



## **Teaching Assistants**

### **Background**

The summary below presents the research evidence on teaching assistants in the Arab World context.

The Teaching & Learning Toolkit focuses on impact of outcomes for learners; it presents an estimate of the average impact of teaching assistants in primary schools on learning progress, based on the synthesis of a large number of quantitative studies from around the world.

This page offers a summary and analysis of individual studies on teaching assistants in the Arab world. In contrast to the Toolkit it includes studies which do not estimate impact, but instead investigate the implementation of interventions and how they are perceived by school leaders, teachers and students using a range of research methods. This information is valuable for leaders and teachers interested in finding out more about particular examples of teaching assistants interventions that have been delivered in the Arab world.



## **Summary of the research in the Arab World**

To date, the impact of teaching assistant on the effectiveness of teaching and learning environment hasn't been investigated. Instead, absence of teaching assistants was identified as a challenge for teachers to manage their classroom and an obstacle to deliver quality education.

In Iraq, data collected from 100 primary teachers revealed that absence of teaching assistants is a significant predictor for classroom problems and concerns (Rajab & Fage, 2018). Particularly in large size classrooms where teachers face stress and pressure and therefore fail to cope with their classrooms (Kerma, 2019). Teaching assistants are therefore needed to help teachers manage students behavior and differentiate their instruction and ensure a student-centered learning environment (Almulla, 2015; Kerma, 2019).

When investigating the effects of class size on teaching, Almulla (2015) found out that Saudi Arabian primary school teachers who teach a large class size (30 to 40 students), usually use a limited range of teaching methods such as teacher presentation or lecture students which makes the class to be more teacher centered. However, in small class size (15 to 20 students), students often learn in pairs or groups which creates an active learning environment for students. Hence, Almulla (2015) suggested that having a teacher assistant would reduce the teacher-student ratio and therefore assist in managing the classroom. Additionally, teachers would be able to better support their students and give them individual time and attention.

Lack of having teaching assistants was revealed in many studies to hinder the ability of teachers for implementing the cooperative learning methods and engaging students in classroom activities. For instance, when exploring the implementation of inquiry-based-instruction in the Lebanese and UAE classrooms, 33 science teachers reported that lack of teaching assistants prevented them to engage their students in science hands on activities (Baroudi & Rodjan-Helder, 2019). In addition, some of these teachers refrained from taking their students to the science lab because they were not able to manage students' behaviors. As a consequence, these teachers followed most of the time the traditional teacher centered method in science instruction.



On the other hand, and as a result of the UAE government efforts for encouraging educational innovations, researchers investigated the employment of the the Nao robot as a teaching assistant in a local primary school in Abu Dhabi. The humanoid robot was used to revise a topic in Mathematics and its efficacy in comparison to a human teaching assistant for 44 students in grade 4. Students were randomly placed in 6 groups of 4 children for the robot condition and 5 groups of 4 students for the human teaching assistant. Results of student scores on the posttest improved and the children were much more engaged when interacting with the Nao robot (Mubin et al., 2019). Students were as interactive with the human teaching assistant as with Nao and in fact talked more with their peers in the robot condition.

Based on the studies above, it can be concluded that teachers in the Arab world are concerned about the absence of teaching assistant and its consequences to their teaching practices and control over their classroom. Having human or robot teaching assistant would increase students interaction and communication skills and help teachers provide more individual support to students.



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### **Summary paragraph:**

Evidence of teaching assistants is inconclusive and has hardly ever been investigated in the Arab world. Having a teaching assistant is believed to support teachers to better manage their classroom and students behaviors.

Studies in UAE, Iraq, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia found that teachers reported that the absence of teaching assistants led to classroom problems and concerns. The research suggested that having a teaching assistant would increase students interaction in class and help teachers provide more individual support to students.

To date, research on teaching assistants in schools is limited in this region despite the general belief of its importance in facilitating teachers delivery of quality education and ensuring student-centered classroom. Both quantitative and qualitative research are needed to investigate the impact of teaching assistants on both students learning and teachers' performance.



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## **References**

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### **Search Terms**

Teaching/classroom assistant, support staff, associate staff, supplemental educational services, teach aide, paraprofessional, auxiliary.

### **Databases searched**

Academic search complete

ERIC (EBSCO)

Education Source

Google scholar

ProQuest Central

ProQuest Dissertations

PsycInfo

Web of Science