

Federal Decree-Law No. (18) of 2020 Regarding Private Education

We, Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates,

- Having reviewed the Constitution,
- And Federal Law No. (1) of 1972 concerning the competencies of ministries and the powers of ministers, and its amendments,
- And Federal Law No. (11) of 1972 regarding Compulsory Education,
- And Federal Law No. (8) of 1980 regarding the Regulation of Labor Relations, and its amendments,
- And Federal Law No. (7) of 1999 issuing the Pensions and Social Security Law, and its amendments,
- And Federal Law No. (29) of 2006 concerning the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and its amendments,
- And Federal Decree-Law No. (3) of 2007 regarding Private Education,
- And Federal Law No. (2) of 2015 concerning Commercial Companies, and its amendments,
- And Federal Law No. (3) of 2016 concerning Child's Rights (Wadeema),
- And based on the proposal of the Minister of Education, and the approval of the Cabinet,

We have issued the following Decree-Law:

Article (1)

Definitions

This text is in accordance with the latest amendment under Federal Decree-Law No. (10) of 2023 - to view the original text

In the application of the provisions of this Decree-Law, the following words and phrases shall have the meanings assigned to each of them, unless the context of the text indicates otherwise:

The State: The United Arab Emirates.

The Ministry: The Ministry of Education.

The Minister: The Minister of Education.

The Educational Authority: The local government entity in the State concerned with private education affairs, each within its jurisdiction.

Private Education: Education in a private school.

Private School: Any non-governmental educational institution in the State that provides educational services from the pre-primary stage up to the pre-higher education stage, and it may be for-profit or non-profit.

Non-Profit Private School: A private school in the State that does not aim to distribute profits to its owners, and all financial returns are invested in the operation and development of the school.

Educational Fees: The amount charged by the private school for each registered student in exchange for all educational and pedagogical services and activities it provides.

The License: The document issued by the Ministry or the Educational Authority to the private school, under which it is authorized to conduct educational activities.

Concerned Authorities: The official authorities competent in any matter related to the private school, each within its jurisdiction.

Teacher: A member of the teaching staff at the private school.

Private School Principal: The person appointed by the private school license holder who is responsible for the academic, administrative, financial, and operational aspects related to the leadership and management of the school according to the approved procedures and systems.

Educational Curriculum: The educational system that the private school teaches in accordance with the license granted to it.

Educational Series: An integrated package of printed courses, materials, and supporting educational resources that meet the approved learning standards and outcomes.

Educational Activity: The educational and pedagogical services provided by the private school to its students from the pre-primary stage up to the pre-higher education stage according to the educational curriculum.

Field Trip: Visits or trips organized by the private school for all or some of its students, which may be inside or outside the State.

People with Disabilities "People of Determination": Persons who suffer from a total or partial, permanent or temporary impairment or deficiency in their physical, sensory, mental, communicative, educational, or psychological abilities, to an extent that limits their ability to meet their ordinary needs like their non-disabled peers.

Public School: A school owned by the government that applies the Ministry's curriculum.

The Agency: The Federal Agency for Early Education established by Federal Decree-Law No. (43) of 2022 establishing the Federal Agency for Early Education.

The Center: The National Center for Education Quality established by Federal Decree-Law No. (44) of 2022 establishing the National Center for Education Quality.

Early Education Stage: An educational stage that begins when a child reaches (4) four years of age until the age of (10) ten years.

Article (2)

Objectives of the Decree-Law

This Decree-Law aims to achieve the following:

1. Regulating the educational and pedagogical process in private schools.
2. Raising the quality of education in private schools and improving their educational environment.
3. Attracting the best investments in private education.
4. Ensuring the application of the best international educational and pedagogical practices in private education, and linking its outcomes to the societal, economic, and technological changes in the State.
5. Regulating education, monitoring the application of quality standards, and improving the level of performance and outcomes in private schools.
6. Encouraging competition among private schools in providing distinguished educational and pedagogical services of international quality.

Article (3)

Scope of Application of the Decree-Law

The provisions of this Decree-Law shall apply to private schools in the State.

Article (4)

Authority Responsible for Applying the Decree-Law

The Ministry shall be responsible for applying the provisions of this Decree-Law, and the Educational Authority shall be responsible for its application within its jurisdiction.

Article (5)

Licensing

This text is in accordance with the latest amendment under Federal Decree-Law No. (10) of 2023 - to view the original text

1. No natural or legal person may operate any private school without first obtaining the necessary license.
2. The Ministry or the Educational Authority is competent to license private schools whose educational stages include the early education stage.
3. The Agency or the Educational Authority is competent to license private schools limited to the early education stage.
4. For the purpose of licensing the private schools referred to in clauses (2) and (3) of this Article, the Ministry and the Educational Authority must observe all controls, standards, and conditions set by the Agency, including educational, administrative, health, and environmental requirements, and the safety and security controls and conditions for buildings, means of transport, and materials used in the manufacture of tools, furniture, toys, and devices for child care and education services.

Article (6)

Name of the Private School

Every private school must have a distinctive name in accordance with the conditions and controls specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.

Article (7)

Licensing Conditions

The following conditions must be met to obtain a license:

1. Submitting a license application to the Ministry or the Educational Authority, including an academic and financial study.
2. Its work must be limited to practicing educational and pedagogical activities.
3. Obtaining the necessary approvals from the concerned authorities.
4. The location and building of the private school must comply with the standards and conditions specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.
5. Appointing a principal for the private school.
6. Any other conditions specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.

Article (8)

Conditions for a Natural Person Applicant for a License

A natural person applying for a license must meet the following conditions:

1. Must be at least (25) twenty-five years of age.
2. Must have full civil capacity.
3. Must not have been previously convicted of a freedom-restricting penalty in a felony or a misdemeanor affecting honor or integrity, unless he has been rehabilitated.
4. Must have obtained the necessary official approvals.
5. Must be able to meet the financial obligations of the private school, as specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.

6. Any other conditions specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.

Article (9)

Conditions for a Legal Person Applicant for a License

A legal person applying for a license must meet the following conditions:

1. Must be licensed by the concerned authorities, and one of its founding purposes must be the establishment and management of private schools.
2. Must be able to meet the financial obligations of the private school, as specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.
3. All partners must meet the conditions stated in clauses (1, 2, 3, 4) of Article (8) of this Decree-Law.
4. Must have a natural person as its representative, who meets the conditions stipulated in clauses (1, 2, 3, 4) of Article (8) of this Decree-Law.
5. Any other conditions specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.

Article (10)

Assignment of the License

The license may not be assigned, explicitly or implicitly, without the approval of the Ministry or the Educational Authority. The Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law shall specify the procedures and conditions for the assignment of the license.

Article (10) bis

Exchange of Licensing Data

Added by Federal Decree-Law No. (10) of 2023

1. The Educational Authority must provide the Ministry with all licenses it issues to private schools.
2. The Educational Authority must provide the Agency with all licenses it issues to private schools limited to the early education stage.

3. The Ministry and the Educational Authority must provide the Agency with all licenses they issue to private schools whose educational stages include the early education stage.
4. The Educational Authority must observe the controls related to electronic linking for sharing the data of the licenses it issues with both the Ministry and the Agency, as specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.

Article (11)

Obligations of the Private School

This text is in accordance with the latest amendment under Federal Decree-Law No. (10) of 2023 - to view the original text

Private schools must comply with the following:

1. Appointing qualified teachers and administrative and technical staff in accordance with the controls specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.
2. School cadres and leadership obtaining professional licenses in accordance with the controls specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.
3. All employees must be of good reputation, and none of them should have been previously convicted of a penalty in a felony or a misdemeanor affecting honor or integrity, unless they have been rehabilitated.
4. Providing all educational, pedagogical, administrative, health, environmental, and safety and security requirements within its premises.
5. Managing the private school and its facilities in accordance with the instructions and guidelines specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.
6. Maintaining academic quality in accordance with the standards and controls specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.
7. Complying with the provisions of the approved national framework for compliance and the approved national framework for education quality.
8. Submitting an annual report to the Ministry, the Agency, or the Educational Authority on its academic, financial, and administrative status.
9. Providing the Ministry, the Agency, the Center, or the Educational Authority with any information or data they request.

10. Allowing authorized employees of the Ministry, the Agency, the Center, or the Educational Authority to enter the private school to carry out auditing, evaluation, and supervision of its facilities and operations by reviewing records, documents, and papers.
11. Not changing the private school's name, address, partners, building, facilities, or the educational curriculum it offers, or making any substantial modification to its activities without obtaining the approval of the Ministry, the Agency, or the Educational Authority.
12. Not using the private school and its facilities for purposes other than those for which it is licensed, or conducting any other additional activities or training courses for which it is not licensed, without obtaining the approval of the Ministry, the Agency, or the Educational Authority.
13. Obtaining the approval of the Ministry, the Agency, or the Educational Authority before organizing any field trips or official visits to the school or inviting external speakers.
14. Creating records and files for students and employees in accordance with what is specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.
15. Preserving Islamic and Arab principles and values, public order and morals, and the values and traditions of the State.
16. Respecting the national identity and sovereignty.
17. Playing the national anthem and raising the State flag exclusively.
18. Not displaying pictures or paintings of figures or symbols other than the State's leadership.
19. Not holding lectures or seminars that are not related to the educational process.
20. Any other obligations determined by the Ministry, the Agency, or the Educational Authority by virtue of decisions issued by them.

Article (12)

Non-Profit Private School

Under this Decree-Law, non-profit private schools may be established, in accordance with what is specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.

Article (13)

Educational Fees

1. The Ministry or the Educational Authority shall approve the educational fees when granting the private school the license in accordance with the conditions and controls specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.
2. The private school is prohibited from increasing or changing the educational fees or imposing any additional fees on its activities without obtaining the approval of the Ministry or the Educational Authority.

Article (14)

Educational Curriculum

This text is in accordance with the latest amendment under Federal Decree-Law No. (10) of 2023 - to view the original text

1. The private school is authorized to apply only one educational curriculum upon licensing, and another curriculum may be added after obtaining the approval of the Ministry, the Agency, or the Educational Authority.
2. The Ministry or the Educational Authority shall be responsible for approving the educational curricula for private schools whose educational stages include the early education stage.
3. The Agency or the Educational Authority shall be responsible for approving the educational curricula for private schools limited to the early education stage.
4. The Ministry and the Educational Authority must observe all standards and conditions set by the Agency for the purpose of approving educational curricula for the early education stage.
5. The private school is prohibited from teaching any educational curriculum that violates or exceeds the scope of the license, without obtaining the approval of the Ministry, the Agency, or the Educational Authority.
6. A private school that applies the Ministry's curriculum must comply with the regulations and standards applicable to public schools.
7. A private school that applies an educational curriculum other than the Ministry's curriculum must include in its curricula the subjects of Islamic

Education, Arabic Language, Social Studies, National Education, and Moral Education approved by the Ministry. In all cases, all curricula are prohibited from containing any violation of the State's laws, the society's culture and its Islamic and social values, and national constants, or containing anything that calls for encouraging violence, racism, or inciting discord and sedition among members of society.

8. The private school must comply with the guidelines and instructions issued by the Ministry, the Agency, or the Educational Authority regarding educational series and other educational resources.

9. The private school must obtain accreditations from specialized international councils for the purpose of approving the application of the educational curriculum in accordance with what is specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.

Article (15)

School Calendar and Official Holidays

1. All private schools must apply the school calendar approved by the Cabinet based on a recommendation from the Minister and in coordination with the Educational Authority.

2. Student attendance at the private school shall be for a single session in the morning only, except in cases that require otherwise by a decision issued by the Ministry or the Educational Authority.

3. All private schools must observe the official holidays announced by the State.

Article (16)

Examinations

1. A private school that applies the Ministry's curriculum must comply with the assessment and examination regulations applicable to public schools.

2. A private school that adopts an educational curriculum other than the Ministry's curriculum must obtain prior approval from the Ministry or the Educational Authority for the application of assessment and examination procedures and systems.

3. The private school must commit to applying the standardized, diagnostic, national, and international tests imposed by the Ministry or the Educational Authority.

Article (17)

Equivalency of Certificates

1. Academic certificates issued by a private school that applies the Ministry's curriculum are considered equivalent to academic certificates issued by public schools and are attested according to the procedures specified by the Ministry in this regard.
2. The equivalency and attestation of academic certificates issued by a private school that applies a curriculum other than the Ministry's curriculum shall be carried out in accordance with the procedures specified in the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law and in accordance with the legislation in force in the State.

Article (18)

Student Affairs

The private school must have a clear and published policy for student affairs, which must take into account the following:

1. Equality and non-discrimination among students based on race, gender, creed, social level, or other divisive factors.
2. Dealing with students and their parents with high professionalism and without bias.
3. Compliance with the conditions and procedures specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law regarding the registration, admission, and transfer of students between different private schools, as well as the procedures and standards for follow-up and service provision.
4. Providing a suitable environment and support programs for special educational needs to accept students with disabilities "People of Determination," in accordance with the conditions and controls specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law, and the rules set by the concerned authorities.
5. Any other provisions and controls related to the organization of student affairs specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.

Article (19)

School Activities and Programs

The private school must comply with the following:

1. Preparing an integrated program for school activities, student guidance, and health, social, and psychological care, in accordance with the controls and rules specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.
2. Adhering to the activities and events decided by the Ministry or the Educational Authority.
3. Obtaining prior approvals from the Ministry or the Educational Authority for events and celebrations in accordance with the controls and rules specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.

Article (20)

Safety and Protection of Students

1. The private school must comply with the security and safety policy established by the Ministry or the Educational Authority.
2. The private school must comply with the conditions and requirements related to school transportation means in accordance with the legislation in force in this regard.
3. The private school is responsible for the safety and protection of its enrolled students during the school day inside the school, its facilities, and buses, or during any student activity outside it.

Article (21)

Code of Conduct

1. The private school must comply with the unified code of conduct issued by the Ministry and the Educational Authorities.
2. Without prejudice to the provisions of clause (1) of this Article, the private school may establish its own additional internal controls and procedures regarding behavioral discipline, provided that they are approved by the Ministry or the Educational Authority and do not conflict with the unified code of conduct issued by the Ministry and the Educational Authorities.

Article (22)

Employee Affairs

1. Employees in the private school are subject to the legislation in force in the State.
2. The private school must create a special file for each of its employees, attaching their academic qualifications, experience certificate, employment contract, a copy of their passport, and annual reports, which include performance evaluation reports, violations committed, penalties applied, annual leave, and any other documents specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.
3. The private school must comply with the procedures, instructions, conditions, and standards related to the appointment of its employees as specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.
4. The service of the private school principal or any of its teachers may not be terminated during the academic semester without prior approval from the Ministry or the Educational Authority.
5. The Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law shall specify any other provisions or controls related to the organization of employee affairs.

Article (23)

Professional License

1. A condition for the appointment of a teacher or the renewal of their employment contract in a private school is that they must have a valid teacher's license issued by the Ministry in accordance with what is specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.
2. The private school must comply with the conditions and requirements specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law in appointing members of the teaching staff.

Article (24)

Professional Code of Ethics

The Ministry shall prepare a professional code of ethics for the teaching profession in private schools, which shall specify the controls, values, and

responsibilities that all employees in the private school, including teachers, must adhere to.

Article (25)

Educational Supervision

This text is in accordance with the latest amendment under Federal Decree-Law No. (10) of 2023 - to view the original text

1. The Ministry or the Educational Authority shall supervise the extent of compliance of private schools whose educational stages include the early education stage in accordance with the approved national framework for compliance.
2. The Agency or the Educational Authority shall supervise the extent of compliance of private schools limited to the early education stage in accordance with the approved national framework for compliance.

Article (26)

Evaluating the Performance Quality of the Private School

This text is in accordance with the latest amendment under Federal Decree-Law No. (10) of 2023 - to view the original text

1. The Center shall develop a national framework for evaluating education quality that includes unified standards and controls for evaluating the performance quality of private schools in coordination with the Ministry, the Agency, and the Educational Authority.
2. The Center or the Educational Authority shall carry out the evaluation and supervision processes on the quality of education in private schools in accordance with the approved national framework for evaluating education quality.
3. The Educational Authority must provide the Center with the results of the education quality evaluation of private schools.
4. The Center shall issue an annual report on the results of the education quality evaluation in private schools, and work to publish and make it available within the Center's database.

Article (27)

Donations and Contributions

1. A private school is prohibited from doing any of the following without obtaining written approval from the Ministry or the Educational Authority:
 - Collecting donations or receiving aid or gifts from natural or legal persons or disposing of any of them, whether from inside or outside the State.
 - Providing financial support to any entity, whether inside or outside the State.
2. In case of obtaining the approval of the educational authorities according to clause (1) of this Article, the concerned private schools must coordinate with the official and accredited entities for collecting donations in the State.

Article (28)

Violations and Administrative Penalties Imposed on the Private School

1. The Ministry or the Educational Authority may impose any of the following penalties on a private school in case of violation of the provisions of this Decree-Law or its Executive Regulations:
 - a. Warning.
 - b. A fine not exceeding (1,000,000) one million dirhams per case.
 - c. Temporary closure or suspension of educational activity for a period not exceeding one academic year.
 - d. Permanent closure.
2. The Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law shall specify the violations and the penalties imposed for them as referred to in clause (1) of this Article, and the controls for imposing such penalties.
3. Without prejudice to the penalties stipulated in this Article, the Ministry or the Educational Authority has the right to permanently and immediately close a private school if it commits acts contrary to public order or public morals, or if they are harmful to public security in the State, or in breach of health, safety, and security requirements.

4. An appeal may be made against the decisions issued with the penalties stipulated in clause (1) of this Article in accordance with what is specified by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.

Article (29)

Loss of Licensing Requirements

1. If a private school or its owner loses any of the conditions stipulated in Articles (6, 7, 8, 9) of this Decree-Law, a decision for its closure or withdrawal of its license shall be issued by the Ministry or the Educational Authority.
2. As an exception to the provisions of clause (1) of this Article, the Ministry or the Educational Authority may grant the violating private school a period not exceeding one year from the date of being notified of the violation, which may be extended for another year, to regularize its status.

Article (30)

Penalties

Without prejudice to any more severe penalty provided for in any other law, any person who violates any provision of Articles: (5/1), (10), (13/2), (23), (27) of this Decree-Law shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year, and by a fine of not less than (10,000) ten thousand dirhams and not exceeding (1,000,000) one million dirhams, or by one of these two penalties, and the penalty shall be doubled in case of recidivism.

Article (31)

Judicial Seizure

The employees designated by a decision from the Minister of Justice based on a recommendation from the Minister or the head of the Educational Authority shall have the capacity of judicial seizure officers in proving violations of the provisions of this Decree-Law, its Executive Regulations, and the decisions issued in implementation thereof, each within their scope of competence.

Article (32)

Reconciliation of Status

The Minister or the head of the Educational Authority may grant existing private schools, before the entry into force of the provisions of this Decree-Law, a grace period or periods to regularize their status with some of the provisions of this Decree-Law, provided that these periods do not exceed a total of two years from the date of the entry into force of this Decree-Law.

Article (33)

Fees

The Cabinet shall issue - based on the proposal of the Minister of Finance - a decision specifying the fees due for the services provided by the Ministry within its scope of competence to implement the provisions of this Decree-Law and its Executive Regulations.

Article (34)

Proceeds from Fines

The proceeds from the fines applied in implementation of the provisions of this Decree-Law and its Executive Regulations shall accrue to the Ministry or the Educational Authority, each within its scope of competence.

Article (35)

Executive Regulations

The Cabinet shall issue - based on the proposal of the Minister and after coordination with the Educational Authorities - the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.

Article (36)

Repeals

1. The aforementioned Federal Decree-Law No. (3) of 2007 is hereby repealed, as is any provision that contradicts or conflicts with the provisions of this Decree-Law.

2. The regulations and decisions issued before the entry into force of the provisions of this Decree-Law shall continue to be in effect, insofar as they do not conflict with the provisions of this Decree-Law, until the issuance of the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law and the decisions that replace them.

Article (37)

Publication and Entry into Force of the Decree-Law

This Decree-Law shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall enter into force six months after the date of its publication.

Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan
President of the United Arab Emirates

Issued by us at the Presidential Palace in Abu Dhabi:

Date: 10 / Safar / 1442 H

Corresponding to: 27 / September / 2020 AD

Article (Six/1) of Federal Decree-Law No. (28) of 2024 states: "The Ministry of Education shall replace the Emirates Schools Establishment and the Federal Agency for Early Education in all legislation related to the competencies outlined in Article One of this Decree-Law, and in all rights and obligations, including the rights and obligations contained in contracts, agreements, or memoranda of understanding concluded by the Establishment or the Agency."

Federal Decree-Law No. (42) of 2024 was issued to establish and organize the Education and Human Resources Council. Article (20) thereof provides for the repeal of Federal Decree-Law No. (44) of 2022 establishing the National Center for Education Quality, and Article (8) thereof states: 1- A center called the National Center for Education Quality shall be established within the Council.

3- The center referred to in Clause (1) of this Article shall replace the National Center for Education Quality established under the aforementioned Federal Decree-Law No. (44) of 2022, in all legislation related to its competencies.