

## **Three Keys to Retaining Talented Teachers in the UAE: Leadership, Community, and Work-Life Balance – A Phenomenological Case Study in the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah**

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The United Arab Emirates hires many teachers from abroad to work in both the private and public school systems. Recruiting foreign teachers can be exceedingly costly, especially when one considers the financial investment associated with air fare, health insurance, housing, transportation, and a competitive salary, along with the substantial processing time involved in issuing work visas, professional and intercultural training. One way organizations may be able to save on additional expenditures is to retain the teachers who have been hired and are already settled in the country. Naturally, a substantial part of the decision for the teacher to remain working and living in the UAE lies with the expatriate teacher. This exploratory, case study employed a qualitative approach in which descriptive data was collected from six in-depth, semi-structured interviews exploring job satisfaction as one, of what may be other, indicators associated with length-of-stay among expatriate teachers in the UAE. These descriptive data were analyzed using an interpretive analysis, which culminated with three selective codes: (1) Leadership and community are key to expatriate teacher's job satisfaction; (2) School leaders' engagement in improving behavior management would improve satisfaction; and (3) Positive work-life balance may influence expatriate teachers' length of stay in the UAE. Taken collectively, this data may assist decision-makers, school leaders, and policy-makers on how to foster environments that promote retention among expatriate teachers in the UAE.

*Keywords:* expatriate teachers, UAE, job satisfaction, work-life balance, school leadership

### **Introduction and Background of the Problem**

While job satisfaction has been researched thoroughly amongst teachers in abundance, there is disagreement on the best way to measure job satisfaction; leading to a balkanization of the research (Pepe, Addimando, & Veronese, 2017, p. 397). When measuring job satisfaction of teachers, researchers have gone to great lengths to mitigate different confounding variables, or at least explain them; whether it is age and/or gender differences (Ma & MacMillan, 1999), emotional

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and stress level differences (Parveen & Bano, 2019) or differences in the country of practice (Pepe, Addimando, & Veronese, 2017). Although job satisfaction among teachers is a well-researched area, there is limited empirical data concerning the job satisfaction of expatriate teachers in public schools in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). As such, it would be beneficial to have a higher retention rate of those teachers, especially given the substantial cost of recruiting and relocating expatriate teachers, and their families, to the UAE. Additionally, in order to keep employees in any field satisfied with their job, a successful onboarding phase is necessary, and this is especially true for international employees (Bauer, 2022). The aim of this research is to understand the influence job satisfaction may have on the length of stay of expatriate public-school teachers in Ras Al Khaimah, UAE.

The reasons for which job satisfaction continues to empirically intrigue managers, practitioners, and researchers are easily listed, and are mainly linked to the awareness that “happy employees” can lead organizations to prosper more (Pepe, Addimando, & Veronese, 2017). This leads to the corollary that unhappy employees do not lead organizations to prosper more, with a direct connection to multiple motivation theories. The cost of turnover to organizations in the UAE that hire teachers from foreign countries is more than that of schools that hire teachers from within their own country. Parveen and Bano (2019) state that stressors felt by teachers that are not addressed will eventually negatively impact students. This can be amplified in the UAE when a teacher, who may be experiencing high levels of stress, leaves their position before the end of their contract; recruiting a replacement is not a fast process. Positive and negative emotions were found to be significant moderators between the relationship of teachers’ stress and job satisfaction (Parveen & Bano, 2019, p. 353). Perceived workload, student behavior, and teacher cooperation influence a teacher’s job satisfaction (Toropova, Myrberg, & Johansson, 2021). Demographics may also play a role in teacher satisfaction; such factors include gender, years of experience, and differing employment status (Ma & MacMillan, 1999).

According to Parveen and Bano, the rate of turnover in educational institutions and instances of early retirement has increased compared to previous years (Parveen & Bano, 2019, p. 355). Many of the factors that positively or negatively affect teachers’ job satisfaction appear to be universal. Teachers who are teaching outside of their home country may experience additional stressors in addition to those they would likely experience in their home country.

A teacher moving from New York to Los Angeles, London to Liverpool, or Ras Al Khaimah to Abu Dhabi will probably experience at least some levels of stress. Although the cities in this example may be quite different, they are significantly similar in terms of language, culture, social and political contexts. There is not much change in the non-work environment for someone changing jobs domestically. This is not the case for a teacher moving from the United States or the United Kingdom to the Middle East. The culture, weather, food, daily customs, and language are all different (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991). While for some, these new experiences might be the reason for relocating to the UAE, some individuals may overlook these aspects before making the move.

Expatriate teachers must adapt to two cultures when they arrive to teach in the UAE: national culture and organizational culture. Taken collectively, these changes may create disruptions in both the expatriates' professional and personal lives. This may also affect the job performance, especially when job expectations may be unfamiliar and/or ambiguous (Selmer & Luring, 2011). This, too, may lead to increased levels of anxiety as the expatriate teacher is learning what is expected of them at their new position. Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou (1991 p. 293), identify three facets of international adjustments for expatriate workers: (1) to the job; (2) to the environment in general; (3) and to the locals of the host country. They also identified two phases of adjustment: the pre-departure or 'anticipatory' adjustment and the post-arrival or 'in-country' adjustment. Individuals who do some research of the region, talk to others who have worked in the Middle East, and are adaptable will have a higher chance of staying for an extended period of time. Individuals who may not possess certain characteristics, are not tolerant, flexible, or adaptable, may not enjoy their time teaching in the UAE (McLean, McKimm, & Major, 2014).

### **Expatriate Experiences**

As stated earlier, there is limited research on the lived experiences of expatriate teachers in the Middle East; a thorough review of the literature reveals, however, expatriate experiences in other fields. Research suggests that expatriates work abroad primarily due to pay and/or job opportunity (Bunel, 2017; Cherry, 2009; McLean, McKimm, & Major, 2014; Sappinen, 1993; Selmer & Luring, 2011), chance to experience a new culture, gain work experience, and travel (McLean, McKimm, & Major, 2014). However, expatriate experiences are varied. There is an abundance of challenges or negatives, identified when compared to benefits, or positives, of being an expatriate worker. This is likely due to a lack of need in research when something is successful; rather research lends itself to fixing problems in areas that are unsuccessful and need reform. Research also suggests that individuals may face a difficult adjustment to a new location/culture (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Bunel 2017; Cherry, 2009; McLean, McKimm, & Major 2014; Sappinen, 1993; Selmer & Luring, 2011), distance from home country (McLean, McKimm, & Major, 2014), difficulty with host country language (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Cherry, 2009; McLean, McKimm, & Major, 2014; Sappinen, 1993), lack of employment opportunities for the spouse (Cherry, 2009), and difficulty with the norms and culture of the host country work environment (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Bunel, 2017; Cherry, 2009; McLean, McKimm, & Major 2014; Sappinen, 1993; Selmer & Luring, 2011). Expatriate employees psychological well-being has been shown to be affected by their perceptions of their work-life balance (Ballesteros-Leiva, Poilpot-Rocaboy, & St-Onge, 2017). To make hiring expatriate employees financially beneficial these negatives need to be minimalized to prevent employee turnover.

## **Solutions Proposed**

With regard to the challenges expatriates encounter working abroad, researchers have identified potential solutions. Selmer and Luring (2011) focused on decreasing workload and having more clear objectives for expatriate employees. McLean, McKimm, and Major (2014) had several suggestions: talking to someone who has already taught in the Middle East (“doing your homework”), working to learn the local language, taking a trip to the country before you start the position (if one has the means), and wanting to work in the country not just for material gain. Many of these recommendations are oriented toward employers. For example, employers should be aware of and empathetic toward cultural differences, (Sappinen, 1993). They could also provide language training, social support networks, and job placement assistance for spouses. Finally, employers could implement a screening process that looks at aspects that may identify an employee who would be a good fit for working abroad, including open-mindedness, flexibility, and cultural empathy (Cherry, 2009; McLean, McKimm, & Major, 2014). When looking at schools specifically, leaders can create opportunities for all parents to become familiar with the teachers from outside of the country (Đurišić, & Bunijevac, 2017). This interaction may help all parties to become more familiar with each other and their expectations. In summary, there are challenges in retaining expatriate workers for extended time periods. This research explored the perceptions of expatriate employees in Ras Al Khaimah, UAE public schools: the extent to which distance plays a role, how work/life balance affects their job satisfaction, and evaluating what the teachers believe can be done to improve the situation.

## **Research Methodology and Data Analysis**

The purpose of this study was to discern the degree to which job satisfaction plays in the retention of public-school teachers in the UAE. Teacher retention is already a domestic issue (with some estimates saying 19 to 30% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years) and it may become much more costly when teachers are hired from abroad (Mulvahill, 2019). The research questions that this study sought to address are:

- In what ways does job satisfaction influence the length of stay of cycle two and cycle three public school expatriate teachers in the UAE?
- In what ways does work/life balance attribute to teacher job satisfaction amongst public school teachers in the UAE?

This study employed a phenomenological case-study in order to collect and analyze in-depth, highly descriptive data concerning the lived experiences of expatriate public school teachers in Ras Al Khaimah, UAE.

## Data Collection

For the purposes of this exploratory study, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews in order to solicit descriptive data from volunteers. Since it may be difficult for people to express themselves to others, ensuring participants are at ease during the interview process was imperative. This was critical to ascertain the lived experiences of participants and acquire an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. Interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The researchers employed member-checking, in which participants verified the accuracy of transcripts. Upon verification of the authenticity and accuracy of the data, the original, raw data audio files were destroyed to preserve anonymity of participants.

An interview protocol was developed to include open-ended questions that provided the interviewee an opportunity to fully express themselves. Samples of the types of questions asked by the interviews may be found in Table 1. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, in English, and continued until saturation was reached by the researchers. Saturation occurs when the researchers ceases to collect new data from participants; in the case of this particular study, saturation was reached at six participants due to the purposeful nature of the sampling, as described below in population sampling.

*Table 1. Sample Interview Questions*

No	Sample Question
1	What were your expectations upon accepting the position to teach in the UAE?
2	How does your actual experience compare to your expectations
3	How much research did you do before moving to the UAE?
4	How long do you anticipate staying in the UAE? What makes you feel that way
5	How would you describe your work/life balance?
6	How does your level of job satisfaction compare to previous teaching positions?
7	How would you describe your over-all happiness here during your stay?
8	In what ways do you feel the current pandemic has influenced any of your previous answers?

## Population Sampling

Given the qualitative nature of this study, the researchers utilized a purposeful sampling approach, in which only those participants who met the specified criteria were eligible to volunteer to participate. Convenience sampling, in which the researchers solicit participation from potential participants from a convenient sample were contacted. Participants were eligible for participation based on the criteria below.

**Criterion One: Expatriate Status.** This study sought to understand how job satisfaction influences retention of expatriate teachers; as such, only those teachers who are expatriates who were currently living and working in the UAE were eligible for participation. The experiences of local teachers are beyond the scope of this study.

**Criterion Two: Length of Time in the UAE.** This study sought to understand the ways in which time teaching abroad influences job satisfaction, only those teachers who are expatriates who have spent a minimum of one year abroad, teaching in the UAE, were eligible for participation. Expatriate teachers with less than one year teaching experience abroad are beyond the scope of this study.

**Criterion Three: Teachers with Prior Classroom Experience Outside of the UAE.** This study sought to understand how teaching abroad may influence job satisfaction compared to teaching in the expatriate’s home country; as such, only teachers who have prior teaching experiences before teaching in the UAE were eligible for participation. The experiences of teachers that have no experience teaching outside of the UAE are beyond the scope of this study.

**Criterion Four: Age of the Participants.** Due to the criteria above, this study limited eligibility to teachers who are at least 25 years of age. Teachers under the age of twenty-five will not likely have attained the required years of experience.

**Criterion Five: English Proficiency.** All interviews for this study were conducted in English; as such, only teachers who are proficient in English were eligible for participation. The experiences of teachers that are not proficient in English are beyond the scope of this study.

Six teachers, two from the United States and four from the United Kingdom, were interviewed using a semi-structured protocol to collect in-depth data concerning their lived experiences living and working in the UAE. Each participant has been assigned a pseudonym and their background details have been presented in ranges in order to safeguard their anonymity. The participants’ background information is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants Background Information

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Years Teaching	Country of Origin
Rick	Man	30-35	8	United Kingdom
Justin	Man	40-45	10	United States
Ramona	Woman	45-50	12	United Kingdom
Violet	Woman	40-45	18	United Kingdom
John	Man	35-40	15	United States
Coleen	Woman	40-45	14	United Kingdom

## Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analyzed through multiple stages of coding, employing an interpretive analysis, in which descriptive data are interpreted for meaning as it relates to the research questions guiding the study. Toward this end, the researchers began with open coding, in which basic units of data related to the research questions were identified. These open codes were then categorized according to similar attributes into axial codes. Open and axial coding was ongoing until data saturation was achieved. Finally, axial codes were classified into selective codes, which were then used to generate themes for the researchers to form the basis

of the narrative. The researchers ensured the research questions were adequately addressed, and whether new questions arise. Although it is not possible to remove all bias, the researchers exerted purposeful effort in applying reflexivity to remain empathetically neutral during the entire research process.

### **Ethics**

Maintaining ethics in research is critical for all researchers. For this study, the researchers ensured that each interviewee was given a consent form that describes the study and gave them a right to withdraw themselves at any time without consequence. All data and personal information solicited during data collection was kept confidential at all times: participants were granted full anonymity and no identifiable information was collected at any time. This is standard for this type of research but of utmost importance. For this research it was imperative all participants felt comfortable in speaking freely and candidly, especially considering their current status as employees. This research was designed to provide individual participants to describe their lived experiences with the aim of developing a greater understanding of the influences that current expatriate teachers face in terms of leaving family, friends, country, and culture behind to make a positive impact in the UAE. If all participants shared openly, the researchers were much better suited to understand these influencing factors and infer potential implications for and future expatriate teachers.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

This study has been delimited to the scope of expatriate teachers currently living and working, in the UAE. The lived experiences of expatriate teachers elsewhere are beyond the scope of this study. This study was further delimited to those individuals who have spent a minimum of one year abroad and was conducted only in English. While the intent was not to exclude non-native English-speaking teachers from this study, it did require participants to be fluent English speakers, so they are able to express their perspectives fully and freely. Further, the nature of this research rested on the interviewees' willingness to be open and honest. While precautions to maintain confidentiality at all times were taken, there may have been participants who remained concerned; these individuals may have been less willing to share their true perceptions and lived experiences.

Limitations of this study primarily center on the qualitative nature of the study. As this study employed a purposeful sample best suited to address the researchers' questions guiding this inquiry, the findings of this study may not be generalized to other populations. While generalizability is not the goal of this study, its significant value rests on the depth of knowledge concerning the lived experiences of real, expatriate teachers in the UAE.

## Results and Discussion

This study examines the degree to which job satisfaction and work-life balance may influence the length of stay of expatriate teachers in Ras Al Khaimah public schools. The analysis revealed three selective codes that are discussed below. A summary of selected quotes is included below in Table 3.

Table 3. Participants and Selected Quotes

Pseudonym	Selected Quote on Job Satisfaction (RQ1)	Selected Quote on Work-Life Balance (RA2)
Rick	... to be looked down on and to be treated a certain way, it makes it harder to stay here due to that...	...taking [my kids] to the aquarium, to the swimming pool, to the beach all the time, there is a lot more to do here [than back home]...
Justin	I was not given a warm welcome... they just put us in the media room and we kept our stuff there.	I really enjoy it here in RAK... we only work from seven to two, approximately.
Ramona	I miss that... be[ing] more interconnected	[less] preparation time [than back home] because everyone is sharing [the workload]
Violet	Sometimes you work so hard and at the end of the day, the results, your student's results, don't show [how much effort you put in]	I get to spend more time with my kids here than I would get to [in the UK]
John	I had more of a sense of purpose [teaching in the US] and I felt I was connecting with the kids more	...here, I do my job, and go home. I'm not involved in [extra curricula activities] so I have more time for myself
Coleen	...unrealistic work expectations, 30 plus hours and six curriculums. When I was teaching [in a different country], the maximum was 24 hours.	I've met some great people here and really love spending time with my friends.

### Leadership and Community Are Key to Expatriate Teacher's Job Satisfaction

The six participants in this phenomenological case-study report that they feel less satisfied with their professional teaching experiences in the UAE than in other locations. This is primarily attributable to a consistent perception among participants that there is little to no community present – neither in a professional nor personal sense. Justin stated, “When [I] first got [to my first school in RAK], I was not given a warm welcome. We weren't even given our own room. They just put us in the media room and we kept our stuff there. When they had meetings, we had to clear out.” Rick echoed similar sentiments, “As [a black man] and a teacher, it's difficult because you feel like you're trying to make a difference, but then to be looked down on and to be treated a certain way, it makes it harder to stay here due to that...I don't want my kids to experience that as well as they get older...it makes it harder to stay here for as long as I would like to.” Both Justin and Rick indicate that they do feel as though they belong. They were not welcomed into a professional working space in a meaningful way, and Rick even suggests that he is looked down upon due to his race. Romona, likewise, has experienced challenges



associated with race and equity, "...I'm from a really like racially mixed city...and I miss that, like, I miss like the, like equality and just being able to jam with different people...and just be[ing] more interconnected." While this sample of participants are coping through challenges that may, to some degree, be addressed by the school leaders, the reality is that some of these challenges – particularly those faced by teachers of color extend beyond the school and into socially constructed stereotypes. While schools cannot, independently, eradicate racist tendencies, there is a substantial amount of work that could be done to improve the professional and personal environments in which teachers circulate.

These unpleasant experiences are further exacerbated by what participants interpret as poor leadership, coupled with motivational challenges. All six of this sample's population reported experiencing challenges with inconsistent leadership, Justin referred to his school leadership this way, "It's like wearing a pair of shoes all day that are too tight, then getting to take them off." Violet shared even more explicitly her frustration with interacting with individuals whom she feels lack the requisite knowledge and skills, "[someone] in the position of DCM (District Cluster Manager) should know more than I know... [and] should be able to give me valuable advice. I do not understand how some of these people were placed in these positions of leadership." Her experiences indicate that she does not feel that those in senior management positions are well-suited to helping guide those who need their support. This commonly held perception among participants may be a factor in eroding trust between leaders and those they lead (Simons, 1999). This sentiment was articulated by John, when he discussed how he had not received critical guidance from the school on how to process required documentation, "...you have to depend on other people's experiences [and] everyone's experiences [are] not the same... when I got my visa [renewed], it was frustrating because I had to make several trips the MOE office because they weren't effectively communicating what [documentation is] needed." John clearly could have benefitted from clear guidance on common governmental procedures required by expatriate teachers in the UAE, rather than asking his colleagues whom, he reported, experienced different processes. While, surely, schools cannot streamline the implementation of governmental procedures, there is still room for schools to assist and facilitate these processes in meaningful ways.

### **School Leaders' Engagement in Improving Behavior Management Would Improve Satisfaction**

Finally, teachers also reported frustration with the lack of student motivation inside the classroom. Rick shared that he has "seen that it [putting in the extra effort outside of teaching hours] doesn't really make much of a difference [to the students' grades]". John has a similar perspective, "[back in my home country] I taught inner-city kids and I definitely had more sense of purpose and felt like I connected with my students more." John suggests that the system rewards students irrespective of effort or performance, "It's like the kids here, they aren't really that curious. They know [no matter how little effort they put in] they'll get good jobs [after leaving school]." Violet also references effort, and makes a connection to the

role of leadership in fostering both student and teacher motivation, “I think in [my home country] there are tangible results for whatever effort you put in. Things are standardized, so if you taught the kids the right curriculum, you knew that at the end of the day, at the end of the term... the kids would do well, and you would feel good as a teacher.” Rick added how this lack of motivation influences his approach to his classes, “[I used to] pour everything into [my lessons], work hard, [give] the best lesson I could give, spend time after school. As time goes on, I’m not putting as much effort into [preparing lessons].” These quotes from the teachers clearly demonstrate a situation in which secondary students, broadly speaking, lack motivation to exert effort in their learning, and whereby teachers are not recognized for their efforts. These two challenges taken collectively definitely impact a teacher’s perception of job satisfaction.

### **Positive Work-Life Balance May Influence Expatriate Teachers’ Length of Stay in the UAE**

Respondents in this purposeful sample reported, overall, high levels of work-life balance, with some even suggesting they have achieved a better quality of life in the UAE, than in their home country. “...I really enjoy it here in RAK... we only work from seven to two, approximately,” Justin shared. Rick concurred, “...taking [my kids] to the aquarium, to the swimming pool, to the beach all the time, there is a lot more to do here [than back home].” Ramona added, “[less] preparation time [than back home] because everyone is sharing [the workload]”. Violet also alluded to having more free time in the UAE when compared to the UK “I get to spend more time with my kids here than I would get to [in the UK]”. The expatriate teachers included in this sample clearly enjoy living in the UAE, despite the dissatisfaction they encounter at their work places. This was especially evident during the global, COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants reported that the Pandemic made it easier for them to save money, stay motivated, and gave them more time to be at home with their families. Coleen shared that she “[joined] focus groups [and] create[d] storyboards for the books and everything for free, because I was just motivated [even with] a heavy workload...now that I’m back in school, I don’t have [that motivation]. Maybe it’s [the] extra commuting time.” Coleen suggests, here, that teaching online allowed her have motivation to teach her students; with the return to on-ground instruction, she is finding that more difficult. Given the physical distance away from their work places, and the greater amount of teacher-independence associated with online instruction during the pandemic, this increase in motivation may indicate that teachers respond positively to opportunities to exercise greater autonomy. Ramona agrees with Coleen’s perspective, “Teaching online was amazing! You could suddenly teach a fully lesson. That’s all gone now.” Justin, however, suggests this motivation gap may be due to the behavioral challenges teachers encounter in the classroom:

I loved teaching the kids online because one of the problems I had with classroom management was just the physicality of keeping kids in their seats...the few kids [who were] interested, genuinely interested, [they are] at the front of the class...and

the other kids are like (pause) you know you're like wasting half the class trying [just to] manage the other kids. It's like impossible to teach...going fully online; those kids that didn't want to pay attention, you know, they just didn't participate... honestly that was okay with me. (laughing) I would just focus on the kids that did want to participate.

Here, Justin describes his experience with managing behavior in the physical classroom, and the reality that children who choose to pay attention are less distracted by students who are disengaged. This, too, demonstrates the need for school leaders to be more actively involved in supporting teachers in managing both student engagement and student behavior. In short, engaged leadership, which provides meaningful administrative and professional support to teachers, along with community building are key to expatriate teacher's job satisfaction and the retention of talented teachers in the UAE.

### **Recommendations**

While the participants in this study do not explicitly link their perceptions of job satisfaction to intended length of stay in the UAE, it is clear that their experiences as Cycle Two and Cycle Three teachers in the public school system do not foster community and lack the leadership required to support teachers in overcoming critical challenges. This lack of leadership and community certainly do not motivate teachers to want to stay. That being said, there are actions that could improve the quality of professional experiences to promote the motivation to remain teaching in the UAE. Toward that end, two notable recommendations are noted: the purposeful promotion of belonging and community and the engagement of stakeholders in the community to combat both explicit and implicit bias against teachers of differing ethnic and racial groups.

Firstly, the researchers recommend that both teachers and schools would likely benefit significantly investing effort in constructing meaningful onboarding policies and procedures purposefully designed to foster belonging in and among the school faculty (Stein & Christiansen, 2010). Developing community provides those who are a part of the community with support, both in terms of professional support and, at times, psychosocial support. School leaders could further promote teacher satisfaction in providing important and necessary support to teachers. This is true both in terms of administrative and professional support. Specifically, implementing procedures that guide individuals new to the country, through the requisite governmental procedures could ease teachers' cognitive overload in assimilating to a new work place in a new country. A team of expatriate teachers who have been working in the UAE for several years could help the newcomers. Research shows expatriate employees value the experiences of other expatriates who have had similar experiences (Bauer, 2022). School leaders should also be providing support and guidance to teachers on how schools could promote student engagement and motivation. Teacher satisfaction is correlated to student discipline (Toropova, Myrberg, & Johansson, 2021) so school leaders should ensure student discipline is a priority. Currently, teachers are left to work on this in isolation, when a whole-school approach is clearly needed. When leaders respond to the

concerns of those they lead, trust is built (Northouse, 2021) and professional learning communities can begin to form. Without the right leadership, it is likely that little positive change will occur to promote the job satisfaction and experiences of Cycle Two and Cycle Three public school teachers.

The second recommendation from the researchers involves community engagement. Given the very real bias and stereotyping experienced by expatriated teachers of color, it would benefit schools, teachers, and community well to implement community outreach programs that engage families with their children's learning and participation at school. Research demonstrates that when schools engage with their local communities, several benefits arise. Notably, in this particular instance, it would provide meaningful and positive exposure to teachers from differing ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds. Providing opportunities for families and individuals to interact in meaningful ways promotes empathy, and may help to alleviate bias and stereotyping (Lueke & Gibson, 2016; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Community engagement has also been shown to positively influence student engagement and parental involvement – both of which then, in turn, tend to improve student performance (Fan & Chen, 2001). The design and implementation of community engagement programs, however, requires school leaders who listen to teacher concerns and are committed to improvement, not simply maintaining the status quo. Should this go unaddressed, it is likely that teachers of color will continue to face bias, discrimination, and possibly abuse from certain areas of the public. This will, undoubtedly, make retaining talented teachers of color challenging.

### **Conclusion**

The Ministry of Education would benefit from higher retention rates and cost savings, and the teachers benefit from lower stress levels. As long as the Ministry seeks to hire expatriate teachers, it would be appropriate and to consider what could be done to improve teacher job-satisfaction. Creating and maintaining satisfactory work environments benefits multiple stakeholders. Satisfied employees tend to be better at their jobs, and also tend to experience higher levels of motivation, and length of stay with organizations (Pepe, Addimando, & Veronese, 2017). The findings of this study indicate that work environments for expatriate teachers could be improved; toward this end, the researchers recommend implementing specific policies and procedures for expatriate teachers that improve both on-boarding and assimilation processes. Additionally, investing in community building will provide teachers with much needed professional and, potentially, social-emotional support. These initiatives will likely have a positive influence on students, as well, as research indicates that improve school-community engagement may promote student performance, overall. Further, engaging with local communities also provides opportunities to build empathy and work to combat bias and stereotyping some expatriate teachers encounter. This is particularly true for teachers of color who, in addition to the stressors associated with teaching in a foreign country, may also be coping with maltreatment from some areas of the

public. In short, the findings of this study suggest that engaged school leaders who emphasize building a sense of community and belonging could help improve job satisfaction, maximize work-life balance, and improve the retention of talented, expatriated teachers within the UAE.

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