



Pearson

United Arab Emirates: What makes an effective teacher?

SERIES 4 OF 23



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Executive Summary



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“
The quality of an education system
cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.
”

BARBER & MOURSHED, 2007

Acknowledgements

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Decades of research make it clear: teachers make a difference in student learning. In fact, Stanford University economist Eric Hanushek (1992) has noted that the difference between a good and a bad teacher can be a full level of achievement in a single school year. Given the strength of these findings, nations around the world recognize that in order to improve educational outcomes and equity they must focus on effectiveness of teachers. A critical step toward achieving that goal is for individual countries to identify the competencies required for effectiveness and use them to inform teaching standards, pre-service teacher preparation, professional development programs and performance evaluations. To make an impact, those systems and processes will need to be based on a common understanding, within each country, of what it means to be an effective teacher.

Oxfam’s international study of teacher competences and standards concludes that in order to build that common understanding, it is “absolutely necessary that the question as to what is considered a quality educator is investigated among stakeholders” (Bourgonje & Tromp, 2011, p. 145). Giving stakeholders a voice not only allows us to understand how they think and feel about a topic; it provides an opportunity to help frame important policy decisions that directly impact their lives. Pearson is therefore surveying learners, teachers, principals, education researchers, policymakers and parents in 23 countries regarding their perceptions of what it takes to be an effective teacher. Pearson is comparing the views expressed by these stakeholders with both current government teaching standards and research on effective teaching.

This report, the fourth in the series, summarizes the results of the survey conducted in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where the government has been working to provide a high quality education to all children, yet still faces significant struggles in developing and training teachers to deliver high quality instruction. In the global report, 23 participating countries are compared not only across stakeholder groups, but by country as well.

The Survey

To learn the top qualities education stakeholders in the UAE seek in their teachers, we administered surveys across the country (see **Figure A1** in the Appendix). The stakeholder groups include:

- Students ages 15-19
- Parents of K-12 students
- K-12 teachers
- K-12 administrators
- Education researchers and policymakers

Respondents were asked to list, in their own words, between three and fifteen qualities that they feel are most important in making an “effective” teacher and to indicate what type of teacher, by subject(s) and grade level(s), they were thinking about while creating their list. The survey did not define “effective” for respondents, other than that it meant “good,” allowing respondents to define what an effective teacher meant for themselves. We developed a coding system to categorize responses based on prior research about competencies of effective teachers. This coding scheme was reviewed by teachers, principals, education policymakers and researchers and revised iteratively as additional responses were coded, resulting in a final list of 32 categories.

The Most Important Qualities of Teachers in UAE

We found some consistency in how the groups of surveyed stakeholders responded when they were asked to list between 3 and 15 of what they believed to be the most important qualities or competencies of effective teachers. The most common response across the full sample was that effective teachers need to build trusting, compassionate *Relationships* with their students. It was the first most common response for each of the stakeholder groups except researchers and policymakers, for whom it was third. It was also the most common response for government schools (second for private schools); teachers of kindergarten, primary and secondary grade levels; and for males (second most common for females). Ultimately, the survey results reaffirm the notion that, at its foundation, teaching is about trusting relationships between teachers and learners that foster learner success, as these communities define it.

The second and third most common responses across all stakeholder groups were the teacher's *Subject Knowledge* and a *Patient, Caring*, and kind personality. Subject knowledge was expressed as deep and thorough understanding of the content and/or curriculum, in order to select which topics to teach and to address student misunderstandings. Patient, caring, and kind personality addresses positive personality characteristics, particularly associated with compassion and empathy.

When the responses of all stakeholder groups are combined, the other seven categories in the Top 10 qualities or competencies mentioned, were in descending order:

- Pedagogical skills and methods (*Teaching Skills*)
- *Professionalism*
- The ability to engage and motivate learners to learn (*Engaging*)
- The ability to make content and ideas clear for learners (*Makes Ideas Clear*)
- Knowledge and understanding of learners (*Know Learners*)
- *Dedication* to teaching
- Emphasis on developing students' *Non-Cognitive Skills*

Most Important Qualities of Teachers in UAE

1	Ability to Develop Trusting, Productive Relationships
2	Subject Matter Knowledge
3	Patient, Caring, Kind Personality
4	Teaching Skills/Pedagogical Practices
5	Professionalism
6	Engaging Students in Learning
7	Ability to Make Ideas and Content Clear
8	Knowledge of Learners
9	Dedication to Teaching
10	Emphasis on Developing Students' Non-Cognitive Skills

Five of the Top 10 most frequent responses for each group of stakeholders were shared by all groups: *Relationships*; *Teaching Skills*; *Subject Knowledge*; *Makes Ideas Clear*; and *Engaging*. Teachers, parents, and students valued similar qualities; researchers, policymakers and principals valued similar qualities; and there were several notable differences in the reported qualities the groups didn't share.

Additionally, public and private schools, and males and females shared the same Top 10 most valued qualities. And regardless of the grade level of the teacher they were thinking of, stakeholders shared nine of their Top 10 qualities. For both comparisons (by type of school and grade levels), the categories varied slightly in frequency and order.

The categories of qualities mentioned most often across the entire sample reflect how strongly education stakeholders in the UAE value not only the knowledge and skills a teacher possesses, but also dispositions of care (relatedness, responsiveness) and character (responsibility, trustworthiness) in their teachers. There is research that supports the link between these dispositions, teaching effectiveness, and learner outcomes. There were also several instances where research emphasizes specific competencies that were mentioned, but not frequently, by education stakeholders (principals, teachers, and researchers, and policymakers), e.g., ability to plan effective lessons and learning tasks (*Planning*); provision of a rigorous, *Challenging* curriculum for all learners; use of *Assessment* to monitor learning (reported infrequently by teachers); regular communication with *Families*; having a continuous improvement mindset (*Always Learning*); and working collaboratively with colleagues to improve teaching practice (*Collaboration*).

“

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Using These Results to Improve Teaching Practice in the UAE

We recommend that the results of this survey be used to inform and guide the definition of what it means to be an effective teacher in the teaching and learning culture of the UAE. The results of this survey can inform national as well as local discussions about teacher preparation, hiring, training, and evaluation in the UAE, particularly in areas of need, as documented by research.

Given the stakeholders' emphasis on the importance of teacher-student relationships, teacher training programs could place greater emphasis on dispositions that stakeholders believe are essential for effectiveness—e.g., patience, care, and relatedness. The programs could assess these qualities in candidates, counsel candidates on career fit and provide training to improve teaching dispositions in future teachers. Given the challenges in recruiting, developing and retaining teachers who are not only qualified but passionate and dedicated to their work in the UAE, adding quality programs for developing the key dispositions that support and enhance student learning seems to be an important step in improving the teaching workforce in this country. As other researchers have noted, **focusing on improving the social relationship that is at the heart of student learning should lead to improvements in a wide range of student outcomes in schools.**

Likewise, training programs may want to emphasize the knowledge and skills that were mentioned less frequently but have been shown to be critical to effective teaching and student learning, such as:

- regular assessment of learner progress
- delivery of a challenging, rigorous curriculum for all students
- regular communication with families about student progress
- collaboration with colleagues

While this research identifies many different qualities and competencies of effective teachers, we caution against using the results to generate a checklist approach under the misguided belief that there is a single winning pattern of competencies to be an effective teacher. Finally, it cannot be overstated that to be effective teachers, the work conditions and environment, first and foremost, must be well managed; school context and community culture have a profound influence on the way different teacher roles and competencies are understood, prioritized, and practiced.

Overview



“We undertook this study to understand what key stakeholders in school systems from around the world value as the most important qualities of an effective teacher.”

What makes an effective teacher? By whose definition? With the global focus on improving the quality of the teaching workforce, identifying the qualities of an effective teacher, and the accompanying competencies required, is a critical first step. Many countries are in the process of developing or revising their teacher evaluation systems, teaching standards, pre-service teacher preparation, and/or in-service teacher training programs. To make an impact, those systems and processes will need to be based on a common understanding of what it means to be an effective teacher, with a set of standards reflecting the expected knowledge, skills, attributes, and other competencies. An important decision for preparing, training, and evaluating teachers is how the standards are developed and by whom (Bourgonje & Tromp, 2011; OECD, 2013).

Oxfam’s international study of teacher competencies and standards concludes that it is “absolutely necessary that the question as to what is considered a quality educator is investigated among stakeholders” (Bourgonje & Tromp, 2011, p. 145). It is often the case that those who are most directly impacted by the set of competencies and standards—e.g., the teachers themselves, their learners, learners’ families, and school principals—have little say in defining which features of effective teachers are valued most.

In response to these concerns, **we undertook this study to understand what key stakeholders in school systems from around the world value as the most important qualities of an effective teacher.** Our focus was to compare the perspectives of the following sources regarding these qualities:

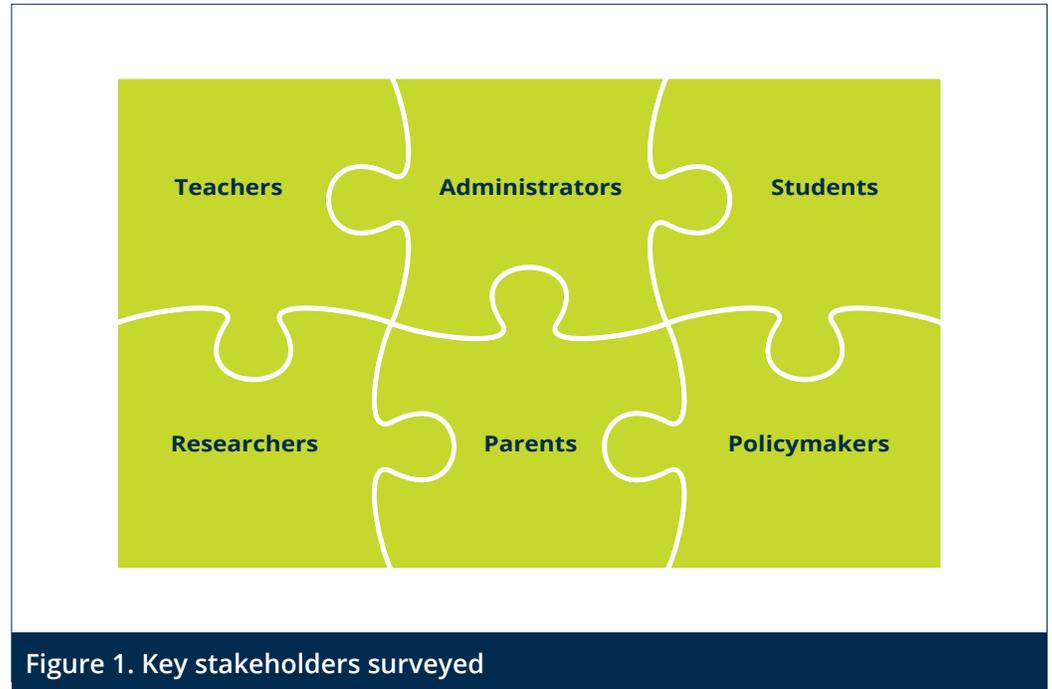
1. Key education stakeholders (learners, parents, teachers, principals, education researchers and policymakers);
2. The government (reflected in national teaching standards); and
3. Research on effective teaching

This report summarizes what we found in UAE.¹

¹ There are 23 countries participating in this survey, listed in **Table A1** in the Appendix of this report.

Our Study

We engaged Dashboard Marketing Intelligence, an international marketing research firm, to collect the survey data from the six stakeholder groups (see **Figure 1**). Given the limited sample size, we combined the education researchers' and policymakers' surveys and their responses in our analyses. Individuals with expertise in the UAE education system reviewed the survey wording in English and Arabic, and the sampling plan.



Along with demographic items—e.g., respondent's city, gender, school or job experience—participants responded to two key items:

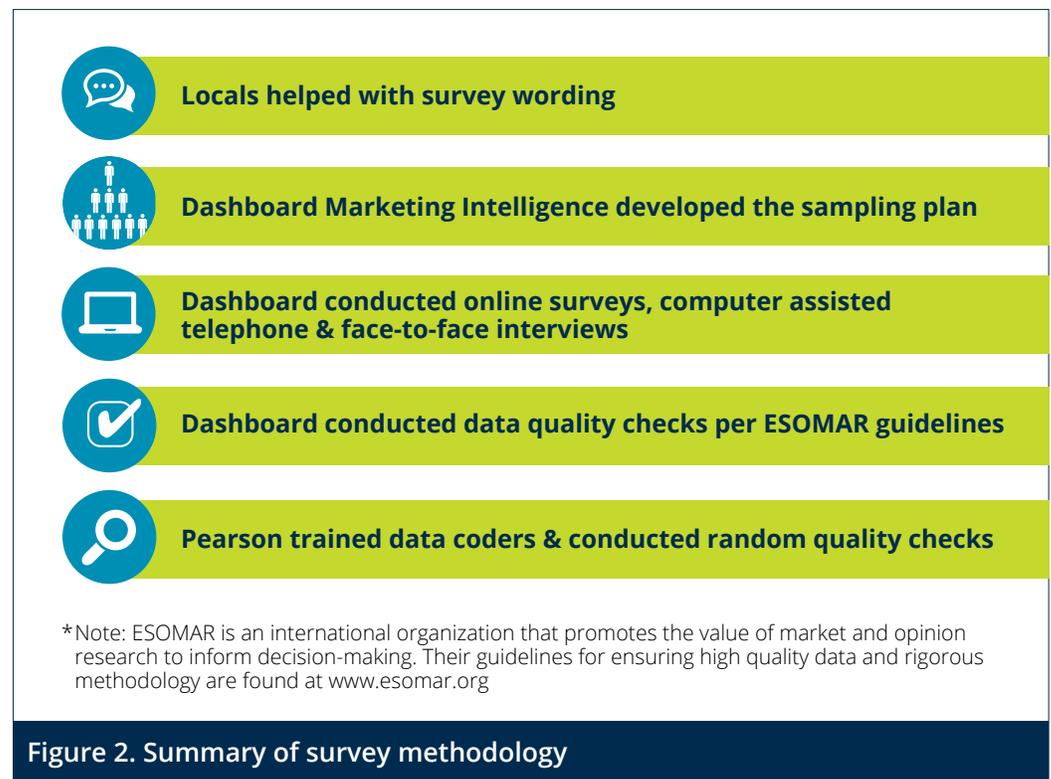
1. List a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 15 of the most important qualities of an effective (good) teacher.
2. Indicate the type of teacher you are thinking of as you create the list.

For the second part, we provided a matrix of grade levels and subject areas taught. This allows us to examine whether the list of qualities differs for different grade levels and subject areas. It is important to note: *we did not provide a list of qualities for respondents to endorse*; we asked them to list their own, in their own words, so as not to influence results.

The study was driven by the following set of research questions:

- 1. What do different stakeholder groups regard as most important qualities of an effective teacher?**
- 2. Do these qualities differ by context?**
- 3. How do these qualities align with teaching standards and research on teacher effectiveness?**

Figure 2 summarizes the methods we used for data collection. More detailed information is in the Appendix of this report, including data collection and sampling methods (**Tables A1** and **A2**); areas surveyed (**Figure A1**); coding of survey responses (**Table A3**); and who we surveyed (**Figures A3 – A8**).



UAE's Education System

Established in 1971, the United Arab Emirates is made up of seven emirates; Abu Dhabi is the largest in size (87% of the land area) and Dubai is the most populous. While the Ministry of Education (MoE) is in charge of general education in most emirates, the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), founded in 2005, oversees education in the largest emirate, and the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), founded in 2006, oversees private education in the most populous emirate, Dubai (UNESCO IBE, 2011). Both the Dubai Education Council (DEC), and ADEC were founded as part of ongoing educational reform to attract internationally accredited private schools, while ADEC also focused on updating curricula and improving educational facilities (Alpen Capital, 2014). Every emirate, with the exception of Abu Dhabi, has an "Educational Zone" responsible for coordinating relations between the MoE and local schools. Public schools implement the curriculum set by the MoE, while there are 17 different curricula for private schools, with British and American curricula among the most favored (Al Qasimi Foundation, 2013).

Basic education is compulsory and free for Emirati nationals for Cycles 1-2 (ages 6-14). Public schools are divided into a four-tier system covering 14 years of education: Kindergarten (KG1 through KG2); Elementary/Cycle 1 (grades 1-5, ages 6-11); Preparatory/Cycle 2 (grades 6-9, ages 12-14); and Secondary/Cycle 3 (grades 10-12, ages 15-17) (Oxford Business Group, n.d.). Secondary is comprised of general and technical stages which involves a first year of core subjects, followed by one of three main streams: technical, agricultural, or commercial (UNESCO IBE, 2011).

Despite its great wealth, the UAE has a public education system that is increasingly seen as failing to meet the most basic needs of its students (Ridge, 2010). In particular, there are serious concerns about the education of boys: Girls are more likely to graduate from high school, have higher grades and go on to higher education. Females comprise 70% of the higher education population. In a research study, Ridge (2008) found vast differences in the quality of teachers and teaching for females vs. males in UAE: Boys were more likely to be hit by the teacher, to like school less, and were more likely to drop out. In secondary schools in UAE, boys are taught by men and girls are taught by women, although recently, more boys are being taught by female teachers (Ridge, 2010).

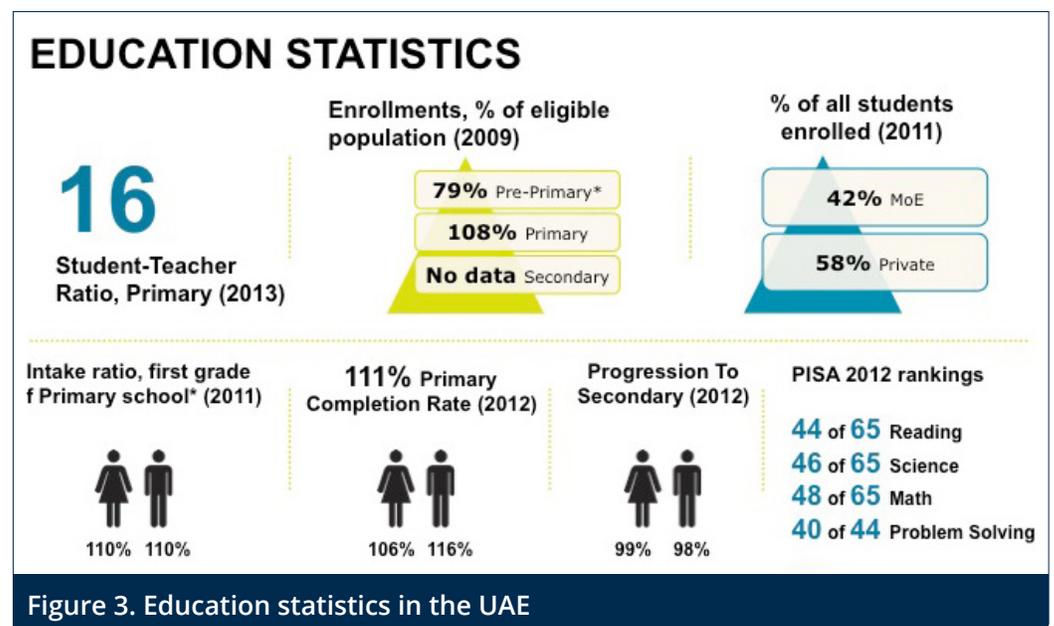
In addition, the UAE education system has been criticized for its repetitive curriculum, emphasizing rote-learning and memorization (Macpherson, et al., 2007; Dickson et al., 2013) along with neglecting student-centered teaching styles and failing to train teachers properly (Barber et al., 2007; Ridge, 2010). Evidence of the need for educational reform was demonstrated by the poor performance of 9th grade students on the 2012 PISA tests, where the UAE ranked below international standards (OECD, 2014; see **Figure 3**).

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Additional concerns include the high unemployment rate (the UAE has the highest in the region, with 24% of 19-25 year olds and 70% of women ages 19-24 unemployed); and concerns about the education system not preparing learners for employment (Arab Thought Foundation, 2014).²

There are multiple education reform plans underway through the MoE, including *Education 2020*, aimed at modernizing the UAE's education system by moving away from rote learning and encouraging critical thinking and practical skills development for students (Alpen Capital, 2014). In 2010, the MoE expanded this plan by implementing the 10 x 10 x 10 strategy in the hopes of making greater changes. Named for its 10 key objectives, its 10 year plan, and its aim for achieving a top rating of 10 out of 10 for each of its 50 initiatives, the major goal of the MoE strategy is to implement a more student-based model of education with a focus in the areas of student outcomes, school life, equality and citizenship; and administrative effectiveness (Ministry of Education, n.d.). The MoE aims to achieve this by developing updated curricula equipping students with life skills; developing qualification standards and improved training for recruitment of educational staff; introducing student career counseling; improving school building infrastructures; assessing students and schools; developing a new budget; integrating parental contribution; and promoting national identity. Also in 2010, ADEC implemented its New School Model for public schools throughout the UAE, which also aims to transform the education system by adapting a student-centered approach to encourage creative and independent thought. The plan allocates almost a quarter of the federal budget to education (Ayson, 2014).

Figure 3 summarizes some key information about the UAE's education system.



Sources: Data are from the World Bank (www.worldbank.org) except for PISA 2012 data (OECD, 2014).

² The full report can be accessed at the Arab Thought Foundation website, but it is in Arabic. The statistics quoted here from the report are from the online article in *The National*: <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/editorial/steps-must-be-taken-to-reform-education-in-the-uae>

Teacher Preparation

There are different teacher qualification requirements listed by ADEC, KHDA, and the MoE, depending on the emirate (Oxford Business Group, n.d.). While this affords some flexibility for these authorities within their own domains, the development of a nationally recognized set of teacher qualification criteria is a priority for the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) in order to ensure that professional teaching standards are uniform. Thus, the Supreme National Committee for the Licensure of Teachers was formed in 2013, and a new teacher licensing system was slated to be released in 2015. At the time of this report, the new system was not yet made public.

To teach in the UAE, individuals need a university degree with classroom experience. Expatriates need to also take a written exam and have a personal interview (UNESCO IBE, 2011). Teacher education programs exist at all three public higher education institutions—the United Arab Emirates University, Zayed University and the Higher Colleges of Technology—and at the newer Emirates College of Advanced Education in Abu Dhabi (Ridge, 2010). The programs attract mainly female Emirati (Ridge, 2010). For Abu Dhabi specifically, teachers need a four-year Bachelor's degree with acceptable English skills, and must attend skills development training during regular school holidays. The Emirates College for Advanced Education offers a four-year B.Ed. for teaching at the elementary level in government schools. It also offers a one-year Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) for those holding a Bachelor's degree, in preparation for a Master's in Education.

Teaching Standards

In 2013, the UAE Cabinet authorized a Supreme National Steering Committee to oversee the development and implementation of a national licensing system which led to the development of the *Teacher and Educational Leadership Standards for the UAE* (NQA, 2015). The TELS UAE are intended to produce a “world-class teaching workforce” for the UAE—one of the objectives of the *UAE Vision 2021* initiative focused on developing a “first-rate” education system (NQA, 2015). The standards are intended for educators in public and private schools in the UAE. According to the NQA newsletter, the standards indicate the required knowledge, skills and understanding for the documented functions and activities, and each standard includes the elements, performance criteria, and performance indicators. Additionally, they serve as the foundation for licensing and certification of teachers in the UAE; appraisal and performance management; continuing professional development; teaching education and training; and recruitment, selection and progression (NQA, 2015). The newsletter also indicates that prior to their introduction, the standards will be aligned with UK qualifications, and piloted in a sample of schools to ensure their appropriateness for UAE educators and the context in which they work. At the time of this report, the UAE had no national set of teaching standards available to the public.

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Challenges to Developing Effective Teachers in UAE

In 2009, the MoE stated that Emiratis made up 11% of the male teachers in government schools, and 71% of the female teacher population was Emirati. Ridge (2010) attributes the rapid expansion of public education as leading to the situation where over 80% of the male teachers working in the public sector are expatriate Arabs from neighboring countries. Moreover, due to the absence of an immigration policy, these teachers are “contract teachers who will leave the country when their employment finishes.” Turnover affects private schools as well: ADEC estimates an annual teacher turnover rate in private schools in excess of 20% (Olar-te-ulherr, 2014). The UAE faces not only a transient teacher population, but transient students as well, due to the large population of migrant expatriates (Malek, 2013).

“Embarrassingly low” teacher salaries, lack of autonomy, poorly run schools, and competition for high quality teachers internationally are some reasons why recruiting and retaining good teachers for schools and colleges remains a challenge in the UAE (Dhal, 2013; Malek, 2013). The teaching profession in the UAE is characterized as a “backup plan” for those who cannot attain high-skill level employment, which in turn leads to a mediocre teaching force (Ridge, 2010).

After visiting 262 schools in Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and the Western Region, ADEC concluded that high teacher absenteeism, high staff turnover, and corporal punishment of students are among the major challenges found in public schools (Pennington, 2015). In private schools, the Cycle 2 (2011-13) inspections found about two-thirds of these schools hired inexperienced teachers with no qualification or training in teaching (Olar-te-ulherr, 2014). They noted “The quality of teaching and learning frequently does not meet satisfactory standards and very often these result in students (being) insufficiently challenged and their progress unsatisfactory.” Other common issues include lack of parental engagement and poor quality curriculum.

Our survey research was conducted within a wide range of teaching and learning contexts in UAE, some to which these concerns apply, some less so. It is important that the system in which teaching and learning takes place is considered when defining what a teacher should know and be able to do. As research demonstrates, in “well-ordered” schools, teachers can take on the many roles expected of an effective teacher, while in schools struggling for resources, strong leadership, etc., teachers may struggle just to manage classrooms, and in some cases, to show up to work. Therefore, when asking individuals to share what they value most in their teachers, we cannot forget about the education system and the context in which these responses occur. Results of this study should be considered with that context in mind.

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What We Learned



The main purpose of this survey was to elicit from a variety of key stakeholder groups what qualities they believe are most important for a teacher to be effective.³ Stakeholders included 150 students, 150 parents, 150 teachers, 50 principals, and 30 education researchers and policymakers, with most of the data collected from Abu Dhabi (39%) and Dubai (54%). Most of the students (66.7%) attended public (government) schools, and the median age was 16. For parents, 28% had some sort of post-secondary schooling, about 45% had attended school in India, and about 70% sent their children to government schools.⁴ About half of the teachers and principals were trained in the UAE, and were quite experienced; more than 60% worked in government schools. Education researchers and policymakers were on average less experienced (median = 6 years on the job), and 83.3% were trained in the UAE. More detailed information about each stakeholder group is in the Appendix (**Figures A3 – A7**).

We asked survey participants to list a minimum of 3 and maximum of 15 most important qualities of an effective teacher. **The median number of responses was 3** for the entire sample, and for each group, and respondents provided up to 8.⁵

A description of how we developed the coding categories and a description of each can be found in Table A3 in the Appendix.

A key question driving this study was whether there were important differences in the qualities that different groups of education stakeholders value for a teacher to be regarded as effective, as reflected in our first two research questions (page 9). Therefore we compared the results by five stakeholder groups (we combined education researchers and policymakers due to the small numbers); government and private schools; grade levels of the teachers the respondent was thinking about; and gender of respondents. Additionally, the British Council collected data for this study using online surveys with teachers (n = 115) and principals (n = 14) from International schools. **Figure A8** in the Appendix details the characteristics of this sample. Their data are included in several of the comparisons.

³ Because the term “effective” implies a person who is successful at producing an intended outcome, we let the stakeholders determine what the term ‘effective’ meant to them with respect to teachers and teaching. Note that the survey was given in Arabic.

⁴ 62% indicated sending their children to government schools only, while 8.7% indicated both government and private schools.

⁵ It is important to note that within each response, multiple characteristics of an effective teacher were often listed; therefore the median value underrepresents the true value.

To address our third research question, our plan was to compare what stakeholders viewed as the qualities of an effective teacher with the national teaching standards and research on teacher effectiveness. However, as noted earlier, at the time of this report, the UAE had not yet released the national set of teaching standards to the public. Therefore we aligned survey results with the teaching standards developed by ADEC (see **Table 2** in this report) that apply to teachers of all schools in Abu Dhabi (ADEC, n.d.). We also focused on international research aimed at identifying a set of competencies that could be applied globally for K-12 teachers, and on studies conducted in the UAE.

Top 10 Reported Qualities of An Effective Teacher

In the UAE, the Top 10 endorsed qualities across all stakeholder groups are illustrated in the heat map in **Figure 4**. The color spectrum ranges from red to green—the lowest to highest frequency of endorsement. To ensure a high response rate, we did not ask participants to prioritize or rank order the qualities they listed. Therefore we report the frequency by which each category was endorsed, for the overall sample (“All”), and by stakeholder group. There are some notable differences between groups in the extent to which they value each of these competencies, as illustrated by the different patterns of green and red in the heat map.

	All	Researcher & Policymakers	Parents	Principals	Students	Teachers
Relationships	15.4%	11.8%	14.2%	19.3%	17.1%	14.1%
Subject Knowledge	11.4%	10.2%	13.1%	9.2%	10.4%	11.9%
Patient, Caring	9.3%	2.4%	10.8%	5.3%	11.8%	8.7%
Teaching Skills	9.3%	17.3%	5.6%	9.2%	10.4%	9.9%
Professionalism	7.9%	1.6%	9.9%	0.9%	9.5%	8.6%
Engaging	7.6%	3.1%	9.3%	3.5%	8.7%	7.4%
Make ideas clear	6.3%	5.5%	6.7%	5.7%	5.6%	6.9%
Know Learners	6.0%	1.6%	6.3%	10.1%	4.4%	6.5%
Dedication	3.7%	3.1%	3.5%	5.7%	3.6%	3.4%
Non-Cognitive Skills	3.2%	18.1%	1.1%	7.0%	2.0%	1.7%

Figure 4. Top 10 most important qualities of an effective teacher: entire sample

Note: A description of each category is found in **Table A3** in the Appendix. These are the top 10 qualities for the entire sample, with frequencies by stakeholder group. Red reflects the lowest and green the highest frequency of endorsed categories. These do not include data from the British Council.

Table 1 illustrates the top 3 reported qualities of an effective teacher for the overall sample, and their rank based on frequency of reporting, for each of the stakeholder groups.

	Relationships	Subject Knowledge	Patient, Caring
Students	1st	3rd	2nd
Parents	1st	2nd	3rd
Teachers	1st	2nd	4th
Principals/Admin	1st	3rd	8th
Education Researchers and policymakers	3rd	4th	Not in Top 10

Table 1. Stakeholder group rankings of top 3 qualities of an effective teacher for overall sample

Ability to Develop Trusting, Productive Relationships

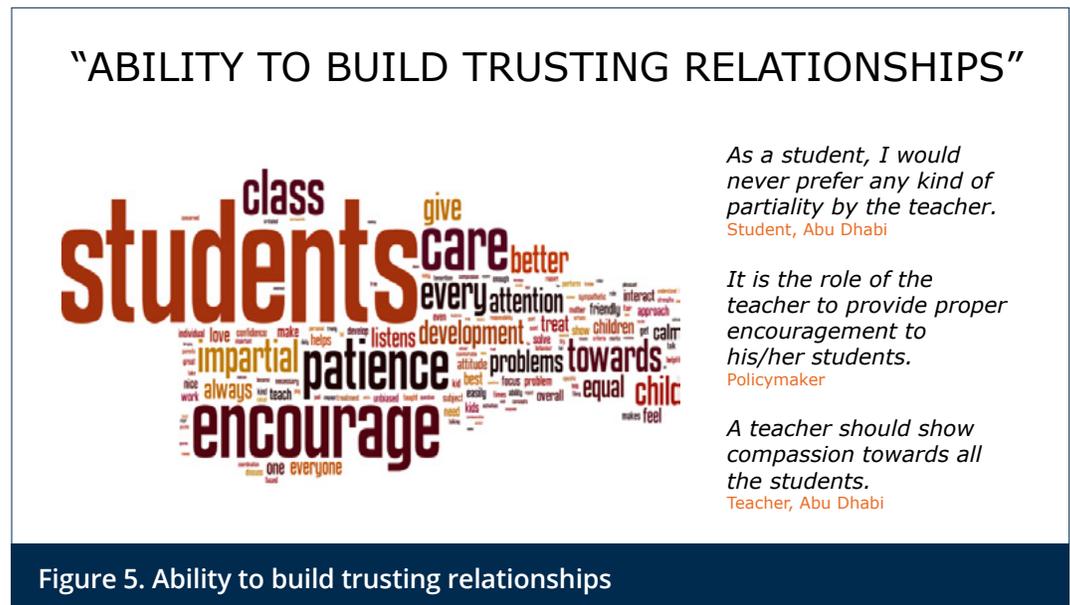
It is clear from the results of this survey that stakeholders in the UAE strongly value the teacher’s ability to cultivate trusting, productive *Relationships* and relate to as well as mentor students. Relationships with students was reported either first or second most frequently across all five stakeholder groups except for education researchers and policymakers, where it was third. As our word cloud illustrates, encouraging and listening to students, patience and impartiality were some of the most common descriptors (see **Figure 5**). The importance of these relationships is further emphasized by the third most commonly reported category referring to a teacher’s patient, caring, and kind disposition.

Researchers have documented the link between learning outcomes and strong, collaborative relationships between teachers and learners (Zins et al., 2004; Singh & Sarkar, 2012; Gelbach et al., 2012). In a study by Gelbach and colleagues (2012) with middle school students and teachers in the United States, the researchers found that as teacher/student relationships improved, teachers interacted more frequently with the students, and students finished the semester with higher grades. Moreover, the achievement gap between under-served and well-served students dropped by 65%.

Teaching is characterized as a complex relationship between the educator and the learner, where teachers **“know and respond with intelligence and compassion”** to learners and their learning (Rogers & Raider-Roth, 2006). Barber (1995) refers to this relationship as part of the “unknown universe” of teaching:

...that crucial part of education that is to do with the classroom interaction of learner and teacher and with the extraordinary ability of teachers to generate sparks of learning, even in the most inauspicious of circumstances (p. 76).

Bransford et al. (2007) note that teachers need to be able to build productive, trusting relationships with students to create a safe, positive and productive teaching and learning environment. This is particularly relevant in the UAE given the documented problems with corporal punishment, particularly for boys, in government schools.

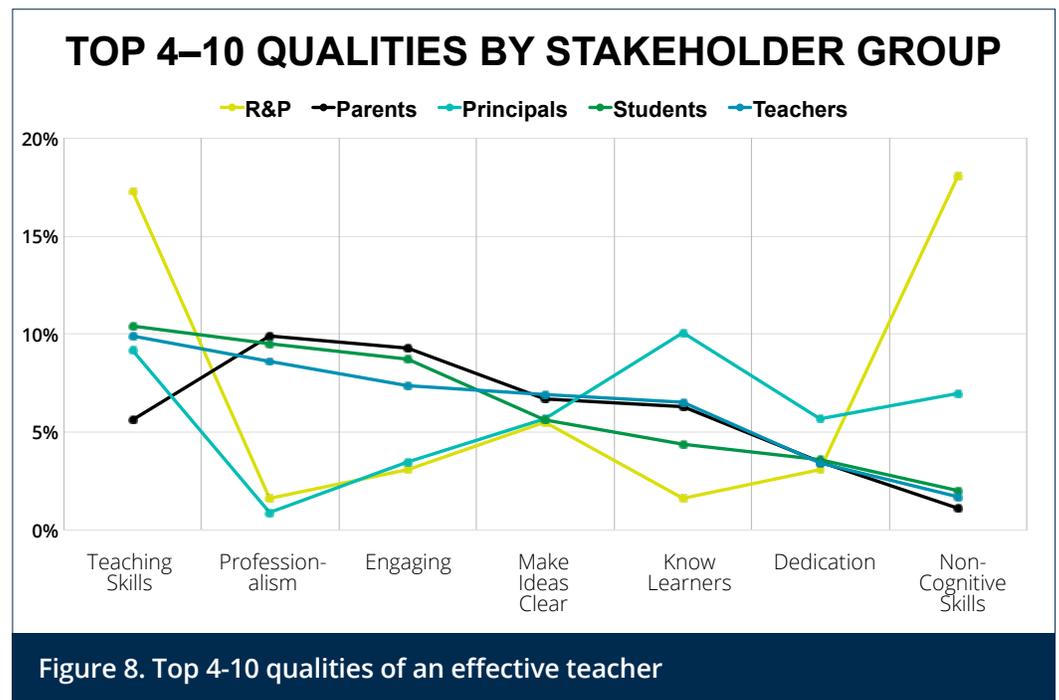


Subject Matter Knowledge

Subject Matter Knowledge, the second most frequent category of responses for the sample, includes expertise in a given content or subject area as well as deep knowledge of the curriculum, learning objectives, and/or standards in that content area (Leu, 2005; Bransford et al., 2007; CEPPE, 2013). Research supports the need for both subject matter and curriculum knowledge for effective teaching, along with strong pedagogical content knowledge. In fact, research linking teacher subject matter knowledge in math to student learning lead the National Mathematics Advisory Panel in the United States to conclude:



The next most important qualities making up the Top 10 list for the sample show more variability across the groups (see **Figure 8**). These qualities focus on sets of skills and knowledge specific to teaching as well as dispositions important to any profession—e.g., professionalism, dedication. **Figure 8** illustrates how each of the five stakeholder groups compares on these seven qualities.



Note: R&P = Education Researchers and Policymakers. These results do not include the British Council data.

Knowledge of Learners

Eighth most frequent across the sample of the most important qualities of an effective teacher, is *Knowledge of Learners*. This is a broad category that includes knowledge of the cognitive, social and emotional development of all learners. Such knowledge includes an understanding of how students learn at a given developmental level; how learning in a given subject area typically progresses; awareness that learners have individual needs and abilities; and an understanding that instruction should be tailored to meet each learner’s needs. This broad set of competencies appears often in the research on effective teaching, underscoring the notion that instructional practices should align with what learning science tells us about how humans learn (Clark & Mayer, 2011; Dunlosky et al., 2013) and that “one size does not fit all” in teaching and learning (Bransford et al., 2007; Klem & Connell, 2004; Leu, 2005; OECD, 2013; Bourgonje & Tromp, 2011).

In the UAE, there were numerous comments about teachers providing individual attention, and attending to the learning needs of all, including the “weak” students, to ensure their progress. Respondents also frequently mentioned that teachers needed to ensure understanding for all students before moving forward. This category was second most frequent for principals, and made the Top 10 list for all stakeholders except researchers and policymakers. **Figure 13** illustrates survey responses regarding this category.

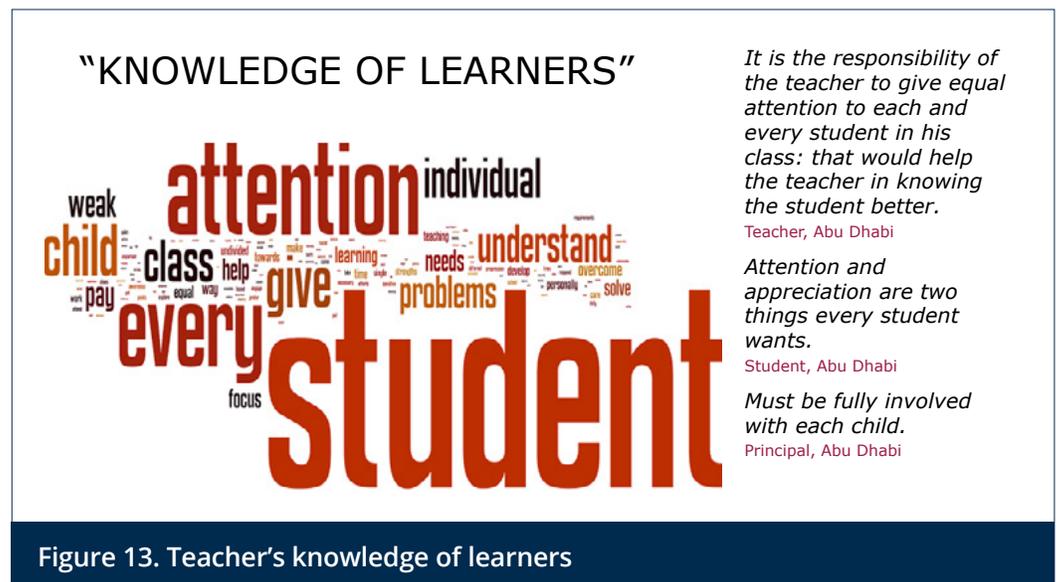


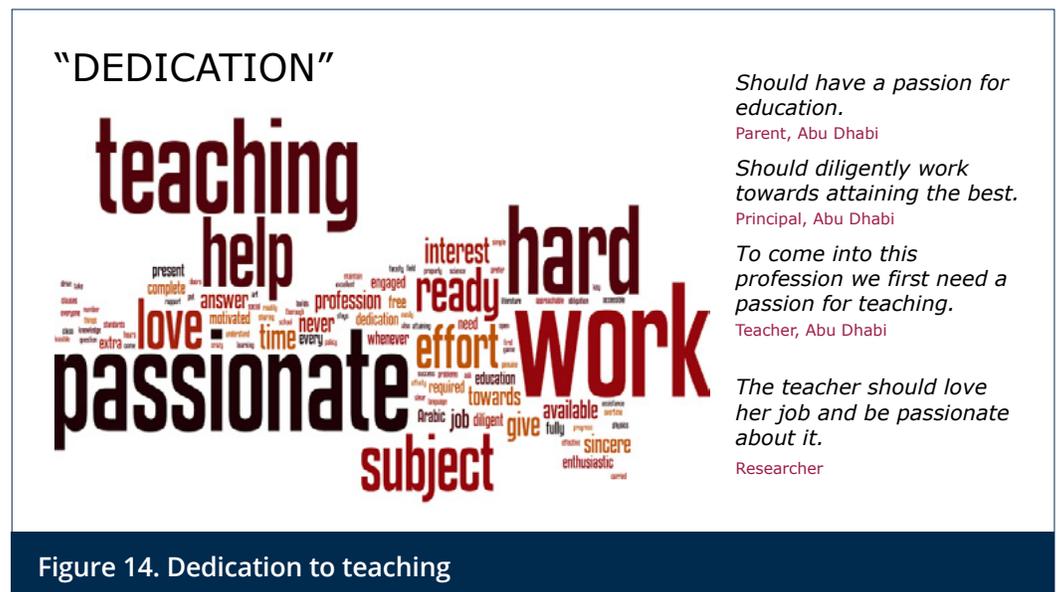
Figure 13. Teacher’s knowledge of learners

Dedication to Teaching

Dedication was the ninth most valued quality by the overall survey sample, mentioned most frequently by principals. Dedication refers to a love of teaching or passion for the work. Responses often referred to “going beyond what is required” or “going the extra mile for learners,” with “passion” for their work being the most common response. Dedication is a reflection of an individual’s intrinsic motivation. According to the popular book “Drive” by Daniel Pink (2011), intrinsic motivation is driven by an individual’s sense of autonomy or control over their own work and their own lives; the ability to learn and create new things; and the desire to improve oneself and make the world a better place.

Like everyone else, for teachers to be intrinsically motivated to be effective in their work, these conditions of autonomy, mastery, and contribution to a greater good, must be in place. It is commonly found in education systems around the world that the work environment in poorly functioning systems and/or schools does not meet these criteria, and teacher morale is low. In the UAE, where teacher pay is low and work environments are often low quality (e.g., Malek, 2013), morale in general is likely to be lower and dedication to one’s job is likely more difficult.

The features most frequently mentioned by stakeholders included being passionate about teaching and about students, working hard, and giving extra effort toward classes and students (see **Figure 14**).



What We Learned

Additionally, all groups shared the following four in their Top 10 most valued qualities of an effective teacher:

- Effective *Teaching Skills*/knowledge and use of effective pedagogical methods
- Deep *Subject Matter* or *Content Knowledge*
- Ability to *Engage Learners* in their learning
- Ability to *Make Ideas and Content Clear*

Research & Policymakers	%	Principals	%	Parents	%	Students	%	Teachers	%
Non-Cognitive Skills	18.1	Relationships	19.3	Relationships	14.2	Relationships	17.1	Relationships	14.1
Teaching Skills	17.3	Know Learners	10.1	Subject Knowledge	13.1	Patient, Caring	11.8	Subject Knowledge	11.9
Relationships	11.8	Subject Knowledge	9.2	Patient, Caring	10.8	Subject Knowledge	10.4	Teaching Skills	9.9
Subject Knowledge	10.2	Teaching Skills	9.2	Professional	9.9	Teaching Skills	10.4	Patient, Caring	8.7
Make Ideas Clear	5.5	Non-Cognitive Skills	7.0	Engaging	9.3	Professional	9.5	Professional	8.6
Assessment	4.7	Dedication	5.7	Make Ideas Clear	6.7	Engaging	8.7	Engaging	7.4
Qualifications	3.9	Make Ideas Clear	5.7	Know Learners	6.3	Make Ideas Clear	5.6	Make Ideas Clear	6.9
Dedication	3.1	Patient, Caring	5.3	Teaching Skills	5.6	Know Learners	4.4	Know Learners	6.5
Creativity	3.1	Qualifications	4.4	Creativity	4.9	Dedication	3.6	Dedication	3.4
Engaging	3.1	Creativity	3.5	Intelligence	4.3	Always Learning	2.2	Creativity	2.7
		Engaging	3.5						
		Assessment	3.5						

Figure 16. Top 10* qualities of an effective teacher by stakeholder group

*Note: We provide the top 12 for Principals who reported three categories equally frequently in tenth place.

“
The Top 10 most frequently mentioned qualities of an effective teacher were somewhat similar for all stakeholder groups in that they shared four of their top ten; teachers, parents and students valued similar qualities, but and there were several notable differences.
”

Overall, parents, students, and teachers reported similarly, sharing eight of their top ten. Researchers/policymakers and principals tended to report more like each other as well, sharing nine of their top ten (taking into account the principals' top twelve, which accounts for ties). These two groups were the only ones to specify the importance of the teacher developing the students' *Non-Cognitive Skills* (also known as 21st Century Skills, non-academic skills, etc.); their knowledge and use of *Assessment* to regularly monitor student progress; and the teachers' *Qualifications* to teach, in their Top 10. Several other notable differences among the stakeholder groups include the following:

- The teacher's *Use of Assessment* to monitor student progress and drive instruction was rarely mentioned by teachers (only 0.8% of responses). Given that this is a fundamental competency of effective teachers (Wiliam, 2007) we expected this quality to be reported by educators more frequently.
- The teacher's *Knowledge of Learners* made it in the Top 10 most frequent responses for all but the Researchers and Policymakers. Given the centrality of this set of competencies to effective teaching, it is surprising that it was not mentioned more frequently by this group.
- The teacher's *Creativity* in planning and delivering instruction made it in the Top 10 most frequent responses for all but the students.
- The teacher's general *Intelligence*, analytical/critical thinking, and problem-solving capabilities was mentioned only by parents in the Top 10 responses.
- The teacher's *Dedication* to teaching and the success of their students was present in the Top 10 most frequent responses for all stakeholder groups except for parents.
- The teacher's *Always Learning* or continuous improvement mindset showed up in the Top 10 most frequent list for students only. We would have expected educators to endorse this important disposition for being effective at one's work more than students.

In summary, the Top 10 most frequently mentioned qualities of an effective teacher were somewhat similar for all stakeholder groups in that they shared four of their top ten; teachers, parents and students valued similar qualities; researchers, policymakers and principals valued similar qualities; and there were several notable differences in the reported qualities the groups didn't share.

Do Responses Differ by Context?

The second research question driving this study was whether the qualities most valued in an effective teacher differed by context. We compared responses by the type of school (Government and Private) represented by the respondent; grade level (kindergarten, primary, secondary) of the type of teacher the respondent was thinking of; and gender of the respondent.

All stakeholder groups except education researchers and policymakers indicated whether they or their children went to public (government funded) or private schools. **Figure 17** compares the Top 10 qualities valued by those from government and private schools. In these data, we included data collected online by the British Council using the same survey, from teachers (n=114) and administrators (n=15) of International schools. These were combined with the private school data collected by Dashboard Marketing Intelligence. Categories are color coded for ease of comparison.

MoE (N=323; 49%)		Private (N=293; 44%)	
	%		%
Relationships	14.7	Patient, Caring	13.2
Subject Knowledge	12.1	Relationships	10.7
Patient, Caring	9.9	Subject Knowledge	8.8
Teaching Skills	8.9	Creativity	8.0
Professionalism	8.8	Teaching Skills	6.8
Engaging	7.6	Dedication	6.7
Knowledge of Learners	6.1	Professionalism	6.3
Make Ideas Clear	5.9	Make Ideas Clear	5.8
Creativity	3.4	Engaging	5.6
Dedication	3.2	Knowledge of Learners	4.9

Figure 17. Top 10 qualities by type of school

Note: Categories are color coded for ease of comparison. Education Researchers and policymakers were not asked to indicate government vs. private school and therefore their data are not included. These data include responses from 115 teachers and 14 administrators at International schools, collected online by the British Council using the same survey.

As **Figure 17** illustrates, government and private schools shared all of their ten most frequent responses, with the same top three in slightly different order.

For grade levels, results were somewhat similar. **Figure 18** shows the results for the Top 10 categories across the sample, by the grade level of the teacher that the respondent was thinking about. In many cases, the respondent was thinking of teachers of multiple grade levels (Kindergarten, Primary, and/or Secondary teachers). All three grade levels shared 9 of the Top 10 most frequent qualities reported, and for all, trusting *Relationships* was the most valued quality. It is notable that for Kindergarten teachers, *Knowledge of Learners*, and *Dedication* are valued more frequently than for the other two grade levels, while *Subject Knowledge* and *Teaching Skills* are valued more frequently for Primary and Secondary teachers.

Kindergarten (N=40; 8%)	%	Primary (N=214; 45%)	%	Secondary (N=346; 65%)	%
Relationships	20.1	Relationships	15.4	Relationships	14.7
Knowledge of Learners	13.6	Subject Knowledge	11.3	Subject Knowledge	12.6
Patient, Caring	11.7	Patient, Caring	10.6	Teaching Skills	9.2
Dedication	7.8	Professionalism	9.9	Patient, Caring	8.3
Professionalism	7.8	Teaching Skills	9.0	Engaging	8.2
Engaging	6.5	Engaging	7.3	Professionalism	7.1
Make Ideas Clear	6.5	Knowledge of Learners	5.8	Make Ideas Clear	6.7
Intelligence	5.8	Make Ideas Clear	5.7	Knowledge of Learners	5.1
Teaching Skills	4.5	Dedication	3.5	Non-Cognitive Skills	3.5
Subject Knowledge	3.2	Creativity	3.5	Dedication	3.4

Figure 18. Top 10 reported qualities by grade level

Note: these data are only from the Dashboard Marketing Intelligence data collection.

We were unable to make meaningful comparisons between content areas taught due to the high number of content areas and low number of responses representing them, even after combining conceptually similar areas. When data are available from all 23 countries, the sample sizes will make it possible to make these comparisons.

We also compared the responses of males and females to assess if there were any important differences. These comparisons include the British Council data mentioned earlier. Interestingly, males and females had the same Top 10 most frequent responses, and they share the same top four qualities, but in slightly different order (see **Figure 19**).

Male (N=300; 46%)		Female (N=359; 54%)	
	%		%
Relationships	14.9	Patient, Caring	12.9
Subject Knowledge	12.1	Relationships	10.8
Patient, Caring	8.9	Subject Knowledge	9.3
Teaching Skills	8.9	Teaching Skills	7.8
Engaging	7.8	Professionalism	7.3
Professionalism	7.1	Creativity	6.9
Make Ideas Clear	6.8	Engaging	5.5
Knowledge of Learners	5.7	Dedication	5.4
Dedication	4.3	Make Ideas Clear	5.2
Creativity	4.1	Knowledge of Learners	4.9

Figure 19. Top 10 qualities by gender

Note: These data include the British Council survey responses.

Do Survey Responses Align with Teaching Standards and Research?

The third research question driving this study was whether stakeholders' values regarding effective teachers align with the UAE's teaching standards and how survey responses and teaching standards compare to what research tells us about effective teachers and teaching. Research on competencies of effective teachers is broad and often country-specific, therefore we focused primarily on studies identifying competencies to be applied globally to grade school (K-12) level teachers and research in the UAE.

As noted earlier in this report, the national teaching standards for the UAE have been under development, but not released to the public at the time of this report. Therefore we focus on the teaching standards developed by ADEC. They are set in four key areas which focus on the learner, and when taken together, represent the role of the teacher (ADEC, n.d.). These four areas include Profession; Curriculum; Classroom; and Community, and are represented in **Table 2**.

ADEC Professional Standards for Teachers	Survey Results
THE PROFESSION	
<p>Is committed to: Continuous professional development, self-improvement, reflective teaching practice and adjusting practice accordingly (14); The school's vision, mission, processes for improvement and School Improvement Plans; ADEC's code of conduct; Undertaking the required professional duties and responsibilities of teachers; professional accountability; and contributing to a learning community (17)</p>	<p>14 Mindset and passion for continuous learning & challenging oneself to improve 17 Professionalism, duties & responsibilities</p>
<p>Understands: Be respectful of the cultural and historical context of the UAE (24); Promote positive values, attitudes and behaviours (11); Communicate effectively (9); Be creative and have a critical approach towards innovation (3); Share in the collective responsibility for the implementation of policy and practice (17, 18)</p>	<p>3 Creative, innovative 9 Ability to communicate and make information clear; good communication skills 11 Ability to build productive, trusting relationships, relate to, & mentor students 17 See above 18 Able to collaborate with colleagues 24 See above</p>
<p>Demonstrates ability to: The learning process and the learner (12); The heritage and culture of the UAE (24); The policies and practices of the workplace and shares in the collective responsibility for their implementation (17); The need for collaboration in a learning community (18)</p>	<p>12 Knowledge of how students learn & develop; personalize learning 17 See above 18 Collaborator; ability to get along with colleagues 24 Cultural competence; respect for diversity</p>

Table 2. Survey results aligned with ADEC teaching standards

ADEC Professional Standards for Teachers	Survey Results
THE CURRICULUM	
<p>Is committed to: The successful implementation of the ADEC Curriculum (1, 17); Planning for progression across the age and ability range (7, 12); Evaluating the effectiveness of their own teaching on all learners (14, 26)</p>	<p>1 Subject matter knowledge 7 Ability to plan lessons; organized 12 Knowledge of how students learn & develop; personalize learning 14 Mindset & passion for continuous learning & challenging oneself to improve 17 Professionalism, duties & responsibilities 26 Researcher; research mindset</p>
<p>Understands: The philosophy that underpins the ADEC curriculum and the importance of the Standards Continuum (17); Pedagogy that allows for differentiated learning across age and ability range (12, 20); How to design effective learning sequences within and across a series of learning experiences (7, 12); How to implement a variety of appropriate resources to enhance the learning objectives (20)</p>	<p>7 See above 12 See above 17 See above 20 Pedagogy knowledge, skills & methods</p>
<p>Demonstrates ability to: Manage & modify learning for individual groups and whole classes (12, 13, 20); Design opportunities for learners to develop their skills and knowledge in their assigned field of instruction (7); Build on prior learning, and apply new knowledge, understanding and skills to meet learning objectives (12, 20); Use the Curriculum Standards to assess student attainment and progress (13)</p>	<p>7 See above 12 See above 13 Knowledge & use of assessment 20 See above</p>

Table 2. Survey results aligned with ADEC teaching standards (continued)

ADEC Professional Standards for Teachers	Survey Results
THE CLASSROOM	
<p>Is committed to:</p> <p>Promoting high expectations for students (27);</p> <p>A safe, fair, respectful and inclusive environment that meets the needs of all students (8, 11, 12);</p> <p>Collaborative and cooperative learning (20);</p> <p>Effective personalized approaches to learning (12)</p>	<p>8 Ability to manage classrooms</p> <p>11 Ability to build productive, trusting relationships, relate to, & mentor students</p> <p>12 Knowledge of how students learn & develop; personalize learning</p> <p>20 Pedagogy knowledge, skills & methods</p> <p>27 Maintains a challenging and rigorous curriculum for all students</p>
<p>Understands:</p> <p>The multiple pathways through which students develop and learn (12);</p> <p>The management of the learning of individuals, groups and whole classes (8, 12, 20);</p> <p>The importance of delivering the curriculum in a safe and stimulating environment (6, 8);</p> <p>The use of data to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching (13, 14, 26)</p>	<p>6 Engaging; Motivating students to learn</p> <p>8 See above</p> <p>12 See above</p> <p>13 Knowledge & use of assessment</p> <p>14 Mindset & passion for continuous learning & challenging oneself to improve</p> <p>20 Pedagogy knowledge, skills & methods</p> <p>26 Researcher; research minds</p>
<p>Demonstrates ability to:</p> <p>Assess and plan for the needs of students in order to set challenging learning objectives (7, 12, 13, 27);</p> <p>Use a range of teaching strategies and resources, including ICT, taking account of diversity and inclusion (4, 12, 20, 24);</p> <p>Support and guide learners to reflect on their learning and behavior, identifying the progress they have made and their future learning needs (11, 12, 13, 31);</p> <p>Makes responsible decisions to ensure student safety (8, 17)</p>	<p>4 Ability to effectively use technology for learning; current with technology</p> <p>7 Ability to plan lessons; organized</p> <p>8 See above</p> <p>11 See above</p> <p>12 See above</p> <p>13 See above</p> <p>17 Professionalism, duties & responsibilities</p> <p>20 See above</p> <p>24 Cultural competence; respect for diversity</p> <p>27 See above</p> <p>31 Focuses on developing students' "noncognitive" or 21st Century skills</p>

Table 2. Survey results aligned with ADEC teaching standards (continued)

ADEC Professional Standards for Teachers	Survey Results
THE COMMUNITY	
<i>Is committed to:</i>	
Valuing the heritage and culture of the UAE (24);	17 Professionalism, duties & responsibilities
Partnerships with stakeholders and understanding their interests (18, 25);	18 Ability to collaborate along with colleagues
The need to utilize the resources available in the community (None);	24 Cultural competence; respect for diversity
Promoting the school in a positive way (17)	25 Communication with parents, families
<hr/> <i>Understands:</i>	
The local and national context in which the school operates (24);	11 Ability to build productive, trusting relationships, relate to, & mentor students
That education is a partnership between the teachers, parents/family, and students (11, 18, 25);	18 See above
The importance of establishing appropriate relationships with the wider and global community (None)	24 See above
	25 See above
<hr/> <i>Demonstrates ability to:</i>	
Communicate effectively with stakeholders (9, 18, 25);	9 Ability to communicate and make information clear; good communication skills
Recognize and respect parents and other stakeholders and their contribution (18, 25);	18 See above
Provide meaningful feedback to parents (25)	25 See above

Note: Numbers reflect the category codes used in this study, shown in Table A3 in the Appendix. Red font indicates the competencies in the ADEC teaching standards that were not mentioned in survey responses.

Table 2. Survey results aligned with ADEC teaching standards (continued)

What Surprised Us



The key research questions driving this study were

1. whether there were important differences in the qualities that different groups of education stakeholders value for a teacher to be regarded as effective;
2. whether context made a difference in the qualities most valued; and
3. the extent to which the qualities most valued aligned with the national teaching standards and with research on effective teachers and effective teaching.

“All stakeholder groups endorsed the importance of teachers building trusting Relationships and relating well to students, and being Patient, Caring and kind individuals.

”

Regarding research questions 1 and 2, we hypothesized that we would find important differences between what is valued by stakeholder groups (parents, students, etc.); for primary and secondary level teachers; for government and private school teachers; and perhaps, by males and females. However, we were surprised by the general consistency in findings across some of the groups. All stakeholder groups endorsed the importance of teachers building trusting *Relationships* and relating well to students, and being *Patient, Caring* and kind individuals. Parents, students and teachers tended to respond similarly, sharing eight of their top ten most frequently reported competencies. Similarly, the combined researcher/policymaker stakeholder group shared all of their top ten most frequently reported competencies with the principals. Across all five stakeholder groups, five of their top ten most frequently reported competencies were the same. When we compared contexts, the Top 10 lists for government and private schools and gender were the same, although they varied in frequency of reporting. The qualities most valued for Kindergarten, Primary, and Secondary teachers shared 9 of the Top 10 categories.

Regarding research question 3, we found that survey responses aligned to documented competencies of effective teachers and teaching practices in the literature as well as the ADEC teaching standards. There were some standards that were not mentioned in the survey responses: working with communities to support schooling and making use of community resources. There were also several instances where research emphasizes specific competencies that were mentioned, but not frequently, by education stakeholders—e.g., ability to plan effective lessons and learning tasks (*Planning*); provision of a rigorous, *Challenging* curriculum for all learners; use of *Assessment* to monitor learning (reported infrequently by teachers); regular communication with *Families*; having a continuous improvement mindset (*Always Learning*); and working collaboratively with colleagues to improve teaching practice (*Collaboration*).

Researchers note that in order to support student learning, teachers need a complex array of knowledge and skills, based on what we know about how humans learn. Moreover, these requirements are changing in light of the types of knowledge and skills that nations and today's learners require to survive and succeed (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Greenhill, 2010; OECD, 2013). Bransford et al. (2007) broadly define the areas of knowledge and attending skills required for effective teachers as:

- Knowledge of learners and how they learn and develop within social contexts.
- Knowledge of subject matter and curriculum goals.
- Knowledge of teaching, including subject matter, diverse learners, use of assessment, and classroom management.

To that broad list, *21st Century Knowledge and Skills in Educator Preparation* and other reports have added knowledge and use of technology, as well as broader dispositions and professional skills including (but not limited to) general intelligence and analytical thinking; strong communication skills; leadership; collaborative learning; and continuous reflection on one's own practice to learn and improve (Greenhill, 2010).

In our study in the UAE, it was surprising to find that a small percentage of responses from the education professionals—teachers, principals, education researchers and policymakers—included specific knowledge and skills that are well understood to enhance student learning and are emphasized in the ADEC teaching standards. Our findings include the following:

- Only **0.8%** of teachers' responses addressed the teacher's critical knowledge and use of *Assessment* to monitor student progress; for researchers and policymakers, it was their sixth most frequent response and for principals, their tenth most frequent response. Wiliam (2007) and others suggest that the ability to consistently assess student learning progress and adjust instruction accordingly is the single most important aspect of teaching practice to enhance student learning, and therefore we expected to see this competency mentioned more frequently by educators.
- No more than **1.6%** of all educators' responses mentioned competencies related to the essential ability to plan learning activities (*Planning*). Research in a variety of content areas, and particularly in math and science, indicate that the quality of the learning tasks is essential for learning content. For example, in the United States, the National Advisory Board for mathematics concludes that how teachers design tasks for students has many implications for if and how students learn mathematics (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).
- No more than **1.6%** of responses from educators addressed making learning *Challenging* and rigorous for all students, in the belief that all can learn. ADEC standards and research indicate the importance of providing a rigorous curriculum and having high expectations of all students. A "watered-down" curriculum, in fact, has been shown to increase drop-out, repeating grades, and/or needing remediation (Stronge, 2007).

“
It was surprising to find that a small percentage of responses from educators included knowledge and skills known to enhance student learning.

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“None of the researchers and policymakers, and no more than 0.4% of principals and teachers mentioned the importance of focusing on the learning process itself and Deep Learning versus learning outputs such as exam scores and grades.”

- None (**0%**) of the researchers and policymakers, and no more than **0.4%** of principals and teachers mentioned the importance of focusing on the learning process itself and *Deep Learning* versus learning outputs such as exam scores and grades. Entwistle (2000) addresses how such a focus on the part of the teacher influences teaching practice and learning outcomes.
- There was also little mention (< **1.0%**) of important teacher behaviors within the school community, including taking on *Leadership* roles and contributing to the profession; working *Collaboratively* with colleagues (only principals mentioned this); and only principals (**1.8%** of their responses) addressed the important skill of connecting with *Families* to keep them informed about their student's learning and progress. Darling-Hammond (2010) notes the importance of these competencies for effective teaching, and research on effective schools show these practices to be important as well (Fullan, 2003). Moreover, the MoE's education reform programs, such as the 10 x 10 x 10 initiative, emphasizes tasks related to these skills, including parental contributions to education and schools.

It is unclear if the infrequent endorsement of these categories by educators in this study is due to lack of training in or familiarity with at least some of these areas, or for other reasons. It is clear from research, education policy literature, and traditional as well as social media, that confidence in some of these teacher competencies in the UAE is low.⁶ As noted earlier in this report, concerns about teachers and teaching in the UAE include:

- Low status of teaching profession, failure to attract “best and brightest” into teaching; high teacher shortages in the Arab Gulf region
- Low salaries, high teacher absenteeism, high staff turnover, migrant teaching force and student population
- Outdated teacher preparation and training
- Low quality teaching in schools; poorly prepared teachers; reliance on outdated, teacher-centered rote learning and memorization pedagogical approaches
- Corporal punishment of students
- Poor student achievement performance on PISA 2012 in all tested areas.

The above concerns highlight the importance of strong teacher preparation and ongoing professional development in the dispositions, knowledge and skills required to support and enhance student learning.

⁶ For example, see <http://gulfnews.com/news/uae/general/attracting-good-teachers-a-challenge-for-the-uae-1.1246598>

Implications

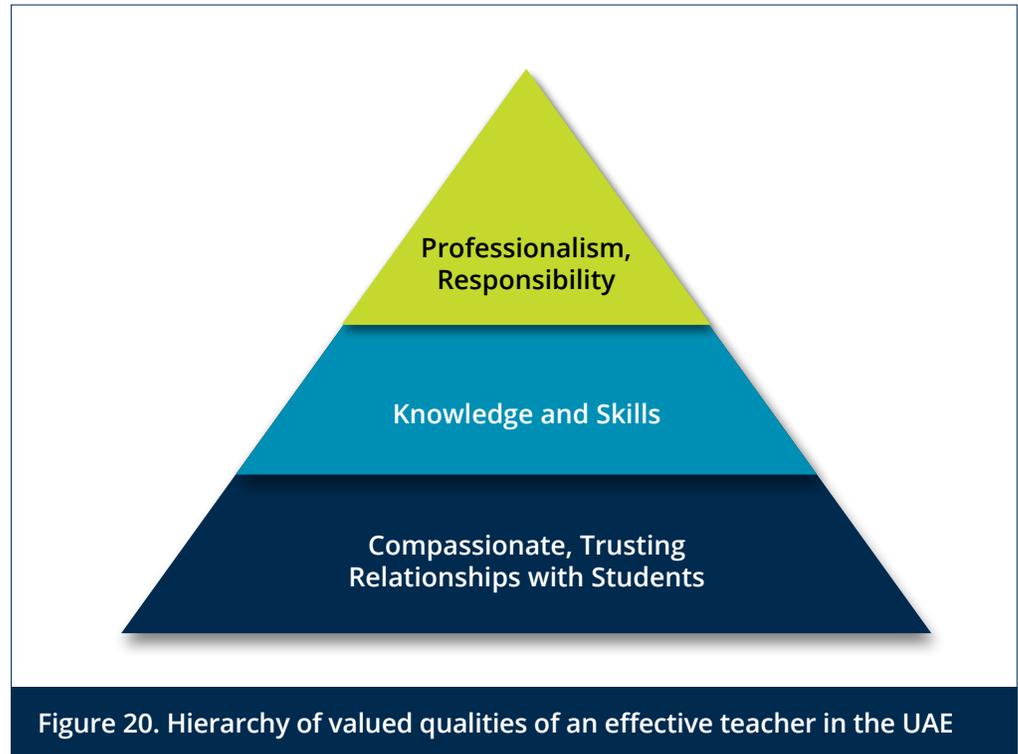
In education research and policy circles, the UAE's education system, despite the massive amounts of spending, is characterized as in need of significant improvements. Poor student performance on international tests and problems hiring skilled employees in the business sector indicate that a significant proportion of students are not able to compete globally in reading, math or science knowledge and skills. Moreover, the quality of the teaching workforce is considered to be a system-wide issue that spans a lack of critical knowledge and skills, lack of professionalism and dedication to the work of teaching, and poor treatment of students, particularly boys.

In light of these documented challenges, it is notable that the surveyed education stakeholders seem to value teacher dispositions of care (patience, compassion, relatedness) first and foremost, along with teaching-specific knowledge and skills. The importance of these dispositions may reflect an underlying belief that without them, a teacher's subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills will do little to help students learn and succeed. Research tells us that when teachers create a safe and supportive learning environment, students are more motivated and consistently engaged. Creating a climate where students feel cared for, that they belong, and where they are free to take risks and make mistakes as they learn new material, is critical for productive learning to occur. As **Figure 20** illustrates, it may be that these dispositions serve as a foundation for effective teaching (i.e., the base of the pyramid) supporting the requisite teaching-specific knowledge and skills as well as professionalism. In combination, these three domains of teacher qualities or competencies cultivate productive student learning.

“

Creating a climate where students feel cared for, that they belong, and where they are free to take risks and make mistakes as they learn new material, is critical for productive learning to occur.

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Given the documented problems with attracting qualified, passionate individuals to teach, as well as some of the world's highest teaching shortages (see Steer et al., 2014), it may be that teacher preparation and training initiatives should add a focus on the development of these critical dispositions of care and character. Research demonstrates that teachers can improve in these areas through careful and purposeful training programs (Taylor & Wasiczko, 2000; Schulte et al., n.d.).

What Our Findings Mean for the UAE



Bourgonje and Tromp (2011) argue that it is critical to formulate a clear definition of teacher effectiveness to meet the goal of placing an effective teacher in every classroom. “Effectiveness” in any field is defined as the ability to produce expected outcomes. The results from this survey can serve as a starting point for developing a shared definition of valued outcomes and therefore, effectiveness as it relates to teaching. The data reflect what stakeholders in the UAE value most regarding the qualities of an effective teacher. Research and literature on effective teaching supports these values. This is a good starting point.

Researchers acknowledge that the benefit of data is in their ability to help us to determine which questions to ask next. The value of our study, is in the use of these results to shape the critical discussions needed for reviewing current pre-service and in-service teacher training, as well as hiring and teacher evaluation policies. The emphasis of UAE stakeholders on the ability of teachers to build productive, trusting relationships and serve as a mentor with students, suggests important areas for teacher preparation, professional growth, and evaluation. Similar statements can be made for other sets of knowledge and skills valued by the survey respondents and supported by research for improving student learning. Low endorsement rates by education professionals (teachers, principals, education researchers and policymakers) regarding critical knowledge and skills for teachers, also suggests potential areas in need of emphasis for training and development.

Some potential areas for teacher training, development and evaluation include:

- **Dispositions:** Focus on what are often referred to as “non-cognitive” factors, including social-emotional intelligence, to support teachers in building respectful, trusting relationships and a productive learning environment to enhance student learning. Improvements in these areas are particularly important in schools where corporal punishment is the norm, and teachers are demoralized. These skills have been linked to academic achievement and career success, and globally, business leadership training is now incorporating a focus on these kinds of skills to build successful leaders. In a recent post in *The Atlantic*, popular author and educator Jessica Lahey (2014) notes that **“if we can figure out how to improve the social relationship that is at the heart of much of students’ learning, we should be able to improve a vast constellation of student outcomes in schools.”**

- **Content knowledge:** Ongoing, teacher-driven, collaborative, often ‘just-in-time’ training to update relevant subject matter knowledge. Poor student performance on PISA 2012 suggests a challenge with teachers’ deep subject matter knowledge in the UAE. Materials can be obtained online, from peers, and/or from external subject knowledge experts such as scientists, engineers, etc. Knowledge transfer from the training to the classroom can be supported by a subject-matter expert coach. Research tells us that when teachers work with coaches, they implement 95% of what they learn in training sessions, whereas those who do not work with coaches implement about 10% of the training (Joyce & Showers, 2002).
- **Pedagogy:** Training in specific pedagogical practices aligned with how humans learn and develop, supported by research and driven by specific learning goals and objectives. Knowledge transfer can be supported by peer observations and modeling by a subject-matter expert coach. Training in learner-centered, active-learning strategies can help teachers shift focus from outdated pedagogical approaches such as rote learning and memorization, to deeper learning and knowledge transfer.
- **Planning instruction/learning activities:** Effective training on how learners learn specific content—e.g., common learning sequences or progressions—and common misconceptions students hold in specific content areas can help teachers to improve instructional planning; develop effective learning activities aligned to individual student needs; understand how to monitor student progress; and focus on the learning process versus passing exams. Research on teachers and teaching in the UAE suggest they are not well-prepared with these basic skills. Lesson planning should be collaborative, with teachers in job-alike subject areas, and vertical (i.e., with teachers of lower and higher grade levels in the same subject areas).
- **Assessment:** Training in the use of assessment for monitoring learner progress and facilitating learner control of their learning. Assessments aligned with the aforementioned learning progressions will help to integrate lesson planning and instructional practices. In our survey, surprisingly few teachers endorsed this critical skill for effective teaching.
- **Features of teacher training:** Researchers note that teacher training in the UAE is “outdated.” Training that is teacher-driven, collaborative, job-embedded (versus single workshops, a.k.a. “one and done”), and supported by coaching or mentoring are research-supported features of effective training for improving practice. Training that emphasizes reflective practice focused on examining teaching practices and the impact on learning, has also been demonstrated to positively impact teacher training and student learning outcomes (McDougall et al., 2007).

Another important area of support for UAE teachers includes a school climate and culture that supports effective teaching and learning. Kokkinos (2007), along with other researchers, found that strategies focused on improving school climate and culture can make a difference. Some potential areas include:

- **Acknowledging and rewarding excellence in teaching.** Research shows that when workers are not recognized for their contributions, and rewards are not based on merit, they become demoralized, less productive and more likely to quit (OECD, 2013). This can help to address the well-documented concerns about low teacher morale and motivation among UAE teachers.
- **Identifying teacher leaders in the building, recognizing their contributions, and leveraging their talents to support their peers to improve practice.** Teacher leadership helps to improve morale and raises the level of instructional excellence in schools where teachers share ideas and successful practices, and support each other. Given the variability in teacher preparation and the difficulty in recruiting teachers in the UAE, strategies that support the development and retention of existing faculty are critical.
- **Fostering productive teacher teams who are given protected time for examining instruction and learning outcomes, and developing strategies for improvement.** This is a well-documented means for enhancing teacher professional growth and improving learner outcomes (Gallimore et al., 2009; Saunders et al., 2009). Stronger teachers can help support their less skilled peers.

Areas for Teacher Training

1. Dispositions
2. Content knowledge
3. Pedagogy
4. Planning instruction
5. Assessment
6. Features of teacher training

Important Considerations

It is important to note that like all research studies, this one has limitations in what we can interpret and conclude from the data we collected. We gathered data across the UAE, from stakeholder groups representing government and private schools, using a variety of methodologies. However, we cannot claim that this sample accurately represents the views of all members of each stakeholder group across the country. Moreover, because we asked respondents to generate their own lists of the qualities, their responses reflect what came to mind at the time of the survey. If given a list of qualities of effective teachers to prioritize, results might be different. Phase 2 of this study will address that question.

We caution against using these survey results to inform a checklist approach to defining effective teaching. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) argue that teaching should not be reduced to a list of behaviors and skills that takes us further away from a clear understanding of what it means to teach. Teaching involves a multitude of factors that occur in a variety of ways, with many moving parts, and **there is no single winning pattern** of knowledge, skills, dispositions, etc.. Yet, as noted throughout this report, research indicates some **common practices and shared understandings of what it means to be effective as a teacher**. Results from our survey in the UAE reaffirm the notion that at its foundation, teaching is about relationships between teachers and learners that ultimately foster learner success, as these communities define it.

Finally, in light of our survey results and their potential use for driving teacher preparation, hiring, training, and/or evaluation, **it cannot be overstated that to be effective teachers, the work conditions and environment, first and foremost, must be well managed**. As others have noted, **school context and community culture have a profound influence** on the way different teacher roles and competencies are understood, prioritized, and practiced (Harley et al., 2000; Bourgonje & Tromp, 2011; Taylor et al., 2012).

In light of these concerns, we hope that the results of this study—reflecting the opinions of a wide array of education stakeholders, from different regions across the UAE, representing government and private schools—will be used to inform and guide the definition of what it means to be an effective teacher in the context of the culture in which teaching and learning occur.

“

We hope this study will be used to inform and guide the definition of what it means to be an effective teacher in the context of the culture in which teaching and learning occur.

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Appendix



Participating Countries	Data Collection Agency
Vietnam	Cimigo
Hong Kong	
Singapore	
Japan	
Australia	Helme Consulting
India	Nielsen India
South Africa	Dashboard Marketing Intelligence
USA	
Canada	
Mexico	
Argentina	
Brazil	
England	
Germany	
Poland	
Finland	
United Arab Emirates	
Qatar	
Saudi Arabia	
Iran	
Turkey	
Morocco	
Egypt	

Table A1. Participating countries

Description Of Study Methods

Dashboard collected data from four regions in the UAE. **Figure A1** shows the proportion of responses from each emirate. Additionally, the *British Council* administered our survey online to teachers (n=115) and administrators (n=14) in International schools in the UAE. *Their data are included in some, but not all analyses in this report, given the different timing and method for collecting data.*

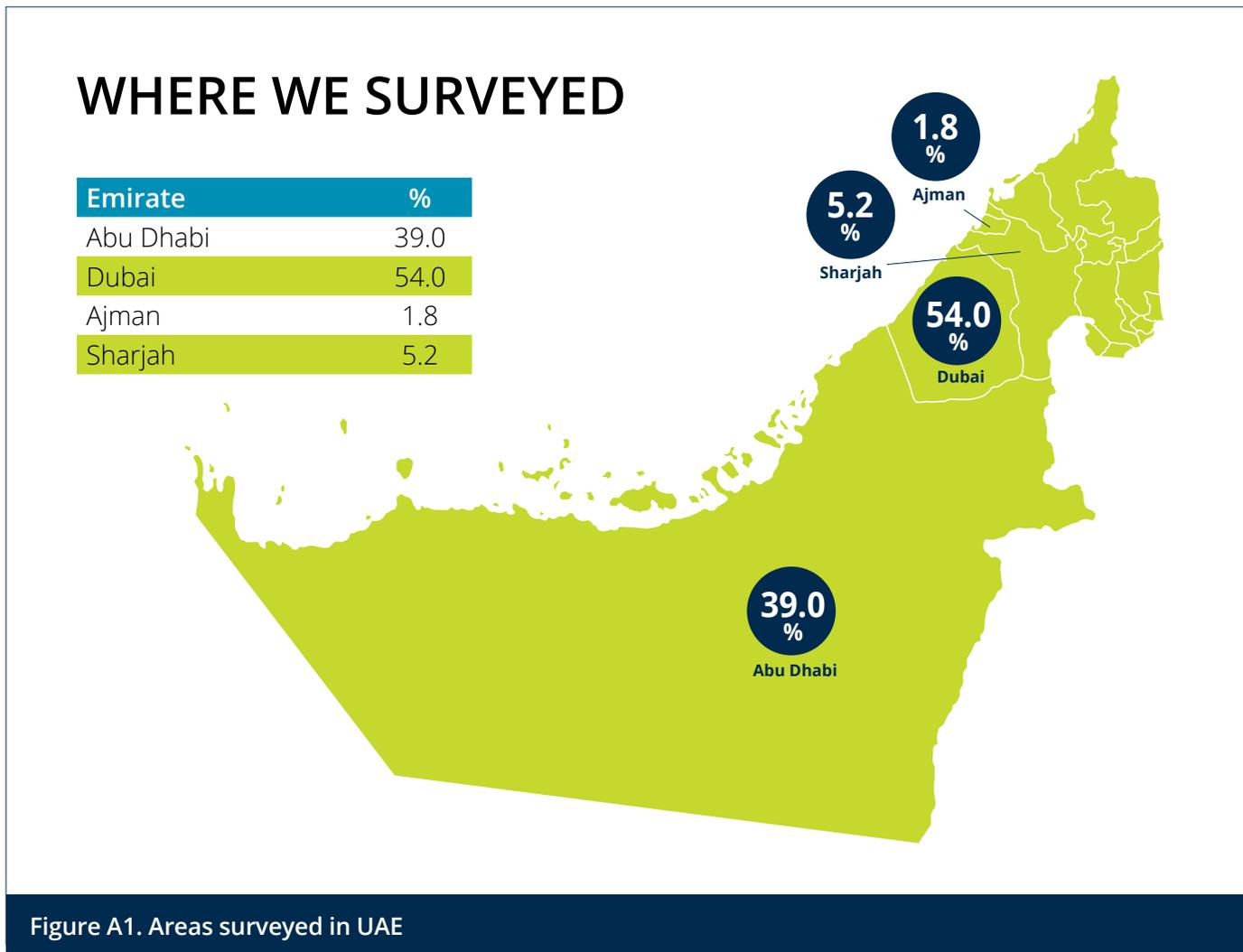


Figure A1. Areas surveyed in UAE

These data do not include the British Council data; those respondents were not asked their location within the UAE on the survey.

How We Surveyed

Dashboard Marketing Intelligence used three methods for data collection with the different stakeholder groups in the UAE:

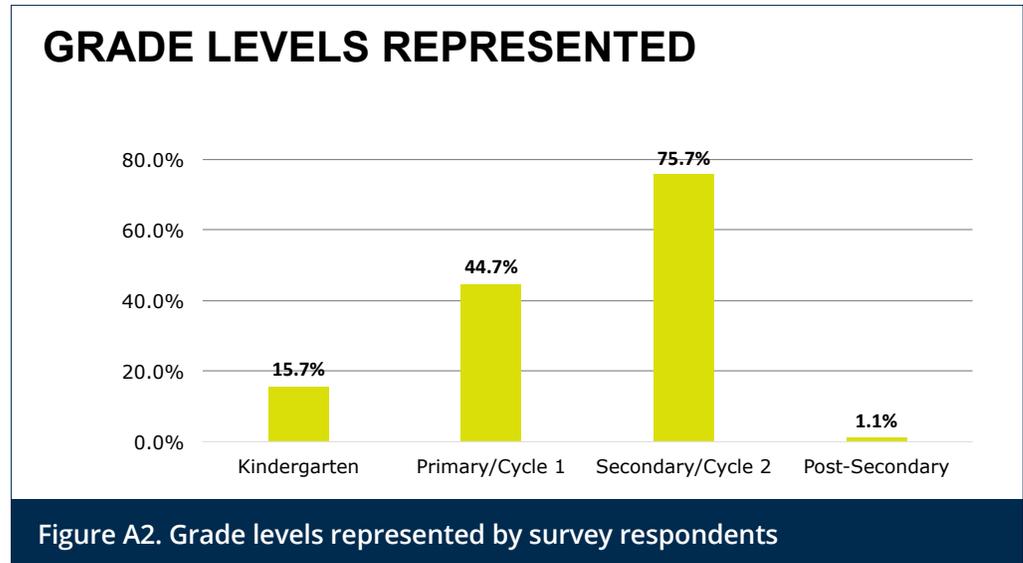
Respondent Group	Data Collection Method
Students (Urban)	Face-to-face (intercept)
Students (Semi-Urban)	Face-to-face (intercept)
Parents (Urban)	Online Panel
Parents (Semi-Urban)	Face-to-face
Teachers (Urban)	CATI
Teachers (Semi-Urban)	CATI
School Leaders (Urban)	Face-to-face (appointment)
School Leaders (Semi-Urban)	Face-to-face (appointment)
Researchers/policymakers	Face-to-face (appointment)

Table A2. Data collection methods by stakeholders

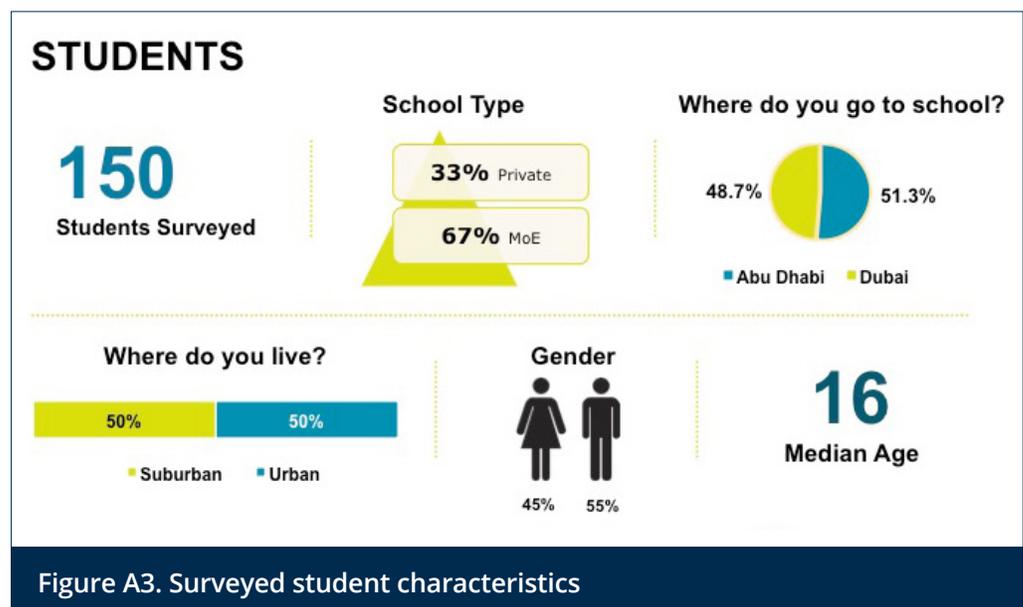
Using purposive sampling, we specified quotas for government (public) and private school responses, and for primary and secondary schools. Data quality was monitored by random quality checks and voice recordings for a sub-sample (5-15%) of the interviews.

Who We Surveyed

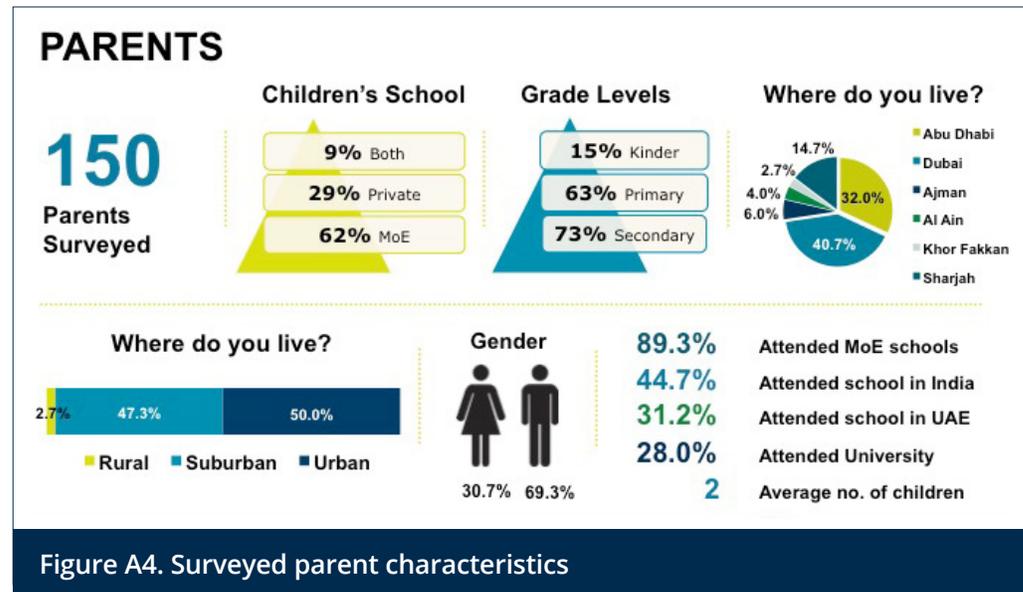
In total, we surveyed 530 respondents with the help of Dashboard Marketing Intelligence. **Figure A2** shows the grade levels represented by the respondents in the survey. All students were in high school.



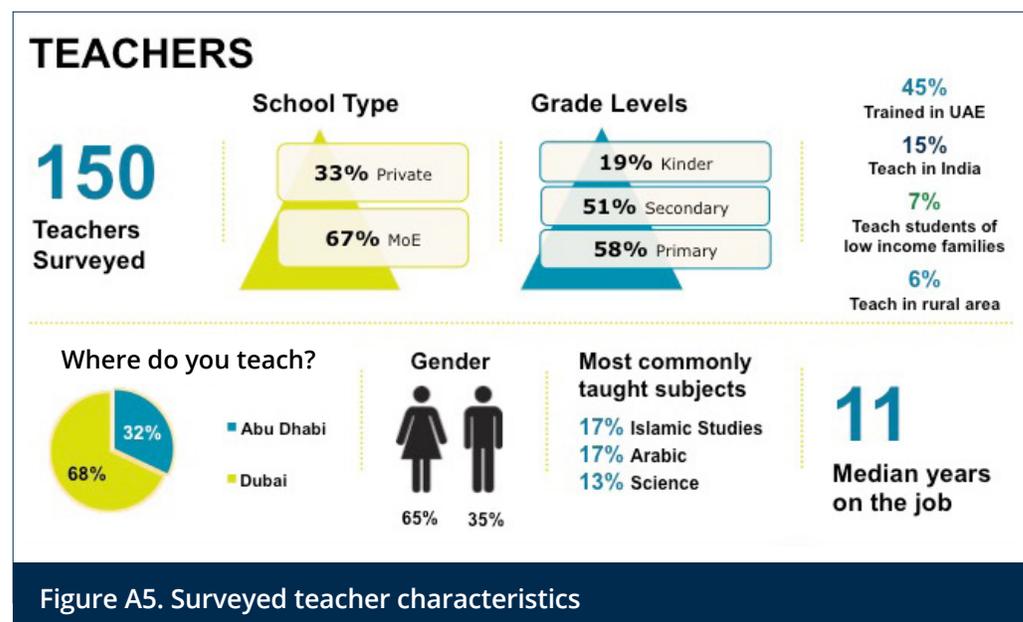
Figures A3 – A7 summarize key characteristics of each of the surveyed groups. **Figure A8** describes the additional data for 115 teachers and 14 administrators collected separately by the British Council, using the same online survey. As **Figure A3** shows for the **students**, there were a few more males (55%) than females who responded, all lived in urban and suburban areas, and most attended government schools. Ages ranged from 15-18, and the median was 16.



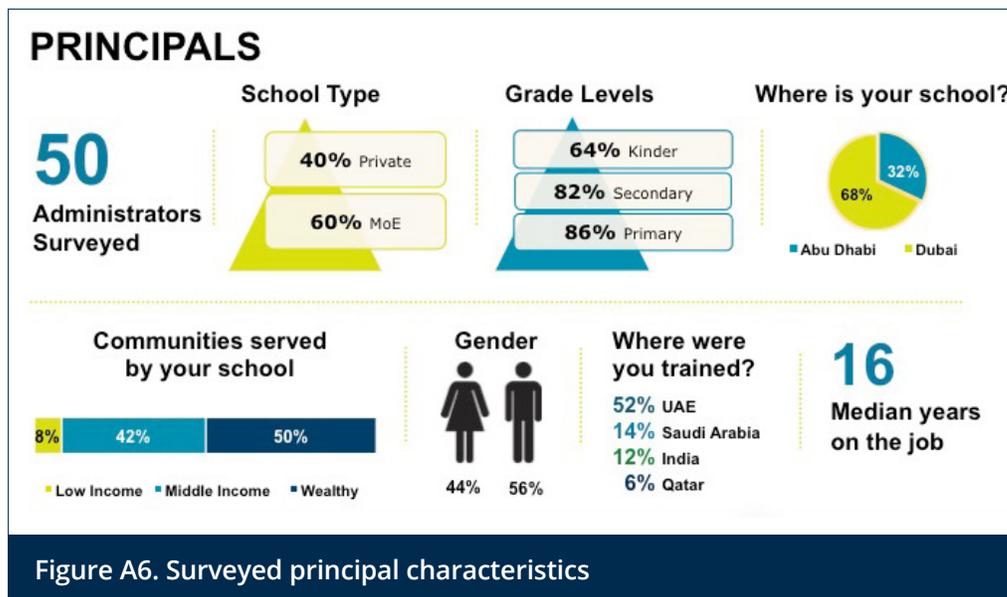
For **parents**, there were more male respondents (69.3%), and most (89.3%) attended government schools as children. Twenty-eight percent (28%) had some sort of post-secondary schooling, and almost half (44.7%) had attended school in India. Almost two-thirds (62%) send their children to government/MoE schools.



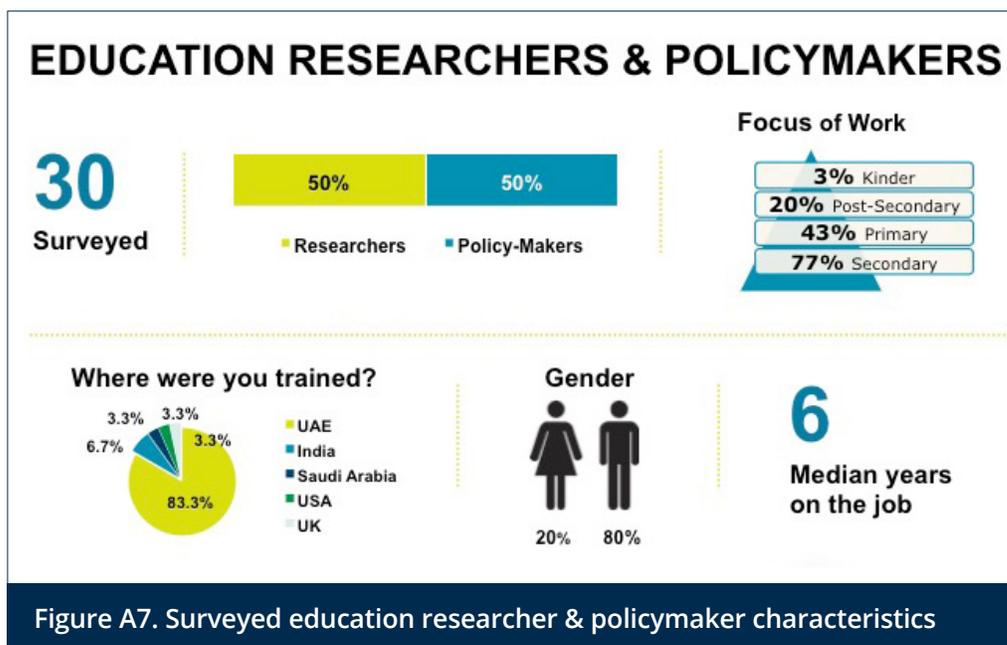
The **teacher** respondents represented a wide range of experience, from 2 – 25 years on the job, and the median of 11 years suggests that on average, these were experienced teachers. Almost one half (45%) were trained in the UAE, and a higher proportion of respondents were female (65%) compared to the other stakeholder groups. About two-thirds (67%) represented government/MoE schools.



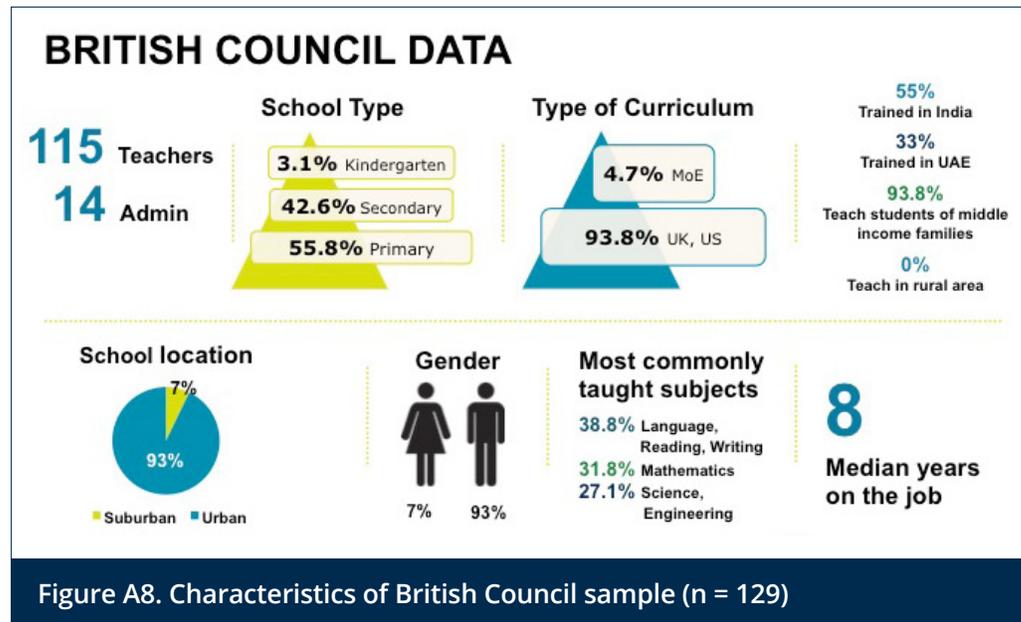
The surveyed **principals** also represented a range of experience, from 2 to 29 years on the job, with a median of 16 years. This suggests that on average, this is an experienced group of principals. Like the teachers, about half (52%) were trained in the UAE and 60% represented government (MoE) schools. There were slightly more males (56%) than females represented.



The **education researchers** and **policymakers** we surveyed were largely trained in the UAE (83.3%). Years of experience ranged from 3-13, with a median of 6 years, suggesting that on average, this was a somewhat less experienced group of individuals. There was equal representation by researchers and policymakers, and 80% were male.



In a separate data collection effort, the British Council administered the same survey online, with teachers (n=115) and administrators (n=14) of International schools. About half (55%) of the **educators** surveyed were trained in India, and had a median of 8 years of experience. Nearly all (93%) were male and taught either a UK or a US curriculum (93.8%).



Coding Survey Responses

We created a coding scheme for all responses. As a starting place, we used research about the competencies of effective teachers as a guide. Teachers, principals, education policymakers and researchers with expertise in teacher effectiveness then reviewed the list and provided feedback. As our research team coded more responses, we updated and revised the list, aiming for categories that were not so broad as to be unhelpful, and not so specific as to be too complex for comparisons across stakeholder groups and countries. Our final list and a description of each category is below in **Table A3**.

We measured interrater agreement using Fleiss' Kappa statistic, specifying 0.75 or higher as the goal. We trained raters until they could meet or exceed this requirement.

Characteristic	Description
(1) Subject Knowledge	Mastery or expertise in one's content or subject area. Includes knowledge of the curriculum, learning objectives and/or standards in the given subject area
(2) Dedication	Dedication, passion, or commitment to one's work as a teacher; commitment to help all learners succeed
(3) Creativity	Qualities indicating the ability to think creatively, adapt, or embrace new ideas or teaching styles; includes being innovative
(4) Technology	Familiarity and/or fluency with and ability to use technology for teaching and learning; keeping current or up-to-date with technology
(5) Patient, Caring Personality	Positive personality characteristics, e.g., patient, caring, kind, fair, humorous, friendly
(6) Engaging	Ability to make class fun and/or engaging and motivates learners to learn; use of engaging learning tasks and/or instructional strategies
(7) Planning	Ability to effectively plan lessons for mastering important content, as well as being organized more generally; ability to organize the learning for the learner
(8) Class Management	Ability to effectively manage classrooms, learner behavior, and time for learning; develop classroom routines to maximize learning time; create a productive learning environment
(9) Make Ideas, Content Clear	Ability to present information in a clear, accessible manner
(10) Leadership	Qualities related to being a leader, e.g., decision-making skills, visionary, influential etc. Contributes to the profession
(11) Relationships	Ability to understand and establish trusting, productive relationships with learners; includes a mentoring role
(12) Know Learners	Understand how learners learn and develop, cognitively, socially, and emotionally, and adapt content to meet the needs of a range of learners/diverse learner populations, including those with special needs; attend to the individual needs of learners
(13) Use of Assessment	Assessment literacy, including the ability to develop and/or use assessments to evaluate learning, provide feedback to learners from the assessments, and/or monitor or track learning progress
(14) Always Learning	Willingness/passion/desire to learn and develop, to challenge oneself to improve, to reflect on one's practice, and accept constructive criticism. Includes desire to stay updated on relevant knowledge and skills in one's field, engaging in ongoing professional development
(15) Belief in Self	Confidence in oneself
(16) Intelligence	General intelligence and/or being well-informed; a strong general fund of knowledge (not specific to the content being taught); critical thinking, analytical and problem-solving abilities
(17) Professionalism	Workplace professionalism and responsibility (e.g., honesty, loyalty, punctuality); awareness of and compliance with rules and policies of the education system
(18) Collaborative	Ability to work well with colleagues; shares knowledge and skills with colleagues; cooperative and works with others to improve as a team
(19) Moral	Good moral character or general ethics; principled; can include religiosity and spirituality
(20) Teaching Skills	Knowledge and use of various pedagogical/teaching techniques, general as well as specific to a given content area; pedagogical methods or approach
(22) Qualifications	Possessing necessary preparation and credentials for teaching the grade levels and subject matter
(23) English Fluency	Having the knowledge and skills to teach English to non-native speakers
(24) Cultural Competence	Knowledge, appreciation and respect for different cultures and backgrounds; tolerant, unbiased regarding different learner backgrounds

Table A3. Coding categories of characteristics/competencies of effective teachers

Characteristic	Description
(25) Families	Ability to communicate and build relationships with learners' parents and families; includes families in learner's education
(26) Research	Ability to conduct and understand research; studying one's own practice and the impact on learners (e.g., action research, lesson study)
(27) Challenging	Belief that all learners can learn; maintaining a challenging, rigorous curriculum for all learners
(28) Political Context and/or Beliefs	The teacher as part of a political system in which education serves a specific role or purpose; reinforces political beliefs (especially in closed societies); or holds specific political beliefs (e.g., democratic, communist)
(31) Non-Cognitive Skills	Focus on teaching learners the skills required to be successful in college and/or a career, e.g., learning how to be an independent learner, how to work collaboratively with others; also known as 21st Century and/or "non-cognitive" skills. Includes career guidance for learners
(32) Deep Learning	Values the learning process and focuses on "deeper" learning and knowledge transfer vs. rote learning (memorization of and ability to recall facts) and exam scores
(21, 29, 30) "Other"	Either odd responses (e.g., "eccentric," "well-traveled") or responses too general to code, e.g., "experienced" or "effective" (essentially repeating the question)

Note: Numbers reflecting coding system the research team used for survey responses, and checking alignment with teaching standards and research.

Table A3. Coding categories of characteristics/competencies of effective teachers (continued)

