

## **How do Years of Teaching Experience Correlate with Beliefs, Confidence and Classroom Practices of Science Teachers Working in Abu Dhabi Government Schools?**

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### **Abstract**

Research is divided as to whether or not a science teacher's years of experience correlate positively with factors such as effective classroom practice, self-efficacy, teaching skills and their likeliness of adopting inquiry approaches to teaching and learning. Whilst there is much evidence in literature suggesting a positive correlation for some or all of these factors, many other studies have shown that the relationship is context dependent. However, very few studies have involved science teachers working in educationally reforming contexts. Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, has been undergoing fundamental reforms to its educational system since 2006. Teachers are recruited from overseas (mainly U.S.A., U.K., Australia and New Zealand) to be employed in government schools, and have a wide range of years of teaching experience. We surveyed 249 expatriate teachers and examined correlations between their years of teaching experience and their beliefs, science classroom practices and confidence levels. We found that, whilst teachers with more experience were far more likely to express confidence in their own abilities (higher self-efficacies), their beliefs tended to be more traditional than less experienced teachers. There was evidence that for some highly experienced teachers, science classroom practices were more likely to lean away from using inquiry-based and student-centred learning approaches. However, on the whole, it would appear that significant variation in classroom practices across teachers' ranges of experience was negligible. This may be attributable at least in part to the challenges present within Abu Dhabi's reforming educational system.