

Social Stratification in Dubai and its Effects on Emirati Students and Multicultural Faculty Members in Higher Education

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Abstract: Emirati students studying at the University of the Emirates, one of three major public institutions of higher learning in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have a wide demographic of faculty members teaching them an equally wide variety of courses. These faculty members bring with them their own cultural assumptions, methods, expectations, educational practices and use of language. The history of multiculturalism in the UAE coupled with the contemporary multiculturalism that exists in higher education Dubai create intriguing phenomena within the classroom. This study seeks to delve into students' and faculty members' perceptions of the social stratification that exists in this context. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews with both faculty and students and analyzed from an interpretivist perspective. Findings suggest the social stratification with is deeply-seeded in the multicultural history of the region and country are reflected in the everyday interworkings of education in modern day Dubai in both beneficial and detrimental ways. The relevance of this research lies in that these findings can provide valuable insights into not only the attitudes and perceptions of these Emirati students but might also apply to any international institutions which accept Emirati students.

Keywords—social stratification, intercultural competence, Dubai, higher education in the UAE

1. Introduction

Emirati students studying at the University of the Emirates (the *U of E*; a pseudonym), one of three major public institutions of higher learning in the UAE, have a wide demographic of faculty members teaching them an equally wide variety of courses that are mandated to be taught in English. While previous studies identified the responsibility of faculty members to understand multiculturalism among students, I took at the University of the Emirates as an example to identify the need of faculty members to learn about the history of the region and its implications on both, modern student populations and modern multiculturalism as it exist in Dubai today.

Specifically, I wished to explore this through the lens of the social stratification that exists in the fabric of Emirati society. This stratification is often embedded within the culture and takes on many forms but is often evident in the classrooms of higher education. Considering the multicultural nature of the administration and faculty demographics of higher education, it is no wonder its effects can be seen daily.

This study begins with a profound look into the manifestations of higher education in the UAE and then considers the historical trends of this social division, specifically stemming from the centuries-old practice of importation of foreign labor which has grown exponentially after the discovery of oil in the region. After this, I wished to explore student and faculty members' perceptions of how this permeates modern Emirati society and is evident in today's classrooms.

2. Methods

The qualitative design of this research is divided into two parts, the interviews which were conducted with the faculty members and the focus groups conducted with the students. The teaching faculty members were interviewed in a structured format for a variety of reasons. First, the interview format was chosen in an effort for the participants to discuss interpretations of their teaching experiences and express how they regard situations from their own perspective. Members of the teaching faculty are also the multicultural participants, which this study seeks to explore the perceptions, effects and experiences of. The members come from culturally diverse backgrounds. An example of this would be that some of the participants are from cultures which Hofstede characterizes as more Individualist while others come cultures which are characterized as Collectivist (Hofstede, 1980). Due to the variety of length of experience, culture of origin, age and previous locations of teaching experience, the decision was made to collect this qualitative data individually in one-on-one interviews.

2.1 – Participants

Teaching faculty participating in this study all live in Dubai and teach at either Dubai Men's Campus or Dubai Women's Campus of the U of E. The campuses are separate and in different neighborhoods of Dubai. Although the university often refers to these institutions as the "Dubai Campuses" with a Women's Campus and a Men's Campus, faculty members are typically under contract and teach at one campus exclusively. As mandated by hiring and accreditation procedures, each faculty member possesses a Master's degree and has a minimum of 10 years teaching experience.

All student participants are current students and are of Emirati citizenship. There were three focus groups in total with four-to-six members each. Data were collected from two focus groups from Dubai Men's Campus and one from Dubai Women's Campus. The reason for the imbalance was a simple matter of accessibility. Cultural practices of men and women meeting outside of professional settings are rare in the UAE. The rationale for interview locations is addressed in Section 4.8. Many of my potential female participants responded to invitations to meet for research purposes with reluctance. Due to this, I was not able to have access outside the university to as many female participants as males. Only 5 of the 15 participants were female.

3. Context

This study focuses on students and faculty of Dubai Women's Campus and Dubai Men's Campus of the University of the Emirates, hereafter referred to as the U of E. The U of E was founded in 1989 with respective Men's and Women's campuses. The U of E offers a broad range of academic disciplines and majors which also differ from campus to campus.

Faculty members come to the U of E from all corners of the globe. They are recruited online or through academic conferences such as TESOL Arabia and are given an attractive package to relocate to the UAE for a 3 year contract, after which they are reviewed by the university, leading to a decision as to whether a renewed three-year contract would be offered. Some nationalities are represented more than others due to a number of factors, most prominent being general proximity to the UAE. Those designated as faculty include but are not limited to British, Irish, American, Canadian, Jordanian, Egyptian, Indian, Filipino, Sudanese, Pakistani, Tunisian, Iraqi, Chinese, Brazilian, Dutch and several others.

3.1 – Historical Context

The foundation of the UAE was itself part a parcel of sea-change in the global order, when Britain decided in 1968 to relinquish her military influence east of the Suez Canal and her supremacy over the Gulf region, leaving the area exposed to the threat of communist infiltration on the one hand and the domination of militarized Iran on the other (Heard-Bey, 2004, p. xxvii).

Few nations have undergone so spectacular a change within the last 100 years. Before the union of 1971, the region now known as the United Arab Emirates was a non-federal compilation of tribes known in the West as the Trucial States, the Trucial Sheikdoms, the Trucial Coast or Trucial Oman, hereafter stated as simply the Trucial States. It was a region consisting of camel-herders, sheep-herders, goat farmers, date farmers and most notably a hub for pearling which accounted for a significant portion of the local economy (Heard-Bey, 2004).

While these industries remained as such for generations, it was the eventual colonization of the Trucial States by Britain which began the molding and formation of the 20th century UAE. The colonial period consisted of essentially two periods, the first being 1820 to the end of World War II. During this period Britain had two different sets of interests and objectives in the Trucial States, the first being a desire to control and monopolize the commercial systems and mercantile power in the Gulf region, most of which centered around the pearling industry and the second interest was to widen British power and influence into another region of the world through implementation of British policies and law (Heard-Bey, 2004).

The British essentially set up sheikdoms of all 7 Emirates. This transition to the hierarchical system ensured familial obligation to protect Britain's dealings with and control over the region. The ruling families were chosen based on existing local status but more importantly the willingness to sign British treaties which ensured colonial control (Kazim, 2000). Britain, in turn became the referees of the region settling land disputes as well as making all types of warfare illegal as a pretext for levying fines on either side who instigated conflict (Davidson, 2005).

Each Emirate's Sheikh, whose family was chosen by the British, was the Ruler of the Emirate and the collection of the 7 Sheikhs formed the Supreme Council which was the highest authority of judicial law in the country. Britain handed over its powers of jurisdiction but not of influence as many leaders remained to aid the formation of the country. With Britain serving as a partner to the new nation, 6 of the existing 7 Emirates became a Federation on Dec. 2nd, 1971 with the elected Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan serving as its Ruler and President.

The UAE of today would not exist without the help of Great Britain yet the manner with which the country was designed and created has led many to become welcoming yet wary of British presence in the newly-formed country (Heard-Bey, 2004). All of this has led to love/hate relationship and potential conflict between modern-day UAE nationals and the British, a West/East comparison which raises the potential of intercultural conflict still to this day.

4. The Population of the United Arab Emirates

Perhaps the most distinctive facet of the UAE is the makeup and demographic which populate it. Current numbers project that only around 10-15% of the population of the country are UAE nationals (United Arab Emirates, 2013). A modern Emirati national grows up among a population in which nearly every nation is represented, some more than others. This is not a new trend as the expatriate presence in the region has been present for centuries. Many believe it was the discovery of oil in the 1960's which produced the mass influx of foreign labor and workforce but in actuality, this started long before with the seasonal pearling industry. While this is true, the existence of oil in the region brought an acceleration in investment and development in the Trucial States and later in the UAE in the 1960's to the present (Kazim, 2000).

Expatriate presence and influence has been necessary for much of the development, physically and intellectually of the UAE in terms of design, management and implementation. Labor and workforce remain at the forefront of the demand for the physical development of the country, especially in the urban areas of Dubai and Abu Dhabi. As a result of this, males outnumber females in the country three to one (United Arab Emirates, 2013). The modern day population and the layers of distinction that exist among the cultures are due to this great influx of expatriate labor. From the blue collar working class of the pearling industries of yore to the development of the construction and oil procurement of the modern day coupled with the white collar business class finance and education sectors of the modern day UAE, this imported labor has made up a significant part of the population and thus the social fabric of the nation.

The effects of this diversity and overwhelming majority of foreignness on the locals' sense of identity will be addressed later in this chapter. However it can be said here that with these have come new additions of language culture, norms, values and religions. With the discovery of oil, the UAE was now moving forward with greater steam on the tide of globalization. A byproduct of this was and is local notions of intrusion upon local culture and perceived "cultural contamination" with the exposure to different ways of doing business, different ways of thinking, differing ways of trading and notably different preferences by the locals for each.

Linguistically speaking, due to the large population of expatriates from the Indian subcontinent in addition to the still significant British and European presence here, English has become the language of business, recreation, socializing and gathering. Similarly, Hindi or Urdu have become common languages of the working class due to the fact that most of the laborers who migrate to the region for unskilled blue collar work often have native command of these languages whereas English may be only secondary. As a result of this multiglossia, Arabic itself has become a language used secondarily anywhere except for inside public schools and Arabs' homes (Davidson, 2005).

Some of the local population fear the extensive growth of the expatriate community vis-à-vis the preservation of local culture, customs and language (Heard-Bey, 2004). They lament the need for a majority expatriate population and the hedonistic pursuit of growth in the Emirates (Heard-Bey, 2004).

5. Social Stratification in the United Arab Emirates

The UAE is often seen by those who live here as a class society, one which one's country of origin, economic status, professional status, material possessions and even ethnicity play significant roles into one's experience in society. This, again is not a new trend. al-Alkim (1989) describes the UAE as a country comprised of "Elites and Non-elites" based primarily on nationality and wealth (al-Alkim, 1989). The facts that this was written 27 years ago and the population of the UAE has risen so much since then, suggests this idea that al-Alkim describes may have lessen in effect over time yet residue of this separation of Elites and Non-elites can still be seen in the modern UAE. Due to the importation of labor, both manual and professional, social stratification has been constructed to form the often perceived social hierarchies. It would be foolish to think this stratification is exempt within the walls of institutions of higher learning

in the UAE. Another aim of this study is to investigate student perceptions of those they learn from. How do issues like classroom management, student motivation and effort manifest themselves from course to course and teacher to teacher? I reiterate the fact that none of the dimensions of social culture mentioned in this study are new phenomena and thus a look at the history such cultural gaps is necessary to fully appreciate the perspective of the participants.

Bedouin tribes, many of which can still be seen today, spawned the first evidence of distinction of class. A separation between the camel-herding tribe, who were more mobile and thus acquired more connections, friendships and relationships within the diverse population seemed to have gained a higher social standing than the sheep herders which tended to be more stationary and possessed a more limited circle of acquaintances. This is evidenced by the camel-herding families having more instances of intermarriage with the tribes and families from greater distances. Their seed spread and a more aristocratic status befell them. As a result of this, greater social power was now held by the group (Davidson, 2005). The weaker tribes of sheep herders became a more dependent class of producers, forced to accept more subservient roles in exchange for economic and military security from their more powerful, fellow tribes of camel herders (Davidson, 2005). This exemplifies the social stratification which exists in the UAE is rooted in its own history, and therefore it is unsurprising that this continues to exist.

Kazim (2000) elucidates the social dynamic that had begun in the Trucial States and thus continues to the modern-day UAE.

Discourses within the labor force reflected and reinforced segmented identities, which, in turn, endangered socio-economic differentiation in terms of economic privilege, cultural prestige and political power. Segmentation and socio-economic differentiation within the contemporary UAE's labor force stemmed from the fact that the immigrant workers came from different countries, spoke different languages, adhered to different religions, had varying educational backgrounds and skills (p. 365).

The UAE and in particular, Dubai and Abu Dhabi continue to grow and thrive led by the ambitious vision of the country's leaders. The country has raised the standard in terms of infrastructure development and well as business prowess. These two things require a polarity of imported labor, one for the manual side, which are often unskilled workers from neighboring countries of low economic status and highly-skilled, often highly-educated professionals who often arrive from wealthier countries. The socio-cultural effects of this demographic imbalance can be seen, according to Thomas (2013) by the occasional policing of migrant workers in public areas such as malls for fear of them "leering at females" which has caused issues in the past (Thomas, 2013, p. 54). In this way, the social stratification that began with the pearling industry has expanded and even been magnified considering the wider array of nationalities represented and the doubling of that population in less than a decade.

In summary, industries of the early 20th century set a precedent for what would become a factor in later and modern UAE society, a segmented class society, often determined by

nationality. There may be a variety of ways this social stratification could affect how students perceive their multicultural faculty members. This study aims to explore how.

6. Education in the United Arab Emirates

The presence of a teacher from an outside culture does not offer a recognizable and culturally relevant role model for students, thereby exacerbating the perception among the local population that teaching, and education more generally, are not careers for Emiratis (Kirk, 2010, p. 14).

To fully understand the academic position of the students in higher learning systems in the UAE and specifically the participants of this study, we must examine the history of education systems, the primary and secondary systems from which the students graduate and the current trends that are happening in the country. What do the students excel at? Where do they struggle? What directives have been put forth in terms of the curriculum design and teacher recruitment to better existing issues? Most importantly and looking to the past and the future, who has taught them?

It should firstly be noted that the UAE was one of the first nations in the region to provide education to women. While both public opinion and government policy favor education for its female citizens, this has proved to be a delicate dance as strict Islamic practices and interpretations of the UAE have historically forbidden females from leaving home without a male family member (Soffan, 1980). Additionally, Emirati females are rarely allowed to board dormitories in other cities which forces them to commute from home (Soffan, 1980). Though perhaps not quite to the same extent as in the time of Soffan's writing, we can, again see this as a general standard practice in contemporary Emirati families. Nevertheless, the UAE has offered free higher education to its female citizens since 1977 (Soffan, 1980).

Education systems at all levels were initially adopted from British models and more recently US education systems (Wilkins, 2010). Kirk (2010) calls the UAE education system one of a "consumer practice" stating that it "has a history of buying in the educational models and expertise it requires, as opposed to the lengthier, but possibly better suited, process of building an indigenous education system from the ground up" (p. 4). This act of the UAE borrowing and adopting foreign education systems as opposed to creating their own to fit the needs of locals students has caused some issues, namely in the conflict of interest of where differing subjects and courses fit. Later, education in the region sees the perceived marginalization of Islamic Studies within the curriculum but an initial point of contention among the local population was the emerging trend of English education.

Between 1985 and 1992, the English language made its way into the compulsory curriculum and thus another shift in recruiting occurred (Kazim, 2000). Teachers from native English-speaking countries were now in demand, many of whom were non-Muslim, and thus school administrators and the Ministry of Education now had to temper the necessity of a core curriculum subject of English with the priority of Islamic Studies.

This shift has had a lasting effect on modern-day skill sets of graduates of these public institutions. The Arabic skills of many of the citizens of the UAE are below standards which consequently has led to the reluctance of private employers to hire UAE nationals (Shagouri, 2005). It seems the demand for English has come at the cost of education of Arabic. The employability of Emiratis which prefer to utilize the regional, Khaleeji dialect of Arabic which can be quite different from standard or classic Arabic has led employers to opt for employees from other countries which have a greater command of and ability to communicate and write in standard Arabic (Lawati & Youseff, 2007).

According to Heard-Bey (2004), the primary and secondary education systems as a whole have not kept up with international standards. With the importation of curricula and textbooks, often primary and secondary school teachers are also imported from other Arab countries and given short, one-year contracts which results in not only a lack of job security but high levels of teaching staff turnover within each school (Heard-Bey, 2004).

Emirati families have two choices when choosing to send their children to study at primary and secondary levels; public, cost-free government schools where the teaching staff is comprised primarily of Arab expatriates or private schools which employ a wide variety of nationalities, are taught mostly in English and provide supplemental and optional curricula which include Arabic and Islamic Studies. This choice is often an economic one as the country does not provide the costly tuition fees for locals to attend private schools. Gulf News, a local English-language newspaper, reports these private institutions can cost upwards of 100,00 AED (US\$ 27,200) per academic year (Sasso, 2013). Often times, male students are given preferential treatments regarding choices offered, most notably international study. Ridge (2010) posits that this is done mainly due to the personal freedoms that male Emirati students enjoy and calls for “higher standards for [male] children” (p. 29). This, however, is viewed by some as a double-edged sword in that the personal freedom they have may adversely affect their ability or willingness to tackle academically rigorous programs. Dalure et. al. (2015) note,

Relatively relaxed standards of personal freedom experienced by some Emirati males did not enable them to develop discipline and strength in character to meet cultural expectations of becoming heads of households and community leaders (p. 81).

Moving onto higher education, United Arab Emirates University was opened in 1976 to serve as the first federal university of the country. This was followed by the establishment of the Higher Colleges of Technology in 1988 (United Arab Emirates, 2013). Later came Zayed University and these three major public institutions offer free education to all UAE nationals using the medium of English for all instruction (United Arab Emirates, 2013).

It can be said that British colonization of the Trucial States had helped the local population with exposure to the English language. Most would agree that Emirati students are well aware of the language due an estimated 85-90% of the population being expatriate and thus having been surrounded by it their entire lives. However, using English as a medium of instruction solely in tertiary education has complicated higher education for students who have

not had the benefit of attending private, international primary or secondary schools. While many students who attended these private schools might still find language a challenge, they enter directly into a Bachelor's program within these public institutions. Conversely, many public school students struggle to attain the standard 5.0 IELTS score required to enter.

Faculty and student satisfaction and job security are included as factors which this study explores. Wilkins (2010) speaks to this, "Once enrolled, there exists considerable pressure on academics to satisfy the students, as they are now considered to be more like consumers than simple receivers of education" (p. 397). A survey of faculty members in the UAE found that many professors feel their students' skills in English and math were subpar and many admitted that Emirati students were being awarded higher grades than they deserve (Gerson, 2010). Wilkins (2010) puts the cause of this in perspective by stating,

It is common for students in the UAE to plead for higher grades, often acting under parental or peer pressure. Poor course evaluations, complaining students and concerns over job security were identified by professors in the survey as some causes of grade inflation. It is not uncommon for academics at HEI (Higher Education Institutions) in the UAE to have their contracts terminated due to poor course evaluations (p. 397).

Data supporting these perceptions are presented later in this study. Contractual obligations being only three years, faculty members often use student satisfaction as a measuring stick to the probability of contract renewal.

7. Results & Discussion

4.1 - Perceptions of Social Stratification

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the UAE could be said to have differing standards and practices in terms of social stratification that may or may not be expected in many of the countries that these multicultural teaching faculty members come from. Noted previously, the UAE has a long history of such stratification due to factors such as British colonization and the long history and more recent explosion of the both professional and working class importation of foreign labor. Ghanim has lived in the UAE and worked for U of E for several years. He is one of the first people that newly-arrived faculty meet when they come to the university. A short session of the Orientation program involves Ghanim giving a lecture on what one can expect from their students based on the students' home lives and religion.

Ghanim, Palestine: *I've tried to help many teachers and not just from the West but other Arabs as well that may not know how things work here. You'd be*

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surprised the number of issues that come up between Lebanese, for example or Egyptians and these students. [The students] can be very racist and reject what some teacher says or does or rather what they want to say or want to do in class simply because they don't agree with the teacher. A Syrian may have a very different relationship with Allah or their religion. They may have a family life which was different or an education which required them to do their work in a much different way. To expect these students to fall line with these notions right away is not going to happen and that's what I try to prepare the teachers for.

Ghanim offers an explicit acknowledgement of not only the necessity of a Cultural Orientation program but the social stratification that has the potential to hinder some newly-arrived teaching faculty members. Through experience and, no doubt trial and error, Ghanim seems to have developed an understanding of his students which many teachers, including myself have benefitted from. The U of E utilizes veterans like Ghanim to impart knowledge and wisdom from their years of experience in teaching Emirati students. It is this interaction with colleagues which helps guide incoming faculty members to the realities of teaching in the UAE. Those co-workers who have the cultural duality or intercultural competence which allows them to engage and thrive in a multicultural teaching and learning environment serve as an invaluable resource. A part of this cultural duality is not the acceptance but the acknowledgement of social stratification and how it can affect the professional lives and teaching practices of us all in very different ways.

Next, I wish to present the qualitative data collected regarding issues of social stratification to give a glimpse of the states of perception at the time of research. Initially, I asked participants to comment generally about the state or states of social stratification they perceive in their daily lives in Dubai. Responses varied.

Carry, Canada: *I do not face any inequality because I am a white male from North America. I'm sorry, I need to say it. This country places value on or devalues people based on your race and I do not face the inequalities that others of a different race face. But I'm not so callous to think that I deserve it because I don't deserve it more than any human being here. I believe it is different for other people.*

But I see [social stratification] every day; I see people being treated a certain way because of where they're from or what their racial background is. You know, if you're Indian or if you're Filipino. These people are very competent but they're not taken seriously, they're laughed at. Indians are being made fun of because of the way they speak yet these people are very, very competent, very intelligent and a lot can be learned from them and the people making fun of them or indirectly smacking them in the head are idiots compared to these people. I see it all the time and it disgusts me and that's the truth.

Carry takes a blunt stance on the issue however, as someone who has lived and worked in this environment for some time, I cannot say that this response is unusual. Hanna supports Carry's attitude and continues to compare social stratification in the UAE to her home country in saying,

***Hanna, England:** I think there's overt racism here in the workplace in a way that we're not culturally accustomed to the West because it's so locked down in terms of equalities. You know, there you have to be really careful of how you refer to someone from a minority ethnic background [in the UK]. I mean, we used to call them 'ethnic minority students' and now we have to call them 'minority ethnic students'. With that there's also it's 'students with a disability' as opposed to 'disabled students'. And people might refer to that as 'PC Gone Mad', you know, that's it's just too much. Vygotsky's theory is that language informs thought and which informs behavior. So, it's actually quite crucial that you get the language right.*

So here, students are so open about calling people 'niggers' or slurs for Indians. I think the students will call each other these things and it's just so open, whereas in the UK we're so scared to use anything that denotes one's race. It's the first thing they'll label you with here. It's still a quite primitive level here.

Carry and Hanna see certain practices as wrong. They see what their worldview deems as injustice. The societal norms of language is something that Hanna sees as driving a huge wedge between her students and herself and she notes her native culture as being what informs her perspective of this. She cites what she sees as the "correct" or "right" use of language in order to avoid the cultural "wrong" of disempowerment of individuals.

So why does this divide exist? Can we point to difference of worldview as justification or perceived "overt racism" that Hanna speaks of? The UAE being a primarily honor-driven culture, one could assume that shaming someone via language or insult would be frowned upon. In fact, publicly insulting someone or cursing is an actual criminal offense in the UAE (Emirates, 2014). Yet Hanna and Carry cite racial slurs as commonplace and fundamentally, to them, wrong. There exist differing definitions of what shame consists of. Due to the social stratification in the UAE and specifically, Dubai, students tend use these terms as markers of status.

In this way, perhaps using racial slurs is a vehicle to 'shame' the other and to promote one's own honor as an Emirati. Yet, according to Hanna and Carry, doing this is not only wrong but shocking in its injustice.

An aside from one of the focus groups was made by one of the students. At the time of it utterance, it didn't mean much to me as the researcher but upon further thought, it seemed to be a playful example of this. Between question items, this participants denotes another's heritage in jokingly saying,

Rashed, UAE: *Don't listen to Essa, his mother's Egyptian, Haha!*

Again, while this may seem innocent enough as a joke, the connotation is that Essa is not pure Emirati which Rashed promotes by putting Essa down.

Samira and Tariq also from the Middle East, see injustice as well but in different forms. Noted here is reference to my original rationale for this study. The U of E and all public institutions of higher learning in the UAE are comprised of diverse demographics of faculty and staff. Many faculty members expect standard pay scales as would exist in their home country but as with many aspects of education mentioned in this study, salary variance is allowed to be subjective.

Samira, Lebanon: *Yes in salary. I have a Ph.D and have been here a long while. I know some white English teachers with only a Master's degree started at a higher salary than I am making now. This is so commonplace here and I don't understand why it's done or why there's not more of a fuss about it. Maybe it's because I'm not used to it. In Lebanon, we're all Lebanese so you can't really see the disparity there. But here when conversations about salary happen, you see there's a gap between different nationalities.*

Samira's response speaks directly to why this research is so pertinent in the unique yet growing context of multicultural education. A level playing field where most parameters of one's working environment are agreed upon and expected does not always exist here. This environment has the tendency to be more arbitrary in certain facets of employment, in Samira's case, salary. These are discrepancies in salary that most likely would not exist, as Samira points out in a homogenous working environment.

Tariq also comments on this citing how salary and hiring practices here are met with different views than in other regions of the world.

Tariq, Egypt: *Any discrimination based on nationality is unjust. We see that here in terms of salary I think. To say to somebody, you should earn this much because your passport is different even though they have the same*

qualifications or better even, that's just ridiculous to me. And that happens, it happens with hiring practices as well. I mean all things being equal, qualifications and experience, they discriminate with salaries. I mean if you did that in the West, you'd be run over the hot coals, you'd be ruined!

Most poignant, in my view was the response from the participant Murphy who put the idea of injustice in a subjective light. Here, he takes a step back from what others might perceive at social stratification taken at face value and rather looks at what that perception also includes. Murphy might well agree with Peterson (2004) in his stating that these dynamics of culture and the opposing sides of them “may be completely different, but both groups have it perfectly right within the context of their own culture” (p. 22).

Murphy, England: *I think it depends on your definition of what is injustice. On the basis of the culture in which I work, I see fairness but again that definition may be different in other cultures, certainly in the UK. If I want to apply a different set of work standards to this place, then I see injustice. However, I think this is a fair place to work, given the social parameters that have been created here over the years.*

Murphy openly acknowledges that there are different sets of values in different cultures and notes how because of this, injustice can be seen as specific to that culture. Having 12 years' experience at the U of E, it seems he is well aware of the sets of values that exist here and therefore, sees them as “fair”. Conversely, he agrees with Samira and Tariq in their saying that were these discrepancies to occur in a different context, it would be considered injustice.

The responses here from faculty participants were also interspersed throughout the interviews and are from different question items. They serve as evidence of the context of working within the social stratification systems of the UAE, which was an ongoing theme. Faculty responses on their multicultural work environment also include their teaching practice with Emirati students and therefore require exploration. The following are responses regarding the lived experience of the participants in the workplace as well as their experiences with social stratification and their Emirati students.

Yasmin comments on what she sees as students' selective “prejudice” toward certain teachers and the statuses that exist. Although she does not state whether she agrees or not with what she sees as students' perceptions, she notes there are distinctions in class.

Yasmin, Turkey: *I think there are a lot of people being defensive, people being in different camps, I don't think we mix as much as we should. There's [sic] a lot of unstated assumptions about certain types of teachers. So, I think there's a bit of a hierarchy. I think if you're not from a high-status, let's say native English-speaking country you've got a bit of a battle on your hands. Because I think if you are an Indian teacher, you've got to get over the students' prejudice and your own sense of, you know, proving your worth.*

I've been here long enough to know the students perceive this in that native English speakers are of a higher status, have better education. [The students] have generally negative things to say about Indians and Iranians. They talk about their accents. They don't think their English is as good. And I think part of that goes along with the teaching style.

Murphy draws a deep divide between 2 large yet, in his mind, distinct groups of teachers at the U of E. Those who he refers to as “Arab teachers” and native English speakers have a mismatch of priority when it comes to functioning in their workplace and their general approach to teaching.

Murphy, England:*Our [native English teachers] reaction to [a multicultural workplace] is positive, altruistic and educational. [Arab teachers] response to the workplace is to cover their back, to look after their job and from our perspective to undermine anyone to sustain their employment. You know, when it comes down to it, they teach most of their content in Arabic when it gets too hard or too challenging for them to teach it in English. They pass all their students when we don't and we're the bad guys in the eyes of the students. The Arabs see it as a way to protect their job. They don't challenge the students; they pass the students as a matter of course. But this is the same cultural difference that we have with our students, [Arab teachers] are more culturally in-tune with our students and the idea is to progress and to stay in the game. Learning is not the objective from their perspective.*

Interestingly, here we see Murphy noting his own perceptions based on experience regarding that stratification of social classes within the U of E. I have noted previously that I believe this participant Murphy to display a noble level of intercultural intelligence. However, we can see from his response that this does not prevent one's own notions of social stratification to be exposed. In this way, we can see it is not only the students who possess such notions of difference and even hierarchy but also the faculty members themselves.

Students' responses regarding social stratification do not explicitly comment on the historical causes. They also do not include economic factors, such as salary variance that faculty members have mentioned. As expected, their lived experiences do not involve the working context of a multicultural faculty but rather exclusively educational experiences. Their responses reflect notions of social stratification which often revolve around the in-class policies and practices of the multicultural teaching faculty. The following are responses given by students among multiple question items in focus groups.

Suhail, UAE: *In my opinion when it comes to teaching, the teachers from the Western countries, they are more fun with us and they do things in a way that will make the class more fun. But when it comes to Arab teachers, they don't take an interest in the students personally. They just teach, make us do the work and that's it.*

Ahmed, UAE: *We had this one teacher from England, he made the class very clear by doing an activity with us where one of us was the detective and the other was the thief and we had to do a play and figure out why something happened the way that it did. I talked to some other students in another section who were taught the same thing with a lecture. I felt lucky I had my British teacher do it this way because I think it was more real to me after that.*

As some student participants cited a preference for "Western" teachers, Mohammed is quick to point out that other teachers offer educational advantages as well, though the methods in which they teach may be undesirable.

Mohammed, UAE: *Well, when we have an Indian teacher, he won't leave the class until every single person understands the concept of the lesson. But it's usually in a boring way, the way he explains. Sometimes, you get tired and bored with the class but you learn a lot.*

As before, Jamila offers a contrast to the majority of the responses. To her the linguistic, cultural and religious conflicts could be easily resolved.

***Jamila, UAE:** Why can't we just have local teachers? Like, I just want to learn this stuff in Arabic, is that so bad? Having Indian, Malaysian, Irish, American, it just makes me have to explain myself, my religion and my way of doing this over and over...and in a language that I don't speak well at!*

We can see that individuality, previous exposure to different cultures, English proficiency and general attitude toward national, ethnic, religious or cultural difference may be factors which lead these participants to have such views in which they seem to stereotype or judge. Is it too unfair to assume that perhaps these students are being held to a higher standard of intercultural competence which many faculty members also struggle with?

8. Conclusion

As in most places where cultural identity is expressed, historical roots have their residue on the interworkings of educational dynamics in the U of E. This, coupled with the modern extensions and magnification of a growing and diversifying demographic of faculty members and administrators has moved the potential misfits of social stratifications into the forefront of the educational fabric of the country.

While some argue that this educational model is not substantial and that local representation in the field of education is not only preferred but obligatory for future success in the classrooms of higher education, there seems to be little progress on this front. Recently budget cutbacks and general disenchantment from the multicultural teaching faculty at the U of E and other institutions of higher learning in the country have forced the hand of the local community to produce a teaching faculty with as much to offer academically as well as culturally. It seems that only when this is realized will the stigma of social stratification in higher education begin to ebb to levels where it is the subject matter of the courses and not the color, race, nationality or cultural identity of the faculty member which is at this forefront of educational perceived educational merit.

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