4-2024

THE IMPACT OF CHANGING THE ADMISSION POLICY ON STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN ABU DHABI HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership and Policy Studies in Education

April 2024

Cover: Image related to educational policies and procedure

(Photo: by Maha Khalifa Al Mansoori adapted from https://jfmlaw.com.au/manage-and-incentivise-your-team-employment-law/reviewing-workplace-policies-procedures/)

Declaration of Original Work

I, Maha Khalifa Al Mansoori, the undersigned, a graduate student at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and the author of this dissertation entitled "*The Impact of Changing the Admission Policy on Students' Educational Opportunities In Abu Dhabi Higher Educational Institutions*", hereby, solemnly declare that this is the original research work done by me under the supervision of Dr. Rashid Al Riyami, in the College of Education at UAEU. This work has not previously formed the basis for the award of any academic degree, diploma or a similar title at this or any other university. Any materials borrowed from other sources (whether published or unpublished) and relied upon or included in my dissertation have been properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. I further declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, data collection, authorship, presentation and/or publication of this dissertation.

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Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with the intricate dynamics of educational change in the UAE, particularly focusing on the impact of admission policy changes on students' educational opportunities on higher educational institutions. The main objective of this dissertation is to critically evaluate the effectiveness of educational changes, specifically through the lens of revised admission policy, in enhancing the standards of higher education in the United Arab Emirates.

A quantitative research methodology using questionnaire was utilized in this research paper and PLS-SEM method with SmartPLS software was used for data analysis. The study investigates the effect of changing the admission policy on student educational opportunities in higher educational institutions in Abu Dhabi. The data analysis, showed support for Hypotheses H2, H3, and H4 but not H1, provides insightful implications in the context of the UAE's dynamic educational landscape. These insights of this study offers valuable guidance for educators and policymakers, emphasizing the need to consider student perspectives and readiness for change to ensure effective and beneficial educational changes. It contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities in education reform and underlines the importance of comprehensive strategies that consider various stakeholder perspectives in the rapidly evolving educational landscape of the UAE.

Keywords: Change, Policy, Admission, Students, Higher Educational Institutions, Readiness for Change, Student Perception, Student Opportunities, Student Involvement.

Title and Abstract (in Arabic)

تأثير تغيير سياسة القبول على الفرص التعليمية للطلاب في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في أبوظبي

الملخص

تتناول هذه الأطروحة الديناميكيات المعقدة للتغيير التعليمي في الإمارات العربية المتحدة، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على تأثير تغييرات سياسة القبول على الفرص التعليمية للطلاب في مؤسسات التعليم العالي. الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الأطروحة هو تقييم فعالية التغييرات التعليمية، لا سيما من خلال منظور سياسة القبول المعدلة، في تعزيز معايير التعليم العالي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

تم استخدام منهجية البحث الكمي باستخدام الاستبيان في هذه الورقة البحثية، ولتحليل البيانات تم استخدام برنامج لبناء نماذج السببية متعددة المتغيرات والتي تستخدم ف البيانات المعقدة PLS-SEM. باستخدام برنامج SmartPLS. تحقق الدراسة في تأثير تغيير سياسة القبول على الفرص التعليمية للطلاب في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في أبوظبي. أظهر تحليل البيانات، الذي أيد الفرضيات H2 و H3 وH4ولكن ليسH1 ، دلالات مثيرة للاهتمام في سياق المشهد التعليمي الديناميكي لدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. تقدم هذه الأفكار دليلاً قيماً للتربويين وصناع السياسات، مشددة على ضرورة مراعاة وجهات نظر الطلاب واستعدادهم للتغيير لضمان التغييرات التعليمية الفعالة والمفيدة. تساهم هذه الدراسة في فهم أعمق لتعقيدات إصلاح وتغييرسياسات التعليم وتؤكد على أهمية استراتيجيات شاملة تأخذ في الاعتبار وجهات نظر مختلف أصحاب المصلحة في المشهد التعليمي سريع التطور في الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

مفاهيم البحث الرئيسية: التغيير، السياسة، القبول، الطلاب، مؤسسات التعليم العالي، الاستعداد للتغيير، تصورات الطلاب، فرص الطلاب، مشاركة الطلاب.

Author's Contribution

The contribution of Maha Khalifa Al Mansoori to the dissertation was as follows:

I. Participated in planning of the work, had main responsibility for the data collection and processing, and evaluation of results.

II. Participated in planning of the work, had main responsibility for the experimental work, data collection and processing, and evaluation of results.

III. Sole responsibility for planning the research and conducting the experiments.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my committee for their guidance, support, and assistance throughout my preparation of this dissertation, especially my advisor Dr. Rashid Al Riyami.

Dedication

To my beloved husband, parents, and family

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List of Abbreviations

ADEC	Abu Dhabi Educational Council
AO	Students' Academic Opportunities
EmSAT	The Emirates Standardized Test
HCT	Higher Colleges of Technology
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
MOE	Ministry of Education
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PLS-SEM	Partial least squares-structural equation modeling
RC	Readiness for Change
SI	Students' Involvement
SP	Students' Perception
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAEU	United Arab Emirates University
ZU	Zayed University

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

"The real asset of any advanced nation is its people, especially the educated ones, and the prosperity and success of the people are measured by the standard of their education". Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (Alsharari, 2018). *"Those who take the lead, take it by doing three things. First, science to be able to maneuver; second, knowledge to be able to heavily invest in education; and third, a very wise leadership with a clear vision and a roadmap to the right direction".* Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (Sebugwaawo, 2022).

Beginning with inspiring and visionary quotes from Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan and Shaikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan about education, it is obvious how much emphasis our leaders in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) put on education. Education is one of the main factors that led to the country's nation-building, modernization development and ensures its continued development. It is a way to increase the value of human labor. The UAE government has identified education as a key sector of focus, acknowledging that a robust educational framework is essential for achieving its goal of diversifying and advancing the economy (Kippels & Ridge, 2019). The UAE, despite its relatively recent creation in 1971, has demonstrated a steadfast dedication to achieving complete advancement in all areas, with a particular emphasis on education. The nation's higher education system is currently experiencing ongoing growth, development, and improvement as seen by its rising position in global rankings. Several educational reforms have been implemented in the past ten years to improve educational standards, reinforce best practices and enhance the quality of teaching (Thorne, 2011). The unwavering emphasis on improving education goes beyond its inherent worth and generates a series of consequences, stimulating progress in other economic domains.

Moreover, having better-educated generations can help sustain the present standard of living and have a competitive position in the world economy (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). One of the educational aims adopted by government schools in the UAE was to prepare school graduates to enter any higher educational institution anywhere in the world (Tabari, 2014).

In an effort to enhance their global standing and obtain international recognition and accreditation, policymakers in the UAE have embraced and modified exemplary approaches from many Western countries. The procedures were implemented with the objective of enhancing the quality of instruction and educational attainment to align with international benchmarks, frequently using a framework inspired by the global marketplace. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that these endeavors may not consistently account for the distinctive constitutional and legal framework, social structure, cultural characteristics including Gulf region traditions, and English language proficiency levels of students in the UAE (Phillips & Ochs, 2003). Emirati students learn English as a second language; hence what might work in western countries where English is spoken as the mother tongue may not work in the UAE where it is spoken as a second language.

1.2 Overview of the Issues

The field of education is characterized by its dynamic nature, necessitating the incorporation of various aspects that facilitate progress and improvement. The primary objective of educational change is to fulfill the international obligations about education. As individuals involved in education, academia, and policymaking, we consistently seek optimal methodologies and reference points to incorporate them into our system effectively. However, if the process of implementing the change is not carried out in the appropriate manner, we run the risk of overlooking important components of the procedure, which could lead to the ineffectiveness of the policy. Researchers such as Bell and Stevenson (2006) and Fowler (2009) outline the steps of policymaking that consist of several processes that will be discussed later in the chapter. These steps can help to guide, follow and lead to a successful policy.

To ensure providing good quality education that is aligned with international standards, many higher education institutions are trying to be aligned with the Ministry of Education's (MOE) future goals, which call for "raising the level of professionalism in educational institutions and focus on enabling schools to be an incubator environment in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation" (Government, 2020). This required some of the higher educational institutions in Abu Dhabi in the UAE to change the admission

policy by raising the admission standards from 5.0 to 5.5 IELTS (The International English Language Testing System) and from 1100 to 1250 EmSAT (Emirates Standardized Test) in order to be in line with the MOE strategic objective which is to "Attract and prepare students to enroll in higher education internally and externally, in light of labor market needs" (MOE, 2020). In addition, some higher education institutions tend to cancel the foundation year and have the students admitted directly to the programs to match two of the main 2021 MOE targets, which were "to be the top 20 countries in average Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) score and to have 0% enrolment rate in foundation year" (MOE, 2020).

In conclusion, a shift in educational policy is required, nonetheless, it is critical that a complete awareness and analysis of all the factors enveloping this transformation be considered in order to support a smooth and trouble-free transition.

1.3 Research Context

Given all those above, educational change is inevitable in all areas of the education field. Moreover, the UAE is a wealthy and relatively new country, which is striving to become a worldwide education powerhouse. Therefore, educational changes are common and continuous to enhance the educational system. According to the Road to 2030 report by the Abu Dhabi Education Council, 95% of Emirate of Abu Dhabi high school seniors do not meet university admissions requirements and must enroll in a remedial program (Matsumoto, 2019). The Road to 2030 places a high value on enhancing university outcomes for Emirati students and preparing them for the workforce. Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) system aims to build human capital as one of its five goals. Priority is given to the immediate needs of the individual in the labor market (Matsumoto, 2019). Creating a committee tasked with both academic and "commercial" outcomes is one of ADEC's suggested government actions. The primary goal of educational policymakers in the UAE is to develop students' skills so that they can contribute to the national workforce, as detailed in The Road to 2030 (Development, 2015).

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) emphasizes the significance of raising educational standards in the UAE. According to the PISA, the UAE ranks as one of the world's fastest-growing education systems. However,

the school's students continue to underperform compared to what would be expected in a modern economy. The UAE and other countries' future prosperity will largely depend on the country's ability to strategically develop and optimally utilize its workforce's skills (Development, 2015). The MOE focuses on adopting international best practices to compete with the global market standard in having the best quality of Emirati students. Therefore, most educational changes or reforms have focused more on global standards and methods of instruction. IELTS and EmSAT are required for university admission in the UAE, where schools continue to use international testing standards such as PISA and TIMS (Government, 2020).

According to Matsumoto (2019), MOE in the UAE relies on foreign expertise for educational policy development. ADEC has always been open to foreign influence. The global reform movement has had an impact on it (Matsumoto, 2019). Therefore, the English language receives a great focus to be developed and raised. It became the dominant language in the UAE's higher educational institutions since it plays an essential role in trade and the economy. Therefore, it became a must in order to be admitted into higher educational institutions by getting a particular band of IELTS/EmSAT.

1.4 Problem Statement

Changing the admissions criteria by increasing the EmSAT score from 1100 to 1250 and the IELTS band from 5.0 to 5.5 had impacted students' educational opportunities in higher educational institutions. In other words, the student's academic opportunities may be harmed by the sudden shift in admissions criteria, which may limit their opportunities to complete their undergraduate degrees if they lack the prerequisite skills and knowledge. For the UAE to keep up with the global market and ensure that its students receive a quality education, changes and reforms are regularly occurring in the educational system. Hence, it is crucial to exercise caution when handling changes, as improper implementation or decisions have the potential to result in the emergence of obstacles, resistance, and ultimately, unsuccessful outcomes (Isbanioly, 2017). In addition, upgrading the language requirements for student admission in the academic year (2019-2020) has been executed rapidly without paying particular attention to the students and other elements, such as policy announcements, implementation duration and cohesion plan between high schools

and higher educational institutions. According to O'Sullivan (2015), instability frequently occurs when there is a lack of coherence and organization in communication. Tabari (2014), states that the rapid onset of reform can inevitably cause tensions.

Furthermore, it is essential to involve the affected subject group in the implementation of change to assess their effectiveness. The perspectives of students should be taken into account during the decision-making process. Effective communication, clear explanations, and careful consideration of potential impacts are crucial for the successful implementation of change. As stated by Levin (2000), when educational changes directly affect students, their active participation in all aspects is necessary for achieving success. Key elements of successful educational change include the development of long-term policies, engaging stakeholders by involving the subject group, and establishing qualitative and quantitative measures to evaluate the impact of adjustments on students (Isbanioly, 2017).

As in the UAE context, recent research examined teachers' perspectives on educational reforms in Ras Al Khaimah in order to gain insight into their thoughts on the educational reforms in schools, as well as their thoughts on what they believe would make the reforms more effective (Tabari, 2014). Per the researcher's knowledge, no research or data has examined the impact of admission policy change on students' educational opportunities at the college and university level. Given that these alterations have the potential to significantly impact students' academic performance and educational pathways, addressing this dimension of change is of paramount importance. Therefore, a careful examination of the characteristics and implications of such shifts can help to develop a better educational experience for students while also promoting smoother transitions for both students and educational administrators. By addressing these issues, educational institutions can better adapt to their students' changing needs and goals, thereby encouraging a more effective and student-centered educational environment.

1.5 Purpose of Study

This study's main goal is to shed light on the effects of changing admissions criteria on students' educational opportunities. By examining the impact of changing admissions criteria on students, the objective is to offer a thorough comprehension of the implications

for students and the wider educational system. This research aims to investigate the consequences of these adjustments on variables such as accessibility to higher education, and the overall educational experience. By conducting thorough analysis and utilizing empirical evidence, the aim is to provide significant insights that can contribute to the development of educational policies and practices, ultimately fostering a more equitable educational environment.

Furthermore, this study aims to further investigate the viewpoints of students, provide insights into the impact of altering admissions standards on their educational chances and individuals' perceptions of the influence of various factors on their access to higher education. In order to obtain useful insights into the experiences, worries, and goals of students, the research seeks to provide them with the opportunity to articulate their ideas and emotions regarding the heightened significance placed on IELTS/EmSAT scores in the criteria for admission. The qualitative dimension of this study will offer an in-depth exploration of how the aforementioned policy change impacts the personal experiences and perspectives of individual students, particularly in relation to their educational opportunities.

In addition, it is imperative to acknowledge that this policy change has far-reaching repercussions that extend to students, teachers, economic and societal realms. Teachers and students play a crucial role as key stakeholders in the implementation of these changed admission standards. The inclusion of their perspectives and personal encounters in adjusting to these changes, along with their observations regarding their impact on pedagogy and academic achievement, will constitute a substantial element of this research. In order to offer a holistic perspective, the study will evaluate impacts, acknowledging that modifications in educational policies might yield lasting ramifications. Comprehending these impacts will facilitate the formulation of well-informed decisions and adaptations that are in line with the objectives and aspirations of the nation, so guaranteeing a future that is characterized by fairness and prosperity.

Moreover, a crucial element of this research entails a thorough analysis of the implementation of policy change, which is one of the vital stages of the policy-making process. The normal process involves identification, policy formulation, policy adoption,

and ends up with evaluation (Bridgman & Davis, 2003; Fowler, 2009). The policy implementation stage is an essential part of the process, which can assist in determining how effective this policy change was, what positive and negative consequences may have resulted, what revisions are required, and whether there are better alternative options available to implement.

By conducting this study, it's hoped to conduct a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted implications of altering admissions policies. The research's primary objectives encompass evaluating the impact of such policy changes on students' educational opportunities, assessing their involvement in policy-making processes, and dissecting the nuances of policy implementation. By providing a nuanced, evidence-based insights, this research seeks to influence future educational decision-making and enrich the ongoing discourse surrounding admissions policies, with the ultimate goal of promoting greater access to quality education.

1.6 Significance of Study

This study has considerable potential to enable well-informed decision-making for policymakers and other significant stakeholders when considering policy change or reforms. Moreover, it is a significant asset for educational leaders, decision-makers, and educators interested in improving the policy-making process and refining current methods of policy change. Decision-makers frequently encounter complex issues before undertaking any substantial policy modifications. This study adopts a comprehensive methodology, allowing researchers to examine several dimensions the suggested modifications could impact. This enables individuals to evaluate different angles that might be affected by this change, acknowledging that comprehensive evaluations are crucial for determining the efficacy of any policy modification. Researchers can use it as a base to dig more into areas full of educational policy change or build upon similar research.

Moreover, researchers might utilize this study as a fundamental source to further explore the complex domain of educational policy change. This phenomenon has the potential to serve as a fundamental basis for subsequent investigation, enabling researchers to build upon comparable studies or explore into complex aspects within the wider scope

of educational policy change. This study aims to fill a significant need in the current body of literature by addressing the gap in the literature and concentrating on the distinct circumstances of the UAE, thereby offering valuable insights and comprehension relevant to this exceptional educational environment and supporting the dynamic education system.

This research paper's value comes in its dedication to thoroughly understanding and clarifying students' viewpoints on changes in admission policies. Through the active engagement of students in the decision-making process, this initiative seeks to illustrate the significant influence they have in impacting the educational system. The ever-changing nature of education necessitates ongoing modifications, and this study provides evidence in favor of the development of policies that can accommodate the changing requirements of students and educational establishments. The conversation at hand places a significant emphasis on the role of students, with their voices playing a crucial role in evaluating the effectiveness of policy change. For example, it is of great use to determine whether students view these developments as obstacles or opportunities and was it easy or difficult for the student to attain the required score. The consideration of students' experiences can be valuable in optimizing the policy change process, enhancing its efficacy, and permitting further adjustments that better match the educational requirements and goals of students in the UAE. The objective of this study is to provide decision-makers and policymakers with the necessary knowledge to make well-informed choices that can improve educational policies and the entire educational experience for students.

1.7 Research Questions

The quantitative technique will be used to address the research questions. The research topic evolved as the objective was to determine the effectiveness of educational change in boosting the UAE's higher education standards for students. This research attempts to address the following primary research questions:

1. What are the effects of changing the admission requirements on students' educational opportunities in higher educational institutions?
2. What is the student's perception of the change in the admission policy?
3. Were the students ready for this change?

1.8 Research Objectives

The overarching aim of this research is to critically evaluate the effectiveness of educational changes, specifically through the lens of revised admission policy, in enhancing the standards of higher education in the United Arab Emirates. This evaluation will be accomplished by systematically addressing a series of research objectives designed to provide quantitative data on the impacts of this policy change. Each objective focuses on a distinct aspect of the change's influence on students, thereby ensuring a comprehensive analysis of its outcomes. Below is a list of the specific research objectives:

1. To evaluate the effects of changing admission policy on students' educational opportunities in higher educational institutions in the UAE.
   - This objective will help determine how changes in admission standards have altered the educational landscape for students, potentially affecting their academic routes.

2. To investigate students' perceptions of the changes in admission policy at higher educational institutions in the UAE.
   - Understanding how students perceive these changes is crucial as their acceptance and reactions can significantly influence the success of the implemented policies.

3. To assess the preparedness of students for the changes in admission policies at higher educational institutions in the UAE.
   - This objective aims to measure how well students were prepared to adapt the new admission requirements, including their readiness in terms of language, knowledge, and support received from the institutions.

1.9 Conceptual Farmwork

Figure 1 presents a visual format of the conceptual framework of this study, which illustrates the relationship of the variables and maps out how variables might be related to each other. It clearly distinguishes between the independent variables (Readiness for Change, Students' Perception) and the dependent variables (Students' Academic Opportunities, Students' Involvement), with arrows indicating the direction of influence.
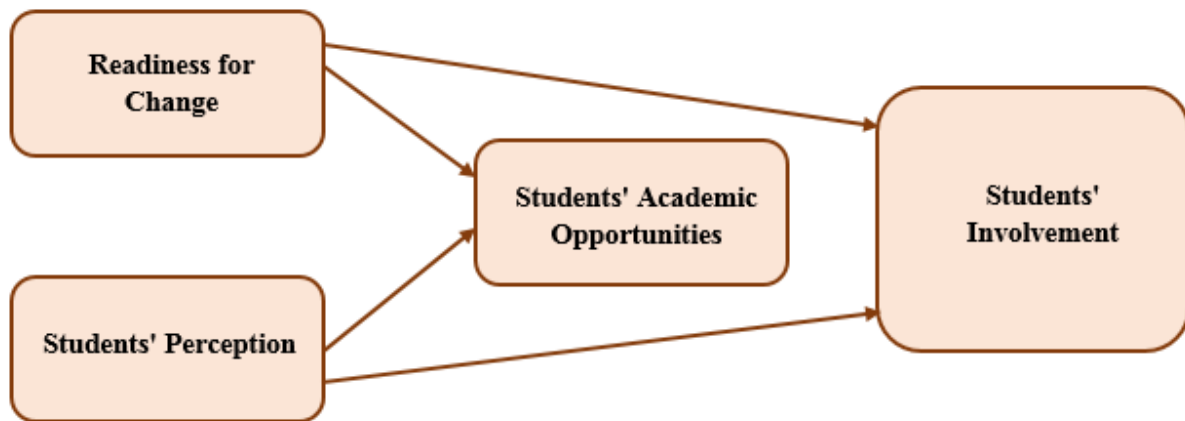
Figure 1: Conceptual Framwork

1.10 Theoretical Farmwork

As the primary focus of this research paper is the policy change and its impact on students' educational opportunities, it is necessary to investigate the theories that fall under this aspect to study and analyze the main problem to help better comprehend and understand the policymaking and changing process. The policymaking process includes five stages: agenda setting, policy formulation, adoption (or decision-making), implementation, and evaluation (Fowler, 2009). This paper highlights theories related to the main variables, such as change theory, self-perception theory, readiness to change, motivation theory, student self-efficacy, student involvement, and second language acquisition theory. Each of these terminologies are defined in the following section. These theoretical frameworks serve as guide to select the appropriate variables and concepts in order to provide roadmap to the study. It can also support understanding the relationship between the variables and how do they correlate to each other by referencing to the existing knowledge, research, and theories. This is in turn can guide in formulating the hypotheses of the study.

1.11 Definitions of the Terms

1.11.1 Change Theory

Change Theory includes a systematic procedure that offers a conceptual foundation for directing the execution of transformative initiatives. Lewin's change theory suggests that individuals and groups experience constraining pressures, which hinder change, as well as driving forces, which promote change by exerting pressure in a novel direction (Fullan, 2006).

1.11.2 Motivation Theory

Motivation Theory includes the intrinsic stimulation, tendency, or readiness that drives individuals to commence, maintain, and guide their efforts and actions in pursuit of certain objectives and the fulfillment of needs (Weiner, 2009). This is another theory that is associated with the concepts of readiness and involvement, suggesting that individuals must influence their behavior to fulfill a goal that is aligned with their needs. According to (Weiner, 2009), individuals' motivation and support for a change are directly influenced by their perception of its value and worth. According to Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), a strong level of motivation is positively associated with a high level of readiness for change. As per Mati et al. (2016), engaging students in decision-making is similar to a process that can influence their educational achievements and serve as an incentive for enhancing their academic performance.

1.11.3 Individual Readiness to Change

An individual's mental and behavioral propensity toward change, both in their personal lives and in professional settings. The degree to which a person is intellectually intended to accept and follow a specific strategy to consciously change the status quo (Al-Maamari et al., 2018). In another words, it is the degree to which a person intellectually intends to accept and follow a specific strategy to consciously change the status quo (Armenakis & Harris, 2002). Armenakis and Harris (2002), suggest that individual readiness for change theory plays a vital role in effective and successful organizational change implementation. Adequate allocation of time for the purpose of preparedness will result in a heightened state of readiness in relation to the process of change. Students who

possess sufficient preparation for any alteration will achieve higher academic performance and demonstrate a more favorable disposition towards the change.

1.11.4 Involvement Theory

Alexander Astin defines student involvement theory as ways in which desirable outcomes for higher education institutions are evaluated in relation to how students change and develop as a direct result of their involvement in co-curricular (Astin, 1999). It emphasizes the student's involvement and active participation in the learning process. According to Astin (1999), the ability of an educational policy or practice to encourage student involvement is directly tied to that policy or practice's overall efficacy as an educational policy or procedure.

1.11.5 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is confidence in one's ability to attain a goal or obtain a desired result (Andrew & Mohankumar, 2017). It's a theory that is connected to readiness. According to Andrew and Mohankumar (2017), they concluded in an investigation that there is a relationship between people's change self-efficacy and their readiness for change. Therefore, it is expected that people's self-efficacy positively impact their readiness for organizational change; therefore, the more excellent the people's self-efficacy, the greater the people's preparation for organizational change, and the more excellent the employees' performance. This can be inferred from students, who are more likely confident to challenge themselves to be intrinsically driven if they have a high sense of efficacy.

1.11.6 Policymaking

It's a process by which governments or other governing institutions create, implement, and assess the effectiveness of public policies. It's a lengthy process with many moving parts that tries to solve society problems, establish priorities, distribute resources, and establish norms and rules. The policy-making process normally consists of five stages: agenda setting, policy formulation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation (Fowler, 2009).

1.11.7 Second Language Acquisition Theory

As per Friedrichsen (2020), it's a field of study in linguistics and education that concentrates on understanding how individuals acquire a second language or a "foreign" language. Students learning English as a second language is another important aspect related to the subject of this research paper. This theory attempts to explain the cognitive, psychological, and social processes involved in acquiring and employing a language that is not one's native or first language. Second Language Acquisition theory describes the process through which individuals who already speak one language acquire a second. Second language acquisition (SLA) According to Friedrichsen (2020), educators may assist students in achieving success in second language acquisition by understanding how second language acquisition occurs and what teaching strategies can be applied.

1.11 Organization of the Study

This research study is structured into five Chapters. This Chapter provides an introduction to the topics, outlining the purpose and significance of the topic, as well as presenting the research questions. Chapter two of the study encompasses a comprehensive literature review, commencing with an overview of the educational system change in the UAE and then provide an exploration of the policy change and policy implementation. The review concludes in a students' English language acquisition. Chapter three presents the technique employed in this study, commencing with the utilization of a questionnaire as a quantitative tool to enable the generalization of data and the formulation of larger population regarding the phenomenon that is under investigation. Chapter four presents the outcomes of the study, while Chapter five provides an analysis of the quantitative data.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This Chapter provides an overview of relevant literature that fall under the educational policy change. The following literature review provides information about a specific topic which is linked to the core idea of the research and research questions. It starts by discussing the conceptual framework of the study and map out how the variables are related to each other. Then, it provides an overview of the educational system change in the UAE and then delve deeper into a discussion about raising the admissions standard in the higher educational institutions. It also includes a discussion of the relevant themes to the study's problem and aim, with appropriate subheadings such as policy implementation, readiness for change, student's perception, involvement and engagement ends up with students' English language acquisition. The goal of these reviews is to get a better grasp of the existing research and controversies in the field, as well as to add to the body of knowledge in this field.

2.2 Research Model and Hypotheses

Figure 2 defines the research model of this study, offering a systematic description of the hypothesized relationships among key variables within the context of Abu Dhabi's higher education institutions. At the core of this model lies the proposition that the admission policy change acts as a catalyst for variations in students' academic opportunities and their involvement in decision making. The independent variables, 'Readiness for Change' and 'Students' Perception,' are suggested to exert a direct influence on the dependent variables. The first hypothesis (H1) suggests a relationship between 'Readiness for Change' and 'Students' Academic Opportunities,' implying that the degree to which students are prepared for policy changes may affect their access to educational opportunities. Alongside, 'Readiness for Change' is hypothesized (H2) to affect 'Students' Involvement,' indicating that preparedness might play a role in determining students' engagement levels. In a similar manner, 'Students' Perception' of the policy changes is hypothesized to impact 'Students' Academic Opportunities' (H3) as well as 'Students' Involvement' (H4), suggesting that students' subjective interpretations of the admission change may influence both their educational opportunities and their involvement. This

framework highlights the potential ripple effect that policy changes can have, extending beyond initial reactions to generate broader implications for student experiences in the academic environment.
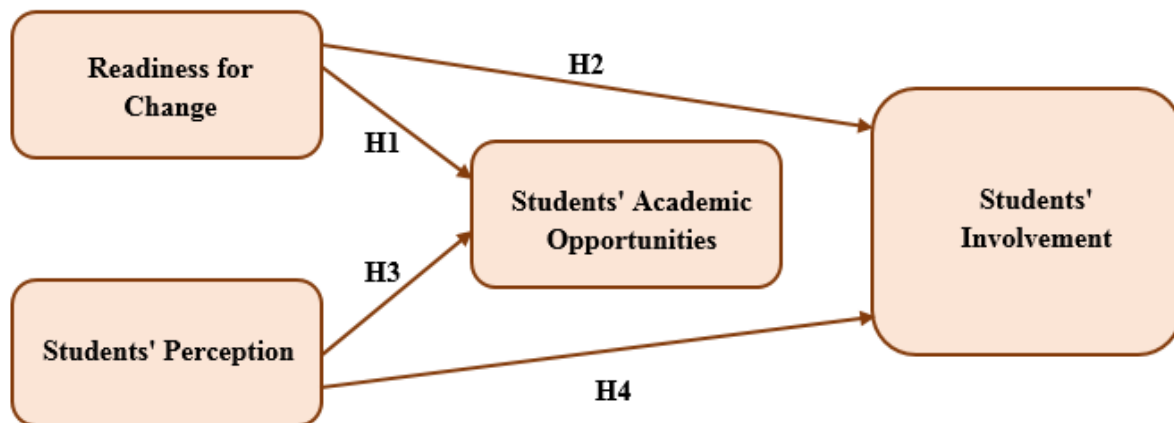
Figure 2: Reserch Mode

2.3 Policy Change

Educational change can serve as a barometer of an institution's ongoing development and improvement. It can be referred to as the incremental changes in existing structures, or new policies (Cerna, 2013). These changes may occur as a result of changes to the institution's policy, structure, strategies, or culture. Changes might happen due to internal or external factors as well. The primary purpose behind policy change is to improve, develop and modify the system or find ways for creativity and innovation in order to stay a strong competitive institution in the market (Cerna, 2013). According Eden et al. (2024), efforts to address educational outcome disparities through change initiatives have been a focal point of global policy agendas. Yet, the success of these changes in meeting their objectives is a topic of ongoing debate and examination.

It is critical to comprehend the primary goal of the educational change as well as the nature of the transformation. Here comes the change theory role, which involves the generalized knowledge about how and why change happens in higher education. The theory of change can be considered as a compass for determining efficacy and comprehending progress, achievement, or failure. As a result, creating achievement

measurements, key performance indicators, and strategic implementation decisions will be easier (Fullan, 2006). Before adopting any change at any institution, it is important to consider many factors, including the type of change, the reasons for the change, the way the change is introduced, its goals, and how people are going to perceive the change.

Owens and Valesky (2014), suggest, that to have an effective change, it should be defined and aligned to the educational goals. Individual educational institutions must also take into account the institution's age, students' readiness, students' level, and academic background if these factors affect the transformation. Policy changes may influence people's well-being, motivation, and performance (Burke, 2014). As per (Owens Jr., R.E. & Valesky, 2014), effective organizational change management can be conducted through several steps; first, define the change and align it to the organizational goals. Second, determine the impacts of the change. Third, develop a communication strategy for delivering the change. Fourth, provide effective training, and finally implement a support structure and measure the change process.

It is also important to consider the way of the implementation of the change. Policy change is a dynamic process that necessitates time to implement a new practice. Alexander (2012) proposes that the policy-making process is divided into six distinct stages: issue definition, agenda-setting, policy design, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. Policy formulation is a dynamic process with a long cycle. Certain individuals will proceed through all stages, while others will skip parts. In some situations, a lack of awareness and information about the policy-making process may contribute to confusion and complication during the policy-making process.

What makes the creation and implementation of educational policies difficult in the UAE are several of these policies are developed quickly, leaving little time for evaluation of their effectiveness. This is a major factor in the policy's failure (Fullan, 2015). Another challenge is that some individuals in decision-making positions or those responsible for developing or implementing the policy do not think long enough before making a decision because they lack the necessary skills to use the proper language policy or are oblivious to various factors such as funding, which may create difficulties in implementing the policy. Some of them may lack sufficient information about the diversity of instruments

available for policy implementation, so they focus on one instrument and ignore the rest. This is a squandering of a great opportunity to improve and smoothly build policies. According to Fowler (2009), educational leaders must be knowledgeable about the range of policy instruments available and use them wisely in order to ensure the smooth transition and implementation of policies. Being aware of the steps of policy development and other related policy subjects is critical to ensuring the policy is implemented correctly.

Professional development and capacity-building sessions on policy are necessary for decision-makers to enhance their capacity, broaden their thinking, and increase their understanding, and this is something that is lacking in some educational institutions in the UAE. Capacity development is a critical policy instrument developed by (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987) as a policy mechanism that suits employed individuals and institutions who are unable of carrying out desired policies due to insufficient training, lack of experience, and insufficient equipment. The capacity building enables individuals and institutions to implement desired new programs and policies (Fowler, 2009). As a result, there will be less opposition and a greater willingness to carry out the policy.

2.4 Changing the Admission Standard Policy

Because the UAE government emphasizes the importance of education in achieving human development, many changes and reforms are taking place in the educational system to assure development and enhancement to fulfill student demands and efficiency. One of these changes was the MOE's declaration that beginning in the Academic Year (2019-2020), some local universities and colleges revised their entry requirements, which was one of the MOE's strategic goals for 2021 (Bayoumi, 2019). The goal of this change was to eliminate the foundation year, which was in line with the MOE's strategic strategy for 2021, which called for a 0% foundation program. Educational policymakers may wish to eliminate the foundational year, as this would impose a significant financial burden on the government. According to Bell and Stevenson (2006), the primary reason for educational change is economic.

Previously, the acceptance rate for higher education admission was 75%, and the needed English language rate was 1100, which is equivalent to a score of 5 on the IELTS test. However, now the new admission policy uttering to divides the students into two

categories; the first category is for direct entry students who get 80% in high school as a minimum, as well as for the English 1250 in the EmSAT test, which is equivalent to 5.5 in IELTS. The second category is the conditional admission for those whose English language averages fall between 1100 and 1250 in the EmSAT test or 5 to 5.5 in IELTS and these students will undergo an intensive educational program in English, mathematics, and Arabic language for one semester only to achieve the level of direct admission to the university (Bayoumi, 2019). As a consequence, some higher educational institutions chose to raise the admittance requirements in order to demonstrate a high level of teaching and learning. The higher educational institutions wanted to execute a new policy that was articulated and structured to be linked with MOE strategic planning. Furthermore, to improve the quality of educational institutions and students, in accordance with the MOE goal of ensuring the quality of educational outcomes and increasing the efficiency of students and graduates in the English language (MOE, 2020). However, As per Tabari (2014), Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research identified one of the challenges facing the education system in the UAE is unclear or conflicting missions and goals between MOE, higher education institutions, and schools which cause noncohesive strategic plans. In such a change, there should be a cohesive plan between schools and higher educational initiations in order to scaffold the students to the required admission level.

2.5 Policy Implementation

Many aspects should be taken into account regarding the policy implementation. One of the most important of these aspects is recognizing the underlying purpose of the change. According to Jie (2016), the key to successful implementation is having clearly defined and generally understood goals so that the appropriate strategy and machinery can be used to accomplish the desired results. People who are touched by a policy change need to understand why the policy has been changed to make informed decisions. Owens and Valesky (2014), claim, that for a change to be effective, it must be specified and connected with educational goals. Individuals and groups are more inclined to accept changes if they understand why they are being made and can see how they fit into the overall strategy.

Another important aspect is the time of implementation. The time component is critical in the process of implementing any educational change. According to Schleicher (2018), there is a long way to go before achieving successful change implementation. Policy changes may induce stress if impacted populations are not adequately prepared. This is consistent with Van Dam et al. (2008), assertion that people are more receptive to change when they receive timely and enough information about the change and its implications. Additionally, providing adequate time before policy implementation can boost people's willingness to change. According to Weiner (2009), increased readiness can result in more beneficial and successful change implementation. This is aligned with the theory of individual readiness, which asserts that individual preparation can contribute to the effectiveness of reform or change (Armenakis & Harris, 2002). The equation states, that high readiness can lead to more positive and successful change implementation. According to the readiness theory, when individuals are sufficiently prepared, they are more likely to support the change (Weiner, 2009). Individuals may experience frustration, overwhelm, dread, and resistance as if they aren't well prepared for change. Change, according to Cunningham (2006), can cause emotional weariness and sadness, lowering readiness for change. When it comes to readiness, motivation theory can be tied to it as well; for example, if an individual is ready for a change, they may be particularly driven to bring about that change. Motivation Theory demonstrates that a high level of motivation results in a high level of readiness for change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). In other words, if people are prepared for change, they will exhibit less resistance to it. According to Weiner (2009), asserts that a variety of cognitive and motivational elements, such as level of confidence, fear, and other negative/positive motivational statuses, might influence people's readiness.

Another significant part that can be accomplished prior to policy implementation is the piloting of a new policy measure. Piloting any new admission policy before implementing it in the institutions, can assist to evaluate it before the implementation. According to Schleicher (2018), pilot projects and continuous evaluation can help to build consensus, allay fears, and overcome resistance by evaluating proposed change before introducing them fully. Experimenting using pilot projects helps to review and evaluate change processes periodically after full implementation.

2.6 Readiness for Change

In addition to what was mentioned earlier, the readiness for change plays an important role in this study; it serves as an independent variable influencing two dependent variables which are students' academic opportunities and students' involvement. In this study, the terms "readiness" was used to denote a condition characterized by receptiveness, personal motivation, and empowerment to embrace upcoming changes. Such a state is deemed vital as a foundational step for effectively spearheading any change initiative (Neill, 2023). Many students may encounter challenges in adapting the new admission policy with the underlying reason often being a lack of individual readiness to embrace the new policy. As a result, their academic opportunities may be impacted if they do not get the required scores. According to Torkzadeh et al. (2016), readiness can reduce the awkwardness of new tasks by encouraging individuals to participate more willingly in services that help them achieve their goals. A study conducted in Indonesia by Saputro et al. (2023) investigated the impact of implementing new program in higher education on students and faculty focusing on their readiness to change to adapt this new program. The results reveled that readiness to change can enhance support the implementation of the new program. Therefore, readiness to change is a crucial factor is successfully implementing changes or achieving the desired outcomes. Readiness to change may also have an impact on the students' involvement. If the students feel that they are adequately prepared, they are more likely to actively involved in their learning experiences. Readiness to change could act as a motivational factor driving students' involvements.

Supporting this notion, Ananda et al. (2023) conducted a similar study to these variables somehow to explore the influence of student engagement on employment readiness and they found out that there is a significant influence of student involvement on job readiness, suggesting that students' readiness to change can impact their level of involvement. However, when examining the relationship further, it is crucial to consider gender differences as a potential mediating factor. Female students may act differently when it comes to readiness to change and involvement in comparison with male students. Research by Shukla et al. (2023) investigated the differences in the readiness ability along the demographic lines of gender and spatial reference by using the Higher Education Readiness test and the result demonstrated that female students compete equally with male

students on performance in Higher Education Readiness abilities. Therefore, while students' readiness to change may influence their involvement, gender differences may lead to distinct patterns of academic pursuit and engagement among male and female students.

2.7 Student's Perception

The term "Student's perception" in this study is used synonymously with "attitudes" and "beliefs". According to Neill (2023), attitudes and beliefs, which can be seen as a person's perceptions, play a crucial role in determining their receptiveness, personal motivation, and empowerment towards embracing future changes. Essentially, these perceptions, or attitudes and beliefs, are indicative of an individual's behavioral tendencies (Neill, 2023). Student's perception about certain educational change can serve as important factor for change to identify gaps and are of improvement. According to Singh et al. (2023), the perceptions of students regarding the educational environment can provide a basis for implementing modifications. The students' perception acts as an independent variable that influences two dependent variables: students' academic opportunities and student involvement. Students' perception plays an important role in shaping students' academic opportunities as their beliefs, their personal motivation, and the way the perceive themselves can impact significantly their academic opportunities. Student perception may include self-efficacy which refers to students' belief in their abilities to succeed academically motivating them to engage actively and face difficulties. It also includes feelings of support, safety and inclusion with the campus environment, recognition of education value and understanding the culture capital. Together, these elements of student perception profoundly impact their academic experiences, opportunities, and outcomes.

A study conducted in five schools in Scotland to investigate the relationship between student's perception and many factors including gender and academic achievement. The findings revealed a vital correlation among student perceptions, academic achievement and gender (Edgerton & McKechnie, 2023). When considering the impact of the students' perception on student involvement, they are closely interconnected as student's belief and motivation can increase students' involvement. This is supported

by a study that conducted by Afzal and Crawford (2022) which part of their study investigated the role of self-motivation on engagement and performance. The results indicated that self-motivated students are more likely to engage effectively. Thus, student perception and their beliefs can impact their involvement. Examining the role of gender in this relationship reveals potential differences in students' perceptions and engagement.

Brady and Eisler (1999) conducted an in-depth study somehow similar variable, and part of the study aimed in assessing disparities in students' perceptions of their college classroom environment, particularly in relation to faculty-student interactions. The study concluded that there was no significant difference between male and female students in terms of classroom participation and perceptions. However, variations were observed in classroom interactions and student perceptions based on different demographic characteristics, including the instructor's gender, class size and other. In summary, this study suggests that the "interaction in the classroom" could be considered synonymous with "involvement" in the context of this paper's variable. Therefore, gender differences are not necessarily guaranteed.

2.8 Involvement & Engagement

Prior to performing any change, it is critical to consider the engagement of stakeholders. Individuals who work in educational institutions, such as teachers, educational administrators, and students are best equipped to make judgments because they are on the ground and have a better understanding of what is happening and what is required. As a result, providing them with the opportunity to participate actively in the decision-making process would be quite advantageous, as they are the ones who confront the issues and can contribute more effectively to policy formulation. The literature recognizes the importance of involving the stakeholder in the process of reform and change. According to Senge (2019), people involved in the changes should be provided an opportunity to reflect on how they think and interact. Engaging stakeholders such as students in the process can help to develop capacity, share ideas, foster a feeling of shared ownership, and lessen resistance. Also, giving implementers, such as teachers, some accountability might help the policy implementation process succeed. Owens and Valesky (2014), underline the need of communicating change to stakeholders, therefore

implementing reforms or change necessitates the involvement and collaboration of teachers, students, stakeholders, and policymakers, as they help to execute reforms in the implementation phase. Every role actor in the system must contribute at some level in order to make good decisions. As a result, Mullins (2007) distinguish three levels of system participation which are, the operational or processing level (the actual activity, for example, teaching); the managerial level: Human resources; and, the community level which involves Environment.

Students being allowed to share their thoughts and talk about their challenges can provide policymakers with predictions about what policies will be successful and which will be unsuccessful. Research has shown that including student voices in education policymaking provides several advantages. According to Oni and Adetoro (2015), involving students in decisions will aid the students to be more willing to accept decisions, they will be more likely to comprehend the motivations behind a policy that they find undesirable and be more optimistic about the college's goals and objectives and to resolve potential issues has been recognized. Allowing pupils to communicate their self-perceptions about specific phenomena allows them to articulate their perspective and manner of experiencing change.

Involving teachers in decision-making can provide valuable feedback since they work closely with the students. They have a better idea of what can work and what not and they can make the best decision. Schleicher (2018) proposed numerous areas of change or reform implementation, including consensus building, because discussions and feedback allow for the consideration of concerns and lessen the risk of significant opposition.

Furthermore, according to Bell and Stevenson (2006), involving teachers in education management and policy can improve students' performance and provide a high quality of school education. This kind of involvement is part of the decentralization decision making which has a significant impact on shortening the distance between policymakers and policy implementers in schools and colleges (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). Despite the recognition of the literature on the importance of involving the stakeholder in the process of change or reform, many educational institutions do not involve students and

teachers in the educational change. The structure of this higher institution is mainly top-down, which means that senior management typically issues directives to institutions, and teachers are expected to implement these rules without consultation. According to Fattah (2008), any effective organization's management system incorporates elements of centralization and decentralization. In any organization, relying exclusively on centralization diminishes the critical role of its employees in technical matters pertaining to their professions. Generally, faculty and educational administrators are not involved or consulted in the process of policy development, formulation, and implementation, in my experience. They are not consulted for their ideas and suggestions, even though they would be useful because they are the closest people who contact the children regularly and are intimately familiar with them.

2.9 Student's English Language Acquisition

The educational background of students significantly influences their English language proficiency. Students from private schools generally exhibit better English skills due to the increased emphasis on English language education. Mollon (2021) notes, "it goes without saying that the UAE's private schools tend to have terrific facilities and resources" providing students with greater exposure to English compared to those in public schools. Ahmed (2011) points out that some Emiratis prefer private education because they believe it places greater importance on teaching English, which is crucial for university success, especially since public schools do not offer math and science instruction in English. To address the issue of students lacking necessary English skills for higher education, the Ministry of Education (MOE) implemented K–12 educational reforms in 2008. This led to increased funding for preparatory programs for higher education. In response to the ongoing challenges in English language education, the Ministry introduced the Emirates School Model (ESM). Under the ESM, scientific subjects and English are taught in English by certified native English-speaking teachers, while Arabic and Islamic studies are taught in Arabic (Gobert, 2019). Despite the UAE's significant efforts to improve Arabic language education, both private and public schools continue to struggle with implementing best practices, leading to student underperformance. While the UAE's initiatives for Arabic language education are

commendable, there is a pressing need to prioritize teacher preparation and ongoing training for teachers and school leaders (Taha Thomure, 2019).

Understanding theories of language acquisition can aid in the development of effective teaching practices and evaluations that guide students' language development. This is consistent with the suggestion made by Fillmore and Snow (2000) and Hamayan (1990) that being aware of the idea of second language acquisition might help teachers improve their capacity to serve culturally and linguistically diverse pupils in their classrooms. Students' levels of language acquisition for the English language vary, as does their capacity to study and acquire the language and abilities. While some students may require 12 years of exposure to the English language before becoming fluent, others may require less time and fully master the language. This is related to some factors, including the student's acquisition ability and educational background. To be more specific, the majority of earlier generations did not have access to private schools that offered the majority of topics in English. Because the majority of pupils were enrolled in public schools that placed a greater focus on Arabic, they did not have a good foundation in English. Studies showed that a student can develop fluency in the academic language from four to seven years depending on many elements such as language proficiency level, age and time of arrival at school, level of academic proficiency in the native language, and the degree of support for achieving academic proficiency (Cummins, 1981; Hakuta et al., 2000; Thomas & Collier, 1997).

As per Robertson and Ford (2008), there are six stages of second language acquisition which are pre-production, early-production, speech emergent, beginning fluency, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency. The strength of one's first language skills is critical for accelerating the acquisition of a second language. Language researchers such as Dixon et al. (2012) have researched second language acquisition and assert that it takes approximately five to seven years for an individual with strong first language and literacy skills to achieve advanced fluency in a second language. However, if an individual's first language and literacy abilities are not fully established, it may take between seven and 10 years to achieve advanced fluency (Robertson & Ford, 2008). More importantly, individuals have a distinct language and educational backgrounds, which have a significant impact on their English learning process (Robertson & Ford, 2008).

2.10 Summary

This Chapter offers a comprehensive overview of literature pertaining to educational policy change. It explores the key topic related to the study's main idea and questions, discussing relevant themes under various subheadings. The review aims to deepen understanding of ongoing debates and contribute new insights in the field. It covers aspects like policy change, admission standards, policy implementation, student's perception, student involvement, and English language acquisition. The Chapter begins with an examination of changes in the UAE's educational system, focusing on the implications of raised admission standards in higher education.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Overview

This Chapter provides a comprehensive examination of the methodological architecture underpinning our study. At its heart, our focus has been on crafting a robust and reliable framework that can support the entire research endeavor. The intricate detailing of the research design serves as a blueprint, illuminating the strategic decisions and design choices that dictate the study's direction. This, coupled with an exploration into our sampling methods, allows us to provide insights into how we've captured a representative snapshot of our larger target demographic. Of paramount importance is our steadfast commitment to ethics, evident in our dedicated segment on the protection of human subjects. Furthermore, the data collection section explains the rigorous methodologies used to collect a solid foundation of information. The significance of pilot testing cannot be understated; it has played a pivotal role in refining our primary survey instruments, ensuring they are both sensitive and specific. Lastly, in the unwavering pursuit of accuracy, it's been diligently addressed potential drawbacks like the Common Method Bias, integrating measures to detect and counteract it. In essence, this overview showcases the holistic and rigorous approach that has been adopted, ensuring that every facet of our methodology is aligned with the highest standards of research integrity.

3.2 Research Design

In this study, descriptive quantitative research is designated to observe situations or events that affect people and get systematic information to develop a hypothesis after data collection. This study adopted a descriptive survey design which is a quantitative research strategy that aims to collect measurable information from a population sample for statistical analysis. It is a common market research instrument that allows us to collect and describe the nature of the demographic category (Creswell,2012). According to Fetters et al. (2013), the quantitative methodology is used to address questions about generalizability and connection. The quantitative research involves large sample sizes to understand and explore the impact of raising the admission standards policy on students' academic opportunities in Abu Dhabi educational initiations. In addition, quantitative research helps to attain greater knowledge and understanding of the social world through

statistics and numbers (Cohen et al., 2018). Achieving in-depth details is significant to spotlight the students' perspective on raising admission standards and the extensiveness of the research is important to generalize and quantify results. One of the goals of quantitative research is to understand the relationship between an independent and dependent variable (Cohen et al., 2018).

The research employed a quantitative approach, gathering data through specific quantitative measures from three prominent higher educational institutions in Abu Dhabi. A pivotal element of this study is the questionnaire, crafted from the foundations of an established instrument. Before its widespread application, this questionnaire went thorough validation to ensure its efficacy in extrapolating generalizable results. Structured in two distinct sections, the questionnaire first collects participant demographics, followed by a series of 20 carefully formulated statements. The participant pool is diverse, encompassing students from various higher education institutions across Abu Dhabi, selected through a random sampling method. This methodological framework is particularly suited to the objectives of the study, offering robust outcomes and meaningful insights. The combination of diverse data sources and the dual-focus approach-encompassing both participant data and statement responses - expected to yield more substantial and nuanced findings than would be possible through a single-method approach.

3.3 Population and Sample

The primary focus of this study is on students in higher education, encompassing both male and female students who have experienced the rollout of the change in the admission policy at various federal universities in Abu Dhabi. These universities have embraced this policy approach first. The demographic data from participants includes:

- Gender: Whether they are male or female.
- Age group.
- University name.
- Educational Background: Distinguishing between those who attended public schools and those who were educated in private institutions or Technical institution.
- English Proficiency Levels: Grouped as high, medium, or low.

To ensure an unbiased representation, the study deployed the simple random sampling technique. This method was pivotal in the selection of participants from the larger student body. The broader target population comprises students from three renowned universities in the UAE: UAEU, ZU, and the HCT being the primary institutions among them.

3.4 Protection of Human Subjects

The study's ethical implications were taken into consideration. It was explained to all participants at all stages that they would be taking part in a research project, that all information about them would be kept anonymous, and that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any point before the paper is published to protect the rights of participants. As per Fleming and Zegwaard (2018), the participants in a research study were provided with an explicit, active, signed consent form for taking part in the research, including understanding their rights to access to their information and the right to withdraw at any point. All personal information and identifying information are kept strictly confidential.

3.5 Selection and Contacting Sample

The selection of the participants was from the federal universities, which are located in Abu Dhabi that implemented the change in the admission policy of raising the standard. The sample size is large to be able to validate and generalize the results and the target number is 500 participants. Approval has been obtained from the MOE to distribute the questionnaire to the random sampling within the three selected federal educational institutions. The questionnaire included the questions along with clear instructions and a detailed ethical and confidential background for all participants. The relationship proposed for this research with the informants will be neutral to provide an objective and unbiased view of the study and to ensure valid and reliable data and trustworthy results.

3.6 Selection and Contacting Sample

The research instrument's reliability was tested through a pilot study, which involved, 50 participants as part of a pilot phase with a university that was not part of the

research. The pilot phase usually allows researchers to determine whether any conceptual or functioning concerns might arise, which might thus be more effectively addressed before the full-scale trial is carried out (Tashakkori et al., 2020). According to Oni and Adetoro (2015), conducting a pilot test can assist in determining the instrument's reliability percentage, as well as gathering and analyzing data. Piloting the survey allowed the researcher to get an update on the progress of the survey from the participants' answers. The participants were given the survey link and adequate time to answer the questionnaire. The pilot stage helped to have the opportunity to get feedback from the participants regarding the pilot questionnaire and the comments were considered to make changes as required. The piloting survey was gained by obtaining official approval from the institution's research committee.

3.7 Data Collection

Data was diligently gathered between September 30, 2022, and June 30, 2023, coinciding with the 2022/2023 academic year. This collection process targeted students from federal universities in Abu Dhabi, leveraging the convenience and expansiveness of online survey questionnaires. A total of 500 questionnaires were disseminated at random to this cohort. Impressively, we received 412 of these, marking a robust response rate of 82.4 percent. However, a subset of these, numbering 88, had to be discarded due to substantial data gaps and inconsistencies. Therefore, the final pool of validated and usable questionnaires stood at 412. These 412 complete responses were not just valid but also exceeded the recommended sample size. As noted by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), for a research population of 5,000, a sample size of roughly 357 respondents is deemed adequate. Our sample of 412 respondents surpasses this benchmark, ensuring reliability and robustness for the study. With this sample, in-depth analysis was undertaken using structural equation modeling (Chuan & Penyelidikan, 2006), a suitable technique to scrutinize the developed hypotheses. These hypotheses, rooted in well-established theories, were specifically tailored to address nuances of the E-learning landscape. Comprehensive analytical processes, such as the assessment of the measurement model, validation, reliability, and model fitness, were executed using structural equation modeling (SEM) via Smart PLS Version 3.2.7 software. This meticulous analysis ultimately culminated in the formulation of the final path model.

3.8 Common Method Bias (CMB)

To ensure the integrity and reliability of the data collected for the study, Harman's single-factor technique, using it in conjunction with seven distinct factors has been employed. This method serves as a diagnostic tool to ascertain the absence of Common Method Bias (CMB), which can potentially skew research findings (Podsakoff et al., 2003). During the execution of this test, a solitary factor was chosen to bear the loadings of ten other factors. The analysis illuminated that the resultant composite factor accounted for a variance of 24.69%. Significantly, this variance is well below the critical benchmark of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003). It's important to underscore that a variance value that reaches or exceeds the 50% threshold serves as an indicator of the presence of CMB. Given our variance value of 24.69%., we can confidently assert that the data underpinning this study is free from any adverse influence of CMB, ensuring the credibility of the insights derived from it.

3.9 Summary

This Chapter delves deeply into the research methodology, serving as the bedrock for the entire investigation. It was meticulously dissected the methodological framework, from the strategic choices in research design to the precision in our data collection methods. Key sections spotlight the commitment to ethical considerations, most notably in the protection of human subjects, and the robustness of our pilot testing procedures. To further bolster the integrity of the findings, safeguards against potential biases, particularly the Common Method Bias have been integrated. Altogether, this Chapter stands as a testament to the study's rigor, ensuring the credibility and validity of our research outcomes.

Chapter 4: Discussion of the Results

4.1 Overview

In this Chapter, data analysis was carried out using the partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) method, employing the SmartPLS V.3.2.7 software (Ringle et al., 2015). A two-step evaluation method was employed to assess the gathered data, encompassing both the structural and measurement models (Hair et al., 2017). Several reasons underpin the choice of PLS-SEM for this study. It's particularly apt for studies aimed at reinforcing existing theories (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). Moreover, PLS-SEM is adept at handling exploratory research, especially when dealing with intricate models (Hair Jr et al., 2016a). One of its notable strengths is its capacity to assess the entire model holistically, rather than breaking it down into segments (Goodhue et al., 2012). Additionally, PLS-SEM facilitates simultaneous analysis of both the measurement and structural models, ensuring precision in results (Barclay et al., 1995).

4.2 Student demographics and personal details

The following Figures delve into a detailed analysis of the students' personal and demographic information. These illustrations provide a thorough understanding, shedding light on the varied backgrounds, attributes, and profiles of the participants within the survey. Out of the 412 participants, 274 (67%) identified as female and 138 (33%) as male. Figure 3 displays the distribution of genders.
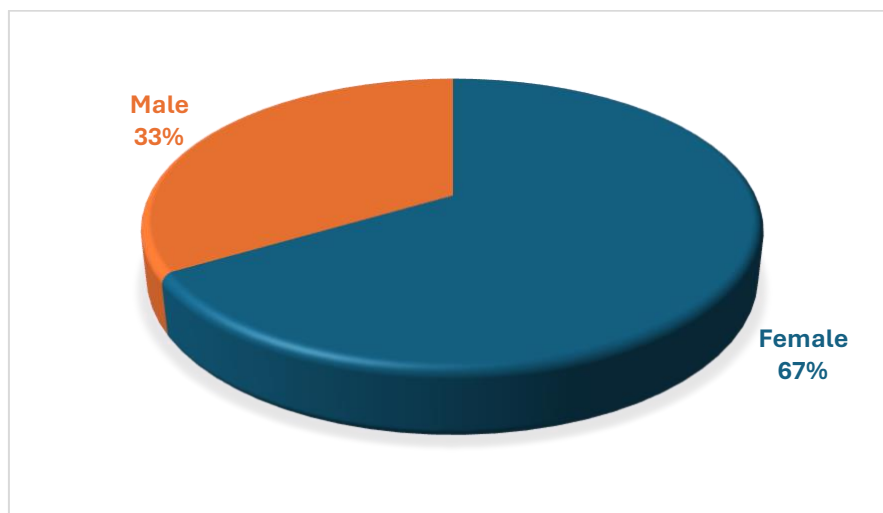
Figure 3: Age Distribution by Gender

The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 years to over 41 years. Specifically, 52% were between the ages of 18 and 24; 29% were between 25 and 30; 14% fell within the 31 to 40 age bracket; and 5% were aged 41 and above. This data suggests a younger skew in the sample. The age distribution can be visualized in Figure 4.
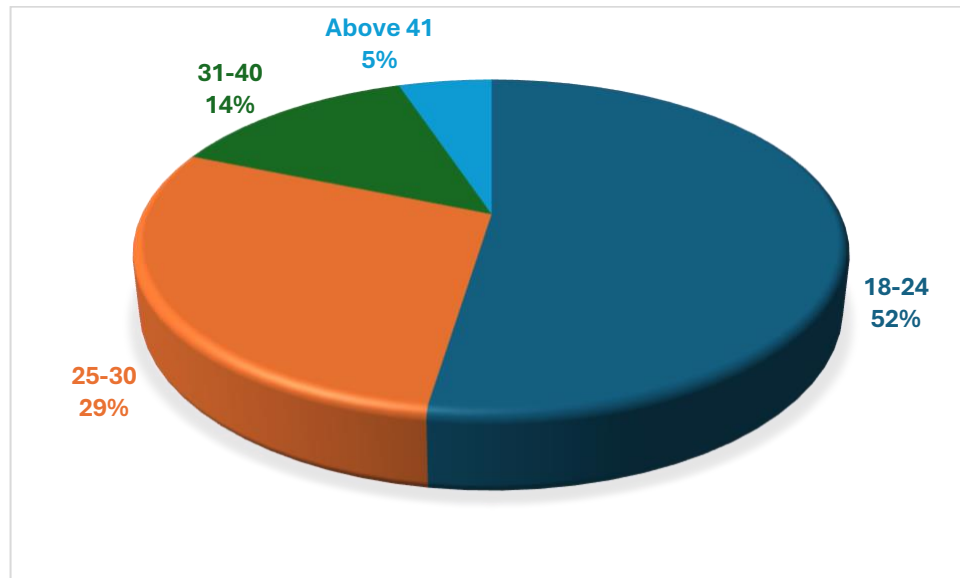
Figure 4: Distribution by Age Group

Among the respondents, the majority are from the UAEU with 183 individuals, accounting for 44%. ZU follows with 143 respondents, making up 35% of the total. Lastly, the HCT are represented by 86 individuals, which is 21% of the overall sample (See Figure 5).
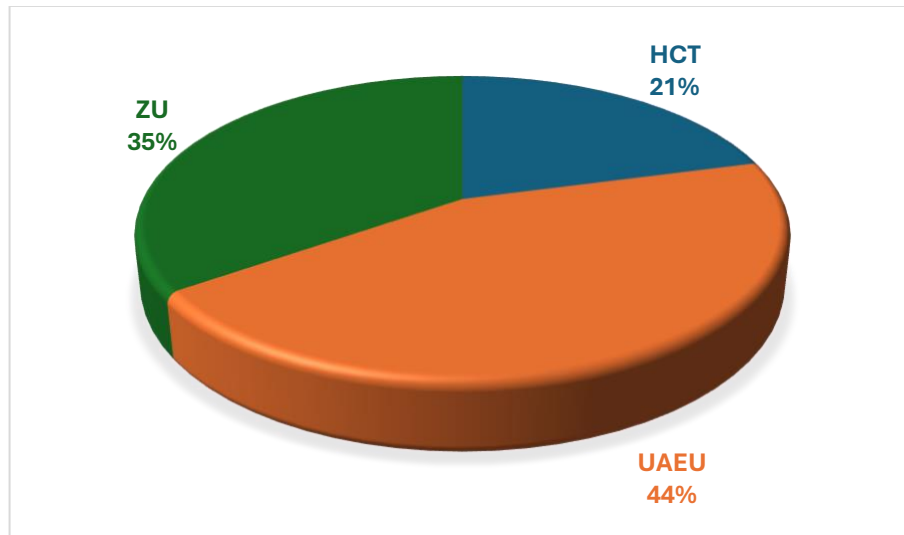
Figure 5: Which University?

Figure 6 provides a visual representation of the respondents' educational qualifications. A prominent 66%, translating to 272 respondents, have secured a Bachelor's degree. On the other hand, Master's degree holders account for 30% of the sample with 122 individuals. The smallest fraction, at 4% or 18 respondents, boasts a PhD.
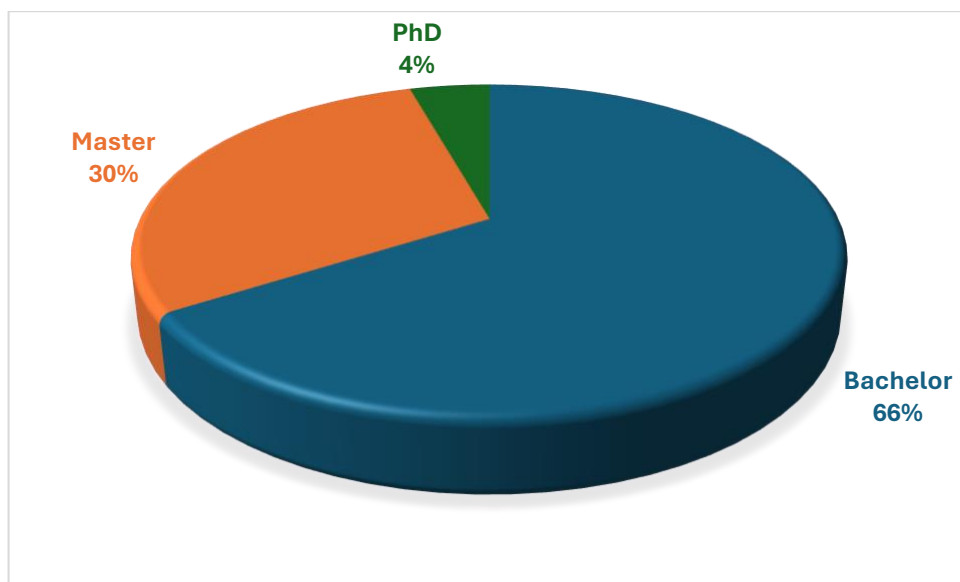
Figure 6: Level of Education

Figure 7 depicts the distribution of respondents based on the attainment of their degree. A significant 72%, representing 295 respondents, affirmed they had secured their degree. Conversely, 28% or 117 individuals revealed they hadn't yet completed their degree.
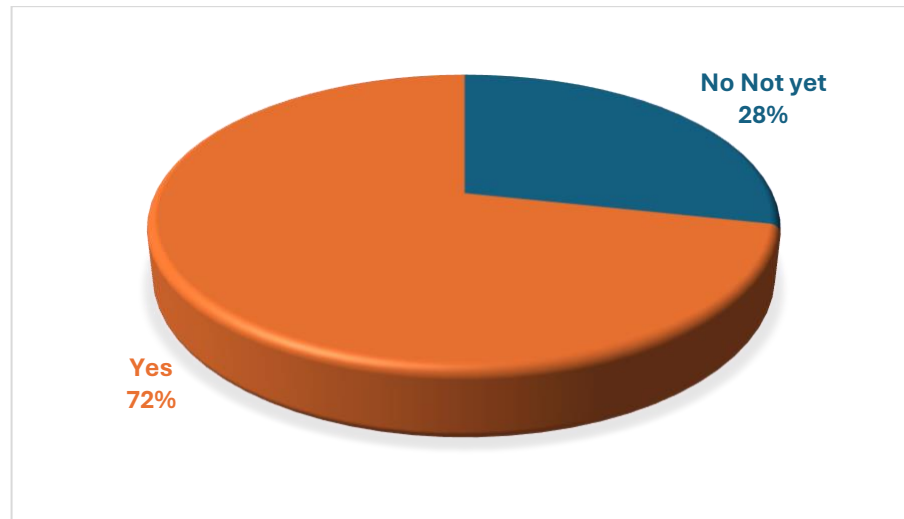
Figure 7: Had you Get that Degree?

Figure 8 portrays the English proficiency levels of the respondents based on EmSAT and IELTS scores. A dominant 57%, which equates to 234 individuals, fall within the 1250-1650 EmSAT range or have IELTS scores between 5.5 and 6.5. A smaller segment, comprising 12% or 48 respondents, have scores between 1675-2000 on EmSAT or IELTS scores ranging from 7 to 8. Meanwhile, 32% of the respondents, corresponding to 130 individuals, have scores within the 825-1225 EmSAT range or IELTS scores between 4 and 5.
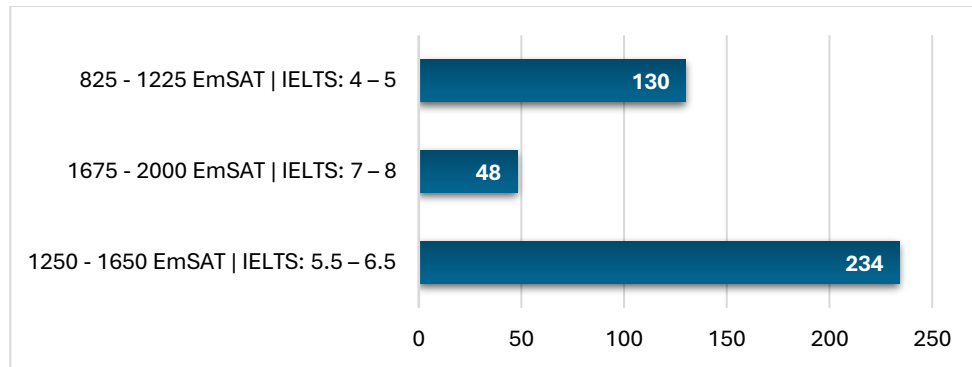
Figure 8: English Level

Figure 9 highlights the educational institutions where respondents were enrolled. Half of them, representing 50% or 205 individuals, attended public schools. Close behind, 44% or 180 respondents were enrolled in private schools. A smaller fraction, accounting for 7% or 27 individuals, were part of technical institution schools. This data provides insights into the diverse educational backgrounds of the surveyed population.
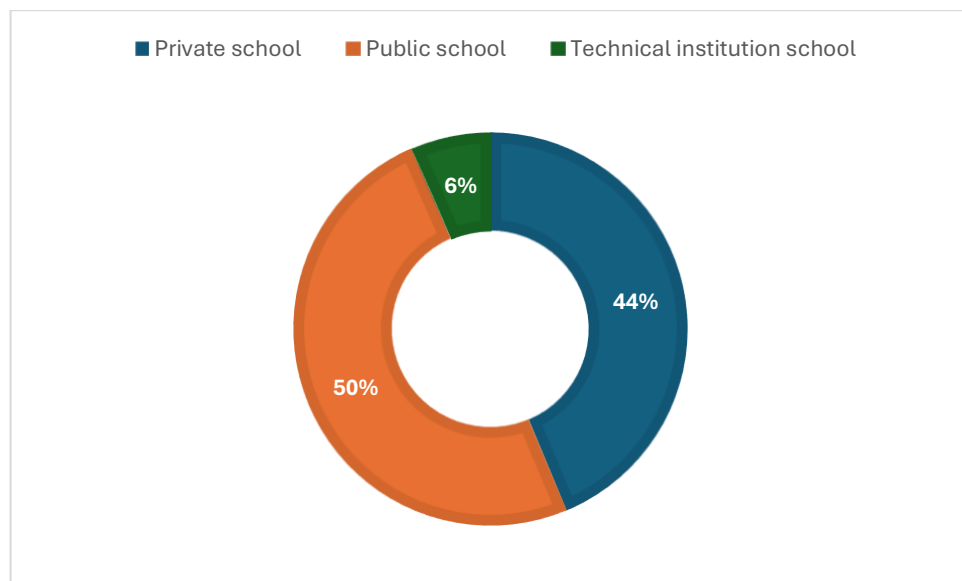
Figure 9: Did you Enroll in?

4.3 Evaluation of the Outer Model

Introduced in 2005, Smart-PLS software has become a go-to tool for executing PLS-SEM (Ringle et al., 2005). Its appeal lies not only in its cost-free accessibility but also its intuitive interface coupled with comprehensive reporting capabilities, making it a

favorite among scholars (Wong, 2013). Within this study, the measurement model explains the relationship between indicators and underlying constructs. Its evaluation axles on two critical validity types: convergent and discriminant (Chin, 1998). Convergent validity enquiries the correlation within theoretically similar constructs, whereas discriminant validity evaluates the distinctions amongst the model's constructs. The collective efficacy of the measurement model is evaluated through the interaction of both these validities.

4.3.1 Convergent Validity

The assessment of the measurement model entails examining construct reliability through metrics like composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (CA), and evaluating validity through both convergent and discriminant validity measures (Hair et al., 2017). In terms of construct reliability, the Cronbach's alpha (CA) values spanned between 0.825 and 0.936, comfortably surpassing the recommended benchmark of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Likewise, the composite reliability (CR) figures ranged from 0.768 to 0.957, exceeding the advocated CR baseline of 0.7 (Kline, 2015). To gauge convergent validity, one needs to scrutinize the average variance extracted (AVE) alongside factor loading (Hair et al., 2017). As presented in Table 1, each factor loading value surpasses the suggested benchmark of 0.7, and all AVE figures outpace the 0.5 threshold. Specifically, AVE values fluctuated between 0.551 and 0.711, thereby affirming the convergent validity of every construct.

Table 1: The Results for Convergent Validity

Constructs	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Readiness for Change	RC1	0.762	0.869	0.902	0.551
	RC2	0.846			
	RC3	0.769			
	RC4	0.842			
	RC5	0.732			
	RC6	0.712			
	RC7	0.823			
	RC8	0.824			
Students' Academic Opportunities	AO1	0.798	0.825	0.880	0.600
	AO2	0.873			
	AO3	0.879			
	AO4	0.870			
	AO5	0.710			
Students 'Involvement	SI1	0.848	0.918	0.936	0.711
	SI2	0.857			
	SI3	0.868			
	SI4	0.802			
	SI5	0.808			
	SI6	0.873			
Students' Perception	SP1	0.827	0.833	0.768	0.680
	SP2	0.806			
	SP3	0.802			
	SP4	0.810			
	SP5	0.802			

4.3.2 Discriminate Validity

Discriminant validity evaluates the extent of divergence between a single construct and all other constructs within the research model (Chin, 1998). It can be ascertained in two primary ways. The first involves examining the correlation between measurements of latent variables and measurement items. For effective discriminant validity, the loading of each measure on its intended construct should surpass its loading on any other constructs in the research model. This means each measure should exhibit a stronger correlation with its designated construct than with others.

4.3.2.1 Fornell-Larker Scale

Table 2 presents the findings from the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) analysis. The bold figures running diagonally across the table are the square roots of the AVE values, while the off-diagonal figures represent the correlations amongst the constructs

(Hair Jr et al., 2016b). These square roots of AVE values ranged from 0.742 to 0.894, surpassing the advisable threshold of 0.5. A notable distinction exists between the AVE values and their respective construct correlations, denoting that each construct shares more variance with its own measures than with measures from other constructs, thereby affirming discriminant validity.

4.3.2.2 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT)

The Heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) has emerged as a contemporary metric to measure discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). HTMT, essentially, juxtaposes the average of heterotrait-heteromethod correlations against the mean of monotrait-heteromethod correlations. It's a pivotal tool in partial least squares structural equation modeling, specifically for appraising discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Failing to examine discriminant validity can compromise the veracity of projected structural paths, potentially yielding skewed outcomes or statistical anomalies. Amongst methods for discerning discriminant validity, the HTMT approach is often deemed superior to alternatives like the Fornell-Larcker criterion and (partial) cross-loadings. This is largely due to its precision in pinpointing instances where discriminant validity falls short (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). An HTMT value under 1 indicates a clear distinction between constructs, while values surpassing the threshold suggest an absence of discriminant validity (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). While some scholars advocate for an HTMT cut-off of 0.85, others lean towards 0.90 (Kline, 2011). As per Table 3, the derived HTMT values validate discriminant integrity, given the pronounced variance observed between constructs and their specific measures, coupled with diminished variance in relation to other model constructs.

Table 2: Fornell-Larcker Scale

	RC	AO	SI	SP
RC	**0.742**			
AO	0.375	**0.775**		
SI	0.566	0.328	**0.843**	
SP	0.549	0.477	0.438	**0.894**

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	RC	AO	SI	SP
RC				
AO	0.441			
SI	0.617	0.369		
SP	0.575	0.620	0.534	

4.4 Evaluation of the Inner Model

4.4.1 Coefficient of determination

The coefficient of determination, known as R^2, is a widely used metric in structural model analysis, as highlighted by (Dreheeb et al., 2016). Defined statistically, R^2 quantifies the squared correlation between the actual and predicted values of an endogenous construct, serving as an indicator of the model's capacity to predict accurately, as explained by (Hair Jr et al., 2016b; Senapathi & Srinivasan, 2014). It expresses how much variance in endogenous constructs is accounted for by other pertinent exogenous constructs. According to (Chin, 1998), R^2 values above 0.67 are considered high, while values between 0.33 and 0.67 are seen as moderate, and those between 0.19 and 0.33 are viewed as low or weak. In this study, as shown in Table 4, the constructs 'Students' Academic Opportunities' and 'Students' Involvement' demonstrated R^2 values within the 0.19 to 0.33 range, denoting moderate predictive strength. Specifically, 'Students' Academic Opportunities' presented an R^2 value accounting for 40.4% of the variance, indicating a moderate level of predictive capability. Similarly, 'Students' Involvement' had

an R^2 value explaining 40.7% of the variance, mirroring the moderate predictive ability of the 'Students' Academic Opportunities' construct.

Table 4: R2 of the Endogenous Latent Variables

Constructs	R^2	Results
Students' Academic Opportunities	0.404	Moderate
Students' Involvement	0.407	Moderate

4.4.2 Test of the Hypotheses – Path Coefficient

The investigation into the interrelationships and connections between the structural model's theoretical constructs was conducted using structural equation modeling via Smart PLS, which utilizes maximum likelihood estimation on the gathered data, as noted by (Milošević et al., 2015). This approach facilitated the evaluation of the hypotheses put forth in the study. The PLS-SEM method yielded beta (β) values, t-values, and p-values for each research hypothesis, which are documented in Table 5 and Figure 10. Analysis of the data revealed that hypotheses H2, H3, and H4 received empirical support, whereas H1 did not. Specifically, the statistically significant link between 'Readiness for Change' and 'Students' Involvement' (β = 308, p < 0.01) lends credibility to Hypothesis H2. In contrast, the influence of 'Readiness for Change' on 'Students' Academic Opportunities' was not statistically significant (β = 105; p = 0.373), leading to the rejection of H1. Additionally, 'Students' Perception' was significantly impacted by two endogenous variables: 'Students' Academic Opportunities' (β = 0.562, p < 0.001) and 'Students' Involvement' (β = 0.578, p < 0.001), thus affirming Hypotheses H3 and H4. Table 5 provides a consolidated overview of the results from testing these hypotheses.

Table 5: Results of Structural Model (significant at p** < = 0.01, p* < 0.05)

| H	Relationship	Path	*t-value*	*p-value*	Direction	Decision
H1	Readiness for Change → Students' Academic Opportunities	0.105	0.892	0.373	Positive	Not supported
H2	Readiness for Change → Students' Involvement	0.308	2.812	0.005	Positive	Supported**
H3	Students' Perception → Students' Academic Opportunities	0.562	5.789	0.000	Positive	Supported**
H4	Students' Perception → Students' Involvement	0.578	5.471	0.000	Positive	Supported**
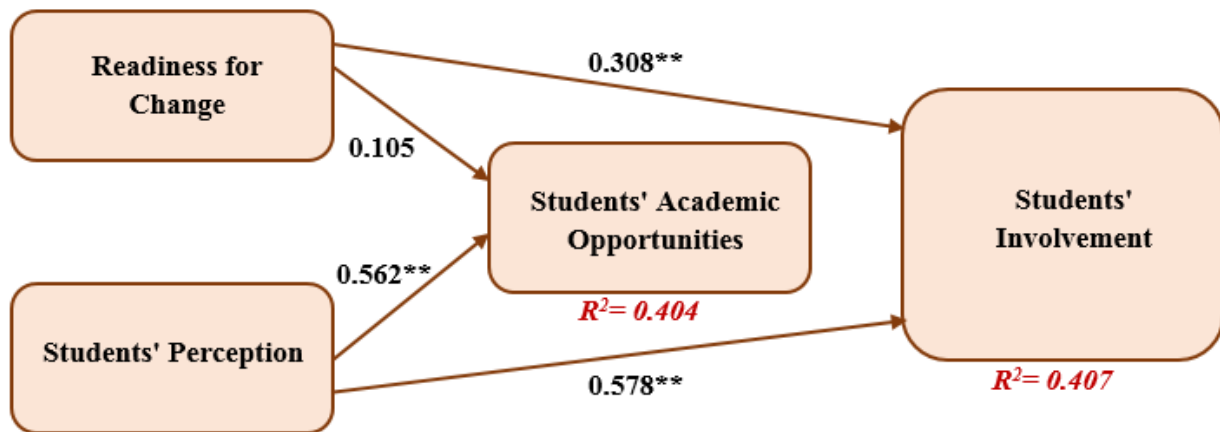
Figure 10: Path coefficient results (significant at p** < = 0.01, p* < 0.05)

4.5 Discussion of the Results

The quantitative research undertaken, utilizing structural equation modeling via Smart PLS as delineated by Milošević et al. (2015) allowed for the meticulous testing of the hypothesized relationships among the study's constructs. Through the application of maximum likelihood estimation, the study acquired beta (β) values, t-values, and p-values for each hypothesis, which are comprehensively detailed in Table 5 and Figure 10 of the research. The findings from the data analysis revealed that Hypotheses H2, H3, and H4 were empirically supported:

- Hypothesis H2 was confirmed with a significant relationship between 'Readiness for Change' and 'Students' Involvement' ($\beta = 0.308$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that students who are more prepared for changes in the academic policies tend to be more involved in academic activities and decision-making.

- Hypothesis H1 was not supported, as the influence of 'Readiness for Change' on 'Students' Academic Opportunities' did not show statistical significance ($\beta = 0.105$; $p = 0.373$). This indicates that mere readiness for change does not necessarily translate into enhanced academic opportunities.

- Hypothesis H3 and H4 were strongly supported, indicating that 'Students' Perception' significantly affects both 'Students' Academic Opportunities' ($\beta = 0.562$, $p < 0.001$) and 'Students' Involvement' ($\beta = 0.578$, $p < 0.001$). This underscores the importance of students' perceptions of policy changes, as these

perceptions are closely tied to their academic opportunities and level of involvement.

The findings from this research provide critical insights into the dynamics of policy change within the educational system of Abu Dhabi, especially concerning admission policy adjustments. As illustrated in the study's theoretical framework (Figure 2, p.26 in the literature review), the model hypothesizes that 'Readiness for Change' and 'Students' Perception' directly influence 'Students' Academic Opportunities' and 'Students' Involvement'. The empirical analysis, supported by structural equation modeling, adds nuanced evidence to these hypothesized relationships.

The lack of support for Hypothesis H1 (Readiness for Change → Students' Academic Opportunities) may seem counterintuitive but aligns with previous studies indicating that readiness alone does not guarantee improved outcomes without appropriate support structures and resources. As Fullan (2006), argues in his work on educational change, readiness for change without the provision of necessary resources and alignment with the broader educational goals can lead to unsatisfactory outcomes in policy implementation. This insight is crucial, suggesting that readiness should be accompanied by strategic planning and execution to translate into tangible educational benefits.

Conversely, the significant results supporting Hypothesis H2 (Readiness for Change → Students' Involvement) underscore the importance of preparing students for changes, which positively impacts their involvement. This finding echoes Trowler (2010) who notes that well-prepared students are more likely to engage actively with their academic environments, contributing positively to their educational experiences.

Hypotheses H3 and H4 being supported highlights the critical role of students' perceptions. The significant impact of 'Students' Perception' on both 'Students' Academic Opportunities' and 'Students' Involvement' resonates with the work of Tinto (2012), who emphasizes that students' perceptions of their academic environment significantly influence their engagement and success. This research substantiates the notion that students' subjective views on policy changes are instrumental in shaping their academic journey and engagement levels.

Additionally, the study corroborates the theoretical propositions presented by Kember and Leung (2005), who argue that students' perceptions can indeed mediate the impact of educational reforms on their learning opportunities and involvement. This underscores the necessity of involving students in the dialogue surrounding policy changes to ensure that their perspectives and needs are adequately considered in the formulation of policies.

In summary, this study not only supports existing educational theories but also contributes to the ongoing discourse on policy changes in higher education by providing empirical evidence from the context of the UAE. It calls for a balanced approach to policy implementation, where readiness and student perceptions are both acknowledged as pivotal elements that can significantly influence the efficacy of educational reforms. This research serves as a vital resource for policymakers, educators, and administrators aiming to enhance educational practices and student experiences in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

4.6 Summary

This Chapter utilized the PLS-SEM method with SmartPLS software for data analysis. PLS-SEM, chosen for its suitability in reinforcing theories and handling complex models, allows for a holistic evaluation of both measurement and structural models. The data analysis revealed that while Hypotheses H2, H3, and H4 were supported, H1 was not. This indicates that readiness for change doesn't necessarily lead to improved academic opportunities, highlighting the complexities of educational changes. However, a notable correlation exists between students' readiness for change and their involvement, emphasizing the need for adaptability. Additionally, students' positive perception of admission policy changes significantly influences their academic opportunities and involvement. These insights suggest that understanding and integrating student perspectives are crucial for successful educational changes especially in the evolving landscape of UAE's education system. Combining this with the study's findings, it's clear that the impact of changing admission requirements on students' opportunities is complex. Students' readiness and positive perception of these changes are key factors, influencing their involvement and potentially the effectiveness of policy changes. However, the direct

effect of student involvement in policy decision-making remains unmeasured, leaving an area for future exploration.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Future Work

5.1 Overview

The data analysis, which showed support for Hypotheses H2, H3, and H4 but not H1, provides insightful implications in the context of the UAE's dynamic educational landscape. The lack of statistical significance in the relationship between 'Readiness for Change' and 'Students' Academic Opportunities' (H1) could suggest that merely being ready for change in admission policies does not automatically translate to enhanced academic opportunities. This might reflect the complexity of educational changes and the multitude of factors influencing student opportunities beyond readiness. Conversely, the significant link between 'Readiness for Change' and 'Students' Involvement' (H2) underlines the importance of students being adaptable to changes in the educational environment, as it directly correlates with their involvement in academic activities. This finding resonates with the need for flexibility and adaptability in the face of ongoing educational reforms in the UAE. Furthermore, the positive impact of 'Students' Perception' on both 'Students' Academic Opportunities' and 'Students' Involvement' (H3 and H4) highlights the crucial role of student perceptions in the effectiveness of educational changes. This aligns with the abstract's emphasis on understanding and incorporating student voices in policy changes, particularly regarding admission standards. These findings underscore the need for careful consideration and implementation of educational changes, resonating the abstract's call for thoughtful change management in the dynamic field of education. The results also stress the importance of student perceptions and adaptability in shaping effective educational experiences, a key aspect in the ongoing development of the UAE's educational system.

5.2 Addressing the Core Research Question

This section investigates into addressing the research questions that were previously outlined. The aim is to provide comprehensive answers, drawing insights from the data analysis and contextualizing them within the broader scope of our study. Based on the results of the study:

1. The effect of changing admission requirements on students' educational opportunities in higher educational institutions is not easy to determine or predict

straightforwardly. The readiness for change in admission policies did not directly translate to enhanced academic opportunities.

2. Students' perception of the change in admission policy is significantly impactful. A positive perception correlates with increased academic opportunities and involvement.

3. The readiness of students for the change in admission policy was significant, as it positively influenced their involvement, indicating adaptability to the educational changes.

5.3 Conclusions

In conclusion, this study explains the intricate dynamics of educational change in the UAE, particularly focusing on the impact of admission policy changes. The findings reveal the significance of student adaptability and perception in navigating these changes. While readiness for change did not directly translate to increased academic opportunities, it significantly influenced student involvement, emphasizing the value of adaptability in educational settings. Furthermore, the positive correlation between students' perceptions of changes and their academic opportunities and involvement highlights the importance of including student voices in policy-making processes. These insights offer valuable guidance for educators and policymakers, emphasizing the need to consider student perspectives and readiness for change to ensure effective and beneficial educational changes. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities in education reform and underlines the importance of comprehensive strategies that consider various stakeholder perspectives in the rapidly evolving educational landscape of the UAE.

5.4 Study Implications

The implications of this study extend to various domains of educational strategy and implementation within the UAE. By demonstrating the critical role of student perspectives in the reception and effectiveness of policy changes, such as those concerning admission standards, this research highlights the importance of participatory approaches in policy formulation. Such an inclusive approach echoes the views of Fullan (2015), who argued for the necessity of engaging stakeholders in the change process to ensure

successful educational change. The findings boost the argument for initiatives that prioritize understanding students' views, as suggested by Trowler (2010), to enhance the acceptance and impact of new policies.

Furthermore, this study sheds light on the urgent need for educational systems to foster adaptability and resilience in students. These qualities are crucial for success in a dynamic academic environment, as emphasized by Martin and Marsh (2006). Therefore, educational leaders should integrate resilience-building into both curricular and extracurricular planning, as outlined by Henderson and Milstein (2003), who provided a framework for fostering resilience in educational settings.

In terms of policy and leadership, the insights from this study are crucial for developing change and reform strategies that go beyond mere academic excellence. These strategies should match with students' expectations and capabilities, aligning with the views of Shields (2017), who emphasized the need to align educational changes with the cultural and societal context of the learners. By doing so, educational leaders in the UAE can aim to create a system that not only raises standards but also resonates with the student community, potentially leading to improved outcomes and satisfaction.

In conclusion, this study calls for a nuanced approach to educational change and reform—one that is empathetic to the student experience and proactive in preparing learners for the demands of future academic pursuits. Such strategic considerations are in line with the UAE's vision for educational excellence and innovation, as expressed in the UAE Vision 2024 National Agenda. This vision emphasizes the development of a first-rate education system that responds to the needs of a rapidly changing world.

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5.6 Limitation and Future Work

The limitations of this study are primarily related to its sample and scope. This study primarily focused on three prestigious federal higher educational institutions in the United Arab Emirate in Abu Dhabi which are the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), and Zayed University (ZU). The reason behind selecting these universities is due to their status as early adopters of the change in the admission policy in higher educational institutions. This selection may not fully represent the diverse student body across the entire nation. Future research should

aim to include a more varied demographic, potentially encompassing students from different regions and educational backgrounds.

Additionally, it's important to acknowledge that the responses may contain subjectivity and bias, with the potential for response bias where students might give answers, they think are expected rather than expressing their true viewpoints. Future studies could investigate the long-term impacts of policy changes on student perceptions and academic outcomes. Including qualitative data in the research could also offer deeper insights into students' experiences and attitudes toward educational change.

Furthermore, the research is limited by the potential for further modifications or changes to the admissions policy following its launch in fall 2019. This restriction emphasizes how flexible educational policies may be and how they can shift over time. Researchers should acknowledge this constraint since it may have an impact on how generalizable their results are and how applicable the study's findings are to the current state of the field of policy. When analyzing the research findings and evaluating their applicability to existing or future situations, it is important to keep in mind that while the study may offer insightful information about the policy's initial impact, the policy's ongoing evolution should also be taken into account.

5.7 Recommendations

Based on the insights resulting from this research, it is important for educational policymakers in the UAE to adopt a more student-focused approach in the adaptation of educational changes, particularly concerning essential decisions such as those related to admission policies. This can be achieved through the establishment of consistent and structured channels for student engagement, thereby ensuring that the voices of the student body are not only heard but also actively inform policy development. Following participative models highlighted by Cook-Sather et al. (2014), the use of regular surveys and the establishment of focus groups could serve as instrumental tools in capturing the nuanced perspectives and the preparedness levels of students regarding impending educational changes.

Furthermore, universities should take a proactive stance in embedding programs aimed at fostering adaptability and resilience within their curriculum and support services.

These initiatives could draw on the resilience training frameworks suggested by Reivich and Shatté (2002), which are designed to help individuals bounce back from challenges effectively. This could include workshops, mentorship programs, and curricular revisions that emphasize skills such as critical thinking, flexibility, and problem-solving, which are invaluable in managing and acceptance change.

Moreover, it is advisable for institutions to collaborate with educational researchers to monitor and evaluate the impact of these programs continuously. Implementing a feedback loop, as described by Boud and Molloy (2013), wherein the outcomes of change initiatives are assessed and refined based on student feedback and performance data, can help ensure that these changes remain relevant and effective over time. Lastly, in recognition of the rapidly evolving global educational landscape, it is crucial for the UAE's educational policies to not only be responsive to current student needs but also anticipatory of future trends in higher education. This calls for a flexible policy framework that integrates foresight planning and regular policy reviews, aligning with best practices in educational governance. By adopting these recommendations, educational policymakers and institutions in the UAE can enhance the alignment of changes and reforms with the student constituency they serve, thereby fostering an educational ecosystem that is both excellent and equitable.

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List of Publications

Abdallah, R. K., Al Maktoum, S. B., & Al Mansoori, M. K. (2023). The road to lesson observation as a tool to school improvement: Accountability vs. perfunctory. In Restructuring Leadership for School Improvement and Reform (pp. 222-252). IGI Global.

Alhumaid, K., Al Naqbi, SH., Elsori, D., & Al Mansoori, M. (2022). The adoption of artificial intelligence applications in education. International Journal of Data and Network Science, 6(4). DOI: 10.5267/j.ijdns.2022.8.013

Alhumaid, K., Al Mansoori, M. Mubarak, E., Akour, I., Tahat, D., Tahat, K., Alfaisal, R., & Salloum., S. (2023). Impact of 5G Service on Internet Usage in the Gulf Area: A Deep Learning-Based Hybrid SEM-ANN Approach. Journal Competitiveness Review, *33*(1), 45-62. https://doi.org/10.5267/j.ijdns.2021.8.006

Appendix

Social Sciences Ethics Committee - Research / Course

Ethical Approval Letter

Date: 03/01/2023

This is to certify that application No:ERSC_2022_2247, titled:The impact of implementing a new admission policy on students' academic opportunities in Abu Dhabi Higher Educational Institutions, submitted by Maha Khalifa Hasan Al Mansoori has been reviewed and approved by UAEU Social Sciences Ethics Committee - Research / Course on 29/12/2022.

Sincerely,

Chair of the UAEU Social Sciences Ethics Committee - Research / Course
Research Ethics Sub-Committee
United Arab Emirates University

Dear Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research,

My name is Maha Al Mansoori, a PhD candidate from the Department of Philosophy in Leadership & Policy College of Education at United Arab Emirates university.

I'm seeking for your **approval** by allowing me to collect data through your support in the distribution of my questionnaire in order to collect date for my final thesis.

The title of the research is:

The impact of changing the admission policy on students' educational opportunities in Abu Dhabi Higher Educational Institutions

My target is UAEU, HCT & Zayed university (Just in Abu Dhabi & Al Ain campuses).

I have attached the ethical approval for this research and below is the link for the survey

https://www.questionpro.com/a/TakeSurvey?tt=fszpr3D1eyAECHrPeIW9eQ%3D%3D

Your assistance would greatly contribute to the successful completion of my PhD certificate.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Maha Al Mansoori

From: Ministry of Education <ccc.moe@moe.gov.ae>
Sent: Wednesday, May 24, 2023 10:47 AM
To: Maha Khalifa Al Mansoori <mkalmansoori@ra.ac.ae>
Subject: [External] RE: Fwd: Survey Distribution [T202305230130S010Z42186160]

Dear Maha,

Please be informed that you need to contact the mentioned universities directly for such inquiries, as they have their own entities.

Yours Sincerely,

E Contact center   مركز اتصال وزارة التربية و التعليم

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62

Survey link

https://www.questionpro.com/a/TakeSurvey?tt=fszpr3D1eyAECHrPeIW9eQ%3D%3D

The impact of changing the admission policy on Students' educational opportunities in Abu Dhabi Higher Educational Institutions

أثر تغيير سياسة القبول على الفرص التعليمية للطلاب في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في أبوظبي

Informed Consent
You have been invited to take part in a study to investigate:
The impact of changing the admission policy on Students' educational opportunities in Abu Dhabi Higher Educational Institutions

Procedure:
The participants are invited to answer this online questionnaire which will take around 3 to 5 minutes.

Confidentiality and Privacy Information:
All data collected for this project will be confidential and kept in a safe place. The participants' identities will not be revealed, and the results will be reported without mentioning any names or identifiers.
Kindly note that participation in this questionnaire is voluntary.

identities will not be revealed, and the results will be reported without mentioning any names or identifiers.
Kindly note that participation in this questionnaire is voluntary.


Right to Withdraw:
Participants can withdraw from the project at any point before the paper is published.
Withdrawal will not result in any penalty to the participants.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the above information and had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw before the paper is published
3. I understand that my data will be kept confidential, and if published, the data will not be identifiable as mine.

I agree to take part in this study.

Start
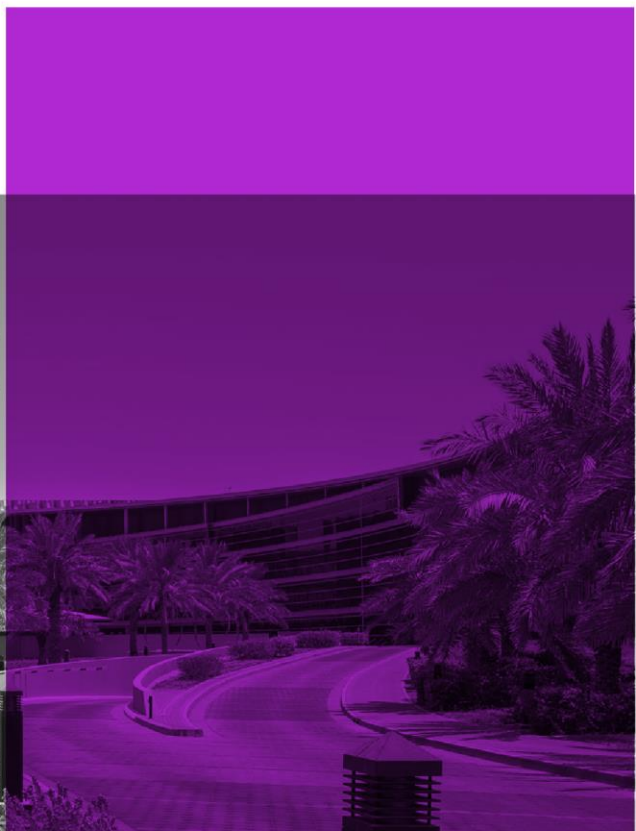
UAEU DOCTORATE DISSERTATION NO. 2024: 36

The paper discusses the importance of educational changes in the UAE, particularly focusing on the impact of the admission policy changes on students' educational opportunities at the higher educational institutions level. It highlights the need for careful implementation of these reforms to avoid challenges and failures.

The study uses a quantitative approach to assess the impact of these changes in enhancing higher education standards in the UAE and aims to fill a gap in the existing literature. The findings are intended to help policymakers make informed

Maha Al Mansoori received her Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership and Policy Studies in Education from the College of Education at the United Arab Emirates University, UAE. She received her Master of Educational in Management & Leadership from the College of Education, Higher Colleges of Technology, UAE.

www.uaeu.ac.ae