authoritarian pattern between the teacher and student suggests that Adec's constructivist curriculum does not sit comfortably with them either.

Wedell & Malderez (2013) say that despite decades of educational research and numerous attempts to introduce more communicative, learner-centred approaches to education systems worldwide many features of (language) teaching and learning gravitate back towards features of the transmission-model and maintain this is because there is no appreciation of the time it takes for teachers to not only implement the change proposal in the classroom but to work through the "invisible culture" of that change (p. 205). Such comments suggest that the AKR's (2011) vision of a "distinct Arabic [sic] teacher" who is "capable of developing his students and equipping them with the skills and values of the knowledge society, as well as managing this constructivist pedagogy in the classroom" (p. 44) is still a long way off. The disconnect between ATEs' teaching philosophy and that of the Adec curriculum has implications for them in terms of their future employment prospects and indicates that, for the time being, Adec will continue to recruit teachers they believe do have the skills to manage constructivist pedagogy in the classroom, if not the culture of the classroom itself.

These factors have ramifications for those in charge of professional development at Adec. The findings show to date its programmes have not met the mark. Although different reasons for their dissatisfaction, both ATEs and EMTs were critical of the professional development opportunities they had been afforded, saying they had been minimal, badly executed, unrealistic and had done little to assist them in the delivery of the English curriculum.

6.2.7.2 THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ADEC IN EMPLOYING ENGLISH MEDIUM TEACHERS (EMTS)

The findings show Adec's unsatisfactory orientation of newly arrived EMTs, together with teachers' conflicting interpretations of the terminology used in the curriculum and assessment documents, led to unnecessary confusion and tension from the outset of their contracts. Not only that, its failure to alert teachers to the students' extremely low English levels meant EMTs were inadequately prepared for their first encounter with their students in the classroom. Their inability to act incisively or efficiently in making their expectations clear to their students, establishing a rapport or delivering the curriculum as it was intended impacted negatively on the immediate impression they made in the school and local community. It also created an uneasy relationship with their Arab colleagues who placed the EMTs' teaching qualifications in doubt. Although EMT participants in the study had a degree, teaching licence, an ESL qualification in most cases and agreed with the principles of constructivist learning, they found that little of the training they had received could have prepared them for the impossible conditions they faced in the classroom. EMTs had no means of controlling the environment as they could not communicate with the students and classroom management identified and continues to identify as the most important barrier to implementing the curriculum; the implications of which are of obvious and serious concern.

6.2.7.2.1 THE IMPACT OF SMT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE ADEC REFORM

A second key challenge, which contributed to that mentioned above, was the lack of support EMTs in two of the schools said they received from their schools' senior management team. Four out of six of the EMTs interviewed felt that the SMT actively obstructed them in their teaching duties, mainly because there were no consistent and/or transparent systems in place to deal with student behaviour and any communication between the EMTs and SMT was hampered by the language barrier. Being consistently undermined personally and professionally had not only proven extremely detrimental to their morale but meant that the principal and his administration team, the very people who should have been championing the reform, were standing in the way of it. This has serious implications for the professional development programmes Adec has in place for training

its schools' administration teams, some of whom, this study suggests are not supportive of Adec's decision to employ teachers from overseas and have little interest in helping them once they arrive. If Adec is intent on replacing ATEs with "native" English speaking teachers, it also needs to address how EMTs will function in schools where Arabic is the medium of communication without the assistance of Arabic speaking English teachers.

6.2.8 IMPLICATIONS SURROUNDING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE STAFFING MODEL

Press reports suggest that although the UAE is intent on nationalising its labour force, attracting local males into the teaching profession is virtually impossible (Al Subaihi, 2012). There have been no male enrolments for the past seven years on the teacher education course at UAE University and none since six male teachers graduated in 2012 from Emirates College of Advanced Education (ECAE) (Pennington, 2014). This conflicts with a National Editorial (2015) which says that of 396 newly recruited Emirati teachers who joined Adec in 2014, 24 were male. Either way, both represent a serious shortfall. Teaching continues to be seen as a low status profession by Emirati males. As there seems to be little hope of the situation changing any time soon it seems realistic to assume that the emirates will be reliant on male English teachers hired from overseas for many years to come. This has implications for Adec whose current approaches to recruitment and retention are impacting negatively on teachers' performance and morale.

The findings of the study show that both ATEs and EMTs feel under-appreciated. On one hand, the possibility of not having their contracts renewed makes ATEs reluctant to invest their energy wholeheartedly in an organisation that does not appear to value their contribution to it. On the other, EMTs feel they have been employed under false pretences and left largely unsupported by Adec in an untenable situation. Instead of providing opportunities for ATEs and EMTs to professionally develop in an atmosphere of collegiality, the current recruitment model seems to engender competition and separatism which only serves to adversely affect the quality of education students receive in the classroom.

6.2.9 CONTEXTUAL IMPLICATIONS – THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND THE LEARNING CULTURE

Data surrounding the opinions of parents and students were not analysed as part of this study, however, it appears both have played a key role in challenging the effective implementation of the Adec change proposal. ATEs commented on conversations with parents which indicate the community is not convinced that constructivist pedagogy as promoted by the current Adec English curriculum/assessment model, and which supposedly enables students "to interact with global sources of knowledge, culture and arts, through criticism, analysis, utilisation and production" (AKR, 2011, p. 46), is of value to its children studying in grade 10 and 11. This is particularly when a high-stakes external exam in grade 12 (CEPA) which has no relation to the Adec curriculum determines their future. Instead it seems, parents have more faith in traditional approaches to teaching, including the use of textbooks, quizzes and summative evaluation. This appears to extend to their views on how their children should be disciplined too. The lack of parental involvement in children's education in the emirates has been widely publicised (Al Sumaiti, 2012) and comments made by some of the participants in this study suggest there is still much work to be done.

Given students' complete lack of exposure to such an approach to learning in their earlier schooling, it is not surprising to note they also struggle with it; especially when, apart from English, all other subjects in grade 10 and 11 are textbook based, assessed using traditional methods and taught in Arabic. Interview data show students tend to approach English assessment tasks in the same way they do their traditionally taught subjects and expect teachers to tell them how to get top marks rather than attending to the performance criteria provided by the assessment rubrics themselves. These findings illustrate how deeply entrenched the rote-learning assessment mechanism is in the local learning culture and how little thought Adec has given to it. In addition, the disproportionate allocation of grades to English formative assessment tasks (60%) versus exams (40%) means students can graduate to the next year level simply by turning in two research projects. As so few students are as yet able to fulfil the Adec curriculum goals of researching autonomously or working collaboratively and critically in English, many of the tasks are completed in class

with their teacher or plagiarised from the internet. This, in effect, renders this form of assessment meaningless and as a result, students do not take the study of English in a school context seriously, as was the case pre-Adec reform.

This curious situation draws attention to the limited understanding policy makers have of public school education and the fact that change proposals do not occur in isolation. They are influenced by many factors; the culture of learning, the culture of the school and the attitudes of the local community. Students and their parents are receiving mixed messages about the type of teaching and learning that is valued and important for their educational development. In 2014 the Federal National Council of UAE announced its intention to close university English foundation progammes by 2018 with the expectation that schools would prepare students for tertiary English study instead. Should this decree comes to pass, the implications of this study's findings are of even greater relevance as they offer valuable insights into what type of curriculum and assessment programme could take its place (section 6.3.4).

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

> Development [has] occurred at all levels simultaneously
> leaving little time for reflection, consolidation, recalibration,
> or adjustment. The speed and extent of development have
> had a serious impact on the overall planning, implementation,
> and management of language programs (Syed, 2003, p.338)

Despite being written over a decade ago, Syed's observations on English language reform in the UAE are of huge relevance today and, sadly it seems, little notice has been taken of them. In the light of his comments and the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

6.3.1 AN HONEST AND REALISTIC ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEEDS

> You can't put down stepping stones for someone to find
> without first knowing where they are (Claxton, 1997, cited in
> Wedell & Malderez, 2013, p. 139).

First and foremost, there needs to be a realistic and honest assessment of students' English language abilities in Cycle Three schools, across a range of skills; from letter recognition (both in Arabic and English) to micro and macro skills and the acceptance that the students are learning English as an additional language. Without it, the true English levels of public school pupils will continue to be obfuscated and no reform regardless of its provenance will gain traction. Given the unique characteristics of the student population, it makes sense that the instrument used to undertake the assessment should be developed here in the UAE, piloted extensively and, based on feedback and further refinements, administered and analysed emirate-wide.

6.3.2 CONSULTATION WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS

> Innovation requires more response-ableness and a collective
> vision (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, cited in Bogotch, Townsend
> & Acker Hocevar, 2010, p. 129)

The study recommends that once the results of the needs assessment have been collated, Adec presents sessions in schools around the emirate which will serve the purpose of informing teachers, parents and students of the assessment findings and at the same time give them the chance to comment on the results as well as make suggestions or air any concerns they might have. In the interests of transparency, those stakeholders who wish to give feedback should be provided the opportunity to do so anonymously. Engaging in open consultation will take time and may produce results policy makers do not want to hear but as the findings of this study show, if such a needs assessment had been conducted pre-2008, the full extent of the English language deficit in Cycle Three schools would have been revealed and the imposition an idealised overseas educational model which clearly does not address the local learning, cultural and societal needs, avoided. Tapping the country's collective wisdom would allow the Emirati people to be active and included contributors to the future of their nation rather than passive and marginalised recipients of pre-determined mandates. Engaging in such a process would at last lead to informed decisions being made about what it is students in the UAE actually need to learn English for and so enable local teachers and curriculum developers to collaborate on how best to achieve this goal given the students' current language levels.

6.3.3 STREAMING STUDENTS ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE ABILITY

The results of small scale in-house English language needs analyses conducted in the past by individual schools have proven useful for identifying students' areas of weakness but because English classes in public schools are mixed ability, efforts to meaningfully target such shortcomings have been largely ineffectual. In order to utilise the findings of the proposed needs assessment (see 6.3.1.) to maximum effect, the study recommends streaming students according to their language ability, explaining the rationale behind this action to them beforehand and allocating the "best" teachers[29] who have ESL qualifications in addition to their teaching licence/diploma to the lower level classes. Having first ascertained they share the same teaching, learning philosophy and are endowed with patience, experience, empathy and high expectations, perhaps these classes could be staffed by an EMT / ATE team-teaching combination who plan and deliver the course together. Such attributes will be necessary to motivate students who might well be disengaged from learning. Some participants in this study suggest that local students will not respond well to streaming but if students were made aware of the research which shows students benefit from studying within their zone of proximal development as well as provided with performance incentives which resulted in promotion between levels, this approach could be applied to subjects such as English, Arabic and maths. Other subjects such as history and Islamic studies, for example, could continue to be taught in mixed-ability groupings. If Adec introduces a wider range of elective subjects as it has proposed on several occasions, students will likely get accustomed to being in different classes for different subjects and the status associated with being a member of a particular class will diminish.

6.3.4 CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT DESIGNED ACCORDING TO STUDENTS' LANGUAGE LEVELS

The study recommends that the curriculum model and pedagogical approach employed depends on students' levels and suggests a three pronged approach. A carefully structured programme focusing on the explicit teaching of key content, skills and understanding is

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[29] Shulman (1987) considers such teachers should have extensive knowledge of: curriculum and assessment, content, pedagogy, learner characteristics, educational context and educational goals within the society.

more likely to be beneficial for lower level students. This would provide them with a supportive environment in which to develop, practise and refine foundational English language skills they may have missed out on in their earlier schooling. Achievable performance goals would enable them to become confident of their English ability in their own right and diffuse their previous need to copy the work of others. Successful completion of a series of assessment task with clear expectations would allow them to be promoted to a higher level.

Students who possess basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) could be placed in intermediate classes. Here students could tackle elements of the current Adec English curriculum but with designed in instructional scaffolding such as modelling, bridging, contextualisation, building schema, re-presenting text and developing metacognition as key components of their course; the features of which are outlined in Appendix 18. Walqui (2006) explains such pedagogical approaches are of particular benefit to English language learners who might need to experience and practise a concept in four or five different ways before fully grasping it whereas a "native" English speaker may have no need for this additional input. The implication here is that teachers may take longer to cover a certain topic, perhaps not in the same depth and assessment tasks would need to be redesigned to reflect these changes but the benefits of employing a scaffolded approach mean that over time students would become equipped with the skills to travel the path towards cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) smoothly and with confidence.

Those students who already demonstrate a well-rounded ability and confidence in English could comprise a third level and to all intents and purposes complete the Adec grade 10 and 11 English course, including the research based assessment tasks, as it was originally intended. Lack of opportunities to effectively scaffold or mediate instruction together with the extreme and diverse needs of students in their mixed ability classes were identified by study participants as major shortcomings of the current curriculum model. By streaming the classes and designing curricula to meet student needs, it is also likely that student engagement levels will improve and this impact positively on classroom management in turn. Student motivation to study English will also depend on the teaching and learning

materials provided for them in the classroom, the importance of which cannot be underestimated.

Figure 5: A suggested pedagogical model for teaching English in Adec Cycle 3 public schools
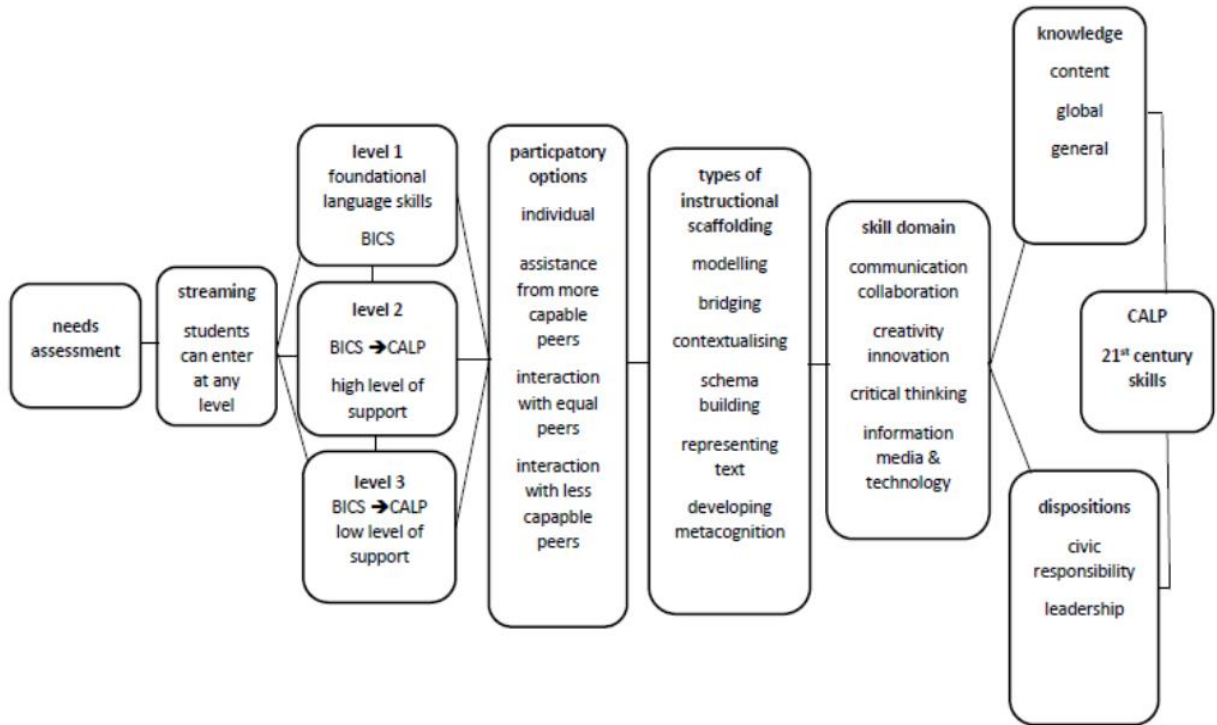
6.3.5 DESIGNING CURRICULUM MATERIALS WITH STUDENTS IN MIND

The inadequate provision of suitable, quality teaching materials has plagued the Adec English curriculum since it was first introduced in 2008. The study recommends that, based on the findings of the needs assessment mentioned in section 6.3.1., core English texts are designed for grades 10 /11 and available in digital format. A core textbook would have obvious benefits. It would provide teachers with professionally designed course materials pitched at the students' level, give them the flexibility of adapting content to reflect the class dynamic and at the same time, allow the perpetuation of a known mode of learning. An English textbook would give students a point of reference, sense of direction and encourage independent study; especially if the text and supplementary activities were accessible via tablet and smartphone. The school administration team would need to spend less of the school budget on photocopying and parents might at last have a clearer picture of what their children were studying.

In addition, supplementary materials created by teachers for the above courses, including video clips, photos, sound files and Arab English vocabulary glossaries could be submitted to a central database, as well as samples of student work and corresponding grade allocation to assist with assessment moderation. The database would be overseen by a committee of teachers selected for the purpose of peer assessing, collating and storing all suitable submissions on an Adec staff intranet portal available for all to download. The study recommends teachers be remunerated for taking on this extra responsibility. Access to a repository of materials such as this would significantly reduce anxiety for teachers, especially those new to the country.

Study participants said students were often disinterested in the course materials because of their inaccessibility and seeming irrelevance to their lives. They said boys responded well to resources that piqued their interest such as sport, cars and technology. The study recommends the formation of a working party comprising ATEs, EMTs and students who would collaborate to create digital books using computer software such as iBook Author and other materials suitable for a range of student language levels and the Emirati context. Materials found in the *NSW ESL Intensive English Programs Curriculum Framework (2004)* documents could be of benefit here (Appendix 7b). The framework is intended for use with secondary aged students newly arrived to NSW Australia who have varying levels of English proficiency and who require intensive ESL tuition before transitioning to a mainstream high school English programme. In the light of the previous comments it may seem of little use in an Emirati context, however, the framework is divided into four levels which represent the progressive stages of intensive English language learning across a range of text types all of which are covered in the current Adec curriculum. Samples of each text type across a range of proficiency levels are included. The local materials development team could use the language features and structures in these samples as models on which to develop their own UAE based content.

6.3.6 INVESTING IN HUMAN CAPITAL

Section 6.2.9 explored the UAE's current staffing model in boys' schools and its implications for their education. The study recommends that Adec undertakes a review of its

recruitment and retention procedures in order to provide equitable performance related employment conditions for both EMTs and ATEs. Discrepancies in their pay scales, length of contract, as well as flight and housing allowances are doing little to incentivise Arab teachers of English who arguably represent Adec's most precious resource in Cycle Three schools currently. It seems that ATEs' lack of teacher education is one of the reasons they are not remunerated at the level of their colleagues but EMTs' inability to communicate with and so manage their students means they are prevented from putting the skills developed on their teacher training courses into practice and the reality for both groups is an over reliance on a teacher-centred approach. The study recommends professional development opportunities be provided for both groups of Cycle Three teachers.

6.3.6.1 ORIENTATION FOR NEWLY ARRIVED TEACHERS

At present, Adec is recruiting teachers from all over the English speaking world to implement its language education reform. Whilst they share a common language, it does not necessarily follow they share the same approaches to teaching and learning; especially as Adec did not insist that teachers had ESL training in addition to their teaching licence/diploma but which is a recommendation of this study. Teachers from the US, for example, come from a SBC (standards based curricula) background whilst, as mentioned in section 5.15, the Adec curriculum is outcomes-based. In order to maximise the school effectiveness of newly hired teachers, the study recommends an in-depth orientation programme on arrival. There should be sessions timetabled to familiarise teachers with the curriculum / assessment documents in both print and digital format, an orientation to the resource portal (section 6.3.5) as well as training given in programme planning and moderating assessment tasks in accordance with the outcomes based teaching and learning model promoted by Adec. Video footage of the curriculum in action in standard public, rather than model, schools would be of more value here. In addition, teachers should be given advice on how best to conduct themselves in the school, classroom and local community in order to help them settle in quickly and also avoid unintentionally offending their hosts. Courses on cultural awareness and linguistic problems typically encountered by Arab speakers could be conducted by ATEs.

As a priority, Adec needs to formulate systematic policies for dealing with issues surrounding discipline, absenteeism and cheating in consultation with school principals, social workers, teachers and student representatives. More importantly, there must be consequences for students who breach the policies which are documented and acted upon. This charter should be presented to EMTs at their orientation so on entry to their new schools teachers can feel confidence in the support they will receive from their principal and his SMT. If the recommendations to stream the students and provide curricula that meet their needs, the hope is that discipline issues will decrease but currently they present a major obstacle to implementation of the Adec English curriculum for teachers who do not speak Arabic.

6.3.6.2 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ATES

For ATEs, a suggestion is to provide them with a bespoke certificated training course including a teaching practice component which draws on the conceptual framework put forward by Walqui (2006) (section 6.3.4 & Appendix 18), Van Lier's (2004) expanded ZPD model and Cummins' (1979) work addressing a student's journey from BICS to CALP. This recommendation is made in response to the study findings in which ATEs said they would benefit from professional development in materials design, together with the specific challenges surrounding teachers' conflicted understanding of "differentiation", the place of "critical thinking skills" in English classes and the collaborative nature of "group" work (Marsh & Heng, 2009; Pedersen & Liu, 2003; Windschitl, 2002). Such a course would give teachers training in creating intellectually challenging scaffolded tasks which could be undertaken by students in a variety of learning contexts research shows are of benefit; individually, with peers, with more capable peers and with less capable peers (Van Lier's expanded ZPD model, 2004, cited in Walqui, 2006, p.168). In the interests of sustainability, ATEs who complete the course and an express an interest in doing so would then train others. Thus, enabling them to re-imagine the classroom as a collaborative, supported and dynamic environment in which students develop the skills, knowledge and dispositions (NAEP, 2007, cited in Bhattacharya & Moallem, 2008) needed to cope in our ever changing world.

6.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the light of the above recommendations, three suggestions for future research spring to mind because of the immediate and positive impact they might have on student motivation, engagement, behaviour and achievement. These include monitoring the effects of 1) streaming 2) team-teaching and 3) involving students in designing, creating and publishing their own teaching and learning materials using Apple technology such as iBooks author. An action research project piloting the teacher training programme outlined above would provide a fourth.

6.5 REFLECTION

This study contributes to the limited published material available on the impact of educational reform in the Abu Dhabi emirate. It puts forward a possible pedagogical model for the teaching of English in grades 10 to 11 (section 6.3.4) and suggestions for a teacher training programme (section 6.3.6.2). These practical and theoretical perspectives were made possible because of the insights provided by the study's participants and for them I am extremely grateful. I am humbled by the trust teachers placed in me by expressing their heartfelt sentiments regarding the Adec reform. Their words were delivered with the true passion of educators who despite coming to the UAE as economic migrants really wanted to make a positive impact on the lives of the students in their charge. The findings of the study left me with little hope and much sadness, however, and Einstein's (n.d.) observation, "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them" (cited in Gilbert, 2011, p.3) helps explain why. For the frustration here is that, in the case of the English language education reforms initiated by Adec in grade 10 and 11, the same kind of thinking *is* being used and, therefore, with little success.

If any positive change it to come from this study, teachers, students and parents need to claim their voice and challenge the wisdom of initiating reforms driven by elite powerbrokers who have limited understanding of the realities of public school education, are only eager to see a "quick win" and have little interest in the issues confronting teachers as they try to implement their mandates or the families on which they are inflicted. To do this, the country must have the courage to end its reliance on overseas interventions and

travel unchartered waters in search of homegrown research based solutions crucial to the

future success of its education system.

> One does not discover new lands without consenting to lose
> sight of the shore for a very long time (Andre Gide, (n.d).

APPENDIX 1: THE GRADE 10 AND 11 LEARNING PLANS FOR 2011-2012

Grade 10 Learning Plan		
Indicators – students learn to:	**Indicators– students learn to:**	
Communicate a range of feelings and ideas in extended conversations and presentations in English Adapt style and register of spoken language to suit different purposes and audiences, in a range of real and imagined contexts Use a range of strategies to read, view and respond to authentic texts from private, public and business contexts	Identify and describe how different uses of language affect meaning and response Write a range of coherent texts characterized by a variety of and flexibility of language Plan revise and refine the composition of texts for different purposes and audiences, and in different media, to enhance overall effect	
Trimester 1 **The cultural family**	**Trimester 2** **Develop a critical personal response**	**Trimester 3** **The world around us**
Consider and explore: What is the Emirati Culture? What does it mean for me living the UAE? Who am I and what is my culture? Where do I come from? What is my cultural heritage? Contemporary society Art and literature	**Analyze, synthesise, evaluate** • ideas in texts • different perspectives • cultural values • beliefs • feelings **Collaborate in** • conversation • discussion **Apply** • appropriate visual representation **Use** • idioms and figurative language with effect **Reflect** on own learning as part of a collaboration	**Consider** Why is our legacy to future generations important? **Consider** the consequences of our "footprint". **Explore:** • environment • influence of climate • education and work • wealth and poverty resources

Grade 11 Learning Plan	
Indicators – students learn to:	**Indicators– students learn to:**
Communicate to explore, express and explain information, processes and ideas Appreciate and select appropriate language forms, features and structures of texts in a range of personal, social and workplace contexts Read and view a wide range of texts, and describe and explain how the relationships between writer, reader, text and context achieve particular purposes	Identify and describe how language forms, features and structures of texts and their mediums of production influence meaning and response Write in a range of styles and with various technologies to convey, analyze and synthesize information and ideas Compose texts for pleasure and purpose, using language and processes appropriately and effectively

Trimester 1 **A healthy society**	Trimester 2 **Develop a critical personal response**	Trimester 3 **Citizenship and civic responsibility**
Consider and explore: Why is it important to develop healthy individuals and societies? What if we do not sustain a healthy society? • The cost of an unhealthy society What is "health"? Health problems in our society 　○ Social 　○ Physical 　○ Emotional Is health merely the absence of disease? Global health issues: How do other countries compare with the UAE?	**Analyse, synthesise, evaluate** • ideas in texts • different perspectives • cultural values • beliefs • feelings **Collaborate** • conversation • discussion **Apply** • appropriate visual representation **Use** • idioms and figurative language with effect **Reflect** on own learning as part of a collaboration	**Consider:** What is a responsible citizen? Why is it important to be a responsible citizen? How can we be responsible citizens? **Explore** National and International communities • public role models • laws, contracts and community values • leadership and roles • social responsibility • personal responsibility • rights and responsibilities • citizenship • volunteers service • charity

APPENDIX 2: AN EXAMPLE OF AN INTEGRATED STRAND TASK (IST)

CRITERIA WRITING FOR PURPOSE

Total Marks /16

4	3	2	1
Presents ideas			
Uses the appropriate text type to present significant ideas that address the prompt clearly	Uses the appropriate text type to present ideas that address the prompt	Text type structure may not be appropriate but some attempt at organizing ideas	A simple text that includes some related ideas which may or not relate to the prompt
Organises ideas			
Uses paragraphing structures appropriately formatting paragraphs/ one idea or set of ideas per paragraph/ a range of sentence structures -simple, compound, complex range of punctuation	Uses some paragraphing structures - formatting paragraphs/ one idea or set of ideas per paragraph - with some variety of sentence structure - simple/ compound/ complex - applying appropriate punctuation mostly at sentence level commas full stops, capital letters	Begins to uses some paragraphing structures -formatting paragraphs/ one idea or set of ideas per paragraph- without using a range of sentence structures - simple/ compound/ complex where punctuation may not be appropriate	Uses simple sentences where paragraphing and punctuation may not be evident
Uses language tools			
Uses some rich, precise words and/or phrases and text type language features demonstrating control of tense most of the time	Uses appropriate text type language features and word choices demonstrating control of tense some of the time	Experiments with new, different word choices, and or uses some text type language features which may not always be appropriate and control of tense may not be evident	Uses some key words that are generally linked to the central idea
Spelling			
Spells all common and simple words correctly Spells difficult / complex words with increasing accuracy	Spells all common words correctly Spells most simple words correctly Attempts to spell more difficult words using recognizable letter patterns	Spells most common words correctly Spells many simple words correctly	Spells some common words correctly Uses initial letters and some known letter patterns

APPENDIX 3: A SAMPLE FROM THE GRADE 10 EMSA PAPER 2012

Text B: Poem - Give and Take

[Adapted from the poem "Make Friends with a Tree", by Brian Moses]

The lungs of the earth
A tree gives us life
Shelter, air and food
The umbrella for life

Cutting, chopping, killing
For paper, house or table
Why not treat a tree politely?
We can do it! Yes, we're able.

What do trees do for us?
What do we do for trees?
We take, take, take
They just ask for a simple 'please'

A tree will always listen,
Tell your troubles to a tree.
To the mystery of life
A date palm may hold the key.

A tree can tell us tales,
A tree is the knowledge of your past,
So in this world of destruction
Help the trees to always last.

ER10 page 2 of 4

Read Text B and answer questions B1 - B3

For questions B1-B2, choose one answer and circle it: e.g. (A)

If you make a mistake, cross out the first answer and circle the correct one. e.g. (X) ⟶ (C)

B1. What is the poetic feature in 'A tree will always listen'?

    A.   Simile

    B.   Metaphor

    C.   Personification

    D.   Alliteration

B2. What is the metaphor that describes "the tree" in the poem?

    A.   Give a tree a squeeze

    B.   A tree can tell us tales

    C.   A date palm may hold the key.

    D.   A tree is the knowledge of your past.

For question B3 write your answer in the spaces provided

B3. Explain how the poet compares trees and people in the poem.

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APPENDIX 4: EMT INTERVIEW ONE QUESTIONS

I The ADEC English curriculum documentation and materials

1) When you started as an LT, can you tell me how you were introduced to the grade 10/11 English curriculum documents?

2) Have you read the documents closely? Do you refer to them to inform your planning?

3) Describe the aims and objectives of the English curriculum

4) Why do you think ADEC has chosen this curriculum? What do you think of ADEC's choice?

5) What do you think of the curriculum teaching materials provided by ADEC?
6) Do you feel confident to design a scheme of work and associated materials for a unit of study?

7) Do you think it should be the teacher's job to prepare teaching materials?

8) Did you bring any materials with you? Were they appropriate for this context?

9) What are the positive aspects of working with this curriculum?

10) What are the major challenges you face in implementing this curriculum?

II Assessment

1) What are your thoughts regarding the assessment system? ECART/ISTs and exams?

2) How do you approach Continuous Assessment tasks with the students?

3) Does your school have the resources available – internet, library –books?

4) Do you think these forms of assessment are suitable ways to assess your students' knowledge? If not, why and what would you suggest?

III) Professional Development / Teacher Education

1) Are you a mainstream English teacher?

2) Do you bring a specialism or training which you feel is particularly beneficial for this context?
For example: ESL/Special Ed/ IT /leadership experience/etc.

3) What kind of training would you have liked to receive before you began to teach the ADEC curriculum?

4) Have you been offered PD opportunities since arriving? If so, have the sessions been useful?
If not, what form would you like the sessions to take? What topics would you like the sessions to cover?

5) Have you run PD sessions for the staff here? What did they involve? How were they received? If you have not conducted PD, would you like to? On what topic? What has stopped you

6) When ADEC recruit LTs what should their requirements/prerequisites be?

APPENDIX 5: EMT INTERVIEW TWO QUESTIONS

IV Post lesson visit questions

1) Tell me about the positive aspects and challenges you faced during the lesson.
To what extent did having a visitor change the students' behavior?
2) Describe the engagement and motivation levels of your students today. Did you feel you were able to meet your lesson objectives? What factors impact on their motivation and engagement levels in general?
3) How do you adapt/have you adapted your previously established classroom practice to meet the needs of the students in this context?
4) How often do you use pair work/group work activities? What are the positives/challenges?

V ADEC Curriculum – Implementation

1) What is your understanding of critical thinking?
2) Have you been provided with an ADEC definition of critical thinking?
3) Do you think the ADEC curriculum provides critical thinking opportunities? In what way?
4) How do you approach CT in your classes here?
5) How do your students cope with tasks which require them to think critically?
6) Has ADEC advised you how to approach the teaching of grammar? If yes, please describe. If, no, how do you approach teaching grammar with students? How do they respond to this?
7) What challenges do reading activities provide for you and for students? What do you do about this?
8) Have your students taken any kind of reading test to ascertain their reading levels?
9) Do you design differentiated activities for your students? What form do they take?
Describe the challenges?
10) What difference would streaming the classes according to language ability make to you?
11) What do you think the focus of English lessons should be in this context?

VI Curriculum Evaluation, Implications and Recommendations

1) What do you think of ADEC's decision to have only LTs in grade 10-12?
What are your thoughts on team-teaching?

2) Has ADEC asked you to evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of the English curriculum?
If ADEC were to evaluate the level to which key features of the English curriculum such as: critical thinking, problem solving, differentiation, ECART research skill development and language skill development were being implemented, what would it find?

3) How long have you been teaching the ADEC English curriculum in Cycle Three?
How would you describe your morale? Why?
How would you describe the level of communication from ADEC regarding the curriculum/exams and any changes made to it/them?
What has impacted positively and/or negatively on your relationships within the school - include students, staff, principal & administration? How has this helped/hindered your ability to implement the curriculum?

4) What suggestions do you have for improving the ADEC English curriculum? Long term & immediate?
ADEC conducted a LT teacher survey in June 2011. Did you complete it? What did you say?

5) Sum up your opinion of the ADEC English curriculum in a sentence.

APPENDIX 6: ATE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) What are the challenges you face as an expatriate Arab English teacher at this time of curriculum reform? Do these challenges differ from the past? If so, in what way?

2) The UAE has frequently been criticised for students' low levels of English in Cycle Three. What is your response to this?
How was English taught in the past and how were students assessed? How does it differ now?

Why do you think ADEC has chosen this curriculum? What do you think of ADEC's choice?
(If teachers had taught grade 10 & 11 they were also asked questions relating to pedagogical approaches and assessment as per the EMT interview.)

3) What do you think of ADEC's decision to have only LTs in grade 10-12? Positives and challenges?
Describe the impact of the introduction of the LT programme on students' English levels and in general.
What are your thoughts on team-teaching in grade 10/11? Could you suggest other models?
Describe the advantages and disadvantages of speaking Arabic as well as English

Have you received PD from the LTs?
Have you given PD?
If you have not given PD, have you offered guidance and assistance to the LTs? In what way?

4) How would you describe your morale? Why?

Do you feel the ministry of education invested in you as a professional? How about ADEC?

What has impacted positively and negatively on your willingness to implement the ADEC reform?

What kind of training would you have liked to receive before you began to teach the ADEC curriculum?

What PD opportunities have you been offered since the curriculum was introduced?

Have the sessions been useful? If not, what topics and what training format would you like?

5) Were you consulted regarding the curriculum content for the new ADEC English curriculum prior?
Has ADEC asked you to evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of the English curriculum?

If ADEC were to evaluate the level to which key features of the English curriculum were being implemented, such as: critical thinking, problem solving, differentiation, ECART research skill development and language skill development, what would it find?

6) What suggestions do you have for improving the ADEC English curriculum? Long term & immediate?

ADEC recently conducted a teacher survey. Did you complete it? What did you say? If not, why?

APPENDIX 7: EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTARY DATA

a) The NSW grade 7-10 English syllabus rationale (DET, NSW, 2003, p.7)

2   Rationale

Language shapes our understanding of ourselves and our world, and is the primary means by which we relate to others. In Years 7 to 10, English is the study and use of the English language in its various textual forms. These encompass spoken, written and visual texts of varying complexity through which meaning is shaped, conveyed, interpreted and reflected.

In acknowledgement of its role as the national language, English is the mandatory subject from Kindergarten to Year 12 in the NSW curriculum. Skills, knowledge and understanding acquired in English are central to the learning and development of students in NSW. Developing proficiency in English enables students to take their place as confident communicators, critical and imaginative thinkers, lifelong learners and active participants in Australian society. It supports the development and expression of a system of personal values based on students' understanding of moral, ethical and spiritual matters and gives expression to their hopes and ideals.

English in Years 7 to 10 is both challenging and enjoyable. It develops skills to enable students to experiment with ideas and expression, to become active, independent learners, to work with each other and to reflect on their learning.

The study of English in this syllabus is founded on the belief that language learning is recursive and develops through ever-widening contexts. Students learn English through explicit teaching of language and through their immersion in a diverse range of purposeful and increasingly demanding language experiences. The syllabus enables teachers to draw on the methods of different theoretical perspectives and models for teaching English to assist their students to achieve the syllabus outcomes at the highest levels. The syllabus is linked to the purpose statement and broad learning outcomes of the *K–10 Curriculum Framework*.

Through responding to and composing texts, students learn about the power, value and art of the English language for communication, knowledge and pleasure. They engage with and explore texts that include the literature of past and contemporary societies. By composing and responding with imagination, feeling, logic and conviction, students develop understanding of themselves, and of human experience and culture. They develop clear and precise skills in speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing, and knowledge and understanding of language forms and features and structures of texts.

In their study of English, students develop their critical and imaginative faculties and broaden their cultural understanding. They examine the contexts of language usage to understand how meaning is shaped by a variety of social factors. As students' command of English grows, they are able to question, assess, challenge and reformulate information and use creative and analytical language to clarify and solve problems. They become imaginative and confident users of information and communication technologies, understanding their impact on society. These skills allow them to develop their control of language in ways that will help them in lifelong learning, in their careers and in life.

b) A sample from the NSW ESL Curriculum Framework (DET, NSW, 2004)

LEVEL 2

GRAMMAR SCOPE

Nouns:	
proper nouns	e.g. Danka
common nouns	e.g. classroom, cupboard
Prepositions:	
of place	in, on, e.g. on the walls, in the front
of time and date	at, on, after, before, e.g. at the same time
of accompaniment	with, e.g. with the same people
Articles:	
definite	the, e.g. the desks
indefinite	an, a, e.g. a cupboard
Pronouns:	
subject	I, you, we, it, e.g. I usually sit.
possessive	our, her, my, e.g. my classroom, his club
Conjunctions:	
additive	and, e.g. The room is painted white and has blue carpet.
causal	because, so, e.g. The desks are joined together so the students sit in groups.
Adjectives:	e.g. big, coloured
Adverbs:	
of frequency	usually, always, sometimes, never, e.g. I usually sit with the same people every day.
There is/there are + noun:	e.g. There is a cupboard.
Present tense verbs:	e.g. My classroom is big. I usually sit.

KLA context

all KLAs

ESL Scales

W: 2 → 3

LEVEL 2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

WRITING

19. Can write a description.

Students learn to

- write using the text structure and language features of a description, e.g. who or what, followed by characteristics including details, features and/or properties (see examples pages 19c and 19d)
- use correct spacing between words, lines, and paragraphs
- set out work using appropriate layout, e.g. margins, date, headings
- use appropriate punctuation
- use the writing process to plan, draft and redraft
- understand the purpose of description is to describe a particular subject, e.g. a person, animal, place or thing

Sample strategies

Teacher directed
- build the field (vocabulary related to topic) using visual/spoken cues
- respond to a visual text such as a visual image by writing a description of the image
- model a range of simple descriptions and point out text and language features, e.g. use of to be/to have, spelling, punctuation, adjectives and noun groups
- provide appropriate word bank of a variety of adjectives for size, shape, texture and colour
- deconstruct to highlight key text features

Joint/guided
- complete cloze/dictagloss to highlight particular language features, e.g. adjectives, adverbs
- write descriptions with information from a matrix, video, picture, topic sentence
- write simple descriptions for use in guessing games, e.g. What am I?

Independent construction
- complete cloze exercise
- complete descriptive paragraphs
- write descriptions, e.g. of another student
- develop personal word banks with detailed noun groups and adverbs

Suggested assessment tasks

- write a description, e.g. character, place, event, animal, thing
- write a description in response to visual stimulus

Suggested themes, topics and/or experiences

animals, people, places, literature themes, excursions, houses, transport, school, important events, shapes, clothing, aircraft, environment, landforms, brochures, advertisements, websites

c) A Sample from the NSW ESL Scales, Curriculum Corporation, 1994, p. 96

LEVEL 5   Writing and responding

Communication

Level 4 outcomes:
4.9 Communicates for a range of purposes on a variety of familiar topics using a basic repertoire of text types.
4.10 Demonstrates an awareness of how effective writing is tailored to the requirements of the topic and the needs of the reader.
4.11 Writes a variety of texts, demonstrating some overall cohesion and coherence.
4.12 Makes use of discussion and reflection to enhance the writing process.

At level 5, a student:
5.9 Communicates on a range of familiar topics and incorporates language and ideas drawn from different sources in response to the varying demands of the classroom.

Evident when students, for example:
- Use own writing for personal reflection (personal journal writing).
- Write from the viewpoint of a designated character in a story.
- Emulate literary forms such as poetry and dialogue, drawing on studied models.
- Sustain an argument on a simple point of view and come to a conclusion (why students shouldn't smoke).
- Write logically, incorporating relevant information (in giving an account of a motor accident).
- Write a report attempting to incorporate information from two or three different sources (by summarising, paraphrasing or copying).
- Maintain an appropriate balance between general ideas and supporting detail in texts.

Language and cultural understanding

At level 5, a student:
5.10 Adjusts the form of writing to intended contexts, purposes and audiences.

Evident when students, for example:
- Show some awareness of audience in writing (consider how much the reader may already know about the topic before writing).
- Identify important common differences between spoken and written texts (that informal spoken texts are loosely organised and that choice of vocabulary and structure may vary).
- Identify inappropriate use of register in own writing (use of slang in formal text).
- Establish a relationship with the reader throughout the text (through stance taken, use of inclusive we).
- Choose a style and vocabulary appropriate to the perceived reading level of the audience (when writing for young children).
- Use fitting detail in descriptions and stories.
- Use a variety of formats suited to the purpose to support or illustrate written texts (diagrams, graphs, tables).
- Sustain an appropriate tone throughout a text.
- Use appropriate content language for different subject areas.

Language structures and features

At level 5, a student:
5.11 Writes a number of coherent texts, demonstrating some flexibility and control over key organisational and language features.

Evident when students, for example:
- Write texts alternating between narrative, dialogue and indirect speech.
- Use aspects of register suited to the text type (use of passive voice as part of an objective description in a science report).
- Use a variety of connectives avoiding mechanical repetition (then, after that, later, when).
- Use a range of conjunctions to relate ideas across sentences or paragraphs in a text (although, yet, however).
- Use some cohesive phrases that link ideas expressed in preceding sentences and paragraphs (as a result, due to, for these reasons).
- Use topic sentences within as well as at the beginning of paragraphs to unify ideas within a paragraph.
- Manipulate given and new information within sentences to maintain coherence in texts.
- Make generalisations using timeless present tense or non-human participants ('rainforests provide...', 'timber is used...').
- Use a range of expressions that signal personal opinion ('In my view...', 'My opinion is that').
- Write sentences using relative clauses with some accuracy ('The water that comes from the sea returns to the sea').
- Use simple past and continuous tenses with some consistency in narratives and reports.
- Express possibility, probability, obligation or doubt through use of modals such as may, might, could and should.
- Balance and vary noun and pronoun references in texts (in referring to multiple characters in stories).
- Use a range of adjectival expressions for descriptive purposes ('many attractive places', 'other dangerous people').
- Use some simple rhetorical devices in writing (rhetorical questions).

Strategies

At level 5, a student:
5.12 Focuses on planning and editing writing to improve its range and expression.

Evident when students, for example:
- Plan extended writing (a research project).
- Select suitable materials from a range of sources.
- Redraft to improve suitability for intended audience (make significant changes to text in the light of responses).
- Check writing to ensure spelling and punctuation are correct.
- Take notes from books or while listening to assist in writing a text.
- Identify some unintended meanings in own writing.
- Monitor own writing to check for habitual errors.
- Proofread for clarity and accuracy of meaning.

Level 6 outcomes:
6.9 Communicates on a range of topics, marshalling ideas through a variety of well-known text types.
6.10 Takes some account in writing that readers react to written texts according to their experiences, interests and values.
6.11 Writes a variety of coherent texts characterised by a cohesive and flexible use of language.
6.12 Plans and revises writing to enhance its fluency, accuracy and readability.

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APPENDIX 8: TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW ONE (EMT)

File: **ALI 1.mp3**
Duration: **0:22:54**

So when I started as an LT I actually was not introduced to the curriculum. That's because I originally came over as an elementary teacher. They had a shortage of teachers in Cycle Three level, so they asked me to come over. So I didn't have the formal training or anything like that.

At the beginning of the school year, or actually when the teachers first came they had an orientation for the cycle three teachers. Some were there. Some weren't for other reasons but that's probably something I should have gone to if I had known I was going to be here.

I haven't read the documents closely, however I have skimmed through them and tried to find things that I can use and that will be effective here. It was tough, first of all, it's 50 to 60 pages that they give us, papers regarding ECART and the continuous assessment. If you had three different people who read it, they would have three different ideas on what it means.

I think what was needed is someone to actually sit us down and train us, and tell us, "This is exactly what we want you to do." Instead of each teacher doing it in their own way, I think that would have been a lot better.

The aims and objectives of the English curriculum; to be honest, I'm not sure what their objective is. Because the things that they're asking the students to do, there's no way these students can do it. In each class you probably have 15 to 20% of the students who can even *attempt* to do what they're asking them to do. That's what's really confusing. We don't really know what they're asking the students to do. Because, if they knew the students they had here, the ECART and the continuous assessment things; they would definitely know that that's not something that they should have in front of the students. So…yeah….

I think Adec has chosen this curriculum [bell rings] because from the outside they want it to look as much like a western education as possible. Personally, I think they should lean towards an ESL curriculum because that's what they're teaching. You know, you're teaching students who are learning English as a second language and not as a first language. This curriculum would be great in England or Australia but I don't think it's right for these students.

I feel very confident designing a scheme of work or a unit of study, as long as there are clear goals and objectives and we have the time to put it together, definitely.

Can I just ask you about that? Have you been given curriculum materials, teaching materials for your levels?

Generally no, every now and then we'll be given maybe a test prep. document or something like that. But as far as daily instruction, we haven't been given anything, we're asked to come up with everything ourselves.

[Pause as Ali reads the next section]

Preparing the teaching materials; it's definitely probably the teacher's job to prepare the materials but I think it's the administration or the school's job to provide the materials. So the teachers don't have to buy different items.

The curriculum should definitely be given to the teachers. I never knew a school system existed where the teachers had to *create* every document. I didn't know that was possible but we're doing the best we can.

I didn't bring any materials from my country of origin, I didn't bring anything. I figured I was coming to one of the richest countries in the world and they would have everything.

The positive aspects of working with this curriculum is we have a lot of freedom, that's one thing. We have the freedom to pretty much teach what we want, when we want and there's very little accountability. We don't really have to answer to anyone daily, "What are you teaching this week or that week?" In some ways it's good and in some ways it's negative, but I think most teachers enjoy that freedom to pretty much teach what they want.

[Break in Audio 0:06:25 – 0:06:37 – students walking by stop to say hello]

The major challenge I think that most of us are facing is trying to teach students at varying levels in the same classroom. We have students in our classroom who are very fluent in English and are applying to universities in the United States and England. Then we have students in the same room who, you talk to them and they look at you with a blank stare, they don't know what's going on.

Differentiation is nice but differentiation happens before the students even step in the classroom. I feel like they should be broken up based on their skill level in English.

That's the most difficult part of teaching these students this curriculum.

The assessment system I think is horrible and that's putting it nicely. First of all, there's way too much put on the ECART, the ECART is worth 60%, and basically for them to do the ECART the correct way they would all probably fail the class. So what we're forced to do is do most of it in the classroom and when that happens, most of them do well on the ECART and that boosts their grade higher than what it's supposed to be. So it just doesn't make any sense to make one project worth that much of your grade.

The integrated tasks; that's another difficult thing, we have integrated tasks where you're sort of told, "This is what you're going to test them on and this is how you're going to test them on that." But that's without even knowing what the students *need.* You come in the classroom and learn that the students need to learn how to write sentences and then the integrated task is telling them to compare and contrast or to do creative writing. So you can see the problem there.

As teachers we come in and we say, "Okay I'm going to teach these students what they need to know." Then you have to assess them on something different. Also the final exam that they take, we have no idea what's on it before, neither do the students so it's basically just a toss-up. Everyone goes in and they cheat off each other. It's chaos.

The way I approach the continuous assessment tasks is; first of all I sort of ignore it until I have to get to it. I teach them what they need to know. If they don't know a subject or a predicate I teach them that. I teach them how to read. I teach them what they need to know.

Then about a week before I decide I'm going to do my continuous assessment task, I will prep them on something I think they should be able to do and I give them a week of practice. Then we'll do the continuous assessment task. Then we'll go back to teaching them what they really need to know. That's how I do that, just so I can fulfil the requirement of Adec.

We do have a library with books in it. We have a computer lab with the internet.

How proficient would you say the students would be at identifying materials independently for something like ECART, for example?

For the ones who can read, they would be very proficient. For the ones who struggle with reading, they can do it if they wanted to but I don't think they'd be willing and for the ones who can't read at all of course they just, they're not going to do anything, they would just give up.

So it's not very practical to use the library unless you were going to take a small group. Again going to the library and choosing books is way above them right now I think.

What about graded readers and things like that, does the library...?

No, our library doesn't have graded readers, that would be great if they had first, second, third grade readers. What I've been doing for my grade 11s, I've been printing out stories off the internet starting at second grade level, going through some of those and then going to the third grade. So that would be great if they had that in the library.

Second grade and third grade, in the American system how old would the students be?

They would be about seven and eight years old. Most of my eleventh grade students are in that area. To be honest, the second graders in the United States can read and comprehend better than my eleventh graders here. That's just an honest assessment. It just goes to show how much work they haven't...., and where they need to be, and what we're asking them to do is ridiculous!

I don't think the forms of assessment we have are suitable ways to assess our students' knowledge. Because if the exams were taken in an honest setting, it would basically just tell everything they don't know and it won't tell anything they do know. That's part of an assessment, you need to know what they know and you need to find out what they don't know. I think the way the assessment is here right now it would pretty much just tell what they don't know.

I wouldn't say I'm a mainstream English teacher. I'm more of an ESL teacher. I got my teaching credential at [name of state] and in order to do that in [name of state] you have to take a certain number of ESL teaching courses in learning how to teach English as a second language. This is because of the high Spanish speaking rate in that state.

Are you an elementary trained teacher [Crosstalk 0:13:32]?

Elementary.Yes.

So elementary trained with ESL specialism?

In [name of state], in order to be elementary trained you have to be ESL trained. So I guess that would be the specialty that I came here with, the ESL specialty.

How do you think you would have coped without having your ESL experience?

I don't really think it would have made a big difference because honestly, I think anyone with a teaching background should be able to assess the students and figure out what they need. So I don't really think it would have made a big difference.

Another thing is, the behaviour in the school and the attitudes of the students. Not that there are bad attitudes, but the laziness and the copying and the cheating. Just the way the students are. It's very difficult to use what you've learned. That's one thing I feared when I first got here is that I was

going to lose my skills as a teacher because I had to change so much. So I don't think it really would have changed much.

Can you elaborate a bit more on that change?

I like to have students talk a lot in class, "Share this with your neighbour, I'll give you 20 seconds to come back and talk to me." It doesn't work here so I had to be doing more of the busy work; give them something to write. Especially for the students who aren't proficient in English, they just copy anyway. So a lot of times you just have to give them something to do; give them something to copy.

Instead of being able to talk to the students for 50% of the class or 40% of the class period, which is what I like to do, I can only get 7 to 10% of actual instruction. I'm not able to model as much, "Let me do it first and watch me. Then we'll do it together." It's just not possible with 25 people talking at the same time.

I've had to yell more than I like to. I don't like to shout and yell in the classroom, I don't like to say, "Be quiet, sit down." At the top of my voice. Those are things I'm not used to doing. That's not how I was taught to teach. So there's a big adjustment I've had to go through teaching here.

Can you see any way that anything could help you in that regard?

The main thing that needs to be done is the administration needs to take behaviour issues seriously in the classroom They need to be more hands on with the students. A simple announcement by the Principal or the Vice Principal at the assembly can help. Having a set list of consequences and rewards would help, where students know that, "If I do this, this will happen." Simple things like that would help.

Another thing that would help is putting students in the correct classroom. When you can't do the work and you know you can't do the work, you're going to act up in class, that's just what you're going to do no matter what. I would do the same thing if I was in a class and I felt like I was waste of my time. So they need to put students in classrooms where they can succeed and they can have the confidence that they can do what they're asked to do. That would go a long way towards improving the behaviour of the students.

The teachers are kind of out of options. We only have so much power as teachers. So there's not really much else we can do.

The kind of training sessions that I would have liked to receive would be a session that implicitly tells us exactly what we should be teaching, how we should be grading them, what rubrics we should be using. Instead of just a pack of papers dumped on our desk, "This is it."

Within the last three weeks we've had a couple of PD sessions but before that we hadn't had any.

Who ran those sessions?

Someone from [the PPP provider]

What were they on?

One of them was on the continuous assessment.

For English?

For English and there was one on- I believe it's called AFL, is that what it is? We don't use that term. What does it stand for? I can't remember.

Assessment For Learning.

The different ways to assess students while the class is going on.

Did you find those useful?

I found the continuous assessment one useful. The assessment for learning one, I didn't find useful. Not because it wasn't useful information but it was information that I'd previously known already but information that was not applicable *here.*

I think some research needs to be done that shows how to assess these students because that works in our countries but I don't think those kinds of things work here, yet.

Have you had any workshops from Adec, like your cluster manager coming in?

No. I haven't had any of those.

Have you gone up to Abu Dhabi, been called up to Abu Dhabi for a training session?

No.

As far as Special Ed. training, I don't have any Special Ed. training other than what I went through in my teaching credential, which is very minimal. I don't think ESL or Special Ed. qualifications should be a prerequisite for this job. I just don't think it would make that big a difference.

The requirements I think Adec should have for LTs [EMTs] are pretty much what they are; a bachelor's degree and a teaching licence.

What's the experience you need to have?

You don't have to have any experience. The reason why I don't think experience is really important here is because, other than the experience of dealing with people and dealing with your co-workers here in the administration. That's really the only experience that's going to help you here; the people skills. As far as the academic stuff and the actual work related, I don't think any experience is going to prepare you for this. It's good to be a people person here and know how to deal with people. That's the best experience that would help you here.

APPENDIX 9: TEXTUAL AND NUMERICAL THEMATIC INDEX EMT PART ONE INTERVIEW

I The ADEC English curriculum documentation and materials	index	numerical index
1) orientation to the grade 10/11 English curriculum	orientation	1.1
2) read curriculum documents / use in planning	planning	1.2
3) understanding of curriculum aims and objectives	A & O	1.3
4) curriculum choice	C choice	1.4
5) teaching materials provided by ADEC	C materials	1.5
6) confidence in preparing materials	confidence	1.6
7) preparation of teaching materials – a teacher's job?	mats prep	1.7
8) materials from your country of origin? Appropriate for context?	mats brought	1.8
9) positive aspects of working with this curriculum?	C +ve	1.9
10) major challenges implementing this curriculum	C -ve	1.10
Classroom management	C-ve M	1.10 CM
Curriculum beyond levels of students	C-ve ↑	1.10 C ↑
II Assessment		
1) general challenges	A	2.1
challenges posed by CA – ECART for students	ECART S	2.1 E S
Challenges posed by CA - ISTs	ISTs	2.1 IST
Challenges posed by - exams	exams	2.1 EX
2) Preparing students for ECART / IST	CA prep	2.2
3) lack of resources – internet, library –books	library	2.3
4) Assessment are suitable	CA OK?	2.4
III) Professional Development / Teacher Education		
1) mainstream English teacher?	m'stream	3.1
2) teacher specialism ESL/Sp Ed/ IT /leadership experience/	ESL/Sp Ed	3.2
3) training prior to implementing the Adec curriculum	PD b4	3.3
4) PD opportunities offered	PD after	3.4
5) PD given to others	PD given	3.5
6) thoughts on ESL or Sp Ed as a prerequisite for the job	ESL Sp Ed ?	3.6
7) thoughts on Adec requirements/prerequisites for hiring	recruitment	3.7

APPENDIX 10: SAMPLE OF THEMATIC INDEXING APPLIED TO EMT PART ONE INTERVIEW

File: ALI 1.mp3

Duration: 0:22:54

Transcript	Index
So when I started as an LT I actually was not introduced to the curriculum. That's because I originally came over as an elementary teacher. They had a shortage of teachers in Cycle Three level, so they asked me to come over. So I didn't have the formal training or anything like that. At the beginning of the school year, or actually when the teachers first came they had an orientation for the cycle three teachers. Some were there. Some weren't for other reasons but that's probably something I should have gone to if I had known I was going to be here.	**Orientation**
I haven't read the documents closely, however I have skimmed through them and tried to find things that I can use and that will be effective here.	**Planning**
It was tough, first of all, it's 50 to 60 pages that they give us, papers regarding ECART and the continuous assessment. If you had three different people who read it, they would have three different ideas on what it means. I think what was needed is someone to actually sit us down and train us, and tell us, "This is exactly what we want you to do." Instead of each teacher doing it in their own way, I think that would have been a lot better.	**Orientation**
The aims and objectives of the English curriculum; to be honest, I'm not sure what their objective is.	**A & O**
Because the things that they're asking the students to do, there's no way these students can do it. In each class you probably have 15 to 20% of the students who can even *attempt* to do what they're asking them to do. That's what's really confusing. We don't really know what they're asking the students to do [laughs]. Because, if they knew the students they had here, the ECART and the continuous assessment things; they would definitely know that that's not something that they should have in front of the students. So…yeah….	**A & O** **C –ve**
I think Adec has chosen this curriculum [bell rings] because from the outside they want it to look as much like a western education as possible. Personally, I think they should lean towards an ESL curriculum because that's what they're teaching [laughs]! You know, you're teaching students who are learning English as a second language and not as a first language. This curriculum would be great in England or Australia but I don't think it's right for these students.	**C choice** **C –ve**

APPENDIX 11: SAMPLE OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES IDENTIFIED UNDER 'ASSESSMENT'

2.1	Challenges posed by assessment in general
Ali	The assessment system I think is horrible and that's putting it nicely. What we're asking them to do is ridiculous.
Jim	(a) They [Adec] don't realise that cooperative learning is so much harder than industrialised education where everybody sits in a row and you present them with something and they do it. They give it back. You mark it and you give it back. It's so easy. **Also in *elite* section** (b) If you're going to do cooperative learning you have to plan almost each individual child individually. You have to be able to monitor it. You have to be able to come up with something to evaluate it.
Paul	Honestly, it's absurd. Every day for me here is like I'm living a bad Samuel Beckett play.
Peter	(a) Ongoing assessment is such a hash of what this person says and that person says. It shouldn't be that it's difficult to define what [actually] it should be. In some ways not having those definitions [again] is a good thing. You're not locked into something that would be unsuccessful. **Also in *curriculum documentation*** (b) My thoughts with regards with the assessment system? Once again, it's way over their heads.

2.1 E P	Challenges posed by ECART requirements: Plagiarism
Paul	(a) The vast majority of kids copy paste things from the internet. I don't even think it's a question of laziness, it's because that's all they can do because they need a whole language. They don't need a research project. (b) Then they're [Adec] angry, and they wonder why they get so many essays that are just plagiarised, or PowerPoints that are just plagiarised, off the internet. Well, why? Of course it's because they don't have the skills to put a research project together. Honestly, it's absurd. Every day for me here is like I'm living a bad Samuel Beckett play.
Jim	[…] a lot of times they'll read it in Arabic and then hit the translator, Google translator. Of course, that's when you have to be careful that they're not just copying and pasting. […] You let them get away with that at the beginning, just so they start to build their confidence a little bit but then you have to write, "copy " and mark them as zero until they get the idea **. Also in *ECART reading***
Peter	They'll also go and try to find an article from another student and make a copy of that, and submit is as their own project. So plagiarism abounds, you try to explain it to them, but once again because their English skills are so low it's just over their heads. So they resort to what they can do.

APPENDIX 12: OPEN, NON-PARTICPANT OBSERVATION PRO-FORMA

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4" align="center">Lesson visit</td></tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Topic:
Present continuous / singular /plurals</td>
<td>School: Old school build, concrete floor; with air con on. The sounds echo.</td>
<td>Grade: 11.3 (19 students)
Time: 8.10-8.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td align="center">Teacher</td>
<td align="center">Students</td>
<td align="center">Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.10-8.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doors to classroom locked.
Shaheen day (army reserves training day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asks students for singular and plural and writes on board. "Give me a noun"</td>
<td>Hands up /shout out</td>
<td>Board is divided into columns
school / schools
Hospital / hospitals etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making sentences with the students' contributions
The boys ____ going to school.
We did this yesterday.
It's "is" because there's only one boy</td>
<td></td>
<td>The board work is there for the students to refer to as a model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.20</td>
<td>Asks st to come to the board to write a sentence.</td>
<td>Sts shout out "Hamad and Ali are going to school."</td>
<td>St write "Ale". Other sts help shouting out "i". The boy looks embarrassed. Lots of banter. St unclear about names or sounds of letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don't forget your helping verb…Good job!
Do you like these sentences?
I like it too!</td>
<td>Other students come to board

Yes</td>
<td>One writes "Teacher and Hamad are playing football."</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>Monitors whilst students complete worksheet am is are before writing their own sentences.
"How many children?"</td>
<td>Sts work quietly on task</td>
<td>Sts have differentiated worksheets some with first two words given.</td>
</tr>
</table>

	Speaks occasionally in Arabic, "Kem?" [How many?] "Wahid" [one]		
	If you finish, you can write ten sentences of your own. T says this to each st individually. Monitoring asks one st "What time did you go to bed?"	Sts "10?!"	The room is quiet Quite a few not writing Some sts don't have notebooks.
	You copied these two from the board so write one yourself.	1 st asks T "How to write _____ ? Another st helps him with the spelling. Most sts are on task. Using the board as a reference	
	Sound it out You're doing a good job. How many houses..? I want more than one.	Another student asks "How to spell 'smart'?"	

APPENDIX 13: UNIVERSITY OF EXETER ETHICS FORM

UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER

Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS

You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, then have it signed by your supervisor and by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php and view the School's statement in your handbooks.

Your name: Rose Stockwell

Your student no: 590057061

Degree/Programme of Study: Doctorate in TESOL

Project Supervisor(s):   Salah Troudi

Title of your project:

An exploratory interpretive study investigating the pedagogical underpinning of the grade 10/11 English curriculum and its implications for students and teachers

Brief description of your research project:

In August 2008, ADEC introduced a new English curriculum, (imported from the Department of Education, NSW, Australia), in public high school for students in grades 10.The main objective here was to expose students to a curriculum which allowed for application of knowledge rather than one involving rote learning, which, hitherto, had been the norm.

This study seeks to investigate the underpinnings of such an approach towards teaching and learning English as well as its implications for students and teachers. The study will involve classroom observation of English lessons, as well as semi structured interviews with grade 10 and 11 students and their English teachers.

It is hoped that results of this research will lead to further research in other Cycle Three schools and possible recommendations for developing the English curriculum to broaden its effect in the Abu Dhabi Emirate.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

Participants

- Teachers: 24 teachers across 6 (3 girls', 3 boys') Cycle Three public high schools in Al Ain, UAE
- Students: 60 (10 in each school) 30 girls, 30 boys. The students will be between 16-18 years old
- An Arabic/English speaking interpreter will assist with translation of interview responses

Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) a blank consent form can be downloaded from the SELL student access on-line documents:

I will be following the Code of Ethics and Conduct set out by Chair of the Ethics Committee at Exeter University.

Respect: Every endeavour will be made to ensure that the views of the interviewees are listened to, respected and represented accurately. Classroom observations and ensuing

reports will be conducted and written with objectivity. Every endeavour will also be made to respect individual, cultural and role differences, including those involving age, disability, education, ethnicity, gender, language, national origin, race, religion, marital or family status and socio-economic status.

Confidentiality: Records of the data collected (including transcripts and any audio recordings) will be stored in a secure and safe place. Electronic information will be accessed by the researcher and interpreter with their username and password. The interpreter must agree not to disclose any information obtained from interviews to a third party. This information will be stored on a secure system with recognised virus protection. Electronic and paper information will be locked in a secure building. Information will also be coded to ensure anonymity. This will remain anonymous in the write up of the research. Collected written information will be destroyed by shredding and securely disposing when it is no longer required. Any audio recording will also be disposed of digitally.

Informed Consent: The University of Exeter template will be used to formulate a consent letter. Obtaining consent prior to the commencement of the study is essential. The consent letter will be distributed to both high school teachers and students. Parental consent will also be required for those students participating in the study. Records of when, how and from whom consent was obtained, will be recorded. Participants will be made aware what the research will involve and how the research finding will be used. The consent letter will be translated into Arabic. Participants will also be asked to acknowledge that their words may be translated from Arabic into English by an interpreter and that they have faith the interpreter will represent their words as accurately as possible. Participants will be reminded that they have the right to withdraw from the research at any given time and that data related to them will be destroyed.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Data Collection

1) The thesis will involve analysis of documentation regarding the rationale, design and implantation of the ADEC English curriculum in grade 10 and literature whose central theme is curriculum design.
2) Semi structured interviews will be conducted to ascertain teachers' thoughts regarding the appropriateness of the curriculum for the UAE context and to gather data on the positive aspects of the curriculum as well as the challenges teachers face in its implementation.

3) English classes will be observed and students interviewed to gather their responses to the curriculum (level of language, appropriateness of content, levels of engagement and so on)

4) Teachers will be interviewed after the observed lesson to gauge attitudes and to discuss the practical implications of the curriculum

With the consent of participants, interviews will be recorded and transcribed. This interview content will then be coded thematically.

Data Analysis:

Qualitative information will be translated and transcribed. Investigation will be done to ascertain the best way to code the data. Differences among views of participants will be explored and cross comparisons made with regard to student and teacher views

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

As mentioned above, every care will be taken to approach all participants with cultural sensitivity. The researcher will take the lead from the interpreter in this regard.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

Teachers may be unwilling to provide their opinions as they might fear this will affect their contract renewal (despite the confidentiality agreement). In addition, students may not be accustomed to expressing their views and parents may be reluctant to allow their children to participate. It is also the responsibility of all those involved in the research to raise concerns about any of the participants.

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given above and that I undertake in my dissertation / thesis (delete whichever is inappropriate) **to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.**

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: Rose A. Stockwell   date: 24.02.12

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: Rose A. Stockwell **date:** 24.02.12

N.B. *You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor*

This project has been approved for the period: March 2012 **until:** March 2013

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): Saleh .... **date:** 24/02/2012

N.B. ***To Supervisor:*** *Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.*

SELL unique approval reference: D/11/12/27

Signed: Saleh .... **date:** 24/02/2012
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

APPENDIX 14: ADEC APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
Education First التعليم أولاً

التاريخ: 2012/4/4

الأفاضل

السادة/ مدراء المدارس الحكومية في أبو ظبي

<u>**الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة باحثين**</u>

يطيب لنا أن نهديكم أطيب التحيات.

ونود إعلامكم بموافقة مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم على موضوع الدراسة التي ستجريها الباحثة الدكتورة
Rose Stockwell، بعنوان:

"An exploratory interpretive study investigating the pedagogical underpinning of the grade 10/11 English curriculum and its implications for students and teachers"

لذا، يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحثة ومساعدتها على إجراء الدراسة.

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم

محمد سالم محمد الظاهري

المدير التنفيذي لقطاع العمليات المدرسية

STANDARDS

The Standards in the *10–12 Applied English Language Curriculum* describe the knowledge, skills and understanding that each student is expected to achieve at each grade level from Grade 10 to Grade 12.

GRADE 10

Students respond to and compose texts in English through speaking and listening, reading and viewing, and writing. They explore real and imagined worlds represented in texts and consider these in the context of their own experience. They communicate a range of feelings and ideas on a variety of topics in extended texts in different forms and media.

Through close study of a range of texts, students recognise how composers use language and technology to shape meaning and position responders. They consider cultural contexts and how values and attitudes are transmitted through texts.

Students describe and use the forms, structures and language of different types of texts to suit different purposes, audiences and contexts, and they adopt different perspectives and consider different points of view in their composition of and response to texts. They compare and contrast textual sources to assess the quality, validity and utility of information and ideas.

Students plan, revise and refine compositions in collaborative and individual situations, and they articulate their own processes of speaking, listening, reading, viewing and writing. They are able to draw on a range of strategies to facilitate and improve understanding and to document and monitor their learning.

GRADE 11

Students respond to and compose a range of extended factual, persuasive, expository and imaginative texts in English through speaking and listening, reading and viewing, and writing. They engage with texts on literal and interpretive levels to articulate a supported personal response. They communicate with increasing confidence and fluency in a range of social and learning contexts, presenting feelings, ideas and information on both familiar and unfamiliar topics and issues.

Through close study and comparison of texts, students describe and explain composers' use of the resources of language and technology to shape meaning, and they examine the relationships between writer, reader, text and context. They consider and discuss how different cultural values, attitudes and assumptions influence the composition of and responses to texts. They recognise and appreciate some literary qualities and rhetorical features of texts.

APPENDIX 16: ADEC ENGLISH CURRICULUM GRADE 10 & 11 STRANDS

STRANDS

The *10–12 Applied English Language Curriculum* is based on three interrelated Strands. These Strands form the knowledge base for the Curriculum.

TALKING AND LISTENING

In this Strand, students talk and listen for different purposes and in a range of contexts. They communicate in critical, interpretive and imaginative texts in formal and informal situations. Through listening and talking they refine their skills in communication and collaboration in English and consider the importance and effectiveness of appropriate language and tone for different purposes, audiences and contexts. They learn how choice of language shapes perceptions of oneself and others and they learn to use language in ways that respect cultural differences. They conduct much of their classroom work in English to practise and refine communication of their higher-order thinking and of their learning. They take pleasure in their developing abilities to understand and speak English, and appreciate the beauty, subtlety and richness of texts spoken in the English language.

READING AND VIEWING

In this Strand, students engage in wide and close reading and viewing of texts to explore, examine, interpret and evaluate representations of information, feelings and ideas. They read and view texts to broaden their outlook, stimulate their imagination and develop sympathetic understanding of other cultures. Through their reading and viewing they analyse how composers of texts use and organise the resources of language and technology for effect in various contexts, using a range of modes and media for different audiences and purposes. They compare and contrast texts on the same subject to evaluate different perspectives, and to examine how particular texts may be influenced by other texts. They consider how the relationships between composer, reader or viewer, text and context shape meaning, and how these can be altered to elicit different responses and points of view. They become increasingly aware of their own reading and viewing processes, choosing appropriate strategies for particular tasks and purposes and deliberately refining their learning processes. By engaging with texts that interest them and offer them new ideas, challenges and experiences, students come to appreciate the benefits and pleasures of reading and viewing.

WRITING

Students write imaginative, factual and discursive texts to address a wide variety of topics, issues and ideas using a range of technologies. They use writing to investigate, clarify, organise and present information and ideas and to represent different perspectives. In their composing of texts, students experiment with form and language to produce different effects. They learn to use different genres and conventions, and to assess the effectiveness of these choices for different purposes, audiences and contexts. They analyse texts to review, assess and refine expression. They select from a repertoire of strategies to draft and edit their own writing and to monitor their writing practices and preferences. Through regular engagement in varied, authentic tasks, they grow to appreciate and take pleasure in writing.

APPENDIX 17: ADEC ECART RESEARCH TASK RUBRIC

INQUIRY PROCESS - COMPLIANCE RUBRIC Total Mark / 24

ECART Sections	4	3	2	1
Organizing	Evidence of all organizational components attempted (overall plan, product plan, contents page, organization system)	Evidence of most organizational components attempted (overall plan, product plan, contents page, organization system)	Evidence of some organizational components attempted (overall plan, product plan, contents page, organization system)	Evidence of few organizational components attempted (overall plan, product plan, contents page, organization system)
Context	Evidence of all context components attempted (reading a narrative, analyzing a narrative, character study, rank order)	Evidence of most context components attempted (reading a narrative, analyzing a narrative, character study, rank order)	Evidence of some context components attempted (reading a narrative, analyzing a narrative, character study, rank order)	Evidence of few context components attempted (reading a narrative, analyzing a narrative, character study, rank order)
Research	Evidence of all research components attempted (research plan, focus statement, awareness of research skills and plagiarism, range of sources referenced)	Evidence of most research components attempted (research plan, focus statement, awareness of research skills and plagiarism, range of sources referenced)	Evidence of some research components attempted research plan, focus statement, awareness of research skills and plagiarism, range of sources referenced)	Evidence of few research components attempted (research plan, focus statement, awareness of research skills and plagiarism, range of sources referenced)
Strategies	Evidence of all strategies attempted (sustained reading program activities, reading journal, making connections including contribution to humanity, developing and using relevant vocabulary activities)	Evidence of most strategies attempted (sustained reading program activities, reading journal, making connections including contribution to humanity, developing and using relevant vocabulary activities)	Evidence of all some strategies attempted (sustained reading program activities, reading journal, making connections including contribution to humanity, developing and using relevant vocabulary activities)	Evidence of few strategies attempted (sustained reading program activities, reading journal, making connections including contribution to humanity, developing and using relevant vocabulary activities)
Reflection and Review	Evidence of all reflection and review activities attempted (weekly reflection, final reflection, choosing an appropriate product, conferencing with teacher)	Evidence of most reflection and review activities attempted (weekly reflection, final reflection, choosing an appropriate product, conferencing with teacher)	Evidence of most reflection and review activities attempted (weekly reflection, final reflection, choosing an appropriate product, conferencing with teacher)	Evidence of most reflection and review activities attempted (weekly reflection, final reflection, choosing an appropriate product, conferencing with teacher)
ICT Integration	Evidence of ICT always used appropriately	Evidence of ICT mostly used appropriately	Evidence of ICT sometimes used appropriately	Evidence of ICT rarely used appropriately

SR/H/2011-2011/ENG MED/ASSESSMENT AMENDMENTS 28 SEP2011   P a g e | 21

APPENDIX 18: A SUGGESTED MODEL FOR SCAFFOLDED INSTRUCTION

Scaffolding instruction for English language learners: a conceptual framework (Walqui, 2006)

This following provides a summary of Walqui's (2006) six main types of instructional scaffolding (p. 170-177) to be incorporated in the projected modified English curriculum in grades 10 /11 (section 6.3.4) and professional development programme for Adec English teachers (section 6.3.6.2).

Modelling

This involves taking students through the steps required to accomplish an activity by using samples of the task completed by students in previous classes as well as authentic material by published authors. When students see language modelled appropriately and are assisted in the process of deconstruction and joint construction they then find it easier to imitate. This process allows them to produce an individual construction which, it should be noted, is not the same as copying.

Bridging

Bridging works on the premise that new learning is best built on secure foundations. By creating opportunities to "weav[e] new learning into existing mental structures" (Tharp & Gillimore, 1988, cited in Walqui, 2006, p.171), students come to realise the value of their bringing lived experiences outside the classroom into it. Walqui suggests using strategies to activate students' prior knowledge (APK) before undertaking a reading text, such as the completion of some kind of graphic organiser like a KWH(L) charts. Here students make notes about what they **know** (K) about the subject, **want** to know (W), **how** they are going to find the answers to what they want to know (H) and, at the end of the topic, what they have **learnt** (L).

Once students have read the text they can assess the accuracy of their initial assumptions, add to their knowledge and perhaps create some kind of interactive glossary of vocabulary items or step by step procedure in English and Arabic to consolidate their knowledge and for other students who might need extra scaffolded assistance.

As students develop in confidence they can start to negotiate their own topics for study and design their own materials.

Contextualising

This approach helps students to cope with the demands of academic language which is, by and large, de-contextualised and situation independent as opposed to everyday language which is embedded in a rich context and dependent on the situation in which it occurs. This is why students develop BICS more readily than CALP and need an abundance of scaffolded instruction opportunities to develop the skills they need to succeed in a school context. By using visuals, sound clips, video clips without sound and so forth the teacher creates a sensory experience that enables students to access complex ideas.

Schema building

This strategy is of particular benefit to students daunted by complex tasks such as reading an academic text or having to listen to a presentation, for example. Tasks of this nature provide an additional challenge as they require students to simultaneously process general information from top-down as well as process lexis and syntax from bottom-up. By providing students with a structured overview, which might include alerting students to headings, sub headings, illustrations and so forth teachers prepare the reader or listener for their journey through unchartered territory and limit the prospect of them becoming lost, overwhelmed and demoralised when they undertake the task alone.

Re-presenting text

This is an approach which encourages students to appropriate language into their personal repertoire by transforming linguistic constructions modelled into one genre into forms used in another (Walqui, 2006, p. 174). It could involve students watching a short film clip and then acting out the scene in groups. Alternatively, students could engage in a collaborative activity and then be asked to report back to the class what happened. This would involve using language to recreate events for those who were not present and then perhaps to a written account of the event and again require the students to represent the original information in a different guise.

Developing metacognition

This is defined as "the ability to monitor one's current level of understanding and decide when it is not adequate" (Bransford et al, 1999, cited in Walqui, 2006, p. 176). It requires students to be aware of a range of strategic options they have when engaged in an activity and to consciously apply those which will accomplish the task most efficiently. They also need to be able to actively evaluate the success of their chosen strategy as this will assist them in planning for similar events in the future. Successful language classes nurture students' metacognition and, by association, learner autonomy; both of which are essential for effective communication in an additional language.

The recommendation is that model materials, visuals, recordings and work samples created as a result of such scaffolded instruction be stored on the Adec portal (see section 6.3.5) so that other teachers and students might benefit from them.

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