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# The Status of Teaching and Teacher Professional Satisfaction in the United Arab Emirates

Elizabeth Buckner  
*Teachers College, Columbia University*

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Elizabeth Buckner is an Assistant Visiting Professor of International and Comparative Education at Teachers College, Columbia University and a Visiting Scholar with the Al Qasimi Foundation.

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## Abstract

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This paper examines teacher satisfaction in the United Arab Emirates. First, it examines the overall level of professional satisfaction among teachers in Abu Dhabi using data from the OECD's 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). It finds that there is a significant gap in overall teacher satisfaction that is driven by higher rates of satisfaction among expatriate teachers than Emirati teachers. It also finds that the perceived value of the teaching profession is a large and statistically significant predictor of teachers' professional satisfaction. The second part of the paper investigates the reasons for this satisfaction gap further— it uses new survey data to explore attitudes towards teaching as a career among a cross-section of Emirati residents. It finds that while Emirati residents – nationals and non-nationals alike –generally consider teaching a good job, individuals' perceptions of both status and salary affect attitudes towards teaching. While the first part of the paper finds that teachers' perceptions of status affect their job satisfaction, the second part finds that salary is an even more significant predictor of whether Emirati residents believe teaching is a good job, and that there is a tight coupling between expected salary and perceived status. Policy recommendations suggest that attracting Emiratis – particularly male Emiratis – back into teaching would require both more pay and a significant status upgrade. Meanwhile, teaching remains a desirable profession for expatriate Arabs and Southeast Asians, as it provides comparably good pay and benefits.





## The Importance of Teacher Satisfaction

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In an era where many nations around the world have difficulty recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, there is much concern over teachers' satisfaction in the profession. This is due to teacher professional satisfaction being closely associated with policy-relevant outcomes, including teacher absenteeism, productivity, and burnout (Huberman et al., 1993; Sargent & Hannum, 2005; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). It is also closely related to teachers' likelihood of leaving the profession entirely. Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2004) explain that, "teacher dissatisfaction appears to be a main factor in teachers leaving the profession in many countries" (p. 357).

The question of teacher recruitment and retention in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one of policy significance. Al Rashid (2013) explains that the number of Emiratis employed as teachers in the emirate of Sharjah fell roughly 16% annually between 2008-2012, and that the number of Emiratis employed as teachers nationally fell 20% over the same time period (Sharif, Hossan, & McMinn, 2014; WAM, 2013). Moreover, a number of studies have pointed to high turnover rates in private schools and low retention in public schools due to attrition (Ahmed, 2011; Dajani, 2016; Dickson et al., 2014; Pennington, 2016). For this reason, it is important to better understand the complex policy issues of the status of teaching and teacher professional satisfaction in the UAE, as these issues are closely linked to the overall quality of the Emirati teacher labor market.

Currently, we have little systematic understanding of teachers' satisfaction in the UAE, and how average satisfaction might compare to teachers in other nations or how teachers from different backgrounds compare to one another. This paper, which is structured into two parts, examines teacher satisfaction in the UAE and its link to perceived professional status. It draws on data from the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013, which surveyed teachers in Abu Dhabi, and an original survey on attitudes towards teaching among residents of the UAE conducted in the emirate of Ras Al Khaimah (OECD, 2014).<sup>1</sup>

The first part of the paper draws on data from Abu Dhabi to examine questions of teacher satisfaction. Although Abu Dhabi is different in important ways from other emirates, and likely not representative of the UAE as a whole, it provides an initial insight into average levels of teacher satisfaction in the UAE, and how they compare cross-nationally. Because TALIS 2013 data is comparable across contexts and representative at the surveyed level (i.e., national or sub-national), it allows us to compare professional satisfaction across contexts and across different teacher populations within the same country. Using TALIS 2013 data, the first part of the paper asks:

1. What is the average teacher professional satisfaction in Abu Dhabi and how does teacher satisfaction in Abu Dhabi compare to that in other countries and sub-national regions?
2. Are there significant differences in professional satisfaction between teachers from different backgrounds and school settings in Abu Dhabi?

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<sup>1</sup> The school sampling frame for TALIS data included 267 schools, developed using the database of all public and private schools in Abu Dhabi, provided by the Abu Dhabi Education Council. Two hundred schools were selected at random. TALIS 2013 was administered in Arabic or English. See OECD (2014) for more details on TALIS survey procedures.

### 3. What factors are associated with professional satisfaction among teachers in Abu Dhabi?

The first part of the paper finds that average levels of professional satisfaction in Abu Dhabi are in line with cross-national trends. However, this average level of satisfaction at the national level masks surprising trends. First, unlike most countries worldwide, male teachers are more satisfied than female teachers in Abu Dhabi.

Investigating the nature of the satisfaction gap further, I find that it is not all women who are dissatisfied – it is specifically women teaching in the public sector who are highly dissatisfied, and it is their dissatisfaction that undergirds the observed gender gap. Secondly, I find that the perceived value of the teaching profession is a large and statistically significant predictor of teachers' professional satisfaction – and this is particularly true for teachers on permanent contracts, which is a proxy for Emirati nationality. I argue that the observed gender gap in the UAE is likely not a reflection of differences in work environments between male and female schools, but rather, is likely a reflection of differences in nationality due to labor market segmentation.

The second part of the paper examines attitudes towards the teaching profession among the Emirati population at large; drawing on an online survey administered in July-August 2016 in Ras Al Khaimah. The second part of the paper finds that while most Emirati residents – nationals and non-nationals alike, have generally positive perceptions of teaching, their opinions are affected by their understanding of the pay and prestige of the profession, and how it compares to their own salary and benefits. In fact, I find Emirati residents' opinions of the status of teaching are strongly determined by their perceptions of its relative pay.

I argue that given the labor market segmentations in the UAE, research on teacher satisfaction must be contextualized within the distinct national labor markets and must recognize that the socio-cultural factors shaping individuals' relative opportunities and perceived benefits may affect teacher satisfaction more than reference to objective criterion such as salary or hours worked.

## Overview of Education in Abu Dhabi and the United Arab Emirates

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The United Arab Emirates is a small wealthy nation in the Arabian Gulf, comprised of seven emirates (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Fujairah, Umm Quayin, Ras Al Khaimah and Ajman), which became an independent nation in 1971. The emirates are united under a federal system, with educational policy set at both the national and emirate level.

Although the population of the UAE is roughly 9.3 million, the vast majority of residents are non-citizens. In 2010, it is estimated that 70% of the population was foreign, although this varies between emirates, with Abu Dhabi and Dubai having national resident rates below 20%. Nationals and citizens have different educational and labor market opportunities, and public schools are open primarily to national students, with few exceptions. As a result, there is a large number of private schools in the UAE that serve both non-national students and Emirati families looking for distinct educational opportunities.





Structurally, the educational system in the UAE is managed at both the federal and emirate level: in 2000, the UAE instituted reforms that devolved some administrative power to the emirate-level. In 2005, the emirate of Abu Dhabi, the largest and wealthiest emirate, established a distinct educational body – the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), which governs all schools, public and private, in Abu Dhabi. Public schools in the other six emirates are operated by the Ministry of Education, while private schools in Dubai and Sharjah are governed at the emirate level by distinct bodies.

According to the UAE's Ministry of Education (MOE) statistics, there were 961,607 students enrolled in all schools in 2014-2015. Roughly 68% of students were enrolled in private schools, including an estimated 35% of Emiratis (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). In Abu Dhabi, there were 340,921 students in schools in the 2013-2014 school year, of whom 126,334 were in governmental schools and 214,857 in private schools, meaning roughly 63% were in private schools (Abu Dhabi Statistics Center, 2014). Table 1 presents the countrywide student enrollment numbers, differentiating between private and public schools.

**Table 1. Student Enrollments in the UAE (2014) by Level and Sector**

Level	Total Students	% Private
Primary	409,776	74.5%
Lower Secondary	253,219	66.3%
Upper Secondary	157,821	53.3%

## Teachers in the UAE

Schooling at all levels is gender segregated, with females teaching in all female schools, and increasingly also at some boys' schools at the pre-primary and primary level. This means that the teacher labor market is largely segmented by gender and sector. Because education is gender segregated and offers a position in the government sector for nationals, it is viewed as a desirable job for many Emirati women. As a result, the vast majority of female teachers in public schools are Emirati women. In contrast, Emirati males can often make more money working in other sectors, including the military or police, making it difficult to attract Emirati males into teaching.

National statistics point to very different rates of emiratization in the teaching profession. In 2014, there were a total of 21,644 teachers at the primary level and 30,968 at the secondary level, for a total of roughly 52,612 teachers in the UAE, of whom 29,690 were in public schools. In Abu Dhabi in particular, there were 11,005 teachers in public schools and 12,472 in private schools (Abu Dhabi Statistics Center, 2014). It was estimated that 19.1% of all educational staff in Abu Dhabi were Emirati, which represents 44% of staff in public schools, while only 1.1% were in private schools. However, some Emiratis are in administrative positions – of only those

in teaching positions, Emiratis make up 37.7% of all teachers in Abu Dhabi (Abu Dhabi Statistics Center, 2014), and these Emiratis are overwhelmingly female. Emiratis make up 63.4% of all female teachers in Abu Dhabi, while Emirati males make up only 2% of all male teachers.

Although the MOE has stated its desire to nationalize teaching, and set an ambitious goal of ensuring that 90% of teachers in public schools are nationals by 2020, this seems unrealistic given the difficulties the MOE has had in attracting male Emiratis (Dickson et al., 2014). A 2015 newspaper article states that there were only 40 Emiratis in teacher training programs, and a survey of Emiratis in secondary school showed that young males ranked teaching among their least desirable professions (Pennington, 2014).

To fill vacancies, the UAE relies on a large number of expatriate teachers, typically from other Arab nations in the Levant and North Africa (primarily Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Tunisia). As a result, the teacher labor force in Emirati males' schools is largely expatriate. Ridge (2014) estimates that across the country, roughly 80% of teachers in males' schools are expatriates, compared to only 15% in girls' schools. Moreover, given laws that require all principals to be Emirati, the few number of Emirati males who begin their careers as teachers tend to be promoted to leadership positions quickly.

Given their status as expatriates, male teachers tend to work under more difficult work conditions – many are contract employees, offered 1-3 year contracts, without the option for permanent residency. They are also paid substantially less than Emirati teachers. This has created what Ridge (2014) calls a “two-tiered workforce in the public education sector” (p. 90). For all of these reasons, we might expect that male teachers would be less satisfied with the teaching profession. In fact, this does not seem to be the case. To the contrary, according to TALIS 2013, a representative survey of teachers in both public and private schools in Abu Dhabi, males state that they are significantly more satisfied than female teachers with teaching as a profession. The next section examines this somewhat surprising gender gap in teacher satisfaction in Abu Dhabi.

## Part I: Teacher Professional Satisfaction in Abu Dhabi

### What is Teacher Professional Satisfaction?

Professional satisfaction is defined as the “emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job,” or “the positive or negative evaluative judgments people make about their jobs” (Locke, 1976, p. 1300). Scholars have conceptualized teachers’ professional satisfaction as their “affective reactions to their work or to their teaching role” (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004, p. 359).

The data available in TALIS 2013 distinguishes between two types of satisfaction: satisfaction with their current work environment and professional satisfaction, meaning teachers’ satisfaction with having entered teaching as a profession. In this paper, I focus on the latter, which is determined by asking teachers questions about whether, given the choice, they would still choose to enter teaching, and whether they regret having become teachers (see Box 1).<sup>2</sup> The next section examines teachers’ level of professional satisfaction in Abu Dhabi.

<sup>2</sup> TALIS advises care in interpreting results when comparing means across countries, as the different factors have different weight in each country – meaning the factors affecting professional satisfaction may vary across countries making it difficult to interpret the means. To account for this, I also create an additive scale that weights each of the variables equally and the gender gaps still exist, although the rank ordering of countries changes slightly.

## Box 1. Technical Notes on Defining Teacher Satisfaction

### Teacher Professional Satisfaction

The measure for professional satisfaction used in this study is a composite indicator created from teachers' level of agreement with four statements:

1. The advantages of being a teacher clearly outweigh the disadvantages.
2. If I could decide again, I would still choose to work as a teacher.
3. I regret that I decided to become a teacher
4. I wonder whether it would have been better to choose another profession.

All items in the scales were measured on a four-point scale, where: 1 for "strongly disagree," 2 for "disagree," 3 for "agree," and 4 for "strongly agree". A scale was created with a mean of 10 and a standard deviation of 2, so values on the scale range from roughly 5-15. The indicator is provided in the TALIS dataset as satisfaction with profession (TJSPROS).

## How Does Average Teacher Professional Satisfaction in Abu Dhabi Compare to Cross-national Trends?

This analysis draws on data from the OECD's TALIS 2013. TALIS 2013 is an international survey focused on understanding the working conditions of teachers and principals in schools. It is implemented as a collaborative effort by the member and partner countries and sub-national regions of the OECD, including Abu Dhabi. Its primary objective is to help countries develop policies that foster the conditions for effective schooling. In Abu Dhabi, TALIS surveyed a sample of 4,000 lower secondary teachers (Cycle 2) drawn from 200 schools (see Box 2 for more information).

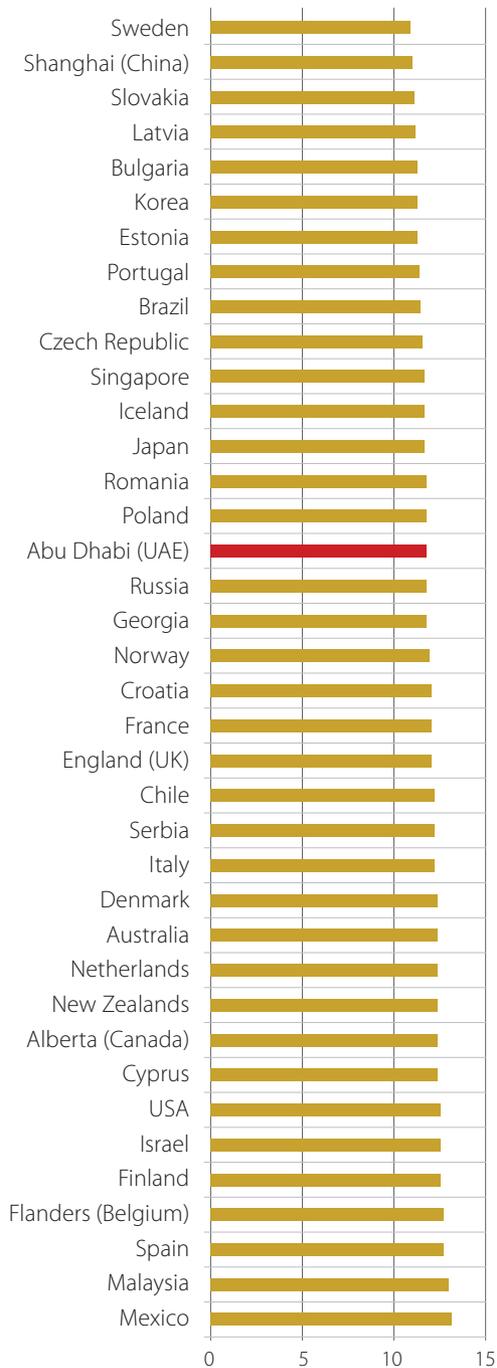
## Box 2. Technical Notes on Analyzing TALIS Data

### TALIS 2013 Survey Methodology

The TALIS sample consists of roughly 4,000 lower secondary (Cycle 2) teachers, collected through a two-stage sampling design. In the first stage, a sample of 200 schools was randomly selected from all secondary schools in Abu Dhabi. In the second stage, a random sample of 20 teachers was selected from each selected school, generating roughly 4,000 surveyed teachers at each level. The quantitative analyses were conducted in Stata 14, and make use of the complex survey design commands, in order to take into account the multi-stage survey design and the clustered nature of the data. All analyses apply teacher final weights, and make use of balanced replicate weights to correct for standard errors (OECD, 2014).

The data shows that, compared to all teachers in the 2013 TALIS data, teachers in Abu Dhabi are not more or less satisfied with their profession than their colleagues in other countries. Figure 1 plots average teacher satisfaction in Abu Dhabi, as compared to all nations and sub-national regions participating in TALIS 2013, where teacher satisfaction in Abu Dhabi (in red) is solidly in line with global averages.

**Figure 1. Mean Teacher Professional Satisfaction, by Country**



**Figure 2. Female-Male Gap in Mean Teacher Professional Satisfaction, by Country**



Note: Asterisks denote statistical significant difference: \* $\alpha=0.05$  \*\* $\alpha=0.01$  \*\*\* $\alpha=0.001$

That said, the national average of satisfaction hides a gender gap between male and female teachers. On average, across the whole dataset, males are more satisfied than female teachers, while females average level of satisfaction at 11.45 and males at 11.93, a difference in average professional satisfaction of .482, approximately a fourth of a standard deviation and statistically significant at an alpha of 0.01.

This male-female gap in professional satisfaction is distinct cross-nationally. Figure 2 shows the gender gap in satisfaction cross-nationally. Research in a variety of countries has consistently shown that female teachers' professional satisfaction tends to be higher cross-nationally for a variety of reasons, including perceptions of teaching as a female profession. However, as Figure 2 shows, Abu Dhabi is one of only two of the surveyed countries or regions where male teachers' professional satisfaction is higher than females' professional satisfaction, and the gap is twice that of Japan, at roughly one fourth a standard deviation. This suggests that while there is nothing particularly out of the norm in overall levels of satisfaction in Abu Dhabi, male and female teachers have somewhat different levels of satisfaction with the profession.

To further explore the nature of teacher satisfaction in Abu Dhabi, I disaggregate teacher satisfaction by both gender and school sector. As shown in Table 2, there are two important gaps: first, there is a significant gender gap in the public sector, whereby males are more satisfied than females. Secondly, there is a clear sector gap among females, whereby female teachers in private schools are more satisfied than those in the public sector. Both of these gaps are statistically significant at an alpha of 0.001.

**Table 2. Teacher Satisfaction among Abu Dhabi Teachers, by Gender and Sector**

Gender	Public Schools	Private Schools	Private Public Gap
Female	10.70 (N=543)	12.00 (N=668)	1.29***
Male	11.45 (N=444)	12.13 (N=291)	0.38
Male-Female Gap	1.05***	0.13	

*Note: Asterisks denote statistical significant difference: \* $\alpha = 0.05$  \*\* $\alpha = 0.01$  \*\*\* $\alpha = 0.001$*

The analysis in Table 2 suggests that the low levels of satisfaction among female teachers in the public sector are driving the gender gap found in Abu Dhabi. Many of the countries identified in Figure 1 as having low levels of teacher satisfaction have low levels of teacher satisfaction across all demographics – Shanghai (China) and Slovakia for example, have low levels of teacher satisfaction among both male and female teachers. Others, such as Iceland, have low levels of teacher satisfaction among males, but not females (i.e., 10.98 males vs. 11.68 females). However, this does not seem to be the case in Abu Dhabi schools, where female teachers in the public sector are somewhat distinct from other teachers in terms of their low levels of satisfaction. In fact, comparing average professional satisfaction for females in the public sector to other surveyed countries and sub-national regions shows that female teachers in the public sector are

not only less satisfied than their male colleagues and teachers in private schools, but that cross-nationally, they are *the least satisfied females in public schools* of any TALIS-participating country or region.

Because the Emirati teacher labor market is segmented by nationality as well as gender, I also examine differences in average satisfaction by contract type, which serves as a proxy for nationality. Table 3 disaggregates teacher satisfaction by contract-type (permanent or contract) and clearly shows that female Emiratis teaching in public schools, who have an average level of professional satisfaction of 10.05, are the least satisfied group of teachers in the country, followed closely by males on permanent contracts in the public sector, a proxy for Emirati males. Those on annual contracts, who tend to be expatriates, have much higher rates of satisfaction – with an average above 12.00 for both males and females. The contract-type gap, which likely represents a nationality gap, is statistically significant for both male and female teachers. Moreover, it is worth pointing out that the gap is large – a gap of 2 points represents one standard deviation in professional satisfaction. This result may seem surprising, given the fact we would typically expect those with permanent contracts to be more satisfied generally, given the additional job security it provides. However, Table 3 clearly shows this is not the case among teachers in the public sector. The findings suggest, overall, that Emiratis and others on permanent contracts are actually *less satisfied* with teaching as a profession than are those who are on annual or short-term teaching contracts. This suggests that teachers’ professional satisfaction may be determined by factors related more to nationality than by contract type.

**Table 3. Mean Teacher Satisfaction among Teachers in Abu Dhabi, by Sector, Gender, and Contract Type**

Gender	Contract Type	Public	Private	Private-Public Gap
Female	Permanent	10.05 (N=369)	12.17 (N=357)	2.12***
	Contract	12.10 (N=167)	11.77 (N=299)	-0.33
	Contract-Permanent Gap	2.044***	-0.397*	
Male	Permanent	10.76 (N=119)	12.34 (N=138)	1.58***
	Contract	12.09 (N=317)	11.90 (N=149)	-0.18
	Contract-Permanent Gap	1.33***	-0.435	

Note: Asterisks denote statistical significant difference: \* $\alpha=0.05$  \*\* $\alpha=0.01$  \*\*\* $\alpha=0.001$

In addition, Table 3 also shows that among teachers on permanent contracts, teachers in the private sector are more satisfied overall than are teachers in the public sector, while the reverse is true for those on annual contracts. This gap is statistically significant for both male and female teachers on permanent contracts, but small and not statistically significant for those on annual contracts. In short, Table 3 suggests that the male-female teacher satisfaction gap we see in Abu



Dhabi, and the low rates of satisfaction among females is likely driven by Emiratis in the public sector, with particularly low levels of satisfaction among females. The long-term implication is that teaching in public schools in Abu Dhabi may become a less desirable career than it currently is, making it even harder for the government to attract qualified national teachers into the profession.

To summarize, the descriptive analysis above shows that the gender gap in teacher satisfaction is largely driven by the low rates of satisfaction among female Emirati teachers in public schools, while teachers in private schools and expatriates in public schools have much higher rates of satisfaction overall. This striking finding leads us to ask: *why are Emirati teachers so dissatisfied?* The next section uses regression analysis to explore the factors associated with teacher satisfaction.

## **What Factors are Associated with Professional Satisfaction among Teachers?**

To further understand why Emirati teachers are less satisfied in the profession, this section uses multivariate regression analysis to examine factors associated with teacher satisfaction in Abu Dhabi. It examines factors that affect teacher satisfaction at three levels: student, school, and societal.

Many factors, at the individual, school and societal level, are shown to affect teachers' professional satisfaction. While individual characteristics, such as personality, may play a role, a significant body of research points to the importance of other external and contextual factors as well, including salary, perceived status and teachers' school environment, and administrative support. In a study on teachers' professional satisfaction in Cyprus, Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2004) find that salary and administrative work influence teachers' professional satisfaction. Additionally, Bogler (2001) finds that teachers' perceived occupational status is strongly predictive of their professional satisfaction.

### ***Individual Characteristics***

*Gender.* The relationship between gender and satisfaction may be culturally specific. Some studies have found no direct relationship between gender and teacher satisfaction (Naderi, 2012). That said, a number of studies suggest that female teachers tend to have higher rates of professional satisfaction than males (Koustelios, 2001; Oshagbemi, 2000; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). For example, Koustelios (2001) finds female Greek teachers are more satisfied with work conditions than men. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) report that there are small but significant differences in teacher satisfaction among Norwegian teachers. They explain that "compared to males, females reported higher value consonance, better relations with colleagues, higher job satisfaction, and lower motivation to leave the teaching profession" (p. 1035). Similarly, Klecker (1997) finds female teachers in Ohio are more satisfied with the challenge of their work, their interactions with students, and interactions with colleagues than male teachers, although they are not necessarily overall more satisfied.



*Years of Experience.* Additionally, research also indicates that years of experience is positively correlated with professional satisfaction – either because unsatisfied teachers tend to leave the profession, or teachers become more satisfied over time (Koustelios, 2001). With experience, teachers may gain expertise, confidence and skills that make them more satisfied. Studies in the United States have found that teacher attrition follows a U-shaped curve, and is quite high early in the career but tends to decrease with experience until rising again at the age nearing retirement (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; 1992). Given the strong relationship between satisfaction and attrition, this relationship could be in part driven by low job satisfaction among some new entrants (Liu & Ramsey, 2008).

## *School Characteristics*

*School Environment.* There are many different aspects of the school environment that might affect teachers' professional satisfaction, including their class sizes, student behavior or administrative work that adds additional burdens.

In addition, research from TALIS 2013 suggests that cross-nationally, teachers who have more opportunities for professional development also exhibit higher levels of professional satisfaction on average (OECD, 2016). For example, data from TALIS 2013 found that teachers' opportunities to participate in activities such as mentoring, induction programs, peer learning communities and the creation of personalized professional development plans were more satisfied on average.

This analysis will define opportunities for professional development as whether a teacher participated in a professional learning community (PLC). The PLC is a model by which schools create opportunities for professional learning and socialization and has been found to be an effective form of professional development (Jaquith et al., 2010).

## *Societal Characteristics*

*Salary.* It is often assumed that teacher pay correlates with professional satisfaction, as teachers who are paid more may feel that their work is more valued. Teacher pay also helps attract highly qualified individuals into the profession, which is seen as one way of promoting teacher quality.

*Status.* Those who perceive teaching to be more valued in society also have higher rates of satisfaction. Professional status for teachers has been characterized by perceptions of reward and respect, and some degree of external control. A large-scale project on teacher satisfaction in the United Kingdom found that perceptions of the status of teaching has fallen steeply from the 1960s, when teaching was ranked as 4.3 on a scale of 5, compared to 2.5 in 2006 (Hargreaves et al., 2007). Research suggests that the school environment affects teachers' perceptions of status. For example, Hargreaves et al. (2007) find that teachers in schools with higher academic standards or perceived status also perceive teaching to be more valued (p. 7), while those in poorly performing schools "demonstrated a lower sense of status than in other schools" (p. 7). In the UAE, prior research has also found that male Emiratis perceive teaching to be a low status career, and this is one of the factors that acts as a disincentive to enter teaching (Dickson & Le Roux, 2012).

## Conceptual Framework

For this analysis, we assume that all of these factors – individual, school, and societal – will interact to affect an individual teachers’ level of professional satisfaction. Figure 3 shows the conceptual framework below.

**Figure 3. Factors Affecting Teachers’ Professional Satisfaction**



Table 4 shows how teachers’ individual characteristics, school environment, and societal characteristics vary by school and contract type. Because public schools are gender segregated, but not all private schools are, I chose not to disaggregate data on private school teachers’ by gender.

**Table 4. Teachers’ Characteristics, by Sector, Gender, and Contract Type**

Characteristics		Public Sector Contract		Public Sector Permanent		Private Sector
		Females	Males	Females	Males	Both Genders
Individual	Years of Experience	16.33	16.15	13.11	10.99	11.58
	Perceived self-efficacy (5-16)	14.36	14.62	14.15	14.19	14.12
School	Satisfaction with work environment (5-15)	12.40	12.25	11.78	11.21	11.90
	Opportunities for collaboration (5-15)	12.24	12.15	11.95	11.73	10.29
	Problems with student behavior (3-13)	6.58	5.09	6.79	5.35	5.43
	Average class size (number of students)	24.06	23.95	23.81	28.96	23.73
Societal	Perceived status of teaching (1-4)	2.64	2.79	2.20	2.23	3.04
	Hours spent on administrative work (per week)	2.76	3.49	2.77	4.24	3.37
	Hours spent teaching (per week)	18.40	20.93	18.31	19.78	22.54

Table 4 shows that teachers in public schools on permanent contracts are significantly less satisfied with their work environment and they also perceive teaching to be of lower status than do teachers on short-term contracts. Post-hoc tests of differences in mean show that these differences in perceived status are statistically significant, across contract type in the public sector and between the public sector and private sector.

## Methods of Analysis

To investigate how school and societal factors interact to affect teachers' satisfaction after controlling for individual demographic factors, I carry out a series of regression analyses to examine what factors affect overall professional satisfaction, and if these differences affect teachers in the public sector differentially. This allows us to see differences between the public and private sector.

In line with prior literature, I include a series of control variables. I predict that teachers who perceive teaching to be less valued in society and are less satisfied with their work environment will be less satisfied with the teaching profession. Status is measured on a scale of 1-4, based on the TALIS 2013 survey, which asks teachers' level of agreement with the statement that teaching is valued in society. To see if these predictors operate differently for female teachers, Emiratis, and those in the public sector, I also run a series of regression analyses with interactions between status and gender, contract-type and school sector.

### Box 3. Technical Notes on Regression Analyses

#### Regression Analysis on Factors Affecting Teacher Satisfaction

All regression models use final teacher weights and balanced replicate weights for the standard errors. Because TALIS is a clustered survey design, which draws roughly twenty teachers from the same school, it is also appropriate to use a multi-level survey design that takes into account the similarities among teachers' in the same school. This is important, as teachers in the same school will have a similar student body and the same administration – if the administration affects all teachers' satisfaction with their work environment and therefore, their satisfaction with teaching, then it would violate the assumptions of OLS regression that individuals are independent. However, the concern with using a multi-level design is that the phenomenon of interest itself exhibits clustering – the primary question is to understand whether the factors affecting the satisfaction of female teachers in public schools differ than those affecting other teachers – and these teachers are naturally clustered by gender and sector. In other words, including a separate school-level intercept may be controlling for the phenomenon of interest. Therefore, I carry out both linear regression and multi-level regression analyses, with random intercepts for each school and secondary weights at the school level. The substantive findings are similar across both specifications; I chose to report the single-level model because the coefficients are easier to interpret and more easily comparable.

**Table 5. Regression Models Predicting Teacher Satisfaction (Models 1-6)**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Female	-0.34*	-0.09	-0.25*	-0.27	-0.37*	-0.06
Private	1.08***	1.01***	0.41**	1.32***	1.07***	0.67***
Permanent Contract	-0.51**	-0.55***	-0.50***	-0.54***	-0.49**	-0.55***
Years of Expertise	0.06***	0.04***	0.05***	0.05***	0.06***	0.03***
Work Environment		0.58***				0.48***
Perceived Status			1.15***			0.68***
Opportunities for Collaboration				0.15***		0.03
Hours Administrative Work					-0.01	
Constant	10.79***	4.06***	8.06***	9.05***	10.82***	3.34***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.104	0.474	0.316	0.138	0.103	0.539
N	1615	1615	1615	1615	1624	1620

Note: Asterisks denote statistical significant difference: \* $\alpha=0.05$  \*\* $\alpha=0.01$  \*\*\* $\alpha=0.001$

Table 5 shows regression results for models predicting overall professional satisfaction from all lower secondary teachers in the TALIS 2013 data. Model 1 tests a small set of basic demographic and school factors that the literature suggests are important predictors of professional satisfaction, namely: gender, years of experience, school sector, and contract type. It shows that in Abu Dhabi females are less satisfied, teachers in the private sector are significantly more satisfied than those in the public sector, those on a permanent contract are less satisfied, and those with more experience are more satisfied. All of these factors are statistically significant.

Models 2-5 look at four other factors associated with professional satisfaction: satisfaction with the school work environment, perceived status of the teaching profession, opportunities for authentic collaboration, and hours of administrative work. Each of the first three are positively and statistically significantly associated with the overall professional satisfaction of teachers in Abu Dhabi. In all three cases, being a female teacher is consistently negatively associated with professional satisfaction, while teaching in the private sector is positively associated, meaning that female teachers and those in the public schools have lower overall levels of satisfaction. Model 5 suggests hours of administrative work is not associated with overall satisfaction with the teaching profession. The combined model, Model 6, includes all of the variables that were significant predictors in the previous models, to examine the relative associations between school-level factors and individual characteristics.

When variables for school and working conditions – namely satisfaction with the work environment (Model 2) and opportunities for collaboration (Model 4), are included, we find that the negative coefficient on gender is no longer significant. This means that after accounting for differences in perceptions of the work environment, there are no substantive gender-based differences in teachers’ professional satisfaction. This is because being female is associated with a lower perception of both the overall work environment ( $r= -0.11$ ) and opportunities

for collaboration ( $r = -0.12$ ). These negative correlations are exhibited in females regardless of contract type.

In Model 3, when an indicator of perceived status is added into the model, the coefficient on the private sector drops substantially, by more than half. This indicates that perceived status is positively correlated with working in the private sector. In other words, we assume part of the reason working in the private sector is associated with higher professional satisfaction is because teachers perceive the private sector to be of higher status. At the same time, we see the opposite change when adding in the coefficient on opportunities for collaboration in Model 4. This change indicates that there are actually fewer opportunities for collaboration in private schools. Having more opportunities for professional collaborations in public schools is helping to narrow the sector satisfaction status gap in the UAE.

When all significant predictors are included in Model 6, we find that the negative coefficient on female and opportunities for collaboration are no longer significant, meaning they are no longer predictive of overall satisfaction. Other individual and school-level factors remain statistically significant, including: working in a private school, contract type, years of experience, perceptions of the work environment, and perceived status.

In short, Table 5 confirms that individual, school and societal level factors are all important predictors of professional satisfaction. The important policy-relevant finding indicates that enhancing the status of teaching may lead to higher levels of professional satisfaction. Nonetheless, the table also suggests that status varies between the public and private sectors and that this might be an important determinant of professional satisfaction. To further explore how teachers' perceived status varies, Models 7-10 run a series of regression models with interactions between perceived status, gender, and sector.

**Table 6. Regression Models Predicting Teacher Satisfaction (Models 7-10)**

	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
Female	-0.087	-0.474	-0.053	-0.415
Private	1.614***	0.625***	0.567***	1.602***
Years of Experience	0.031***	0.032***	0.031***	0.029***
Contract Type	-0.463***	-0.533***	-1.308***	-1.128**
Status	0.862***	0.592***	0.053***	0.650***
Work Environment	0.484***	0.485***	0.048***	0.483***
Private x Status	-0.362**			-0.377**
Female x Status		0.143		0.125
Permanent x Status			0.276**	0.244*
Constant	3.123***	3.810***	4.030***	3.751***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.544	0.54	0.543	0.548
N	1615	1615	1615	1615

Note: Asterisks denote statistical significant difference: \* $\alpha = 0.05$  \*\* $\alpha = 0.01$  \*\*\* $\alpha = 0.001$



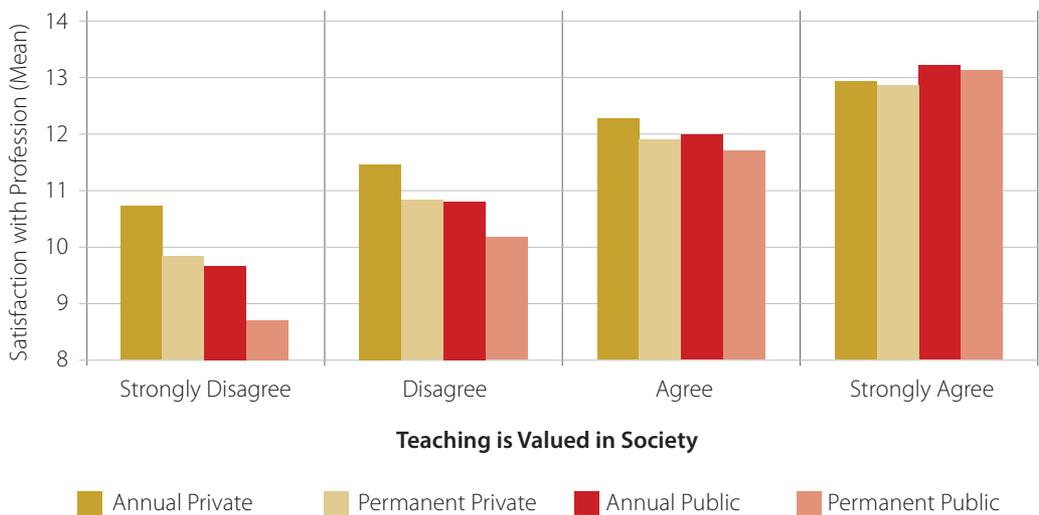


Model 7 includes an interaction term between perceived status and working in the private sector. Model 8 includes an interaction term between perceived status and being female, and Model 9 includes an interaction between perceived status and having a permanent contract. Model 10 is a combined model with all three interaction terms.

The main finding indicates that perceived status *is more positively associated with the professional satisfaction in the public sector than the private sector* and is more strongly associated with satisfaction among *teachers who are on permanent contracts*, which is a proxy for Emirati nationality. Additionally, there is some evidence that perceived status is more strongly associated with female teachers' satisfaction, although this relationship is smaller and is not statistically significant. Overall, the findings suggest that status is a more important predictor of overall job satisfaction among Emiratis working in the public sector than expatriates and those working in the public or private sector.

To visualize this relationship, Figure 4 shows teachers' predicted level of satisfaction on the satisfaction distribution (i.e., mean of 10, standard deviation of 2), based on their perceived status, which is defined as their level of agreement with the statement that "Teaching is valued in society" from a low score of "Strongly Disagree" to a high score of "Strongly Agree". It is clear that those on a permanent contract, presumably Emiratis, in the public sector are significantly less satisfied with their profession when they believe that their work is not valued in society than are teachers in the private sector. Teachers in public schools are more sensitive to the importance of status than teachers in the private schools, and this is even more true for those on permanent contracts. In fact, teachers in the public sector are just as, and actually slightly more satisfied, than teachers in the private sector, when they believe their work is highly valued.

**Figure 4. Predicted Average Teacher Satisfaction, by Contract Type, Sector and Perceived Status**



## Discussion and Analysis

The findings indicate that the perceived occupational status of teachers in Abu Dhabi is both lower on average, and simultaneously, *more important* to overall satisfaction of teachers in the public sector. The findings beg the question: why is the relationship between perceived status and professional satisfaction different for Emiratis in public schools than other teachers in Abu Dhabi?

The first hypothesis is related to labor market segmentation. Given the labor market segmentation in the UAE, Emiratis may view teaching as less valuable in society than non-Emiratis because teachers make less money, or work more hours, than those employed in other civil sector jobs. In contrast, teaching may be understood as a desirable job for non-Emiratis because it provides a secure job in the public sector with relatively high pay and decent benefits when compared to other options for non-Emiratis in the UAE. Prior literature on teacher satisfaction suggests that male teachers experience a larger relative wage gap than female teachers in most countries, given the male-female wage gap in many countries. This may be particularly true in the UAE, where male Emiratis have a variety of well-paid career options in the local or federal government. In this sense, the satisfaction gap is explained by recognizing the position of teaching relative to other labor market opportunities.

However, although salary is a component of occupational status, it is not the only important predictor. In fact, substantial literature on the sociology of the professions actually suggests that high-status professions can often pay *less*, as individuals will be attracted to these professions for their prestige rather than their monetary rewards. This hypothesis suggests there may be different understandings of *what a good job is*, not only relative to other labor market opportunities, but relative to social and cultural understandings of what *good work* is. In the UAE, Emirati nationals may prioritize status over other factors, such as job security or salary. This means their satisfaction may be linked to whether they believe teaching is valued by society to a greater extent than expatriates. In some ways, these hypotheses may be difficult to disentangle, as it is likely that the perceived status of teaching is related to both the economic pay off and societal perceptions of prestige. Moreover, it is not possible to explore these hypotheses using TALIS 2013 data, as the survey does not include information on teacher salaries, making it impossible to understand how salary and job stability shape attitudes about the status of teaching. To address some of these questions, Part II now turns to examine the relationship between salary, status, and general attitudes towards the teaching profession.

## Part II: General Perceptions of the Teaching Profession

Part I of this working paper investigated teachers' professional satisfaction, and found, somewhat surprisingly, that professional satisfaction was higher among males on average than females, higher among non-Emiratis, and higher at private schools than public schools. In part, it seems that these findings are driven by the fact that teaching is perceived as low status among Emiratis, and the teacher labor market is highly segmented in the UAE by nationality, gender, and school sector. It also found that perceived status is an important and strong predictor of professional satisfaction – particularly for Emiratis in the public sector.



However, the analyses from TALIS 2013 were unable to disentangle why teachers in the public sector and Emiratis believe teaching is less valued than non-Emiratis and those in the private sector. This is due to limitations in TALIS 2013 data. There are two primary limitations with the TALIS 2013 data. The first limitation is that TALIS 2013 is limited to teachers, which means that it is not clear whether teachers' attitudes reflect broader societal perceptions of the status of teaching as a profession, or if it reflects the specific experiences of teachers in the public and private sectors. There is some reason to be concerned about attitudes towards the teaching profession in the UAE, given a 2014 survey conducted with 5,320 Emirati secondary students nationwide, which found that the least popular professions were: "university professor and secondary school teacher, which tied for last with chef" (Pennington, 2014). However, it is also possible that teachers' attitudes towards teaching differ systematically from perceptions of non-teachers, which TALIS 2013 cannot shed light on.

The second limitation to the TALIS 2013 data is that given the severe labor market segmentation of the Emirati labor market, it is possible that the relative dissatisfaction of teachers in the public sector reflects underlying differences in who has access to public sector teaching jobs. This leads to a somewhat surprising, but not improbable, possibility that teaching in the public sector is only considered low status to those who actually can do it – it could be a desirable and high-status job to those who are not able to work in the public sector. To overcome these limitations with the data, we must examine societal attitudes concerning teaching in Emirati society as a whole, not only among teachers. Part II of this paper presents findings from new survey data on how Emirati residents from varied backgrounds view the teaching profession as it compares to other jobs.

The main contributions of Part II are: first, to examine attitudes to teaching among Emiratis – *not only teachers*; and, secondly, to more fully examine the relationship between the salary and status of teaching, something TALIS 2013 data cannot do.

In this section, I tackle three questions related to general perceptions of the teaching profession. First, I examine how teaching is perceived by a broad spectrum of residents of the UAE, disaggregated by their country of origin. Secondly, to better understand how attitudes towards teaching are formed, I ask UAE residents about their perceptions of teaching along three dimensions: 1) salary; 2) social status; and, 3) the difficulty or stress of the work. Third, given the importance of perceived status in teachers' professional satisfaction, particularly among public school teachers, that was found in Part I, I examine the factors associated with the perceived status of teaching, disaggregated by sector.

## Data and Methods

Data on perceived social status comes from a new survey, conducted in July-August 2016, that gauged general attitudes to teaching among Emirati residents. The survey was distributed through various dissemination channels. First, I used online tools to disseminate the survey among adult residents of the UAE associated with various organizations' list-serves, and also canvassed at a local mall in Ras Al Khaimah, which serves as a public space for a broad range of individuals. Although the survey sample is not necessarily representative of the population in the UAE as a whole, it provides an initial investigation into general attitudes of the teaching

profession. The sample includes 297 individuals, of whom I have data on gender and country of origin for 249 of them. The sample is slightly more female than male (143 females, 106 males), and Emiratis make up the plurality of the sample at 30%. Nonetheless, the sample reflected the broad diversity of the UAE, with respondents coming from 41 different countries. For the purposes of the analysis, I grouped respondents into four major categories: Emirati, non-Emirati Arab, North American/European/Australian, and Indian/Asian.<sup>3</sup> As desired, the sample includes both teachers and non-teachers, with roughly 24% of the sample reporting they work as teachers and 76% reporting they are not teachers.

## Is Teaching Considered a Good Job?

First, I aimed to gauge participants' impression of the teaching profession, by asking respondents to rank their agreement with the statement *"Teaching is a good job for someone like me."* on a scale of 1-4, where one represented a strong level of disagreement and four represented strong level of agreement. I examined average agreement, grouping teachers into four groups based on their country of origin. Overall, the average response was 3.37, suggesting generally positive attitudes towards teaching. There was no statistically significant difference between teachers (3.37) and non-teachers (3.34). This suggests that teachers' perceptions of the profession likely reflect broader societal attitudes in the UAE. This is an important finding because it suggests that overall, teachers experiences likely do not influence their perceptions of whether teaching is a good job.

Figure 5 shows average perceptions of the teaching profession by demographic group in gold. Examining attitudes to teaching across different populations, we see that Emiratis, male and female, tend to have lower perceptions of teaching as a profession overall than all other demographic groups except for Western males, who also have a generally lower impression of teaching. Other groups, particularly Indian and Asians, Western females and Arab males have quite positive attitudes towards teaching.

However, we know that individuals' perceptions of teaching are likely associated with their individual characteristics, such as where they are currently employed and their salary. Using multi-variate regression, I control for important individual-level factors: age, gender, and two labor market factors: if an individual has a long-term employment contract (4+ years or civil servant) and individual salary. The red bar in Figure 5 shows the same group's predicted perception of the teaching profession after controlling for these individual level characteristics.

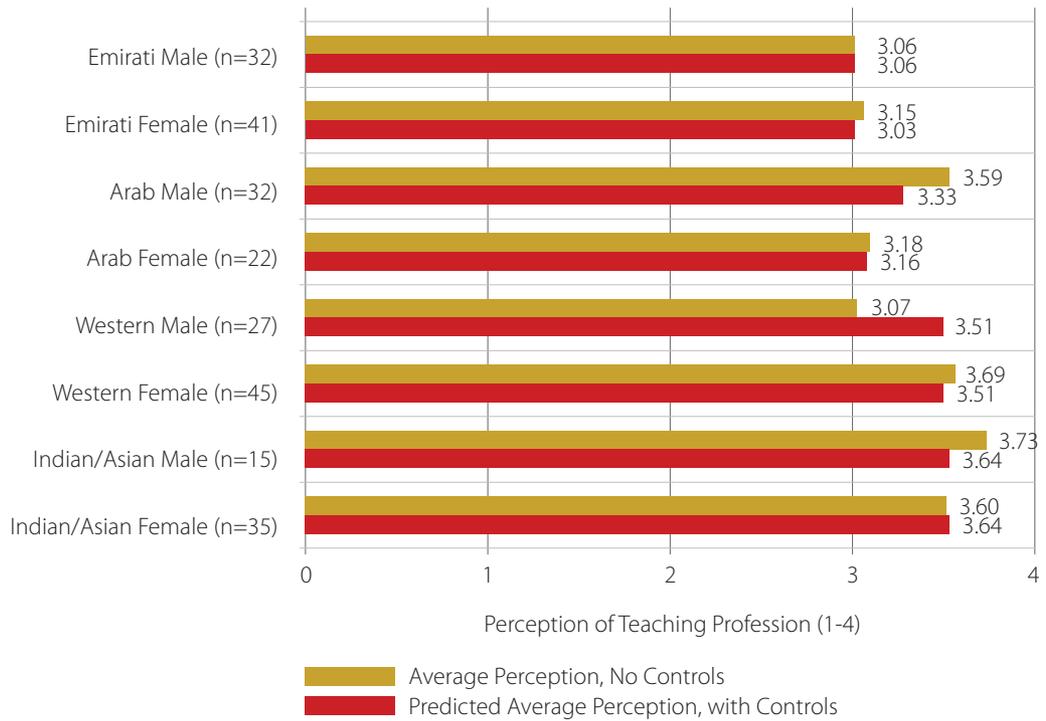
Once controlling for these factors, I find that the gap in attitudes towards teaching narrows. Of all groups, perceptions of teaching fall the most for Arab males after including individual level factors in the model. In contrast, those of Westerns males increase the most. In general, Indians and Asians tend to have more positive attitudes to teaching than other groups, even after controlling for salary and work stability. The findings support the idea that there are not

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<sup>3</sup> Arab: Morocco; Oman; Egypt; Sudan; Kuwait; Iraq; Jordan; Israel; Saudi Arabia; Syria; Lebanon; Yemen  
Indian/Asian/Other: India; South Africa; Malaysia; Belize; Pakistan; Brazil; Philippines;  
Bangladesh; Jamaica; Kenya; Antigua and Barbados; Thailand; Nigeria; Azerbaijan; Iran  
Western: Ireland; Canada; UK; USA; Australia; New Zealand; Italy; Germany; Switzerland; Hungary; Netherlands;  
France; Macedonia



**Figure 5. Average attitudes towards teaching as a profession**



necessarily national differences in how Emiratis or expatriate Arabs view teaching. Rather, teaching as a career choice offers expatriate Arab men relatively good salaries and job stability, when compared to other jobs they might have, but this is not necessarily the case for Emiratis.

### **Does Salary or Status Matter More in Determining Perceptions of Teaching?**

Figure 5 shows that Emirati residents from various backgrounds have different perceptions of the teaching profession, and that individuals' salaries mediate their perceptions of whether teaching is a good job. However, individuals' salaries are not the only important factor. A number of other factors affect attitudes towards teaching. For example, Part I showed that perceived status of teaching is an important factor in teachers' overall professional satisfaction. Therefore, it is also likely that perceptions of status, as well as salary could shape perceptions of whether teaching is a good job. In addition, in prior work I conducted in the UAE, I found that teachers often complained about the stress and difficulty of teaching. Therefore, I also investigated whether these other factors affected attitudes towards teaching (see Box 4).

## Box 4. Technical Notes on General Perception of the Teaching Profession

### Surveying Emirati Residents' Attitudes to Teaching

The survey consisted of 15 questions, and was conducted in Qualtrics and disseminated online or through tablets during in-person canvassing. Respondents had the option to select English or Arabic. The survey asked participants to rank the status of teaching along three dimensions, and by sector. The survey question reads as follows:

In your opinion, compared to other job options available to you and your peers, how does the job of a school teacher at a [public/private] school compare to other job options in terms of:

- Social Status or Prestige
- Salary and Benefits
- Difficulty or Stress of Work

I created a combined index of their attitudes to teaching in both the public and private sector, and ran a series of regression models to understand how perceptions of teaching affected respondents' perceptions of teaching.

It is worth pointing out that anticipated salary, status and perceived difficulty are all positively correlated with one another. Anticipated salary and perceived status are highly correlated, while perceived difficulty is not particularly highly correlated to either perceived status or perceived salary. Status and salary are strongly correlated at  $r = 0.72$ , while salary and perceived difficulty are positively correlated at 0.41, and difficulty and status are positively correlated, but without a particularly high correlation (0.28). The correlations do suggest that putting both status and salary in the same model might cause issues with multi-collinearity.

Table 7 shows a set of linear regression models examining the factors associated with the status of teaching. Model 11 shows individual demographic data, while Models 12-14 add in each of the key explanatory variables (anticipated salary, anticipated status, and anticipated difficulty). Finally, Model 15 presents a combined model with all three explanatory variables.

Models 12-14 clearly show that having positive perceptions of the relative salary, status and ease of teaching compared to other jobs available are all statistically significantly positively associated with overall impressions of whether teaching is a good job or not. However, it is likely that having positive perceptions of teaching on one dimension is associated with positive perceptions on all – so, in Model 15, I include all three predictors. Model 15 shows that the variable with the strongest explanatory power is salary – in other words, general attitudes about the expected salary and benefits of teaching more strongly affect general perceptions of whether teaching is a good job than its perceived status or how easy or difficult it is.

**Table 7. Regression Models Predicting Perceptions of Status of the Teaching Profession (Models 11–15)**

	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15
Western	0.201	0.314	0.19	0.353	0.296
Arab	-0.363	-0.215	-0.265	-0.287	-0.211
Indian	0.051	-0.015	-0.083	0.068	-0.055
Female	-0.062	-0.015	-0.083	0.068	-0.055
Teacher	-0.217	-0.138	-0.229	-0.331	-0.227
Individual Salary	-0.221***	-0.133*	-0.159**	-0.234***	-0.148**
Anticipated Status		0.205***			0.093
Anticipated Salary			0.246***		0.150*
Anticipated Difficulty				0.114***	0.038
Constant	4.515***	2.753***	2.871***	3.862***	2.496***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.095	0.234	0.26	0.156	0.278
N	186	186	186	186	186

Note: Asterisks denote statistical significant difference: \* $\alpha = 0.05$  \*\* $\alpha = 0.01$  \*\*\* $\alpha = 0.001$

This finding is broadly consistent with Figure 5, as both suggest that it is the relative salary and/or stability of teaching that make it a desirable profession for expatriate Arabs and an undesirable profession for Emiratis and Westerners. Nonetheless, this finding also complicates the findings found in Part I, where status was an important predictor of teachers’ professional satisfaction, particularly in the public sector. To shed light on this relationship, in the next section, I examine which factors are associated with the perceived status of the teaching profession.

### What Predicts Perceptions of the Status of Teaching in Public and Private Schools?

Given the findings in Part I, whereby perceived status was an important predictor of professional satisfaction for teachers working in a public school, and the findings above in Part II, which indicate that salary actually has a larger association with teaching, I hypothesize that ideas about the status of teaching in the public sector are closely linked to perceptions of its salary.

In Table 8, I examine which factors are associated with general perceptions of the status of teaching at public schools (Model 16-18) and private schools (Models 19-21), respectively.

Models 16-18 show factors associated with Emirati residents’ perceptions of the status of teaching in public schools. The models show that compared to Emiratis, individuals from Western and Arab countries have lower perceptions of the status of the public sector, and that these are statistically significant, while perceived differences in status are not statistically significant in the private sector. Across all models, we also note that individual salary is negatively associated with



**Table 8. Regression Models Predicting Perceptions of Status of the Teaching Profession (Models 16–21)**

	Model 16	Model 17	Model 18	Model 19	Model 20	Model 21
	Status of Public Sector			Status of Private Sector		
Western	-1.405***	-1.399***	-1.275***	0.414	-0.410	-0.439
Arab	-1.120*	-0.992	-1.071*	-0.844	-1.429	-0.822
Indian	-0.396	-0.4	-0.262	-0.562	-0.544	-0.587
Female	-0.598*	-0.601*	0.596	-0.115	-0.129	0.672
Salary	-0.386***	-0.387***	-0.393***	-0.300**	-0.297**	-0.311**
Teacher	-0.33	-0.336	-0.284	-0.741*	-0.718*	-0.718*
Anticipated Salary	0.533***	0.538***	0.657***	0.691***	0.671***	0.769***
Anticipated Difficulty	0.086	0.087	0.087	0.05	0.041	0.048
Arab x Anticipated Salary		-0.024			0.112	
Female x Anticipated Salary			-0.219*			-0.131
Constant	5.345***	5.323***	4.643***	4.385***	4.548***	4.018***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.534	0.534	0.545	0.535	0.537	0.539
N	184	184	184	181	181	181

Note: Asterisks denote statistical significant difference: \* $\alpha=0.05$  \*\* $\alpha=0.01$  \*\*\* $\alpha=0.001$

perception of the status of teaching, and this is true in both the public and private sectors – in other words, those who tend to make more money, have a lower impression of the status of teaching after controlling for other demographic characteristics. In addition, after accounting for individual salary and region of origin, Model 16 shows that females also perceive teaching in the public sector to be slightly lower status than males, which aligns to the findings in Part I.

Interestingly, although Models 16-18 show that having personal experience as a teacher is not statistically significantly associated with status in the public sector, Models 19-21 show that having experience working as a teacher in the private sector is negatively linked to perceived status. This suggests that personal experience working in schools in the private sector may actually reduce teachers’ perceptions of the status of the profession. This could occur if teachers have negative experiences while teaching that affect how they understand the status of the profession. The reasons for this are not immediately clear, and it is something that should be explored in future research.

One of the consistent findings across all models is that perceptions of salary in both public and private schools is positively and statistically significantly linked to perceived status of the



teaching profession. In other words, believing teaching makes more money means that Emirati residents believe it also has higher status and prestige. The regression models indicate that the same cannot be said about believing teaching to be a less stressful or demanding job – there is something particular about the link between salary and status, as opposed to stress and status.

Model 18, which includes an interaction term between female and perception of salary for teachers in the public sector, shows a statistically significant negative coefficient on the interaction. This indicates that the link between perceived status and perceived salary is slightly lower for females than male respondents. This finding supports the idea that males' perceptions of status are more closely linked to how much they make than females are – a finding that aligns well to other studies in sociology and economics about the greater importance males place on salary. We do not find similar interaction effects in the private sector or among Arabs. The findings suggest that salary is an important driver of the perceived status of teaching in the public sector and this is particularly true for males.

## Discussion and Analysis

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The findings from Part I and Part II point to nuanced and complex relationships between teacher satisfaction, status, and salary in the Emirati labor market. The key findings can be summarized as follows:

- Teachers in the public sector are less satisfied than those in the private sector; this difference in satisfaction is particularly acute and large among teachers with permanent contracts, which is a proxy for Emirati nationality.
- Female teachers in the public sector are the least satisfied teachers; however, this finding seems to be driven by the fact that female teachers in the public sector are the most likely to be Emirati.
- Teachers' perceived status is an important predictor of their professional satisfaction, and this is particularly true for teachers in the public sector on permanent contracts.
- General perceptions of whether teaching is a good job are more strongly influenced by perceptions of relative salary and benefits than perceptions of the relative status or difficulty of teaching.
- General perceptions of the status of teaching are more strongly associated with the perceptions of the relative salary and benefits of teaching than they are to perceptions of the difficulty or stress of teaching. In other words, salary – not concerns over work load – are linked to perceived status.
- Perceptions of teachers' relative pay and benefits have a stronger impact on males' perceptions of the status of teaching in the public sector than on females', but does not seem to affect Arabs more than Emiratis.

While nuanced, the findings do help to answer a specific question – why male teachers, at least initially, seem more satisfied in the UAE than females, a finding that is both contrary to the global norm and one that surprises most who are familiar with the teacher labor market in the UAE,

where we know that male teachers face real challenges. We note that the vast majority of male teachers in the UAE labor market are not Emirati – and that this labor market segmentation helps to explain the phenomena we see.

Despite some concerns over the data quality, the data suggest that for expatriate Arabs, teaching is a relatively secure and well-paid profession, particularly compared to other jobs that are available in the UAE. In contrast, the perceived salary of teaching in the public sector is one of the factors that makes it less appealing to Emirati men and women. At the same time, the clear finding that expatriate Arabs are concerned most about salary and benefits also has important consequences – along with other factors, it could help explain lack of engagement among expatriate male teachers, which other scholars have pointed to as one reason for a female-male achievement gap among students (Ridge, 2014).

Popular media accounts of a strong supply of foreign teachers in the UAE and high demand for more Emiratis support this interpretation. For example, a recruiter is quoted in *The National* as stating: “The UAE is still a very attractive destination for teachers to come to live and work,” given relative salaries and benefits (Pennington, 2016). In contrast, another article, detailing the need for more male Emirati teachers exclaims that among Emiratis, “low salaries and low status continued to deter men from entering teaching” (Swan, 2016). The findings point to the fact that while Emiratis think teaching is generally a respectable career, they nonetheless believe that its status and salary make it a less desirable career option for themselves and their relatives. The author of the study, Harold explains that “parents saw teaching as a good profession but didn’t necessarily want their sons or daughters doing it. They wanted more tangible benefits for the status to be raised” (as cited in Swan, 2016). The findings from Part II of this study support these earlier findings.

Nonetheless, the findings have not answered the question of why female teachers in the public sector seem particularly dissatisfied, although they do provide some hypotheses. One factor for why Emirati females may be dissatisfied with the public sector is their impression of its salary and status: after controlling for demographic factors, Emirati females have the lowest perceptions of the status and salary of teaching of all survey respondents (see Figure 5). In addition, Emirati females have better impressions of the private sector than the public sector, a phenomenon that seems likely to intensify if rates of private school enrollment among Emirati families continues to increase.

## Limitations

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There are a number of important limitations to this analysis. In Part I, it is important to recognize that the TALIS 2013 survey, while designed to be completely anonymous, was still conducted in the context of a severe power imbalance in Abu Dhabi. It is possible that non-Emiratis felt pressured to state higher levels of satisfaction and better working conditions, while Emiratis felt no such pressure, and this could be one of the factors driving the large gap in satisfaction we find between Emiratis and non-Emiratis. Although the survey was designed to be administered anonymously, we cannot know if male expatriate teachers felt that their responses were indeed private.



Moreover, despite the results of TALIS 2013, we have reason to believe that male teachers are not highly satisfied in the teaching profession in the UAE (Ridge, 2014). Alternatively, male teachers may actually enjoy the salary and stability provided by working in the UAE, even while they strongly dislike the work itself. The design of the survey questions does not fully disaggregate for these nuanced differences, as the survey was designed to be cross-nationally comparable and not specific to the Emirati context. There are many reasons to be concerned the survey results do not fully capture the sources of teachers' satisfaction or their frustrations, and future research is needed to understand better both teachers' sources of dissatisfaction and satisfaction.

That said, concerns over potential bias may be attenuated somewhat by the fact that non-Emiratis do not express particularly high levels of satisfaction cross-nationally; indeed, they are well within the global norms. Additionally, in responses to other questions, related to working conditions, such as class sizes, hours spent teaching and hours of administrative work, there do not seem to be significant or large differences between non-Emiratis and Emiratis responses.

There are also many limitations to the data used in Part II, stemming from the small sample size and non-random dissemination of the survey. The survey should be replicated with a more random cross-section of Emirati residents. Nonetheless, the findings largely support and deepen our understanding of the factors that affect perceptions of the teaching profession found in Part I.

Moreover, I would caution against a direct extension to student learning. Although female teachers express higher rates of dissatisfaction with teaching as a profession on TALIS 2013, there is no reason to believe that this indicates they are less effective teachers. In fact, female students in the UAE consistently outperform boys in exams. There are clearly many factors that affect student achievement, and teacher satisfaction likely has an indirect relationship on student achievement, through teacher quality. Female students likely have more time and motivation for studying and higher ambition for educational attainment, and prior research has shown that female teachers in the UAE may have better pre-service training (Ridge, 2014). Nonetheless, teacher satisfaction is an important variable of interest, as it is linked to other policy-relevant outcomes, such as teacher recruitment and retention, as well as policies for teacher professional development and teacher pay.

## Conclusions and Future Research

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Much of the research on teacher satisfaction is drawn from the United States and other Western nations, where teaching is not gender segregated and teachers have multiple other opportunities for employment. However, this study suggests that teachers' professional satisfaction must be examined within their country contexts. The study finds that given this labor market segmentation, the factors affecting teachers' professional satisfaction in the Emirates varies substantially across different populations.

The findings point to a number of areas for future research. The first is the importance of the school work environment. The regression tables showed that teachers' satisfaction with teaching as a profession is closely linked to their satisfaction with working in their specific school. There is a need to understand the factors associated with satisfaction with the school environment,

including what types of professional support, administrative practices and policies, opportunities for input into decision-making, and school-based leadership increase teacher satisfaction with their specific schools. Future research can pursue these questions by studying how relevant school-level practices affect teachers' satisfaction with their work environment.

A second area for future research concerns teacher engagement – teachers' satisfaction with their profession may not be predictive of the quality of their teaching. In fact, the findings of this study point to the fact that expatriate teachers, particularly expatriate males, are entering and staying in teaching for instrumental reasons, namely the pay and benefits. We know that male expatriate teachers face many challenges, including student behavioral issues and heavy teaching loads. This combination of factors is likely associated with male teachers' lack of engagement or investment in high-quality teaching, as good teaching can require significant time for designing and preparing student activities, and providing feedback. There is a need to better understand what types of support teachers need to ensure high levels of engagement.

In addition, Part II suggests that teachers in the private sector may perceive teaching to be a lower status career than the general population does – something not found in the public school system. Future surveys should replicate this finding and seek to understand the factors behind this finding.

The primary policy-relevant finding is that both the status and pay of teaching are important predictors of teacher satisfaction. Attracting and retaining qualified Emiratis into the teaching profession should focus on improving the status and pay of teaching, relative to other options Emiratis have. One possibility would be to explore creating competitive and prestigious fellowship programs that target recent graduates. Future studies could investigate the success of various policies and programs that have upgraded the status of teaching in other countries and their relevance to the Emirati context.





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SHEIKH SAUD BIN SAQR AL QASIMI  
FOUNDATION FOR POLICY RESEARCH

Tel: +971 7 233 8060, Fax: +971 7 233 8070

P.O. Box 12050

Ras Al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates

E-mail: [info@alqasimifoundation.rak.ae](mailto:info@alqasimifoundation.rak.ae)

[www.alqasimifoundation.com](http://www.alqasimifoundation.com)