Investigating the Critical Influences on Emerging Trainee Teacher Identity in The UAEU: A Case Study of Elementary Arabic and English Language Students' Views

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Abstract

Research into emerging teacher identity among B.Ed. Students at the UAEU considers the national background and the debate of "Modernism vs. Traditionalism" and considers how these and other factors affect the emerging teacher identity of student teachers of English or of Arabic in UAE elementary schools. Students in their first year of study, and also students in their fourth year of study from each category were interviewed and their views were analysed. A unique methodology was used – sharia compliant interviews of young female students by older male interviewer – to gather data. There was an expectation that traditional versus modern would be a difference between the groups of students, which proved unfounded. Both groups acknowledged the importance of both languages and the need for compromise and living with others with different views. Recommendations include attempting to improve the status of teachers in the UAE and encouraging more male elementary teachers there.

Keywords: Education, Teacher Identity, UAE, Modernism, Traditionalism, Culture, Student Teachers, Language

Introduction

This research investigated the ways in which student teachers in the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) develop a "teacher identity" during the four years of their training course (Bachelor of Education, BEd). However, a study of teacher identity among student teachers in the UAE has never before been completed, making this study unique in that respect.

The Traditionalism/Modernism Debate

It has been suggested by some researchers that after the abolition of Ottoman Caliphate, the Muslim world suffered in different fields of life. The setback was felt more in economic, political, and cultural fields (Alhebsi, Pettaway, & Waller, 2015). This was the time when Europe revolted against the traditional Church restrictions and adopted science, technology, and scholarly research. The Islamic nations did not adapt themselves to the changing world and other civilisation and regressed from being civilised, technologically and scientifically developed nations, falling behind Europe in these areas (Hurvitz & Alshech, 2018).The two issues of *ijtihad* and *taqlid*, translated as "independent thinking" and "imitation" respectively, have been a major source of internal conflict within Islamic society for many years, and have been misunderstood within those communities – *"ijtihad"* for example, does not exclude tradition in the Qur'anic sense, as many seem to believe (Hallaq, 1986). This, too, is linked to the idea of "independent thinking – *ijtihad*" mentioned above, provided that it is remembered that this is, nevertheless, Islamic or Qur'anic "independent thinking". The point is not always easily understood, but the essence of Islamic thinking is that the revealed word of Allah is found only in The Holy Qur'an, and the thoughts and ideas of the Prophet Mohammed in the Sunnah and Hadiths. The Sunnah is *"the way of the Prophet"* and describes the words and actions of Mohammed.

This dichotomy in Islamic society is perceived as being traditional Vs. modern, but this is not the whole story since it is not as simple as the paragraph above states. Nevertheless, because the student teachers of Arabic also teach Islamic studies, the expectation of the research was that they would be rigidly traditional and reject *ijtihad* whereas the student teachers of English would be more open to modernism.

The research focusses on the perceptions of the students of how the language is being affected by the fact that is becoming a minority language, and the worry of some Arabic commentators that Arabic is "dying" in the UAE (Hopkyns, 2017).

One of the trends that is often discussed by academics studying the Middle East Area (MEA) is the fashion for code-switching between Arabic and English, the pidginization of Arabic (*"Arabezi"*, Hopkyns, 2017) by the large and seemingly semi-permanent population of a large number of workers from different countries.

Education in the UAE

To compete in the 21st century, the federal government faces a number of challenges. These include fluctuation of oil prices, economic diversification and the need to build up human capital (Jamil, Ahmad, & Jeon, 2016; Ewers, 2016). The other challenging factor is the creation of more jobs for Emirate Nationals. To cope with these challenges, UAE is embarking on knowledge-based economic development (Marchon & Toledo, 2014).

The UAE education reform since 2010 was developed to raise education standards for both men and women, to improve employment opportunities, and increase economic and social independence for the country. A building programme in the 1960s and 1970s increased the scope of the education system, meaning more schools were introduced into the country although it was not at that time compulsory for any child, male or female, to get an education (Alhebsi, Pettaway, and Waller, 2015). In the years since 1971 where the educational structure was established, this has now evolved to the point where education at primary and secondary level is universal throughout the Emirates.

The use of the English language is a key to communicating worldwide – it is the second language in many countries and is now being taught in schools worldwide as a subject (Thomas, 2010). Schools in the public sector are funded by the government and follow a curriculum intended to match the values and aims of the nation's government. These schools use Arabic as the language of instruction, but the country's *lingua franca*, English, is highlighted as the main second language. The Ministry of Education (MoE) oversees the education system comprising primary (elementary) schools, middle schools, and high schools (UAE Embassy.org, 2019). Reforms and standards are developed by the MoE in partnership with the National Association of Elementary School Principals in the USA.

Aim

The aim of the research is to explore some of the issues around student motivation, and around the emerging "teacher identity" of these students.

Research Questions

To investigate, analyse and evaluate the issue, research questions were created, these are:

1. What are the influences on the choices of student teachers (elementary/primary languages) at the UAEU when choosing a specific language (Arabic or English) as a specialism for teaching?

2. How do those influences have an impact on how these students perceive their own "teacher identity"?
3. If their perceptions of their identity as a teacher change during the four years of the course, how do they change? And finally:
4. How may the participant's perceptions change regarding their expectation to remain in the teaching profession?

Rationale

The study is unique – no other researcher has examined the growth of teacher identity among this group of student teachers, nor looked at the reasons for their choice of language specialism. Thus, this research contributes knowledge in a unique area, and in a part of the world growing in international importance (Abdouli & Hammami, 2017).

The "observation" of the participants must take place within the context of a theory – the starting point for research, not the finishing point, which involves accepting a "position" according to this view. Essentially, by paraphrasing Paul Feyerabend (1924-94), one cannot discover something from the inside – an external standard is needed.

The "external standard" for my research were the theories of "identity" and "globalisation" and the interaction between them. Thus, if a theory (such as cartesian identity) needed to be modified to fit the data, then that modification effectively creates a new theory, which can later be tested by others. On this basis, the research creates a theory specific to this student group that indicates any common characteristics that are seemingly connected to "being a teacher".

Thus, the conclusions may be described as a theory of teacher identity amongst student teachers of language in the UAE. The difficulty proposed by many, from Feyerabend through to Arvaja (2016), is that each of us has our own worldview – "we believe, but only I can know" – all are theories, all are valid, but none is "fact".

Literature Review

The literature review also needs to be considered "in context", and thus context of the introduction gives a greater understanding of the situation in the UAE and other MEA countries. This chapter begins with some definitions which are used or accepted tacitly throughout the literature review.

The literature review was, necessarily, wide ranging in some respects but very selective in others. Identity has been studied by many from Descartes to Heidegger and beyond, and within "identity" there are sub-divisions; professional identity, teacher identity, national identity, and many others – almost anything could have its own "identity" in this sense. Because of this, the sections of the literature review cover specific areas, and are limited to the topic in hand. Thus, it begins with sections on Traditional and Western Values, "New Teacher" Identity, Identity, and Teacher Identity before moving to cultural influences on identity, including language choices for teachers, job satisfaction, and globalisation.

Traditional and Western Values

These are frequently mentioned, and also connected to the globalisation of education. Although only briefly discussed, the globalisation of education covers the way in which many developing countries accept and implement Western (particularly US) educational models. This has both supporters and critics (Furuta, 2020), but since access to education is now viewed as a basic human right, globalisation of education is also used to convey the idea that education is being made available across the world.

The differences between Traditional and Western values are also very closely connected to the UAE identity, but also include cultural differences some of which are not mentioned above – Islamic banking (no interest charged or paid), the family being the centre of society, and collectivism. In the West, "I" am at the centre of everything, in the UAE "we" are the centre. The UK, like most Western countries emphasises individualism and freedom of choice. Equality and equal opportunity are embedded in the culture to a high degree, and all of this affects the worldview of the individual (see also pp. 41 and **Error! Bookmark not defined.**). In this sense culture means everything around us that we interact with, people, places, computers, media etc.

In the UAE, the emphasis is on collectivism, following rules, and obeying authority. Although it still incorporates all of those interactions listed above, those interactions also follow the cultural direction. This is one of the main difficulties with this research – explaining one culture in the terms of another.

New Teacher Identity

Identity is discussed below, but the definitions used are based on Cartesian identity, the feeling of "who one is" and one's place in the world. It covers professional and personal issues. It is considered throughout to be a fluid or changeable concept and one where each individual has more than one "identity" depending on circumstances and position. Specifically, the students have entered college presumably thinking (in the appropriate language) "I am a student, I will be a teacher" and hopefully will end the course thinking "I am a teacher". This is what is referred to throughout as a developing teacher identity.

Identity

Identity is a broad-spectrum issue, nevertheless, identity has a psychological and sociological aspect. It has been argued that identity is the outcome of the interaction and engagement between subject, history, religious heritage, and geography since specific inhabitants' territory form a determinate identity and society. However, cultural identities emerge in definite times and places and they are subject to change and development, and in some cases disappear. In addition, education can play a vital role in shaping identity

The creation and shaping of national identity through education is embedded in several ways, techniques, and in pedagogical and syllabus literature. Education often tries very hard to standardise identities (Arar & Ibrahim, 2016; Ljunggren, 2014); within an education system there is an underlying assumption of the citizen which the educators wish to create, so that the educational methods employed are aimed at making the learner think in predetermined patterns (Ljunggren, 2014). This in turn, leads to teachers within that system having a teacher identity formed by that system and their perceived place within it.

The study of professional identity within teaching has been examined in considerable depth, both within the UAE (Hopkyns, 2017) and in a cross-cultural situation (McNiff, 2012). Both of these researchers have provided insights into the sometimes-conflicting views of student teachers developing both a national and professional identity,

But then, all "identities" are constructed from our experience of the world around us and sometimes require a deliberate acceptance or denial of aspects of that world. However, so many factors may impinge upon it that there is often considerable difficulty in describing what one means by a particular "identity".

In essence, the overarching concept of "identity" used throughout this work finds its origin in Cartesian identity – Descartes' (1596-1650) famous *"Cogito ergo sum"* – but influenced by Heidegger and the other academics mentioned above. It does not set out to make a definitive statement that "teacher identity is …", but to gather together and discuss some of the characteristics observed in students who are learning to be teachers of language in the UAE.

Teacher Identity

Teacher education, which is bound together with teacher identity by the education system according to Ljunggren (2014), as explained above, is not easy to compare cross-culturally – "teachers are what they are taught to be", in agreement with Ljunggren's (2014) view that the education system is intended to produce a "model citizen" with "model teachers", and essentially similar to Heidegger's view that identity is defined by existence (da sein). I believe, however, that if the researcher has been fully enculturated into both of the cultures involved, (s)he may be able to see the direction in which the education system is driving in each culture.

Teacher identity has been studied – Beijaard *et al.*, (2004)Canrinus *et al.*, (2011; 2012), and more recently, Arvaja (2016) have all examined this in a European context, and Gilroy's editorial on *"Teacher Identity through Diversity"* notes that in many countries outside Europe,

"teachers have little social standing or prestige, often seen as babysitters, whereas the teachers themselves identified a number of roles that went far beyond babysitting. Their tentative conclusions include the suggestion that these teachers need to engage with their wider community so as to develop their professional identity more effectively"(Gilroy, 2017, p. 2).

It is seen in this research into teacher identity that the situation in Europe is different to Africa and Latin America, and therefore perhaps elsewhere. Two studies in North America and Europe on the growth of teacher identity show this clearly – Espinoza (2015), and Stranger-Johannessen and Norton (2017). Espinoza (2015) gives a personal view of her own experiences, and Stranger-Johannessen and Norton (2017) worked in North America and Europe with "The African Storybook" (ASb). Stranger-Johannessen and Norton (2017, p. 45) observed how other student-teachers changed: *"Teachers' shifts of identity were indexical of their enhanced social and cultural capital as they engaged with the ASb"*, leading to the conclusion that *"the enhancement of language teacher identity has important implications for the promotion of multilingual literacy for young learners in African communities"*.

Cultural Influences on Professional Identity

Some of "teacher identity" comes from "social standing" (Gilroy, 2017), and this does vary with culture. Because teachers are entrusted with the education of future citizens, they should be held in high esteem in any society. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, and in many cultures, there is an ambiguity about the professional status of teachers – many perceive the job as being easy, and something anyone can do (although there are no exact figures for this, all of the first-year students questioned said that before starting the course, they too, believed this).The assessment of "status" is not easily done, as it is not necessarily linked to remuneration levels, therefore this could be a research subject in its own right, but the research shows the complexities regarding status facing teachers in the UAE (Hayes & Al'Abri, 2019).

Methodology

Unique Aspects Within Chosen Methodology

Within the chosen methodology which follows, this work is intended to make some unique contributions beginning with the respectful Islamic interviewing of young Muslim Women by a male interviewer. This included offering the choice of language (Arabic or English) for each interview. The interviewing was Sharia compliant interviewing – there was no recording equipment present due to local conventions, and all Sharia conventions were followed regarding being alone with a woman, which provided the requirements for interview context (i.e., the one-to-one interviews were conducted in an office with windows so that the interview was carried out in full view of colleagues and classmates of the participant, and with the office door slightly open).

The Located Case Study

This is qualitative research, based on a case study of the teacher training course at the UAEU – four student groups: 1. 1st year English teacher students, 2. 1st year Arabic teacher students, 3. 4th year English teacher students, and 4. 4th year Arabic student teachers. Thus, before interviewing the participants and collecting data I first had to understand the location (the UAEU) where the case study would take place, because location has a major effect on context and results (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2006). The first, and simplest justification is that although the UAEU is not the only University in the UAE to offer the B.Ed. teacher training, it is the country's foremost university and developed the curriculum for the B.Ed. degree (UAE Ministry of Education, 2014).

Although the case study is an often used and appropriate methodology in higher education, concerns have been raised about the ways in which the case study is used and reported:

> *"We have argued that case-study research in the field falls short of its promise due to a lack of theorizing about the research methodology or an understanding about the methodology"(Corcoran, Walker, & Wals, 2004, p. 7)*

In view of this criticism, for this case study the theories regarding case studies in general, multiple case studies (Gustafsson, 2017), and single case studies (Mariotto, Zanni, & Salati Marconde de Moraes, 2014) have been carefully considered. In addition, the views of other scholars on specific aspects of the methodology have been considered – Mendaglio (2003, p. 1), for example, considers the case study to be *"a vehicle by which researchers enable our hearing of the voices of gifted persons"* and therefore particularly apt in an educational research setting.

Within the methodologies laid out above, it was then necessary to select suitable methods for the research. This includes methods of data collection, methods of data analysis or interpretation. The following sections detail the way that the methods were selected and used. The case described was a group from year one and a group from year four of students at the UAEU who are taking the four-year Bachelor of Education degree before becoming teachers in the UAE. This involved a series of semi-structured interviews. These were completed in early November 2016 with a follow-up almost four months later in late February 2017 – although a relatively short time it represents one third of their academic year, and it was hoped that the data analysis would show that it was a period of sufficient duration to show both consolidation of the data and differences between individual students preparing to teach Arabic or English within each group.

The Sample

On arrival in the UAEU I was introduced to the students in class at the university. I explained the purpose of the research to each student category (English or Arabic student teachers) in each year (1st and 4th), and then, after answering questions, volunteers were requested, with a guide statement that it would need "seven or eight" students in each category. In the UAE, the cultural structure, with its high power-distance meant if there were too few volunteers, the students would expect to be selected instead. From the volunteers the participants were selected so that the groups would be of equal size (see Table 1 and Table 2). Fortunately, the numbers of volunteers were just sufficient, and equal in number, meaning that this task was not difficult.

Number of Students	Subject	Year	Interview Type: One to One/Group
8	Arabic	1	Yr1 Group
8	Arabic	4	Yr4 Group
8	English	1	One to One
8	English	4	One to One

Table 1: November 2016 Interviews (two groups, eight individual)

Number of Students	Subject	Year	Interview Type: One to One/Group
8	Arabic	1	Yr1 Group
8	Arabic	4	Y4 Group
8	English	1	One to One
8	English	4	One to One

Table 2: February 2017 Interviews (two groups, eight individual)

Results and Findings

The full analysis of the interviews was also problematic because it was necessary to consider the ways in which cultural and other details affected the students' perception of "teacher identity", and to discuss and consider any cultural differences that appear – the strength of "family" in career choices, for example. This, on occasion, required explanations of some of the differences in cultural outlook between the "Arab world" and the "European world".

Figure 1: Network Map of Influences and Effects. From the left, the influences on the four main categories is followed by the things that they, in turn, affect, and finally are the items which may be linked
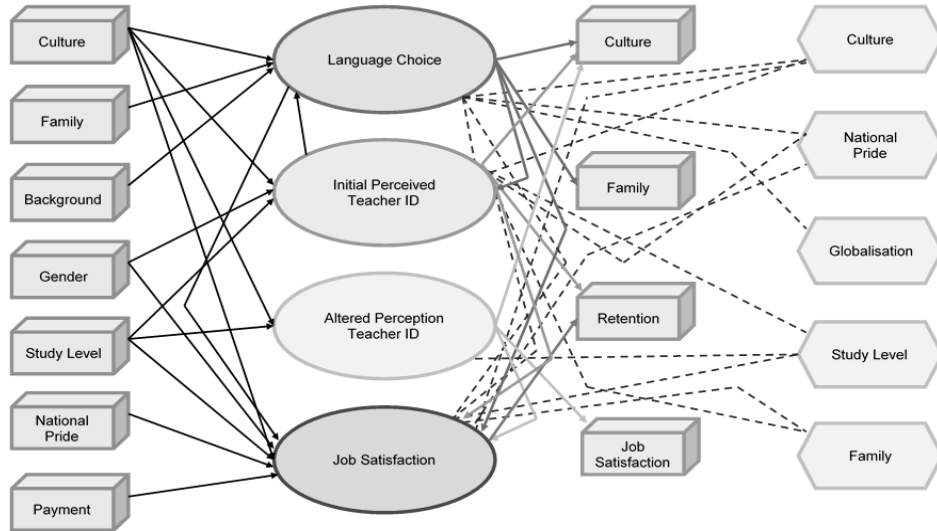
Error! Reference source not found. shows the way in which the influences and effects on the developing teacher identity are interrelated. Each of the items in the list was extracted from the coding of the data. These Sharia compliant interviews were the only area where the modernism Vs. traditionalism dichotomy was apparent, and even there only to a small degree.

Figure 2: "Word Clouds" from: Top Line, Left, 1st Year Arabic. Top Line, Right, 1st Year English. Bottom Line Left 4th Year Arabic. Bottom Line, Right, 4th Year English. Arrows show relative comparisons.
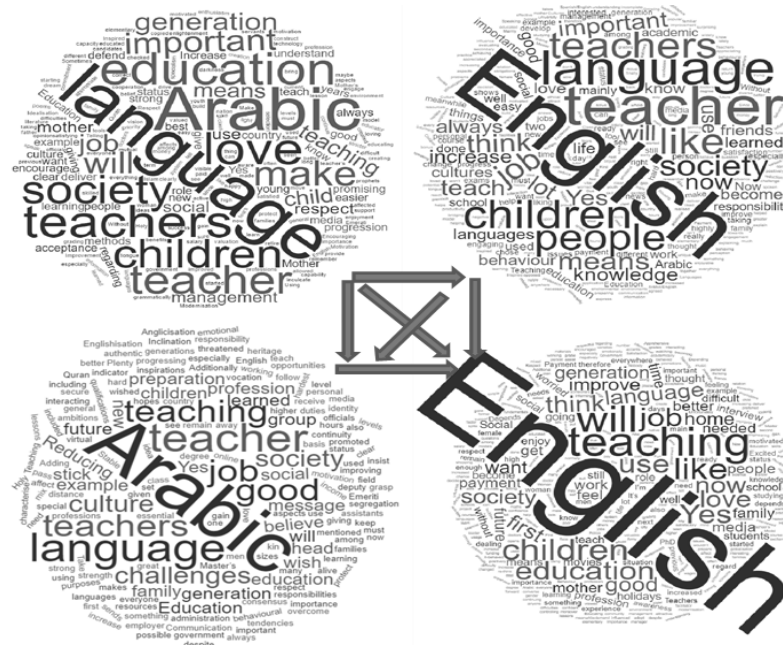
Henderson and Segal (2013) suggest that one of the best ways of visualising qualitative data from interviews is to begin at "word level", and thus **Error! Reference source not found.** shows word clouds take from the interview transcripts of the four student groups. This shows the different attitudes between the Arabic and English teachers, but also shows that they are similar and linked in their approach to teaching. It also shows the ways that what is important to the students changes over the four years of the course. This is, of course, only a small part of the analysis process, but gives a good visual impression of the major findings from the data. The most obvious indication from these early displays (in Figure 2) is that for student teachers of Arabic, the language appears to increase in importance over the course, as does English for the student teachers of that language.

Although at this stage there was no strict quantification of the number of times a word was used, this initial view shows that the Arabic student teachers mention "society" slightly more than their English teaching counterparts, and that in both cases, by the final year students are considering "job" or "jobs" more often than abstracts such as "educate" and "children". The usesof words in this way, and the way the usage changes across the years and between the specialisms supports the initial feeling that the Arabic student teachers have a different feeling of tradition and national pride; the English student teachers did not mention the Holy Quran, for example, whilst the Arabic student teachers stressed its importance.

Although initially there was believed to be a large difference between the proposed data collection and the actual data collection, using group interviews/focus groups for one half and one-to-one for the other, altering the research method to permit this change actually proved to have fewer challenges than were expected. Clearly, the two types of interview need to be approached in a different way when analysing the data.

In either type of interview, however, the main aim of the interviewer should be to ensure that the situation is as natural as possible, and as already described, the difference between the parties (interviewer and participants) must be minimised as far as possible.

Finally, the situation highlighted some of the apparent cultural differences between students in the two groups and the need to adapt the research to the actual situation, rather than continuing as planned and forcing a change on the subjects. Clearly, this second option would bring the results into a dubious position in terms of validity, because of the fact that an unnatural situation would have been created, rather than a natural situation observed. Although the interpretation of what is observed may be different according to the worldview of the analyst, it is evident that by strictly observing a "non-interventionist" attitude during the interviews makes the validity of any observation more effective.

As the analysis moved forward it became apparent that there was a major difference between the student teachers of English and the student teachers of Arabic. Amongst the differences noticed was the idea that the "traditionalist" Arabic student teachers were quite at home with technology and modernism but felt very strongly that it was necessary to teach children about their history, heritage, culture, and language. At the same time, the "modernist" English student teachers also had a strong sense of "national pride" and knew the importance of "belonging" to the UAE. This urge to belong to both sides of the modernist/traditionalist debate, and to have more than one "identity" (*e.g.,*teacher, Emirati, student, woman), appeared both natural and normal within these groups of student teachers, and did not add any tension or major difficulty to the way the individuals "saw themselves".

From the examination and comparison of the thirty-six interviews the indication was that although these student teachers were all modern and forward looking in their attitude to technology, including its uses within education, there was a fundamental disagreement regarding the cultural and heritage aspects of teaching Arabic or English. In their answers to why they had chosen to specialise in English or Arabic, the difference between the groups could be summed-up in the following ways: the English teaching group were in favour of modernism and globalism and felt that English was a necessity if modernism and globalism were to continue. On the other hand, the Arabic teaching group were in favour of modernism and globalism provided that the Arabic language and heritage were protected and taught. This is an important distinction which has implications within the construction of identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

The construction of personal and professional identities is complex, and in some cases may require the individual to *"unlearn the ways of the coloniser"* (McNiff, 2012, p. 129) and to accept that one cannot exist free of historical and political heritage. There seems to also be an unbridgeable gap between personal identities and global identities. The relatively modern idea of personal identity introduced by Descartes (1596-1650), has led to the point where the stronger individual identities become, the weaker the national identities become – the UAE is a collectivist society, and these student teachers were Emirati above all. This view becomes even more apparent when small "nationalist" movements are examined.

It seems that uniting into larger blocks reduces the individual to a cipher, and unity at the expense of individualism seems less likely than individualism at the expense of unity, even in a "collectivist" society such as that in the UAE.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The research set out to examine the emerging "teacher identities" in elementary (*i.e.,*they will teach 7–11-year-old-children) Arabic and English Language students at the UAEU. Part of the intent was to discover how factors such as culture, gender, and background affect that identity, and the ways in which teacher identity, in turn, affects the perceptions of job satisfaction among these student teachers. Because of my shared characteristics with the students (I am Arabic from Sudan, Muslim, and a teacher of English and Arabic), I hoped to see beyond simple stereotypes and give them an opportunity to share their personal views on these subjects.

Before the detailed conclusions, there were some general, but nonetheless important, conclusions worth consideration. First, there has been for many years a dichotomy in the Arab world where its members wish to be in the modern world and the traditional world at the same time. This has, in some cases, led to difficulties with personal identity, but what was apparent amongst the students in this study was that their identityas "Muslim Emirati's" was firm, regardless of the language they spoke or taught. Thus, although the English teaching students accepted one-to-one interviews they were no less"Muslim" or "Emirati" as a result. This same was reflected in their levels of national pride – the student teachers and speakers of English were as strongly Emirati as the Arabic student teachers and found the same difficulties that arise from being a minority group inside one's own country. There was an acknowledgement from both groups that the UAE needed to encourage its own citizens to become teachers to educate the new generations.

The second of these general conclusions was that the cultural differences that I had expected to make a difference to the emerging teacher identities were both more <u>and</u> less pronounced than this expectation.This contradictory statement clearly needs explanation; I expected to find a large difference in their ideas of "teacher identity" compared to my experience of talking to emergent teachers in the UK, but this difference was not apparent. I also expected that, although the UAE is very traditional, there would be at least some male students on the course, and that there would not be a large difference in attitude to teaching – here, the cultural difference was greater than I expected, because there were no male student teachers in either year group. All the students were female, and teaching in the UAE, particularly at the elementary level, is seen as "women's work" (by Emirati's). The acceptance of this does show some level of change, but it was still present in the comments of the students regarding pay levels and conditions.

The lack of male teachers in the GCC countries, and the UAE specifically, is a major difficulty – without male teachers as a role model, young Emirati men are less likely to become teachers themselves (Sevier & Ashcraft, 2009). The importance of role modelling in education and moral development has been stressed since Aristotle who *"considered what nowadays is referred to as 'role modelling' as having a large influence on children"*(Osman, 2019, p. 316), and, as Sevier and Ashcraft (2009) found, gender of role models is important. In addition, joining the army in some capacity perhaps gives these young men a greater perceived "agency" than teaching – an ability to actually change the world. In reality, the world is changed by teachers more than it is changed by soldiers – without education society would not progress (Jackson, 2019), but of course, educating a generation before any change takes place may seem to be too long a timeframe for young men starting out in life. Finding any means to overcome this problem is indeed challenging – one of the areas of future research that I believe has been indicated by my results.

In the UK and USA "troops to teachers" schemes have been tried in order to bring ex-military personnel into teaching, but whether this would be effective in the UAE requires additional research. The US "troops to teachers "(TTT) scheme was introduced in 1994 and has proved successful (US Department of Defense, 2019). In view of this success a similar scheme was introduced in the UK in 2014, and "revamped" in 2018 (Teaching.gov.uk, 2018) although take up in the UK has been slow so far.

Recommendations

The recommendations which are made as a result of this research can be broadly divided into recommendations for the UAEU and general recommendations for the teaching profession in the UAE.

For the UAEU:

➢ **Encourage more male teachers**
o This has already been raised by the government as a necessity, but more research into why men are not attracted to the profession (in the UAE) will be required before this can take place.

o   It has long been acknowledged that there is a shortage of male teachers in the gulf countries. Many of the women interviewed expressed concern that there were too few men teaching, but at the same time many of them emphasised that it was a good job for a woman.

➢ **Research teacher retention factors**

o   This is a global problem, not just a UAE problem, but the factors may be different in different countries, so although existing research into teacher retention will be helpful, specific UAE research is indicated.

➢ **Work with government to improve status of teaching**

o   This, too, may require additional research before it can be begun, because even a brief examination shows that this is very complex.

In general, in the UAE:

➢ UAE Ministry of Education should introduce a mentoring scheme for newly qualified teachers since these have been shown to work elsewhere and cost very little. This research found, as other UAE research has found, that new teachers in the UAE are expected to leave university ready to be teachers – despite the fact that educationalists across the world have repeatedly demonstrated that it actually takes several years of practice to make an effective teacher. Mentoring would almost certainly improve retention.

➢ UAE Ministry of Education should consider overhauling the grading system for teachers.
➢ The social position and acceptance of elementary teachers should be further investigated.
➢ The potential within the participants regarding national pride should be better utilised.

These recommendations are aimed at alleviating the longer-term difficulties facing education in the UAE and the on-going difficulties of teacher retention. The fact that student teachers here and elsewhere retain their enthusiasm and determination into their final year does bring an indication that additional research may be required, as the question that comes to mind is "Have the universities prepared them for the reality of teaching?", alternatively, is the retention problem due to some other, unknown, factor (such as those leaving the profession for childcare reasons when they start a family of their own)?

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