

An Investigation into the challenges facing educational leaders\managers from western developed contexts working for the first time in tertiary institutions in the United Arab Emirates and their coping strategies

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Abstract

In this era of global mobility, it is increasingly common for individuals to travel beyond their home contexts to live and work. However, adjusting to life and work in an unfamiliar cultural setting can pose challenges due to the differing cultural values, norms and expectations which one might encounter. This thesis focuses on the UAE where, because of the relatively small numbers of UAE nationals, the demographic profile is characterized by the numerical dominance of foreign nationals at almost every occupational level. However, the shaping forces of the indigenous culture remain at the forefront of virtually every aspect of life in that country exerting a strong influence on working practices and expectations.. This thesis investigates the experiences of a small group of expatriates recruited to leadership positions in the UAE tertiary sector, specifically it focuses on what challenges they experience in their work in that context and what coping strategies they may employ to help them navigate their new environment.

This research was carried out in two tertiary institutions and data were gathered through interviews with seven expatriates new to the context; the views of two Emirati colleagues also contributed to this study. The findings of the study reveal that while tertiary educational institutions in the UAE appear to share structural similarities with western counterparts, local interpretations of organizational roles, structures and processes combine to create organizational cultures unique to that context. The resulting mismatch of expectations between western recruits and their Emirati hosts can sometimes be a source of tensions and misunderstandings. The study additionally found that participants who were able to draw upon attitudes and behaviours associated with the ongoing development of intercultural competence were better equipped to cope with the challenges they encountered in ways which were more beneficial to them in terms of their individual well-being and peace of mind, as well as to their employing institutions.

The findings of this study have implications for the way UAE human resources departments organize and conduct not only the recruitment of senior expatriate staff, but also the ongoing orientation and professional support that is offered to them.

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Acronyms

ADEC – Abu Dhabi Education Council
BERA – British Educational Research Association
CEPA – Common English Proficiency Assessment
CHEDS – Centre for Higher Education data and Statistics
EEC – European Economic Community
ELT – English Language Teaching
GCC – Gulf Cooperation Council
HCT – Higher Colleges of technology
HE – Higher education
HEI – Higher education institution
HR – Human Resources
IC - Intercultural competence
IELTS – International English Language Testing System
MENA – Middle East and North Africa
MNC – Multi-national company
MOHE – Ministry of Higher Education
NAFTA - North Atlantic Free Trade Association

SI – Symbolic Interactionism

UAE - United Arab Emirates

UAEU - United Arab Emirates University

UN – United Nations

VSO – Voluntary Service Overseas

ZU – Zayed University

Chapter 1 Introduction

This study is based on the notion that bringing educational leaders and managers into settings such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where the cultural values, norms and expectations facing them are often very different to those they are familiar with, may serve to place them in situations where they have to deal with a whole variety of sometimes unexpected challenges and issues. Any educational institution within any context represents a unique organizational culture which encompasses guidelines and boundaries which guide the behaviour of the staff within the organization (Deem et al 2015: 566). However, given the increasing globalization of education, the role of national, or societal, culture in shaping organizational culture must also be given attention. Walker and Dimmock (2002: 1), in stressing the need to avoid “decontextualized paradigms” when examining education systems or institutions, acknowledge that societal culture will inevitably be a factor which exerts some measure of influence on individual organizations and how they function. The main focus of this study therefore, is to identify what some of the challenges facing newly recruited educational leaders and managers to UAE institutions may be and to explore how participants faced with challenges in the new and unfamiliar workplace environment navigate their way through them.

From personal experience, such challenges may serve as hidden shoals, or reefs, on which the unwary traveller frequently founders, sometimes with disastrous professional and personal consequences for individuals, their families as well as the institutions that employ them. This is an issue that is assuming increased importance as culturally diverse organizational teams become a global norm across most contexts and in key social sectors such as health and education.

Smith et al (2007) and Mackenzie Smith (2008) amongst others, note that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) regional contexts provide good examples of this trend, with many GCC settings (e.g. the UAE, The Sultanate of Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia) having initiated large, complex ongoing educational reform processes in the early years of the twenty first century. They go on to comment that these GCC contexts set these reform processes in place with the aim of implementing educational changes that were perceived as necessary to turn what were essentially traditional education systems into systems capable of meeting the

needs of contemporary societies and workforces. These initiatives have led to the recruitment of large numbers of teachers, academics and educational managers and leaders. For the most part these professionals have been recruited from Europe, the USA, Canada and other developed contexts with the aim of using their knowledge, skills and expertise to design, implement and coordinate the educational reform initiatives. Having spent some fourteen years working in the region, I have personally observed the failure of a considerable number of those individuals to adapt to GCC environments which unfortunately, as indicated previously, has frequently come at a cost, both to the institutions on the ground and the individuals themselves. Evidence for this at the expatriate teacher level can be seen on social networking sites such as 'Dave's ESL Café' (1995-2015) which hosts an active discussion forum about working in the UAE education sector and regularly sees large numbers of teachers venting their personal frustrations and dissatisfactions with regard to work related and other cultural issues in relation to UAE state schools and tertiary level institutions.

It is also apparent in the UAE tertiary sector that at the management and leadership level there is a faster turnover of staff than in many of the other international contexts I have worked in as an educator, eg, Poland, People's Republic of China and Fiji. This leads to the conclusion that there may be hidden issues connected to that context which may not be immediately apparent and which require scrutiny and investigation. Moussly (2011: Sept 18th), writing in the Gulf News, likens the situation in the UAE to "a revolving door of university leadership", indicating that the resulting lack of continuity of high level decision makers is neither beneficial to educational institutions nor to the individuals concerned, with the former being left to pick up the developmental pieces and deal with lengthy and expensive recruitment processes and costs, while the latter leave before the job is done, taking with them a damaging legacy that can include negative perceptions, dented confidence and, in some cases, even damage to future career prospects.

1.1 Aims of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the experiences of a small group of expatriates recruited to work as educational leaders and managers in UAE tertiary sector institutions. It specifically seeks to explore their perceptions of the workplace challenges they encounter and the coping strategies they may use to deal with them. The study poses two broad research questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by western educational leaders and managers when they come to work in the UAE tertiary sector for the first time?
2. What coping strategies, if any, do they use to deal with them?

The main data gathering method is in-depth, semi-structured interviews which were then followed up by more informal conversations addressing specific queries which arose from my examination of the preliminary data. The data gathered were analyzed using a constant comparative method aimed at identifying discrete elements in the data and then ordering the discrete elements into categories to develop a “descriptive/interpretive analysis” (Radnor 1994: 18). This is discussed in detail in chapter four of this study.

1.2 Orientation of the study: Professional knowledge development

The question of professional learning and development is implicit to the research questions as I sought to examine the challenges the participants perceived to be part of their new workplace environment and the strategies they adopted to deal with them. In this respect, I follow the notion that while professional decisions and actions are socially and culturally shaped they are also individually enacted. In brief, this means that the study emphasizes the notion that effective professionals play an active role in adapting their decisions and actions to meet the needs of their immediate professional contexts. This view of professional knowledge development draws on Schön’s (1983, 1987) concept of “knowledge-in-action”. According to Schön, the work of competent professionals in a range of fields involves the deployment of intelligent action in dialogue with a given situation. Such knowledge grounded in experience is an integral part of fluent performance and is embedded in skillful action. This emphasis finds echoes in socio-cultural theory,

which in similar fashion emphasizes “knowing-in-action”, as part of “situated activity”, (Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998). It is also a theme that appears across other disciplines. For example, discussing teacher education, Britzman (1991: 8), argues against seeing teaching as competence across a range of skills and techniques and writes:

“Learning to teach – like teaching itself – is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become.”

The notion of deploying intelligent action in dialogue with a given situation as one adapts to new workplace environments and copes with the challenges they may bring is also mirrored in the literature on globally competent leadership. For example, Pusch (2009) comments on the important roles curiosity, asking and answering questions and developing awareness of others may play in helping leaders of culturally diverse teams to become more competent over time in their leadership and management roles. This is paralleled by an emphasis many educational researchers place on the potential learning in general has in terms of being transformative. For example, Wenger (1998: 263) writes:

“Education in its deepest sense and at whatever age it takes place, concerns the opening up of identities – exploring new ways of being that lie beyond our current state [...]. Education is not merely formative – it is transformative. [...] issues of education should be addressed first and foremost in terms of identities and modes of belonging and only secondarily in terms of skills and information.”

1.2.1 Culture and Organizational Culture

There is increasing recognition that there exist links between organizational performance and organizational culture (Bush, 2011; Deem et al. 2015); the former may be influenced by both the internal organizational culture prevalent in an organization or by external cultural forces which may be at play within the context in which an organization is embedded, or indeed, by a combination of both. Additionally, the dominant post-war belief of effective management and leadership as universal concepts impervious to societal effects has increasingly been challenged (Hofstede, 1983; Cheng, 1995; Dimmock and Walker, 2002; Dimmock, 2005). However, in common with many other aspects of research into management, the field of organizational culture had its origins in the business and

corporate sector and it is only since around the 1980s that there has been a growing call for organizational management research specific to the educational arena which, given the increasingly globalized nature of the educational enterprise, has only intensified. This is discussed in the section below.

1.3 A potential research gap

Bush and Coleman (2000:18) note that much of the research dating from the beginning of the twenty first century in relation to educational leadership and management derived largely from western and North American contexts to the detriment of other parts of the world. Walker and Dimmock (2002) and Deardorff (2009) amongst others, point out that one of the results of this is the provision of a narrow rather than broad world view in much of the available research which leaves gaps in terms of most African, Middle Eastern, Asian and Far Eastern perspectives. Abdalla and Homoud (2001), Brown and Ataalla (2002), Jabri (2005) and Smith et al (2007) all point out that this is the case with the UAE which, in line with many other Arab and GCC contexts, is traditionally subsumed in research terms into a broad Arab world. This presence of a potential research gap was further corroborated by a search for either educational or business management cross-cultural studies that focused on Arab contexts in the online archives for two key journals between 2000 and 2014, (The International Journal for Cross-Cultural Management and Educational Management Administration and Leadership). The search revealed four studies with an Arab focus in the former and zero in the latter.

Deardorff (2009), writes that this is an area that should be addressed in future research if we are to reach deeper understandings of the unique nature of individual cultural and organizational contexts. Therefore, this study is seen as significant as it focuses on the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as a specific and unique cultural context which to date has received only a limited research focus. It is also apparent that while there is a steadily growing body of research which has focused on the UAE's tertiary education sector (e.g. Richardson, 2004; Clarke and Otaki, 2006; Clarke, 2008; Clarke and Gallagher, 2008; Gunn, 2012) little attention has been paid to educational leadership and management in the UAE, with, as noted above, much research assuming a regional Arab world, rather than context

specific focus. A recent exception to this is a mixed methods study conducted by du Toit and Jackson (2014) in which they write:

“in most cases, expatriates make up the vast majority of leaders in higher education. Such academic leaders particularly need to be able to effectively interact with diverse colleagues. However, some of these leaders have limited international experience and understanding for major differences of culture and expectations relevant to the workplace. Beyond professional experiences and practices from country of origin, some may not know what will be effective in the UAE. Such challenges can be seen to increase employee turnover, which in turn challenges the success of Emirati higher education”.

(58)

Given the growing prominence of the UAE on the world stage, and its rapid development, with modernization taking place across all social sectors (Davidson 2008; 2009), it therefore appears that this is an opportune moment to add to the body of research that currently exists about that context. It is anticipated that any insights or understandings that may arise about the nature of the expatriate managers' experiences in the UAE might be of value in several quarters, including to organizations recruiting personnel to that country, to those already in place and to those contemplating a career move to the UAE.

1.4 The expatriate experience: My personal connection

My own personal interest in exploring the experiences of expatriates who choose to work outside their home cultures goes back to 1984 when I embarked on an overseas career in English Language Teaching (ELT). Since that time I have been fortunate to have worked at various levels and in very different capacities in multiple contexts, firstly in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region and Southern Europe, later in the Peoples' Republic of China and Poland, and more recently as an educational leader and manager in various tertiary level institutions in the UAE and the Fiji Islands. Thus I have experienced working life in a number of very different cultural and organizational contexts.

Throughout my career I have also worked in multi-cultural teams made up of teachers, teacher educators, managers and leaders drawn from diverse cultural backgrounds who have spoken a variety of mother tongues but whose common language of communication has always been English, albeit of differing **varieties**. In one instance, I even worked in a setting where the faculty teaching team was made

up of fifty different nationalities and involved collaboration with colleagues speaking at least seven different varieties of English. Inevitably, this led to a multitude of team discussions about a wide range of language and other cross-cultural differences and similarities. For me personally, this cross-cultural collaboration has usually been a positive experience and I have been fortunate to work in teams that have generally worked well together.

When I moved to the UAE in 2000, I found myself working in multi-cultural educational management teams and became aware, possibly for the first time, of various leadership and management issues which impacted, sometimes negatively, on the various developmental educational initiatives that I was involved with as part of my day to day employment. The various managers and leaders I worked alongside came from differing cultural backgrounds and often appeared to have widely differing perceptions of how the work should be managed and how things should be done. At times these were not in line with the views of their counterparts and became a cause of friction. Reading around the subject of leadership and management, I began to be persuaded to the view that some of the leadership and management behaviour exhibited by these teams was not only an individual construct but needed also to be seen against a specific cultural backdrop to enable in depth understanding and interpretation to occur. In other words these are socially situated rather than universal concepts. This further sparked my interest and this is what led me to this study.

The notion of working across cultures is not a new phenomenon. Branine (2011:3) points out that traders, explorers, knowledge workers, emperors and colonizers have, for centuries, travelled and worked away from home and had to come to terms with the demands of living in a different society and dealing with new cultures, norms, cross-cultural communication problems, values and belief systems. However, until the mid-twentieth century it is evident that research into these issues had not received much attention in either the corporate management or educational leadership and management fields. Branine (2011: 11-29), comments that with regard to the corporate sector, by the 1970s the situation had started to change, in response to ongoing problems experienced by US multinational corporations with expatriate staff being sent to work outside of the

USA for the first time. He goes on to indicate that the latter part of the twentieth century saw cross cultural research expanding as international organizations like the United Nations (UN), European Economic Community (EEC) and North Atlantic Free Trade Alliance (NAFTA) were created and brought together people from diverse cultural backgrounds to live and work.

Walker and Dimmock (2002:14) note that it was also around this time that educators and politicians in the west, alerted to superior test results in international achievement tests in mathematics, language and science in some countries, started to ask questions about what could be learnt from other contexts such as Singapore and Finland. At the same time, educational leaders and managers started to question to what extent solutions derived from studies in other contexts were transferrable across cultures.

1.5 Conclusion

To summarize, in a contemporary world it is becoming the norm for large numbers of people to relocate to another context either for short term work or emigration purposes, this has resulted in growing cultural diversity in terms of national populations and workforces. This means managers and leaders who move to unfamiliar settings often have to come to terms with the demands of living in those settings and deal with unfamiliar norms and cultural values that may be very different to those they are more familiar with.

In the next chapter I present a brief overview of some of the historical, political, cultural and economic backgrounds which have underpinned the developmental path taken by the UAE up to this point in its history. I consider this important as it is the interaction of these four key areas which has served to shape the overall approach to issues concerning leadership, organizational structure and the working and living environment which prevails in the UAE. I also present details about the higher education context in the country including some information about demographics of staff, turnover rates and management structure which I consider pertinent to this study. Chapter three which follows provides a discussion of the literature that deals with the concepts of organizational theory and organizational structures and models. Within this discussion I consider aspects such as work

policies, procedures and processes including a brief overview of sources of power and decision-making in organizations. As part of this discussion I look also at power and decision-making within the specific context of the UAE. This is followed by a consideration of the concept of organizational cultures and the role of national cultures in influencing the shape of organizational cultures. In addition, I present a detailed explanation of the concept of culture and how it is understood in this study. Finally, the areas of leadership and management are discussed, including an explanation of some of the key terminology in these fields. In chapter four I present a detailed account of the methodology on which the study is based and include details about the participants and how they came to be selected. In chapter five I present my analysis of the data and include not only illustrative examples from the data itself, but also link these to the relevant literature where necessary. Finally, in chapter six, I consider the meanings and implications of this study and offer suggestions for possible future areas of research.

Chapter 2 The UAE context: historical background

2.1 Historical context

Cities with skyscrapers...a sophisticated network of highways crisscrossing the country, cars zooming about...tree lined boulevards...magnificent shopping malls [...] fun parks [...] a communications network that can be the envy of the world all lie side by side with the silent desert, wind tunnels and camels [...] much has changed within so short a time [...]“The UAE: UAE Tourism Bureau” 2007 para 4.

The above passage, which was taken from the 2007 website of the UAE Tourism Bureau, reflects many of the threads that are key to any understanding of the contemporary United Arab Emirates. Rapid change since the inception of the federation in 1971, which brought the seven emirates together as one country, has juxtaposed old traditions and practices with contemporary ways of living and working in the UAE. Clarke (2008: 45) commenting on the previous quote, notes that “if ever there was an ode to progress the United Arab Emirates would be it”. Other scholars of the UAE write along similar lines in their discussions of the history of the country (Hurreiz, 2002; Heard-Bey, 2004; Rugh, 2007; Davidson, 2009). Heard-Bey (ibid.) notes that from a political perspective an aspect of the UAE’s contemporary political landscape which marks it out as unique amongst the other GCC states is its federal nature. Bringing the seven emirates of the UAE together as part of a federation was a major feature of the late Sheikh Zayed Al Nahayan’s vision for the long term development of the UAE as a nation. In terms of population, the federation has grown from approximately a quarter of a million inhabitants in the early 1970’s to a current population in excess of nine million inhabitants , of whom only about 11% are Emirati nationals making the ratio between expatriates and nationals one of the highest in the world (BQ Magazine 2015).

2.2 Historical factors that shaped contemporary UAE perspectives

Historical events and decisions made over time inevitably serve to influence and shape national cultures as unique contexts; in the sections that follow, I briefly summarize some of the major influences which have served to shape the UAE’s political, economic and societal perspectives. Kazim (2000) provides a model of

the past 1500 years of the UAE's history which is adopted by this study as a frame for this summary. Kazim includes an Islamic period (AD 600-1500), a transformational period (AD 1500-1820), a colonial period (AD 1820-1971) and a contemporary period (1971 to present) in his model of UAE history.

As Kazim (ibid.) informs us, the introduction of Islam into the region during the Islamic era was undoubtedly the feature that has most indelibly shaped the identity of the GCC region and other Arab contexts. He notes that it was during this period that the Arabic language was adopted as a regional means of communication, together with the notion that life should be lived according to Islamic principles. Islam remains a key and fundamental aspect of contemporary UAE society; one may therefore argue that developing an understanding of Islam, and the principles on which it is based, is essential for expatriates coming to live and work in this context in order to help them make sense of the events and experiences they inevitably deal with as part of their lives in an unfamiliar cultural setting.

The second stage of Kazim's model of how the contemporary UAE has developed is defined as a transformational period. Kazim indicates that this period was marked by ever increasing expansion of European trading activities within the UAE, which eventually led to the suppression of traditional trade and commercial activities. This commercial expansion was initiated by the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch and then continued by the British. Kazim notes that this was also an era marked by ongoing militarization on the part of foreign powers, evidence of which can be seen in the historic forts that are scattered across the UAE and, indeed, the broader GCC region. Kazim explains that this foreign influence led to the demise of traditional regional trading centers such as Hormuz and Khor-Fakkan and inevitably led to the emergence of anti-European feeling and growing resistance to their influence across the region. It is frequently noted (Hurreiz, 2002; Rugh, 2007; Davidson, 2009) that a marked distrust of external influences, especially those such as the British, still plays a role in the way UAE government ministries and corporate organizations deal with the old colonial powers.

Kazim defines the third stage of UAE history as the colonial period. This era started with the commencement of British control of the Arabian Peninsula and ended with

the emergence of the UAE from what had been known as Trucial Oman (as distinct from the country known today as The Sultanate of Oman). This period saw Trucial Oman divided, by the British, into seven separate administrative regions, each with its own boundary and police force and, most significantly, its own ruling sheikh through whom the British preferred to deal. The latter years of this period also saw early links being made from the GCC region to global trade networks through the discovery and development of oil and natural gas resources. British withdrawal from the region finally took place against a rising backdrop of anti-colonial sentiment as the second world war came to an end. Evidence for the increasingly international role being played by the UAE from this period can be seen in the fact that it became the eighteenth member of the Arab league and the one hundred and thirty second member of the UN.

Rugh (2007) asserts that it was actions taken by the British administration during this era that have served to shape contemporary UAE perspectives of leadership, and followership, and also influenced the way many contemporary UAE organizations and institutions are structured and operate. The actions taken by the British during this period are the focus of the next section. I discuss them in this chapter as they provide a backdrop against which the challenges and issues experienced by the western participants in this study, vis a vis leadership and followership and other related issues, may be better understood.

2.2.1 UAE: Changing views of leadership under British colonial influence

Rugh (2007: 217) indicates that UAE views of leadership shifted through time, from a “pre-colonial era egalitarian style” where everybody had a voice in the placement and maintenance of an individual leader’s power, to one epitomized by centralized rule and a strictly controlled, top-down power hierarchy. Ibn Khaldun (1967), describing the pre-colonial era in the 14th century, writes in a similar vein about the nomadic nature of the sheikhdoms at that time, describing them as being organized loosely around “an alignment of solidarities to gain dominance” (158) within which sheikhs made strategic alliances; such alliances were strongly characterized by relationship and loyalty building. Thus, leaders of this era depended strongly on the support of their followers to both be selected as leaders, and to maintain power over time. This meant they had to be open to consultation,

be good listeners, capable of making consensus and maintaining good relations with all followers. Failure to be effective across these skill areas frequently led to them being deposed or even sometimes assassinated as Davidson's (2009: 16-23) brief summary of the history of the region and the emergence of Abu Dhabi illustrates.

Evidently such freedom to move around and act at will did not sit well with a colonial power like Britain who wished to control regional activity and movement for its own political, economic and administrative purposes. The British tactic was to identify and promote a few specific leaders whom they trusted. This not only served to diminish the numbers of tribal leaders they dealt with, but also raised the status of those they chose to favour. In short, it can be argued that this led to a shift of power away from the tribal unit as a whole, placing it ever more in the hands of a few trusted individual leaders who cooperated with the British. It is possible to speculate that this concentration of power into a few hands contributes significantly towards contemporary UAE perspectives on organizational structure and hierarchical leadership and followership roles. This was identified as a strand in the data that were gathered for this study and is further discussed later.

The British also intruded on traditional tribal practices in numerous other ways including banning piracy, inter-tribal warring and slave trading each of which were traditional activities and key to the building up of wealth, territory and prestige in pre-colonial times. In addition, the British imposed the right to approve succession disputes and put an end to tribal leaders using their independent initiative to deal with foreign powers, instead forcing them to deal through British administrators and pay heed to their political position and the various treaties that were set up in order to control the region.

When oil exploration began in the 1920s, the British created land borders to inhibit tribal movement; these later formed the basis for the boundaries of the seven emirates we know today as the UAE. During this period the British also started channeling the wealth derived from oil to individual, trusted rulers which further increased their leadership power base as it meant rulers had the financial resources to allocate gifts to their people to ensure loyalty. Up to this point the

allocation of resources such as water wells, fishing areas and grazing had been determined communally and shared equally amongst tribal members rather than being controlled by a single individual. An eventual consequence of this shift was that the context changed from one in which all tribal members shared, to a discretionary system based on the good will of the leaders. As long as rulers were generous with their wealth and used it to enrich the lives of their people there were no problems, but when they were not, there was often trouble. For example in the 1950s and 1960s Sheikh Shakbut Al Nahayan, ruler of Abu Dhabi, refused to share his new wealth, a decision which left Abu Dhabi lagging far behind other emirates in terms of modernization. This angered the local population and eventually led to him being deposed in favour of his brother, the late Sheikh Zayed Al Nahayan. (Davidson, 2009: 25-41)

Rugh (*ibid*), notes that the process of moving from an egalitarian status to a more rigid top down hierarchy may also have been enabled by public acceptance of the traditional leadership role that had existed even before the developments brought about by the British. Khuri (1990) writes in a similar vein when he argues the process may also have been facilitated through the fact that tribal societies tend to see the leader as a father figure who provides for, and supports, his family. In brief, a popular leader in such a setting is likely to be afforded a level of respect and reverence traditionally reserved for a patriarch or father figure. When viewed from this perspective it is easy to see the nature of the relationship that exists between leadership, followership and kinship within the UAE. This is highlighted on various public occasions such as the annual National Day when former and current leaders and other senior members of the ruling families are described as the “Fathers of the Nation” and Emirati nationals pay public homage to them. One might argue the shift from egalitarianism to a centralized control of power over time has created a situation where contemporary leaders of the UAE now attempt to maintain their control of power and influence within the country using whatever tools that are available to them to do so. Some of the strategies they have adopted are described in the next section.

2.2.2 Contemporary maintenance of control: Wealth, heritage and tradition

The current leaders of the UAE appear to have a well-developed strategy to maintain control and influence which, I argue, is apparent not only within the broader society as a whole, but also at the level of organizational operations. The strategy includes control through welfarism: UAE nationals are entitled to free education at all stages of their lives along with free health care, subsidized housing and free utilities, as well as financial support to cover the cost of marriages and child rearing. The same benefits are not afforded to the majority, expatriate population. Expatriates residing in the UAE typically live in that setting on a contract to contract basis that allows for their removal at short notice. While welfarism, as described previously, is not an overt feature of organizational practice in the UAE, from personal experience it is not uncommon for Emirati staff to receive promotions, salary rises or other benefits according to decisions made by individual managers and leaders that might go beyond agreed organizational policy and practice. The reasons that underpin such decisions sometimes remain unclear.

Hurreiz (2002) points to other subtle forces, such as heritage and traditional folklore, that he argues are manipulated by UAE rulers to strengthen a sense of community and promote the notion of a common national identity. He goes on to comment that tradition is also used to strengthen and maintain traditional perspectives on the role of a leader. Hurreiz discusses this in terms of folklore traditions and indicates how these are skillfully woven into every aspect of private and public life. It is not uncommon to see traditional symbols of the past throughout public areas; these serve as potent symbols of national identity. Large models of traditional dhows, camels, coffee pots etc. are subliminal reminders to the population of their historical roots.

2.3 Higher Education in the UAE: Rapid development

Higher Education (HE) in the UAE is a relatively recent development and in the early years there were three main federally-funded institutions which were the leading players in the field. The first institution of tertiary education to be established was the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) which opened in 1976 in the city of Al Ain. The UAEU has grown considerably over the years and in

the academic year 2014-15 the student body numbered some 13000 male and female students. The second major player on the UAE tertiary scene was the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) which first opened four branches in Abu Dhabi and Al Ain in 1988. By 2014-15 the HCT system of colleges had expanded to include 17 campuses across the seven emirates, offering more than 75 different programs of study. The HCT currently has a combined enrollment of more than 17,000 male and female students across the system. The third significant UAE tertiary institution to be created was Zayed University (ZU) which opened in Abu Dhabi and Dubai in 1998, initially for women only. Since 2008, ZU has opened its doors to both male and female students and developed large campuses in both Abu Dhabi and Dubai. In 2014 it offered over 40 undergraduate programs across the sciences and humanities and had an enrolment of over 10,000 students.

However, the limited options for tertiary education which were a feature of the early years of the federation are a thing of the past. Since around 2000, tertiary institutions offering a wide variety of choices have proliferated alongside these three established players and the website UAEEducation.info now lists over 100 higher education institutions which operate in the UAE. Amongst the new arrivals are public and private emirate-based universities and colleges as well as branches of international universities in partnership with the local authorities. International institutions which have branch campuses in the UAE include the Sorbonne, New York University, Middlesex University and Heriot Watt University amongst others.

2.3.1 Features of the UAE tertiary system

“The nature of the students, the heterogeneity of the academic workforce, and the way the UAE HEIs are funded and administered creates institutions that reflect the UAE's unique society and complex mix of cultural influences from which it is formed” (Baalawi 2008: 32)

As the above quotation from Baalawi suggests, there are some features of the UAE tertiary system which mark it as different to many other tertiary systems. For example, the federally funded UAE tertiary institutions mentioned in the previous section operate with male and female student bodies that are segregated in some way. The HCT system of colleges operates separate men's and women's campuses in each emirate. ZU and UAEU also work with male and female

students as separate student bodies, but locate both gender groups on the same campus in separate areas to ensure they do not mix. In contrast, most of the international tertiary institutions and other private universities that have opened in the UAE operate with mixed gender student bodies. Bristol-Rhys (2008) attributes this to a perceived need on their part to keep operational costs at a manageable level. She notes that the financial consequences of operating with a gender separated higher education system are not insignificant and that many international universities who open branch campuses in the UAE are not willing to assume such costs. The student bodies of these institutions are generally much more international in nature and, unlike the main federal institutions, do not cater solely for Emirati nationals.

Another significant feature of the UAE federal tertiary sector which differentiates it from many other systems is that, from its inception, it has tended to cater for significantly more Emirati women than men. This trend continues today, for example, while the UAEU enrolled around 13,000 students in the academic year 2014-2015 only around 3000 of those enrolled were males. One reason that may explain this phenomenon is that, at least in the early years of the federation, Emirati men often opted for high salaried careers in the public sector (police, military and oil industry) which may have required specialist training rather than tertiary academic credentials. Another explanatory factor for the relatively low numbers of males in tertiary education in the UAE, is that men in that society have many more opportunities to travel overseas for study than are afforded to their female counterparts. There are, therefore, larger numbers of Emirati women graduating from local institutions every year than there are Emirati males. Despite the growing numbers of female Emirati tertiary graduates, there remain real limitations on many women's lives in the UAE; Bristol-Rhys (2008: 108) gives the example of a female internship student who "pleaded with (her) to extend her time as an intern because she knew that this was her only chance to experience working as her father would not permit her to have a job."

Bristol-Rhys (ibid.) comments that the notion of UAE women studying, and eventually entering the workplace, represents significant social change taking place in the fabric of UAE society. However, as she goes on to state, the UAE is

still relatively young in terms of social development and cultural traditions tend to change at a slow pace. Traditional UAE views concerning women and their role still predominate in many quarters and these have focused on homemaking and family support rather than work related roles. It is not uncommon for UAE families to demand stringent security features to control both the movement of, and access to, female members of their families while they study on federal campuses (Bristol-Rhys *ibid.*). Bristol-Rhys characterizes the separation of genders amongst young Emirati men and women as “the most potentially dysfunctional aspect of gender-segregated higher education in the UAE” (2008: 105). However, she is careful to point out that the women-only tertiary environment is not one devoid of all men, just one characterized by the absence of Emirati men; foreign males, be they administrators, academics or service staff are not seen as posing a social threat. However, from personal experience as a male working in colleges catering to young female students, gender segregation and its consequences is a feature of working life which many male western teachers and academics seem to find hard to adjust to particularly when they are new to that context.

A third feature of the UAE tertiary sector is that, for the most part, study programs are delivered and assessed via the medium of English rather than Arabic. Over time this has been a cause of frustration for both students and academic staff, as in many instances, student language proficiency levels have not proved adequate to meet the demands of studying through the medium of English at the tertiary level (Fox 2008). However, this situation may be starting to change as a result of efforts, initiated in 2007, to reform the UAE school system. These education reforms have included the adoption of English as the medium of delivery for both primary and secondary school programs. Anecdotal evidence from colleagues dealing with new arrivals in tertiary institutions, suggests that these reforms may have had some impact with growing numbers of students emerging from the school system better prepared to study in English.

Another factor differentiating the UAE tertiary sector from many others is the multicultural makeup of its staffing. Currently, over 90% of staff and faculty in licensed institutions of higher education are expatriates with approximately 55% of

these originating from non-Arab contexts (The UAE Higher Education Factbook 2013/14: 82). The presence of so many different nationalities has had a major impact on the higher education system but it also means that it is a fertile breeding ground for the higher education tensions associated with the 'global-local', 'indigenous-imported', traditional-modern' and 'idealistic-pragmatic' dichotomies (Findlow, 2005), and all the inevitable challenges this brings.

2.4 The expatriate academic experience in UAE institutions

As suggested above the UAE has proved a fertile ground for the selling and marketing of tertiary education and, in common with many employment sectors in the UAE most of the higher education institutions, whether well-established or relatively new, rely heavily on expatriate staff. Syed (2003: 229) comments, this has not been unproblematic:

“Although foreign teachers bring diversity into the classroom, and although some use contextually situated pedagogy, there are wide gaps in the expatriate educators (especially non-Arabs) knowledge of local sociocultural communities and languages. Linguistic and cultural distance between learners and teachers is a serious factor in the Gulf [...] classrooms.”

Another potentially serious factor in higher education institutions in the UAE is that of a relatively high turnover of staff. Official statistics on annual staff turnover in the education sector are apparently not available (although see below for information from the Centre for Higher Education Data and Statistics –CHEDS) but a recent World Bank report on the Dubai education sector makes reference to high levels of turnover, without specific figures being provided (Ryan 2014). Ryan (ibid.) claims that media reports have identified staff turnover rates of anywhere between 20 per cent and upwards of 60 per cent in some cases. Ryan's review concerns the education sector in general and is not specific to the tertiary sector, but my own personal perception having worked in that arena is that it is one where colleagues come and go regularly. The CHEDS report (2012) mentioned above reveals that 63% of faculty in federal institutions remain in place for less than six years, i.e. generally less than two standard contracts; this figure rises to 69% in officially accredited but non-federal institutions (21). The implications of this are numerous but may include aspects such as a potentially damaging lack of continuity, a negative impact on the development of research groups or effective working

parties within institutions and a limited capacity to build partnerships with companies and employers in the country. Commenting about frequent changes in leadership in the UAE tertiary sector, Dr Tod Laursen President of Khalifa University in Abu Dhabi, is quoted as saying:

“Frequent changes of direction in leadership can disrupt the strategic direction of a team and disrupt the momentum built by the campus community over time.” (cited in Moussly 2011, para. 11)

2.5 The institutions in this study

The western participants who agreed to be interviewed during the course of this study came from two tertiary institutions which I shall call Institute A and Institute B. In the paragraphs that follow I provide some background details about these two institutions whilst still endeavouring to safeguard their anonymity.

2.5.1 Institute A

Institute A was established in 2003 as a private university by one of the ruling families and other distinguished UAE citizens. It numbers a student body in excess of 4000 and is divided into three divisions and an English Language Institute which prepares students to enter undergraduate programmes and supports them throughout their years of study. The students are not separated by gender for teaching purposes but the provided accommodation facilities are strictly separated as one might expect. Each division is led by an Academic Dean supported by administrative staff and faculty. The stated mission of Institute A, in common with that of many of the new institutions proliferating in the UAE, is to become a regional leader in the provision of a variety of academic programs and prepare students for the world of work across the MENA region and beyond. Programs are delivered and assessed by academic staff recruited from various Arab and western settings. These faculty work to accreditation standards defined by the UAE Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). Information provided on the website of Institute A indicates that some curricula are still drawn up in-house, although there appears to be a growing trend to create partnerships with external universities in the US, Australia or UK and import their curricula and accreditation standards. This is not surprising, as the search for international accreditation is never ending within most

UAE tertiary institutions and such international links and partnerships are seen as a badge of quality and provide a good 'sales pitch' when recruiting new students (Starrett, 2008; Davidson, 2009). As a privately funded institution, it recruits a student body that includes both international and Emirati male and female students, all of whom are required to pay programme course fees. However, it is fair to say that scholarship funding opportunities are widely available to Emirati nationals from both federal and local government sources.

On the surface, academic leadership of each division, and indeed the institution itself, appears to be provided by expatriates. It is significant that there has been a fairly high turnover of Deans and Vice Chancellors in the institution (personal communication from colleagues), although it is not clear why this may be the case. It is also significant that the body which oversees all aspects of institutional activity, and to which the academic and administrative staff are ultimately responsible, consists solely of Emirati nationals. Members of this body are drawn from a number of eminent and influential Emirati families. One might speculate that these families provide an important source of funding for the institution, although it is not possible to find evidence of this on the website. From personal experience of working in UAE tertiary institutions, even when the overseeing bodies include non-Emirati members, as is sometimes the case, it is the UAE National members of such bodies who retain the responsibility for signing off on nearly every aspect of decision making within their institution. In essence, this means that, unlike similar institutions in the west, there tends to be very little delegation of authority.

2.5.2 Institute B

Institute B, established in 2007, is one of a number of institutions initiated by what is now called Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) in order to support their efforts to reform the school sector. It was established in partnership with a university from outside the UAE which for the purposes of anonymity I will not identify, and it was initially understood by the partner institution that there would be an international mandate. However, a significant feature of Institute B is that, unlike Institute A, it has not in fact admitted non-Emirati students but, like its federal counterparts, is open to both male and female students who are segregated in different sections of the campus. It is noticeable that, in common with other UAE tertiary institutions,

the student body is mostly composed of females as, despite strenuous efforts, the institution has never managed to recruit more than token numbers of males in any given academic year since it opened. Even though there are only small numbers of Emirati male students on campus, the gender segregation policy is strictly applied; the resulting 'doubling up' of resource costs has both staffing and budgetary implications. The student body is recruited from across all the emirates, and in common with federal institutions, all students are fully funded. Current enrolment stands at approximately 200 for the year 2014-2015.

The academic staff are recruited from various western and Arab contexts. The institute's organizational structure includes a Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor, together with a number of Deans nominally responsible for academic affairs and various other areas of operations. The current and former incumbents of the leadership and management posts come from western contexts, however it is significant that there have been at least seven Vice Chancellors appointed since the opening in 2007; one could say that these particular management positions in this institution exemplify the "revolving door" of leadership noted by Moussly (2011: Sept. 18). As with Institute A, the overseeing Board of Trustees consists mainly of Emirati nationals along with a few westerners drawn from the ranks of ADEC. ADEC is the institution that acts as the Abu Dhabi government funding provider and manages the institute's budget. My personal experience has been that ADEC is the government body that dictates the decision making processes within the institution acting in a similar capacity to the overseeing board of Institute A described above. Academic staff are, without exception, expatriate Arabs or recruited from western contexts; currently there are no Emirati academics in the faculty, although there are several Emirati administrators and department managers.

2.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have sketched a brief description of the historical context of the UAE and speculated on ways this may have impacted on the areas of leadership and management. I have given an overview of the UAE tertiary context and provided specific details about the two institutions that feature in this study. I have pointed out that, whilst UAE tertiary institutions may superficially resemble their

western counterparts in terms of organizational structures and the decision making responsibilities one might expect to be part of such a structure, the reality may be different.

In the next chapter I provide an overview of the research literature that has accrued over time with regard to notions such as organization, culture, intercultural competence and educational leadership and management. The chapter explores some of the differing perceptions of the nature of these concepts that exists and indicates how Emirati perspectives on organizational structures and how they should operate may differ from those of the western managers nominally recruited to act in leadership roles.

Chapter 3: Reading review

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research study is to develop an understanding of the challenges and issues that may face leaders and managers from western contexts when they are recruited to work in tertiary institutions in the unfamiliar cultural setting of the UAE for the first time. How these leaders make sense of their experiences raises questions about the epistemological and ontological issues that are fundamental to all research. Chirkov (2009) notes that in essence there are two broad approaches to dealing with social science subject matter. The first involves taking a deductive approach to subject matter which is based around the need to search for explanations or universal laws that are 'out there' waiting for researchers to find them. This is rooted in the deductive or positivist research tradition which usually underpins research in the fields of the natural sciences. In contrast, the second seeks to understand rather than explain and is rooted in the interpretive tradition of social science (Crotty, 1998; Hollis, 2002; Manicas, 2006). This is based on the assumption that it is the main purpose of research to seek the meaning that underpins actions in order to understand them more completely. Tappan (1997) indicates that from this viewpoint a human action can only be understood from within. It is within this latter tradition that this study is positioned as it attempts to examine how the expatriate leaders in this study perceive, and try to make sense of, their day to day working life in the institutions in which they find themselves.

The chapter begins with a review of the research literature that relates to organizations and how they function including aspects such as structure, decision-making processes, power and how decisions may be communicated. The notion of organizational cultures is introduced and this is related to the broader concepts of coping strategies, culture and intercultural competence and how these areas may be inter-related. The chapter concludes with a discussion of leadership and management in the educational arena.

3.1.1 Factors influencing reading review selection

As noted previously in chapter 1, a review of the research literature that deals with leadership and management issues shows that much of it derives from North America and other western contexts, to the detriment of other contexts

including the GCC region. Smith et al (2007) and Deardorff, (2009) indicate this may serve to present a somewhat distorted picture of educational leadership and management. Another feature of much of the research dealing with the management field is that it has its origins in the corporate and business sectors rather than focusing specifically on the educational arena. However, it would be difficult to ignore completely this body of research; Hallinger and Snidvongs (2008) point out that to view the fields of business and educational management and leadership as distinct ignores the fact that the latter has borrowed much from the former over the years, and that while the two areas differ in terms of focus, they are not entirely separate. Similarly much cross-cultural research originates from a business management focus but has been utilized by the field of educational management. For example, Hofstede's (1980, 1983) cultural dimensions model, which resulted from research originating from the corporate world, has been extensively borrowed by researchers dealing with cross-cultural issues from the perspective of educational management and leadership, for example see Child (1981), Triandis (1982), Bryant (1998 cited in Bush and Coleman 2000), Dimmock (1998), Pusch (2009) and Branine (2011). Therefore, this review of the literature, whilst primarily concerned with the field of education, borrows from other fields whenever I have considered it relevant to do so.

3.2 Organization Theory: Introduction

At the most basic level an organization may be understood as a group of people working together to achieve a set of common objectives, with each member of the group having a specific role to play or task to perform in the achievement of the common goals. Over the years there have been many attempts to explain the complex dynamics of organizations including aspects such as how decisions are made, how power and control is managed and distributed, how conflicts are resolved and how change is managed. As Pfeffer (1997) summarizes, this large body of work has examined organizations at a number of levels: the effects of organizations on individuals within them; the impact of the individual on the organization; the performance, success and survival of an organization and the mutual effects of the environment, including political and cultural, on an organization. Most of the early work in the broad field of organization theory focused on the business and corporate worlds

(Morgan, 1997; Bolman and Deal, 2008) with research focusing specifically on educational organizations beginning to emerge as a field in its own right in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The notion that organizations are inherently complex is a theme that has developed over time and cuts across the literature base. For example, Cuthbert (1984), Morgan (1997), Bolman and Deal (2008) and Bush (2011) comment on the need to view organizations from diverse perspectives in order to develop clear understandings of them. Bolman and Deal (ibid) discuss case studies of leaders from the contemporary corporate world who failed to adopt a multi-perspectival stance on taking up new leadership posts and suffered as a consequence. Morgan (1997: 347) summarizes this position eloquently when he writes “organizations are many things at once! They are complex and multifaceted. They are paradoxical”. Bush writes specifically about educational organizations and acknowledges that they, like any other organization, are unique entities and need to be dealt with as such.

3.2.1 Organization theory in the education field

Bush (2011) writes that a considerable body of literature has accrued in relation to the specific contexts of educational organizations and the practice of leadership and management. Bush (ibid) acknowledges the hybrid nature of the field stating that many early developments can be traced back to structural and operational principles that were originally applied to industrial organizations. Taylor’s (1911) theory of scientific management is commonly cited as a primary source of many early organizational principles (Morgan, 1997; Bolman and Deal, 2008). Hallinger and Snidvongs (2008) echo Bush’s comments about the field of educational management being a hybrid one, and note that while it has made some progress in transitioning from an area that is dependent on ideas drawn from the business setting to becoming a field in its own right, the transition remains problematic. They indicate that there is a strand of opinion that maintains there are functions that are common to all organizations, for example financial management and human resources. This may lead to the conclusion that organizations of all types may be managed along similar lines. Hallinger and Snidvongs (ibid.) however, also comment that a contrasting opinion holds that there is much about educational organizations that makes them unique, not least being a focus on learning, instruction and students,

which are areas the world of business organizational practice seems to have little to offer in terms of input.

Another notable feature of much of the research base on educational organizations is that, in common with its corporate counterpart, until the end of the twentieth century it too derived mainly from Europe and North America and seemingly ignored other global contexts. One might speculate as to why this might have occurred: one possibility is that researchers of the time saw organizational structures and practices as being standard across differing contexts. The works of Morgan (1997), Bolman and Deal (2008) and Bush (2011) resonate with this when they comment that early organizational research in the broader field itself, focused on formal organizational structure to the detriment of cultural and other factors. However, more contemporary research into leadership and management issues in both the corporate and educational sectors, has seen this position change; it is now common to see research which is more inclusive of multiple aspects of an organization, covering not only formal and structural aspects, but also social and cultural factors. Research has been conducted both from a business organizational perspective (Hofstede, 1980; Morgan, 1997; House et al, 2004; Bolman and Deal, 2008; Branine, 2011), as well as from a leadership and management perspective focusing specifically on educational organizations (Walker and Dimmock, 2002; Bottery, 2004; Leithwood et al, 2004; West-Burnham, 2009; Walker, 2010; Bush, 2011).

3.2.2 Organizational models

As noted above, organizations are complex and researchers have attempted to synthesize this complexity into a variety of models. For example, Morgan (1997) has provided a series of metaphors through which one may view an organization including organizations as machines, as organisms, as brains, as cultures and as political systems. Similarly, Bolman and Deal (2008: 10) view organizations through a series of “frames”, including organizations as formal structures, organizations as a human resource, organizations as political entities and organizations as cultures in action. Sybert et al (2010) take a slightly different approach, dividing organizations into three structural levels; the first level they introduce is the micro level which includes a focus on issues such as leadership, motivation and job satisfaction, conflict, power and influence. The second level is the meso level which focuses on authority and power structure,

organizational structure in general and staff rewards. The final level they outline is the macro level which focuses on how the external environment impacts on an organization. Others (e.g. Cuthbert, 1984; Bush, 2011) have written specifically about organizational models in the education sector. Bush (ibid.) provides a set of six windows through which he maintains educational organizations can be viewed, nevertheless the influence of business-focused research lingers, and it could be argued that these windows are similar in terms of content to the models provided by researchers focusing on a broader corporate organizational platform. The categories Bush provides include a focus on educational organizations as formal structures, collegial models, political models, subjective models, ambiguity models and organizational cultures.

The taxonomies above do not necessarily imply the superiority of one model, or perspective, over another. However, it is argued that differing models have developed and evolved in response to a growing awareness that early technological models with an emphasis on organizational structure may be only partial, and potentially deficient (Chapman 1993 cited in Bush 2011; Morgan, 1997; Bolman and Deal, 2008). Despite differing terminology and different backgrounds (corporate and educational), a shared feature of the models noted is that they are concerned with aspects which are common to all organizations from the smallest company or school, to the largest multinational corporation or university, namely: organizational structure; work processes and policies; decision-making processes and channels of communication. I now turn to a discussion of these areas.

3.2.3 Organizational Structures

“Structure is not an objective in itself. Rather, it is a means to an end. Simply and practically, organizational structure (generally represented by charts) is the framework that depicts job arrangements, lines of influence, and coordination mechanisms. It is the hierarchical and purposeful arrangement of positions and jobs that aims at facilitating the performance of organizational activities” (Ali 2009: 106).

In western contexts the industrial revolution of the mid 1800's was arguably, a major shaping force behind the advent of organizational structures and the notion of structure has been a feature of any organization, including those in the educational field, since that time. The growth of factories and other industrial organizations led to the creation of structures aimed at maximum efficiency whereby owner-managers took control over the labour force in a hierarchical

relationship (Morgan 1997). This view of how organizations should be structured impacted heavily on the education field and, it could be argued, led to the “notion of the school as a hierarchical decision-making structure with a horizontal division into departments and a vertical division into authority levels” (Bell, 1989: 146 cited in Bush, 2011:158). This typically gives rise to the image of a pyramid as a visual representation of a hierarchical organizational structure. It would be easy to dismiss such a formal and traditional structure as irrelevant in a contemporary world, yet Bush (ibid.) notes that this kind of structure remains resilient in the education sector. Clarke (1983: 114, cited in Bush ibid.) writes:

“academic structures do not simply move aside or let go: what is in place heavily conditions what will be. The heavy hand of history is felt in the structures and beliefs that development has set in place”.

As the name suggests, a hierarchical organizational structure is top-down in nature and ultimate authority rests with the leader whilst others in the hierarchy have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Other common features of this traditional model include bureaucracy and standardized processes to shape operational practices and to achieve clear, pre-determined goals as efficiently as possible.

Whilst the industrial revolution may have been a major factor in shaping organizational structures in the west, different societal forces have inevitably played a role in other contexts. In an empirical study focusing specifically on the politico-historical evolution of the Gulf region, Atallah (2011) examines a number of contributory factors to what he terms the “democracy deficit” (ibid. 167) in the Gulf region as a whole. Building on the Elbadawi, Makdisi, Milante (EMM) Model to empirically examine the contributory factors to this democracy deficit, Atallah (ibid.) concludes that hierarchical organizational structures and authoritarianism persist as notable features in that part of the world. Atallah’s findings also indicate, in line with the discussion in chapter two, that their existence may owe more to the historical factors shaping power and influence in those countries (patriarchy, tribalism and family allegiance) than to the techno-rational forces which saw the emergence of hierarchies in industrial contexts. A google images search for “UAE organizational structures” yields a web page showing dozens of examples of various organizational structures in the UAE

(governmental, corporate and educational) almost all of which offer one variation or another of a hierarchical structure.

A major criticism of traditional hierarchical structures is that they limit creativity on the part of the individual. They were not originally designed to allow individuals the agency to adapt to meet new and ever-changing circumstances which are a feature of many contemporary societies in a rapidly changing world (Morgan, 1997; Lumby, 2001; Bolman and Deal, 2008; Bush, 2011). These changing circumstances in many contexts have forced organizations to think in new ways about the notion of structure and to formulate alternatives which allow for more flexibility and adaptation. For example, Lumby (2001) explains that many institutions now prefer metaphors such as the Christmas tree which, it is argued, offers a less stark image than that presented by the pyramid. Other alternative images to represent organizational structure include the use of Venn diagrams or concentric circles to illustrate flatter (horizontal), more collaborative organizational relationships and flexible lines of communication.

In what he terms a “single country comparative” study, Hvidt (2009: 397) offers an analysis of the key factors that have shaped contemporary Dubai. Combining data from a range of documentary sources as well as a large number of interviews conducted with participants from a broad cross-section of Dubai society, Hvidt offers an example of how a local adaptation of hierarchical structures coupled with unique and favourable economic conditions has played a positive role in the development of the Dubai government and corporate sectors. Dubai has grown in a short space of time from a small insignificant and poverty-ridden settlement to a high-profile city state competing on a world stage, and Hvidt (*ibid*) notes that the organizational structure under which Dubai functions is extremely centralized, with power, control and decision-making resting in the hands of a very small number of men (*sic*). Hvidt maintains that this centralized control coupled with an ability to basically “purchase” (2009: 403) a workforce on the international market to suit current needs has created an alternative and more flexible version of a hierarchical organizational structure leading to a very favourable climate for Dubai from a developmental perspective. Hvidt writes that it is the resulting flexibility in the size and qualifications of the workforce which “allows Dubai to make exceptionally quick strategic changes as new market opportunities arise or new developmental

goals are set” (ibid. 403). Kirk (2015) however, takes a rather more cautious view of the strategy of using sovereign wealth to import foreign expertise. He notes that, whilst such a strategy may enable rapid and targeted development, it “leapfrog(s) the lengthy and costly processes of indigenous growth and maturity” (2015: 78), and may hinder or delay capacity building amongst the indigenous population. Although Kirk maintains that his article is the product of a research initiative undertaken by the Centre for International and Regional Studies at Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service in Qatar, he offers no indication of his methodological approach and the article reads more as an opinion piece than a systematic study. However, a quantitative study of organizational structures and teamwork in the Abu Dhabi public sector based on questionnaire data gathered from a sample of over 250 respondents (Romaiithi 2011) indicates that there may be some substance to Kirk’s observations. Romaiithi concludes that almost all government organizations in that emirate are “typically mechanistic” (ibid. 7) with multiple hierarchical layers, chains of command and centralized decision-making which leads to delays and inefficiency. Clearly the situation in the UAE is complex and illustrative of a nation in transition.

Despite the emergence of new and alternative organizational structures, Lumby (2001) maintains that whatever shape these may take, an element of bureaucratic hierarchy will always assert itself. It should also be noted that whilst visual representations of the structure of an organization provide an authorised version of formal roles and relationships, it is only a partial view of what actually may happen on a daily basis because it offers no insights into the values, beliefs and personalities of the individuals involved. Bush (2011) points out that a focus solely upon organization as structure represents a positivistic approach which ignores the contribution that individuals may make. Ali (2009) takes the argument further when he asserts that although structures may seem similar across cultures, each culture gives different meanings to structural arrangements. In other words, whilst structures may look the same on the surface, the whole notion of roles and relationships within a structure may be subject to differing interpretations within different contexts. In the next section, I shall turn to a consideration of policies, procedures and processes and consider how they contribute to the structure of an organization.

3.2.4 Work policy, process and procedure

The terms *policy*, *process* and *procedure* are often used interchangeably which serves to hide the subtle differences between each and the ways they may work together to form the system which underpins the operations of the institution. At a broad level *policy* can be taken to represent the approaches, rules and guidelines by which the institution functions. Policies may be concerned with administrative or academic matters. The *process*, typically outlined in an institutional manual of policies and procedures, can be likened to an overview, or map, of how a policy is to be implemented. *Procedures* represent the specific steps to be followed in order to implement the process and thus carry out the policy. To illustrate how these three terms can work together in an educational institution one might consider a typical example of language policy and its related assessment. Although individual institutional requirements vary, most UAE tertiary institutions have a language policy that requires students to attain a certain standard in the externally benchmarked International English Language Test System (IELTS) in order to graduate (Mouhanna, 2010; Karmani, 2011). The process to be followed to enable students to achieve this benchmark is typically articulated in a course handbook and maps out the stages to be followed throughout an academic year e.g. hours of teaching, progress monitoring and evaluating stages etc. The procedures offer detailed instructions of how to proceed through each stage including details of teaching and testing materials and/or course books to be used as part of the process and thus implement the policy.

The terms policies, process and procedure are rooted in the perspective of organizations which views them through a techno-rational lens (Morgan, 1997) and the original intention was “to ensure predictability, uniformity and reliability” (Morgan *ibid.*13) in operational terms, thus averting problems connected with quality and equity which might arise if decisions were left to individual discretion (Bolman and Deal 2008). The assumption underlying the implementation of policies from this perspective is that staff in organizations have a shared understanding and acceptance of institutional policies, processes and procedures and will conform to operational standards as they are laid out in policies. However, as noted earlier, educational institutions and the way they operate are not always so clear cut. Bush (2011) comments they can be viewed

as social, political and ambiguous entities in which differing perceptions, values and beliefs can come into play. For example, even at the basic level of procedures, each individual teacher, behind the closed doors of their own classroom, is likely to deal in different and individual ways with their students. Nevertheless, as an entity whose function is to serve a wider community, it is essential that an institution can be transparently accountable if it is to maintain its integrity and retain the trust of all its constituents. Documented institutional policies, processes and procedures can serve to fulfil this function. Such documentation has inevitably been generated through a process of decision-making which may have taken place in a number of different ways, at a number of different levels and have involved different stakeholders, both internal and external. In the next section, I shall turn to a discussion of decision-making and some of the factors which may influence it.

3.2.5 Decisions and decision-making processes

In its simplest definition, decision-making could be said to be the act of choosing between one or more courses of action. Miller et al (1999) identify two levels at which such decision-making occurs. The first level is that of the functional, operational decisions which determine the day to day functioning of an organization. The second level of decision-making identified by Miller et al (ibid.) is what they call strategic decision-making which may have a more fundamental impact on the organization as a whole. They explain that strategic decisions often happen at the level of policy and are characterized as dealing with unfamiliar ground and novel concepts which necessitates the creation and implementation of new processes and procedures in order to deal with them. Miller et al (ibid.) note that the former are usually delegated to middle managers in an organization while the latter, due to their sensitive nature, are usually dealt with by more senior managers.

Morgan (1997) offers four broad perspectives on the way decisions, whether operational or strategic, may be made. Morgan (ibid. 160) explains that decisions may be autocratic i.e. coming from “the top” as may occur in a top-down organizational structure. Some might argue that this kind of decision-making does not feature as much as it may have in the past in many western contexts due to changing social expectations, but autocracy certainly remains in evidence in other contexts (Morgan, ibid; Lunenburg, 2011). The second

classification Morgan provides explains that decisions may be bureaucratic in nature. In other words shaped by the written rules and policies of an organization where a “we are supposed to do it this way” (Morgan, *ibid.* 160) attitude is in evidence. The third type of decision-making process identified by Morgan (*ibid.*) is a technocratic one whereby expertise is brought into play in order to determine the best course of action. In Morgan’s words “It’s best to do it this way” (1997: 160) is the rationale guiding the process. The final classification of decision-making outlined by Morgan is that of a democratic process whereby employees at different levels within an organization are formally authorised to have voice in the decision-making process.

3.2.6 Power, decision-making and communication

Bush (2011) distinguishes between authority and influence as sources of power in the decision-making process. Authority represents the legally sanctioned positional power vested in an individual by virtue of his/her job title and job description. In contrast, influence represents individual or group ability to affect the decision-making process and may be based on informal factors such as personality or other sources of influence. Authority and influence communicate through different channels to affect decision-making. Bacharach and Lawler (1980 cited in Bush 2011) assert that authority is the static, structural aspect of decision-making power whereby decisions are communicated from the top in a uni-directional manner which leaves little room for officially sanctioned upward or sideways channels of communication. Influence, on the other hand, represents a more informal source of power whereby individuals or groups work together to exert pressure on decision-makers behind the scenes to achieve their particular desired outcomes. Ali (2009) writes that in any given structure it is only possible to see formally laid out activities and communication channels but it is not easy to access the informal communications, negotiations and bargaining that may take place beneath the surface and influence the decision-making process. In this case, influence is multi-directional and can flow upwards, downwards or laterally (Bacharach & Lawler 1980 cited in Bush *ibid.*). Bush (2011) writes that in higher education institutions a considerable source of authority in the decision-making process lies in the power of professional expertise. This is often represented in a ‘collegial’ approach to decision-making

which is characterized as more democratic in nature and in large educational institutions is:

“often manifested through formal systems of (standing) committees [.....]. The decision making process inside committees is thought to be egalitarian with influence dependent [...] on specific expertise [.....]. The assumption is that decisions are reached by consensus or compromise rather than acquiescence to the view of the head or principal”. (Bush, 2011: 81)

However, in his discussion of collegial systems Bush (ibid.) also notes that membership of standing committees within many tertiary institutions may often be restricted, thus raising questions about the extent to which they can be classified as truly egalitarian or democratic.

In more recent years, it has been acknowledged that decision-making processes within educational institutions are rarely simple or straightforward (March, 2009; Bush, 2011). Bush (2011) discusses the uncertain and unpredictable nature of educational institutions and maintains that ambiguity, politics and individual subjectivity are all prevalent features within complex organizations like colleges and universities. As noted above, there are different sources of authority and influence which operate and communicate in both overt and covert ways to affect the decision-making processes. In common with many other types of organizations, educational institutions are accountable to external stakeholders as well as being made up of different internal groups. However, in the case of educational institutions this accountability is perhaps more complicated in the sense that, unlike businesses whose major focus may be to make maximum profits for stakeholders, educational institutions have varied constituencies (e.g. external: parents, government funding agencies. Internal: students, different departments or divisions etc.) which may have differing or competing interests and priorities. Bargaining and negotiating, be it formally or informally, on the part of these varying interest groups may feature in the decision-making processes. In other words decision-making may take place under an amalgam of formally sanctioned authorities (power and authority by virtue of position and/or expertise) and informal sources of power and influence (personal charisma, social networks, allegiances etc.). These various sources of influence and power in the decision-making processes are apparent to varying degrees in educational institutions throughout the world. However, Hudson (2013), in an interesting qualitative study of the experiences of expatriate

English language teachers examined through data collected in interviews with 32 respondents in 11 different higher education institutions across the Emirates, identifies an unusual degree of student power as a source of influence on decision-making that may be particular to the UAE tertiary sector. He writes:

“At an institutional level, through the use of the feedback forms, the students are perceived as holding a level of power over their teachers which, for many of the respondents, may go far beyond anything they have previously experienced.” (Hudson, 2013: 196)

Hudson’s findings hint at the possibility that there may be factors at play in the decision-making process that are specific to the UAE context and which lie beyond the control of the expatriate employee perhaps as a result of their outsider status. In the next section I shall review some other factors in the decision-making processes which may be context specific to the UAE.

3.2.7 Power, influence and decision-making in the UAE

In a study taking a Hofstedian dimensions approach, Daleure et al (2015), contrast Arab and western societies pointing out areas that can lead to misunderstandings at the level of decision-making. They cite Klein and Kuperman (2008) who assert that

“Arab societies tend to be collectivist, promote interdependence, encourage discussion [...] in individual decision-making and value maintaining relations over efficiency and cost-effectiveness.” (79)

They contrast this with the individualistic nature of decision-making in western contexts where efficiency and saving time and money might be valued over the interpersonal dimension. Similarly, expatriate managers in Al Mazrouie and Pech’s UAE-based study (2015) cited a focus on group culture as a significant area of difference between them and their Emirati subordinates. Abdulman and Lustig (1981 cited in Karolak and Guta 2015) found that Saudi Arabian managers resented the inattention to social rituals that they perceived amongst their American counterparts. Ali, (1989) in an early survey study of Arab Gulf managers’ decision-making styles, found a strong preference for a consultative or a pseudo-consultative style that he traces back to the influence of Islamic and tribal values. Ali additionally comments that both consultative and pseudo-consultative decision-making processes take time and that this may lead to frustration for western managers unfamiliar with this style when collaborating alongside Arab counterparts. Similarly, Romaiti (2011) has found that a pseudo-consultative

working environment in fact masks a strict chain of command and centralized decision-making within some Abu Dhabi government organizations. She notes that this inevitably creates delays in decision-making as strict adherence to the chain of command requires getting feedback and approval at every stage. She maintains that this is further compounded by strict requirements governing the reporting and documenting of requests and actions that involve other parties.

The notion of consultation links to another area which has been identified as important in Arab societies, that of maintaining positive interpersonal relationships and ensuring that one's colleagues are not cast in a negative light in public interactions (Karolak and Guta 2015). Daleure et al (2015) paraphrase Klein and Kuperman (2008) when they explain:

“Members of Arab societies, often use the technique of saving face - diffusing, putting off, or ignoring an unfavourable idea or arrangement rather than directly rejecting it. Arab decision-making may seem more emotional than logical to Westerners while Westerners' decision-making processes may seem coldhearted to Arabs perceiving it as devoid of the human elements such as illness or family problems.” (79)

The need to maintain positive interpersonal relations has also been reported by Al Mazrouie and Pech (2015) who found that tackling sensitive issues in a head-on or direct manner was a problematic area for the expatriate managers in their study. Al Mazrouie and Pech (ibid.) report that this was a finding also confirmed by Cerimagic (2010) whose research found that Australian managers in the UAE “could not be as direct with their subordinates as they were accustomed to being in their home country” (Cerimagic 2010, 283 cited in Al Mazrouie and Pech 2015, 82).

Hudson (2013: 198) identifies the concept of “wasta” as having a role in shaping decision-making and explains that “wasta” refers to the influence that individuals from powerful families may exert. Writing specifically about the UAE tertiary sector, Hudson (ibid. 198-207) offers a number of examples from respondents in his study who describe instances where “wasta” has influenced decision-making about areas as diverse as grades, exam results and (non)-application of institutional policies.

Closely linked to the concept of “wasta” is the influence of family. As noted in chapter two, Bristol-Rhys (2008) identifies family and family pressure as a key

influence that has shaped decisions made about the tertiary sector in the UAE. Bristol-Rhys refers specifically to the pressure exerted by many local families which has led to a gender segregated model of tertiary education. Daleure et al (2015) note that research on family involvement as an influence on student success or otherwise, has usefully fed into policy-making decisions in educational institutions in western settings. They comment that research on the effects of sociodemographic factors and culture on education in the Arab world in general, and the UAE in particular, is still relatively sparse although they do highlight some exceptions (e.g. Crabtree, 2005; Tabutin and Shoumaker, 2005; Ridge, 2010; Hassane and Abdullah, 2011). Daleure et al (2015) argue that more context-specific research is needed to inform decisions about educational policy if it is to be effective particularly given that the workforce in the UAE tertiary sector is largely composed of expatriate educators. Daleure et al (ibid) maintain that it essential that this group develops an understanding of the social expectations and pressures currently shaping the lives of Emirati students if effective decisions about pedagogy at both the individual and institutional levels are to be made.

It was noted above that all organizations, whatever their business or size, are concerned with how the organization is structured, what policies and procedures it adopts and how decisions about these policies and procedures are made and communicated. Educational institutions in the UAE tertiary sector are no exception to this and may have, at least on the surface, many structural and organizational similarities to their western counterparts. However, based on a longitudinal study (four years) using a combination of participant observation, documentary analysis and interviews to gather data, Mercer (2005: 275) has characterized UAE tertiary organizations as “hybridized” in the sense that they may superficially resemble western organizations but at a deeper level they may operate in ways that are peculiar to the UAE. This is a view that has been echoed by both Baalawi (2008) and Hudson (2013) when writing about the UAE tertiary sector. Interestingly, it seems that this hybridization may not be confined to the educational world in the UAE; Naoum et al (2015), in a mixed methods (quantitative survey and qualitative interviews) analysis of UAE management practices in the construction sector found that companies in the UAE construction industry have developed and adopted a unique management style

that is a hybrid of both western and eastern management applications, but one that is heavily influenced by local culture. In the sections which follow, I turn to a discussion of organizational culture and culture in a national culture sense.

3.3 Organizational Cultures: Introduction

A focus on cultural issues has come to the fore in the field of management research since the latter quarter of the twentieth century in response to a growing awareness that there is a link between the culture underpinning an organization and its performance (Bush, 2011; Deem et al., 2015). A cultural perspective on organizations emphasizes the more informal aspects of an organization rather than its formal, structural elements. Organizational culture can be viewed as the system of shared assumptions, beliefs and values which serve to shape how people behave, and how they expect others to behave, within an organization (Schein, 2010). Each organization represents a unique organizational culture which encompasses guidelines and boundaries which guide the behaviour of the staff within the organization (Deem et al., 2015).

In common with many other aspects of research into management, the field of organizational culture had its origins in the business and corporate sector. However, since around the 1980's there has been a growing call for organizational management research specific to the educational arena which is reflective of the factors which differentiate that sector from others.

3.3.1 Organizational culture in higher education

An early starting point from which to study organizational culture in higher education was proposed by Tierney (1988) who developed a framework of six dimensions which he claims are pertinent to educational institutions. The first dimension is environment which encompasses how the institution views itself in relation to the community it serves. The second dimension is mission which is the articulation of the educational focus of the institution and the degree to which that provides a standard for measuring its performance. The third dimension is socialization which is concerned with how new members are inducted into the institutional community. The fourth dimension relates to information from the perspective of what is considered relevant, who has access to it and how it is disseminated. The fifth dimension, strategy, focuses on the institutional decision-making processes including aspects such as who

has sign-off authorities and lines of accountability within the institution. The final dimension is leadership which incorporates not only an examination of formally designated leaders and their responsibilities but recognizes the existence of informal leaders and their potential to influence the functioning of the institution.

More recently, Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) have identified six alternative aspects of organizational culture in educational institutions which they claim are reflective of contemporary views of higher education institutions. Bergquist and Pawlak's taxonomy includes the following categories: collegial, managerial, developmental, advocacy, virtual and tangible. The collegial culture of an institution emphasizes its academic roots and attitudes to scholarship and research. The managerial culture focuses on the business aspect of the institution and its efficiency and effectiveness. Developmental culture emphasizes student/teacher relationships and faculty development. Advocacy culture is concerned with relationships across all areas of the institution including interactions between faculty, students, administration and leadership. The final two dimensions – virtual and tangible – are reflective of a contemporary teaching and learning environment in which technology is a driving factor and examines what different learning environs mean for both teachers and students.

It is clear that organizational culture exists across multiple dimensions and may not necessarily be a unified entity but rather one which may comprise of different sub-cultures (Deem et al, 2015). When individual values, beliefs and norms coalesce into shared understandings a relatively unified organizational culture may result. However, particularly in the case of large institutions, smaller groups sharing similar values and beliefs may form, thus creating a sub-culture or sub-cultures. In other words it is possible that a number of different, and potentially competing, organizational cultures may exist within any single institution. In educational institutions these differing sub-cultures may exist at a discipline-specific level (Valimaa, 1998), for example, the shared values, beliefs and practices of members of a science department in a university may differ significantly from those of their colleagues in a social sciences department.

3.3.2 The influence of national culture in organizations

Given the increasing globalization of education, the role of national, or societal, culture in shaping organizational culture has also been the focus of educational

research (Bush 2011: 172). Walker and Dimmock (2002) acknowledge that societal culture will inevitably influence organizations and how they function and stress the need to avoid “decontextualized paradigms” (ibid. 1) when examining education systems or institutions. They write:

“The field of educational leadership and management has developed along ethnocentric lines, being heavily dominated by Anglo American paradigms and theories [...] Frequently, [...] an implicit assumption is made that findings in one part of the world will necessarily apply in others. It is clear that a key factor missing from many debates on educational administration is context... context is represented by societal culture and its mediating influence on theory, policy and practice.” (2002: 1)

Dimmock and Walker (2002) also provide a helpful distinction between the concepts of national and organizational cultures when they write:

“Societal cultures differ mostly at the level of basic values, while organizational cultures differ mostly at the level of more superficial practices as reflected in the recognition of particular symbols, heroes and rituals. This allows organizational cultures to be deliberately managed and changed, whereas societal or national cultures are more enduring and change only gradually over longer time periods. [Educational leaders] influence, and in turn are influenced by, the organizational culture. Societal culture, on the other hand, is a given being outside the sphere of influence of an individual [...] leader”. (2002: 71)

In a discussion of organization and cultural context, Morgan (1997) also cautions that it would be a mistake to dismiss cross-national differences in culture as being of little significance. This conclusion owes much to the work of Hofstede (1980) whose work on cultural dimensions illustrates the presence of differing workplace norms and values in different national contexts. However, it should be noted that Hofstede also acknowledges the need to be wary of national stereotyping and this is a view with which this study concurs. In the next section I discuss organizational culture in the context of the UAE.

3.3.3 Organizational culture in the UAE

As noted earlier, Romaihi (2011) has conducted research into organizational culture in the UAE public sector, an area which, she explains, has hitherto received little attention from researchers (2011). Romaihi used survey questionnaires to gather data about organizational culture in governmental institutions (including the education sector) in Abu Dhabi and her findings indicate that this is a complex and potentially problematic area. Romaihi’s study focused on local leadership and how it handles the key areas of communication,

effective organizational structure, staff empowerment and rewards. Romaihi argues that these aspects of an organization are key contributory factors that can enable the development of effective team structures which she maintains are essential if UAE organizations are to successfully navigate the landscape of rapid change and transition created by the current boom in economic development. Romaihi found that the necessary leadership skills amongst Emirati managers to bring about effective transformation in these areas is largely lacking and that, as a result, many teams do not function effectively or efficiently under their management. Romaihi's study had a broad focus on governmental institutions in various sectors, clearly further research into this area would be necessary, not only to support Romaihi's findings in the broader field, but also to investigate the specific area of the education sector and it is hoped that this present study may add further insights. Harris (1992 cited in Bush, 2011) writing from an educational perspective, comments that organizational culture is at the centre of educational administration; this is echoed in Dimmock and Walker's distinction between societal and organizational cultures (see above). It can be inferred therefore, that an important role of the educational manager is to provide leadership which contributes to, manages and shapes organizational culture.

A characteristic of organizational culture peculiar to education is its dynamic nature. Educational institutions experience regular turnover of constituents, particularly amongst the student body. In the UAE, high turnover is not only confined to the student body however; the heavy reliance on an expatriate workforce means that the transient nature of employment there (Richardson and Zikic, 2007; Moussly, 2011; Kirk, 2015) is often a prominent feature of organizational culture. I would suggest that the resulting perception of "the precariousness of [...] employment" (Hudson 2013: 7) is likely to be a factor that shapes the working environment and the resulting organizational culture.

Another factor prominent in the UAE is the "policy hysteria" (Stronach and Morris, 1994: 5) which has characterized much of the reform efforts in the education sector in that country. For example, writing about her experiences of the UAE education sector, Riddlebarger (2015) discusses the difficulties facing tertiary sector educators responsible for teacher preparation because they are "attempting to prepare pre-service teachers to work in schools that are

constantly being reinvented and restructured – sometimes midyear” (2015: 1). Regular turnover of staff and students coupled with ever-changing foci in curricular terms have led to calls for regular audits of organizational culture in educational institutions (Gappa et al, 2007); it is proposed that such audits are necessary if an institution is to remain effective.

In the section which follows, I shall examine the broader concept of national culture and explain where this study positions itself in relation to this.

3.3.4 Essentialist versus non-essentialist views of culture

Much research studying the phenomenon of culture in the field of management (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; House et al, 2004) veers towards an essentialist position, within which culture becomes a concrete social phenomenon characterized by a specific set of norms, values and behaviours exhibited by a particular nationality. This represents a static view of culture which regards the concept as a “fixed inheritance of shared meanings” (Thornton 1988 cited in Raddawi 2015: 186) and thus ignores the role of individual agency in meaning-making. Other research has offered a contrasting view of culture as a “movable concept used by different people at different times to suit purposes of identity, politics and science” (Holliday, 1999: 38). This latter view takes a non-essentialist position which redefines culture as “an open process of shared experiences” (Raddawi, 2007 cited in Raddawi, 2015: 186).

Schwartz (1997) also offers a view of culture which resonates with consideration of issues linked to individual agency and process, and draws on a social constructionist philosophical base. Schwartz (ibid.) acknowledges that the various environments which surround us from childhood onwards – the cultural settings in which we live, the social institutions within which we interact, the institutional settings to which we belong etc. - shape individual behaviours, behavioural expectations and our perspectives on the world around us. Schwartz (ibid.) portrays culture as a complex, dynamic interplay between individual agency and cultural patterning, with the latter shaping, but not determining, the process of meaning making. In discussing the nature of individual agency he writes that:

“..... each of us has unique sets of experiences and inherited traits that influence what we learn. As a result we each have elements in our mental

programming that we do not share with others. These unique elements constitute our individual personality". (1997: 69)

3.3.5 Small cultures and large cultures

Culture as a phenomenon limited to national boundaries and ethnicities is described as "large culture" (Holliday 1999: 237). Holliday (ibid.) explains that this is an essentialist position which has often become the default understanding of the term for many and which may lead to unhelpful, potentially damaging, generalizations, simplifications and national stereotypes. In an attempt to counteract possible distortions of this nature, Holliday offers an alternative "small-culture" lens as a supplement to a large culture lens. As Holliday explains:

"The idea of small cultures [...] is non-essentialist in that it does not relate to the essences of ethnic, national or international entities. Instead it relates to any cohesive social grouping with no necessary subordination to large cultures." (1999: 240)

Holliday (ibid.) claims that the addition of a small-culture lens allows for the existence and exploration of alternative social groupings which may exist nationally or cross-nationally; examples Holliday provides include social groupings such as hospitals, families, offices, schools, colleges etc. In other words, to function effectively individuals are continually adapting to changing circumstances to become competent at operating and interacting within the various cultures and sub-cultures they inhabit.

To summarize, this study is based on this latter notion of culture which accounts for individuals being unique in terms of what they think and how they behave. It also takes into account the fact that humans live together in groups and, therefore, share essential characteristics like language, perspectives on the world, values and beliefs, behaviours and expectations. These are acquired variously over time through individual experience and social institutions such as family, schools, the church and places of work. Taken together, the interplay of these factors shapes the way individuals perceive what is acceptable behaviour and what is not, how they view right from wrong, as well as the consequences of expressing different thoughts and ideas within the group in which they live or work. Thus how groups of individuals interact to operate as part of an

organization or community, gives rise to a unique organizational culture influenced by, but distinct from, national culture(s).

3.3.6 Everyone is a cultural traveller: an expanded view of intercultural competence

If one accepts Holliday's view of multiple small cultures existing within and alongside national and international boundaries, then it follows that we develop 'small-culture' intercultural competence throughout our lives insofar as we are continually interacting with others in a succession of small cultures – family, schools, jobs, friendship groups, relationships etc. (Holliday 2016). In this view the notion of intercultural competence (IC) is not confined to, or limited by, national boundaries or ethnocentric views. However, Holliday (ibid. 1) acknowledges that those who travel to study or work in different countries will encounter more enhanced versions of the concepts of "home" and "abroad" and our experiences in the small cultures of our home environments are the major resource on which we draw to negotiate our way through unfamiliar settings. In other words we use past experiences to try to make sense of new ones as we live through them.

3.3.7 The challenges of expatriation

Increasing numbers of professionals are taking the opportunity to explore the "landscape of an international career" (Richardson and Zikic, 2007: 164) and, as noted in chapter two, the UAE tertiary sector is one arena that is heavily dependent on an expatriate workforce. Johnson et al (2006: 535) point out that living in and interacting within an unfamiliar cultural environment may induce a "psychological strain" on individuals which can reduce their capacity to adapt effectively and, consequently, their abilities to cope with the new environment. Similarly du Toit and Jackson (2014: 60) point out that expatriate work environments frequently feature unanticipated stress factors which, if not adequately addressed, can impede the ability of an individual to cope with the challenges they face. In a review of expatriate coping literature, Sanchez, Spector and Cooper (2000) have stated that for managers:

"learning to manage in and cope with a foreign environment involves a profound personal transformation. [...] Indeed, a management style that works at home may fail to produce the desired response abroad, or it may even be counter-productive." (96)

In examining what it is that permits some expatriates in management and leadership positions to successfully navigate a new environment whilst others fail to do so, it would appear that at least two areas are worthy of closer examination: coping strategies and mechanisms, and the notion of intercultural competence and what it may comprise. I would argue that the former should be considered as components of the latter in the sense that an ability to draw upon a repertoire of coping skills and strategies to deal with new situations as they arise is an essential part of any journey towards intercultural competence. In the discussion below I shall first elaborate on this point before turning towards a more detailed explanation of the concept of intercultural competence.

3.3.7.1 Coping strategies as a component of intercultural competence

Much of the research on coping strategies has its basis in the field of psychology rather than specifically in the area of intercultural competence and there is an abundance of literature surrounding the concept (see for example Vaillant, 1977; Andrews et al, 1978; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Folkman, Lazarus et al, 1986; Lazarus, 1993; Folkman and Moskowitz, 2000). Most of the early research in the field focused on the style or manner in which an individual responds to stressful situations and examines the coping strategies they display in response to the stressful factor (Folkman et al 1986). This body of research regards coping as a trait assumed to be primarily a property of the person; in other words an individual is thought to have particular personality traits and dispositions which govern their responses to situations (Folkman et al *ibid.*). For example, in layman's terms, an individual who appears to cope well with challenges may be regarded as an optimistic or positive person, as someone in possession of a degree of natural resilience and/or as someone who appears to rise to challenges whatever the circumstances. As noted above, much of the early research in the field was focused on personality dispositions, regarded as fairly stable in nature, and from which coping processes could be inferred (e.g. Byrne et al, 1968 and Gaines et al, 1977 cited in Folkman et al 1986).

However, later research on coping came to regard it in a more dynamic light as a process (Folkman et al, 1986). In this view both conscious-awareness and context become critical factors in assessing coping strategies which are viewed

as an evolving response to the psychological and environmental demands of specific stressful encounters. In this approach, coping is defined as:

“the person’s constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific internal and/or external demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the person’s resources” (Lazarus and Folkman 1984: 141).

The theory of coping as a process emphasizes that there are at least two main functions of coping: problem-focused coping strategies and emotion-focused coping strategies (Lazarus, 1993). These two categories of coping strategies can sometimes be in opposition, for example when emotion-focused behaviours serve to impede planned problem-solving behaviours. Stahl and Caligiuri (2005), in a discussion of expatriate coping strategies, offer two contrasting examples to illustrate the potential consequences of different strategy choices: the first is of an expatriate who, on realising he (sic) lacks specific knowledge about the new context, actively seeks out information and advice from colleagues to fill the information gap (a problem-focused strategy) and thus reach a fuller understanding of the new environment. Stahl and Caligiuri (ibid.) contrast this with an expatriate who, on feeling uncomfortable interacting with host nationals, engages in an emotion-focused strategy by withdrawing into the expatriate enclave thus “quelling his (sic) discomfort with host nationals” (ibid. 604), but thereby also potentially missing out on opportunities to broaden (his) understanding of the new context.

The two functions of coping introduced above should not, however, automatically be regarded as mutually exclusive; in other words, an individual does not necessarily employ these strategies on an *either/or* basis and research has shown that it is possible that the two coping strategies can function in tandem to produce healthy responses to stressful events (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). In addition, as Lazarus (1993) points out, despite a strong tendency in western values to venerate problem-solving strategies and distrust emotion-focused ones, there may well arise circumstances (particularly those in which an individual finds him or herself powerless to change a situation) where rational problem-solving efforts can be counter-productive and even result in “chronic distress” (ibid. 238) when they fail. Under such circumstances, emotion-focused efforts (e.g. an ability to ‘make the best of a bad job’ or a

conscious decision to simply 'go with the flow') might in fact, offer the best coping choice.

A further refinement of the concept of coping as a process involves action which has been termed "cognitive appraisal" (Folkman, Lazarus et al 1986, 992). Cognitive appraisal involves two steps which have been labelled primary and secondary responses (Sanchez et al, 2000). The mental process known as primary appraisal/evaluation involves a recognition of whatever environmental factor is at play as a stressor, and the secondary appraisal/evaluation involves the active selection of a coping response to deal with the stressor (Sanchez et al, *ibid.*). Folkman, Lazarus et al (*ibid.*) describe this in the following terms as:

"...a process through which the person evaluates whether a particular encounter with the environment is relevant to his or her well-being, and if so, in what ways. In primary appraisal, the person evaluates whether he or she has anything at stake in this encounter. (.....) In secondary appraisal, the person evaluates what, if anything, can be done to overcome or prevent harm or to improve the prospects for benefit. Various coping options are evaluated, such as altering the situation, accepting it, seeking more information, or holding back from acting impulsively and in a counter-productive way. Primary and secondary appraisals converge to determine [actions]." (992-993)

An important factor to note here is that both the primary and secondary responses involve an active and *conscious* effort to solve personal and interpersonal problems. This contrasts with a view of coping as purely a matter of personal traits, or dispositions, in which responses could be described more in terms of being impulsive/reactive than as a result of a conscious process. Clearly individual personality traits and dispositions do play a role in facilitating, or otherwise, an expatriate's ability to adapt to a new environment and should not therefore, be dismissed as irrelevant factors in the selection of personnel for overseas assignments. However, the 'process' of coping and the ability to draw upon coping strategies seems to interface most clearly with the concept of intercultural competence at the level of conscious awareness. Seelye and Seelye-James (1995) discuss intercultural competence as a longitudinal process consisting of three stages: understanding the dynamics of the situation one finds oneself within; understanding oneself as an active agent within a given situation and adjusting one's mindset (and/or actions) to cope with the new and unfamiliar circumstances. This description of intercultural competence clearly highlights the conscious, active and dynamic nature of the concept as a

developmental process in which one may need to deploy a variety of coping strategies in order to navigate the new territory. It is in this sense that one may consider coping strategies to be a component of intercultural competence. In the discussion below the concept of intercultural competence is discussed further and the importance of conscious awareness/reflection is highlighted.

3.3.7.2 Intercultural competence: A process of becoming through reflection

In a workplace environment characterized by the presence of individuals from numerous different national backgrounds the objective of finding common purpose and solutions across languages and cultures through mutually coordinated communication is arguably a key goal at all levels and in this respect the notion of IC becomes important. It was noted above that the UAE education arena is largely staffed by an expatriate workforce, however, the education sector in UAE is not the only arena where expatriates predominate. For example, Raddawi (2015), adopts a mixed method approach including secondary sources, observations and interviews with a stratified random sample of respondents to investigate healthcare provision in that country; she offers examples from the resulting data where communication difficulties and misunderstandings have arisen as a result of a lack of intercultural awareness between patients and expatriate medical professionals.

Fantini (2009) describes IC as an individual judgmental process which appears to be complicated by differing cultural perspectives. He defines IC as “the complex abilities that are required to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (Fantini, *ibid.* 458). He goes on to comment that being “effective” is reflective of the view of one’s performance in the target culture from an outsider’s, or “etic”, perspective, whilst “appropriate” refers to an “emic”, or insider, view of the performance (*ibid.* 458). Fantini indicates that the real challenge is for individuals to recognize their etic stance while attempting to uncover the emic views of their hosts. He also notes that at its core the success of the IC developmental process depends on each individual and a personal mixture of affective factors, cognitive skills, behaviours and adequate experience.

A notable theme that appears in much of the IC research base is the notion of it being an individual developmental process within which the factors mentioned

above, along with individual experience and ongoing self-reflection, play a role. Kim, (2001, 2005, 2009); Deardorff, (2004, 2006) and Bennett, (2008, 2009) amongst others, echo this view when they comment that individual factors such as motivation, cognitive skills and behaviour appear to play roles in enabling IC to develop but, by themselves, do not explain how the process may work. In broad terms, the argument is that individuals work with affective factors, cognitive skills and behaviour in tandem, and while doing so, reflect on new experiences and ask questions, thereby developing awareness of themselves, their own culture and that of cultural others. It is this process that enables an individual to build knowledge and learn how to behave appropriately in unfamiliar settings. Bok (2006: 156) defines this process as learning to “think interculturally”. He indicates that for him, this type of thinking is at the heart of IC and discusses the key role individuals may play in the process by being willing to think, reflect and use the knowledge they generate to adjust their behaviour and develop new understandings of cultural others. Bennett (2009) echoes this and emphasizes the need for individuals to balance knowledge, skills, affective factors and reflection as part of a process that enables knowledge to develop and behaviour to change. Earley (2002: 277) provides an elegant description of the process when he describes it as involving individuals in “putting together patterns into a coherent picture even if one does not know what the picture might look like”. The role individual reflection, self-awareness and self-questioning play as part of the individual developmental process is also a focus of the work of many other researchers including Kohls, (1996); Byram, (1997); Byram et al, (2001); Fantini et al, (2001); Deardorff, (2004, 2006, 2009); Rathje, (2007); Kupka, (2008); Kim, (2009) and Fantini, (2011).

3.3.7.3 Intercultural competence: An uncomfortable journey

The notion of IC being a developmental process has also been linked to the concept of culture shock which some individuals have been reported to experience when travelling and/or working across international boundaries. Culture shock generally follows a recognizable pattern beginning with euphoria on initial arrival in context, with subsequent stages of hostility and ambivalence developing as one spends more time in the new environment. In some cases individuals fail to find adequate coping strategies (either problem or emotion-based) to deal with the negative emotions they are experiencing and are thus

unable to move beyond these later stages and as a result, are unable to 'settle in' to their new environment (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1962, cited in Spitzberg and Changnon 2009). Oberg (1960 cited in Davidson 2009) is attributed with creating the term culture shock; he indicates that it is located in the anxiety some individuals appear to feel when they are removed from their home cultural setting and placed in one that is unfamiliar. He comments that in essence what it means is that, for some individuals, losing the everyday cultural signs and cues they are familiar with, and commonly use to orient themselves to daily life situations, can prove to be a traumatic and uncomfortable experience.

The culture shock model is illustrative of the notion that the developmental journey may not always be comfortable or smooth. Chirkov (2009: 94) echoes this when he writes that the journey is random and may include "stops, starts, pauses and even regressions" on the part of the individual. Kim (2009) writes along similar lines when she describes the development of IC as a "continuum of adaptive changes from a monocultural to an increasingly complex and inclusive character" (2009: 56) as an individual becomes more personally secure and develops the ability to see others as unique individuals rather than as part of a mass of cultural others within which individuality may be lost. She comments that this process is based on experience, and reflection on experience over time; individuals who are able to consciously draw upon both problem and emotion-based coping strategies are able to more easily develop positive attitudes such as openness and curiosity which she argues are key enablers of IC. Ting Toomey, (1999, 2005), Imahori and Cupach, (2005) and Hofstede, (2009) all point to the tensions that frequently surface when people find themselves in unfamiliar cultural settings and emphasize this may lead to feelings of uncertainty about self in relation to cultural others.

3.3.7.4 Coping with and adapting to new environments

The identification of the phenomenon of culture shock and the associated feelings of tension and uncertainty which individuals may experience as a result has furthered interest in investigating what it is that allows some individuals to cope and adapt to new environments whilst others are seemingly unable to do so.

Deardorff (2009), notes that much of the contemporary IC research base derives from western contexts and can be traced back to the 1960's with the

advent of volunteer organizations such as the USA's Peace Corps and the UK's Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) sending expatriate volunteers to third world contexts. Deardorff (ibid.) explains that the focus of this early research was on the identification of component parts that could be seen as factors contributing to volunteer success, or failure, in the field. Bremer, (2006); Hulstrand. (2008) and Branine, (2011) indicate that interest in IC has also been driven from within the corporate sector, with multi-national companies (MNCs) seeing a need to make sure they recruit candidates who will succeed in terms of expatriate placement and effectiveness in post as part of long term corporate growth planning and budgeting processes. This is a thread that stems back to cross-cultural research from the 1980s and 1990's. For example, Tung (1987) and Black et al (1991) note that over time MNCs have been concerned about the numbers of expatriates who fail to complete assignments, to the detriment and cost of the companies that recruit them, as well as the employees themselves in terms of career progression and loss of confidence. The latter indicate that from 1970 to 1990, between 16% and 40% of American expatriate leaders and managers were unable to complete their overseas assignments, with each premature return costing the company up to \$100,000. They discuss the potential such failure has to damage individual managers' personal lives, careers, the reputations of the institutions they work for, their families as well as the host country nationals they leave behind. Human capital retention has also been identified as a problematic area for the UAE with some local management consulting agencies estimating that UAE companies incur several billion dirhams in staff-related costs annually due to high staff turnover (Zaplatskaia, 2013 para. 2).

Early research into indicators of success or failure in the new environment led to the development of lists of motivational factors, professional attributes, knowledge and cognitive skills. These were frequently random lists which came with little or no attempt at categorization (see for example Harris, 1963, cited in Spitzberg and Changnon 2009; Ezekiel, 1968, cited in Spitzberg and Changnon, 2009; Jones and Popper, 1972; Benson, 1978; Church, 1982; Wiseman, Hammer and Nishida, 1989 amongst others). Not surprisingly, a frequent criticism of the list, or component part, approach is that while researchers identify possible component parts of IC, they often fail to illustrate

how these parts relate to each other as part of a holistic process which enables the development of IC (Bennett, 2009).

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984, 141) description of the process of coping as comprising an individual's constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage internal and external pressures bears some similarities to Kim's (1992) examination of IC. Kim defines the construct in terms of one's "adaptive capacity" comprised of "cognitive sense-making", "affective factors" including "emotional and aesthetic tendencies, motivational and attitudinal predispositions, and operational/behavioural (flexible and resourceful) dimensions" (Kim *ibid.* 370). Kim places adaptability at the heart of intercultural competence and defines it as:

"[...] the individual's capacity to suspend or modify some of the old cultural ways, and learn and accommodate some of the new cultural ways, and creatively find ways to manage the dynamics of cultural difference/unfamiliarity, intergroup posture, and the accompanying stress."(1992: 377)

Echoing Kim, Wiseman (2001) cites research on other behaviours related to IC including mindfulness (Gudykunst, 1994), flexibility and adaptability (Bochner and Kelly, 1974). Deardorff (2006 cited in Spitzberg and Changnon 2009) maintains that attitudes and affective factors such as curiosity and openness lie at the core of the developmental process which enables individuals to cope with and adapt to new and unfamiliar environments. Deardorff (2009) further expands on her earlier comments about curiosity indicating that she believes this trait enables a whole range of other positive behaviours which help with the coping and adapting process; other positive behaviours which she maintains stem from curiosity include patience, resourcefulness, tolerance and the ability to suspend judgement in order to ask questions and seek answers.

It was noted above that coping strategies could be seen as a component of IC and the table overleaf serves to illustrate this point further, highlighting some of the intersections between the two research areas. As the table shows, terminology may differ but the underlying meanings and concepts can be seen to be related.

Features of intercultural competence	Examples of Effective Expatriate Coping Responses
Flexibility and adaptability (Bochner & Kelly, 1974; Kim, 1992; 2009)	“think of assignment as growth opportunity”; “observe and study [local coping responses]” (Sanchez et al 2000, 97); “Changed something so things would turn out all right”; “Came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem” (Folkman et al 1986, 996)
Mindfulness (Gudykunst, 1994);	“engage in self-evaluation” Sanchez et al, 2000, 97); “I tried not to act too hastily or follow my first hunch” (Folkman et al 1986. 996)
Curiosity (Deardorff, 2009)	“observe and study [local coping responses]” (Sanchez et al 2000, 97); “talked to someone to find out more about the situation” (Folkman et al 1986, 996);
Resourcefulness (Deardorff, 2009)	seek out needed information (Stahl & Caligiuri 2005); obtain task help (Feldman & Thomas 1992)
Suspend judgement, openness (Deardorff, 2009)	“do not make unwarranted assumptions” Sanchez et al 2000, 97); “Realized I had brought the problem on myself” (Folkman et al 1986, 996)
Remain tolerant and patient (Deardorff, 2009)	Actively engage in problem-solving strategies employing tolerance and patience (Selmer. 1999)

Table 1: Interface between IC and coping strategies

In the increasingly global job market of the twenty first century professionals in many sectors are now undertaking overseas assignments as part of their career trajectory and the academic sector is no exception to this. Richardson and Zikic (2007) report that many academics are now making a specific career choice to engage in international mobility beyond the traditional overseas sabbatical. In the paragraphs above it was suggested that personal qualities such as flexibility, resourcefulness, mindfulness and adaptability were necessary traits to ensure successful integration into a new environment. When an overseas career choice involves undertaking a leadership role these traits assume greater importance as, by definition, the leadership role brings with it responsibilities not only for oneself but also for others. In such a multi-cultural and rapidly developing environment as the UAE the need for skilled and inter-culturally competent educational managers capable of fostering successful and positive organizational cultures which can cope effectively with the pace of change in that country is clear. However, Romaiti's (2011) study, discussed above, suggests that awareness of the leadership skills needed to develop

effective working teams in contemporary UAE organizations may not yet be well developed in some quarters. Therefore it seems useful at this point to consider the literature on educational leadership and management which will be the focus of the sections which follow.

3.4 Educational leadership and management: Introduction

In rather the same way that research into intercultural competence yielded lists of desirable skills and competencies, the literature about leadership has often adopted a similar approach. Writing about educational leadership, Dempster (2009) notes that there has been a tendency for leadership in that field to be defined in terms of the competencies, traits, standards, dispositions and skills that are seen as necessary for educational leaders to possess. Dempster (ibid.) cites Ministry of Education websites in western contexts that include UK, America, Australia, Canada and New Zealand as evidence of this and notes that such frameworks are commonly used variously for recruitment, as self-reflective devices or as formal evaluation tools. Leithwood et al (2000) and Gronn (2003) criticize this on the grounds that such lists are not only frequently subject to omissions, but also include standards that are selected according to individual subjectivity rather than necessarily being based on objective research data. Another criticism of this perspective is that it does not deal with the personal or moral dimension of leadership. Subsequent research has moved beyond simple lists of traits and competencies and has highlighted some of the more complex aspects of the role of the educational leader (Mulford, 2008). I shall review some of the various ways in which educational leadership has been defined in the sections below.

3.4.1 Adjectival leadership

Mulford (2008: 38) notes that a considerable body of educational leadership research developed around the turn of the century; he describes this body of work as “monocular”, or “adjectival” in its approach to leadership and management. He uses the terms monocular and adjectival to emphasize the singular rather than integrated nature of the research conducted under the following titles: Instructional Leadership, Situated Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Distributed Leadership, Strategic leadership, Sustainable Leadership. Mulford (ibid.) comments that at one point or another each of these was seen as providing a universal answer to issues of educational leadership

and management. He goes on to indicate that the ones that seem to have endured longest are Instructional Leadership, Transformational Leadership and Distributed Leadership.

3.4.2 Instructional Leadership

Hallinger (2003, 2005) is a key name that emerges from the research into Instructional Leadership. He comments that the notion of Instructional Leadership has never really disappeared and has emerged in other guises over time including Leadership for Learning. Important themes have emerged from this body of research including the crucial role effective leaders play in influencing the teaching and learning process positively by shaping organizational culture in terms of institutional learning goals, curriculum directions, assessment procedures and by supporting teacher development.

3.4.3 Transformational Leadership

The work of Leithwood and Riehl, (2003) and Leithwood and Jantzi, (2005), amongst others, has added an extra dimension to the discussion about Instructional Leadership – that of Transformational Leadership. This research highlights a broader view of a leader's potential for transforming whole institutions across multiple levels rather than on a specific instructional level alone. In essence, their view is that the role of an educational leader is to shape organizational culture by transforming teacher attitudes and teaching, and inspiring them to change the way they work. They also define the role in terms of the forging of positive interpersonal relationships and links being made between staff and students at all levels. This approach puts trust at the heart of the process (Day and Harris, 2002; Harris, 2007) and emphasizes leadership qualities including relationship building, trust, and effective inter-personal communication skills.

3.4.4 Distributed Leadership

Other research (e.g. Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves and Fink, 2006) emphasizes the growing complexity of educational organizations and defines the role of managing and leading as being too big for one person to handle effectively. Hence the notion of Distributed Leadership. Distributed Leadership stresses the importance of a leader being able to delegate and share the decision-making process amongst other staff members to avoid leader burnout. This research also links the role of leadership to the world outside the institution: the

worlds of parents, work and social institutions in general. This places emphasis on the need for leaders to operate as part of a bigger societal whole in order to make institutions useful and sustainable over time. Fullan (2003) stresses the role played by morality in this regard, noting that for educational leadership to be effective it should be morally directed by the notion of learning based on the values that underpin this.

3.4.5 Educational leadership: a multi-faceted role

One thing that is clear from the brief review above is that, despite the apparent singularity of much of the research literature in relation to Mulford's (ibid) notion of adjectival or monocular leadership, in practice proponents of the various approaches over time moved beyond the exclusivity of a one-size-fits-all approach to incorporate an expanded understanding of the role of the educational leader. Effective educational leaders are now expected to be motivators and transformers, good communicators, encouragers of positive attitudes and enthusiasm, effective staff developers, delegators of authority, strategic planners, managers of resources and pedagogical experts. Swaffield and MacBeath (2009) indicate the common theme that exists between all of these aspects of the role lies in the notion of learning. This covers self-learning as well as that of students, teachers and others in the broader community.

3.5 Self-awareness and leadership

More latterly research into leadership has tended to stress the particularistic role played by self in the delivery of effective educational leadership. Swaffield and MacBeath (2009) stress the role played by individual agency in exercising the leadership role and describe this in terms of self-belief, awareness of self and identity, moral purpose, self-regulation and a willingness to take charge and direct one's own learning. They describe agency as having the ability to monitor, regulate and evaluate self, what one learns and how to learn and lead. Friedman (2005) writes about the skill of learning and states:

“ [...] the greatest survival skill is the ability to learn how to learn. The best way to learn is to love to learn and the best way to love to learn is to have good teachers who inspire you.” (New York Times, para 13)

The focus on self and learning is echoed in the work of West-Burnham (2009). He takes the term “mindscapes” from the work of Sergiovanni (2005 cited in West-Burnham, 2009: 8-9) and describes the process of

sense-making as one involving individual realities being filtered and shaped by an implicit set of personal mental frames we develop as part of the process of socialization. He writes:

“Effective leaders understand their mindscapes, work to systematically enrich and deepen them and use them to navigate their world [.....] if we share such maps then shared social understandings and action becomes possible [...] thus my personal mindscape or mental map could be a product of the social imaginary: the dominant hegemony.” (West-Burnham *ibid.* 8-9)

West-Burnham (*ibid.*) discusses the process of learning, change and adaptation that becoming aware of self may require. He goes on to point out that it may be frequently complex and difficult, as it not only involves an individual realizing that mental frames exist in the first place, but also accepting that they may need to change them to adapt to new circumstances and be effective. The process may be further complicated as it may involve core beliefs and values being brought into the spotlight for examination and these are things an individual may not wish to examine, challenge or even change. West-Burnham’s discussion is in relation to a British mono-cultural setting, however, the notion of developing awareness of self, learning and adapting is key to any discussion of leadership in cultural environments other than one’s home context and is therefore seen as relevant to this study for this reason.

3.6 Leadership: the impact of context

Broadly speaking, in the post war era of the 1950s the dominant belief across Europe and the USA was that management and leadership in both the corporate and educational sectors were universal concepts impervious to societal effects (Hofstede, 1983; Dimmock and Walker, 2002; Dimmock, 2005). Cheng (1995) is one of the first researchers to propose a view of leadership based on divergence. Cheng (*ibid.*), argues that culture has to be taken into account when studying educational management practice to gain an accurate view, rather than using a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. Bush and Coleman (2000) adhere to a similar view when they assert that educational leadership and management practice is likely to be viewed differently in different contexts. Dimmock and Walker (2000) maintain that there is a need to develop a wider body of cross-cultural research covering a greater diversity of contexts than is currently the case. They indicate a need for this in the midst of increasing global

interest in borrowing or importing models and policies of so called best practice which may not be a good cultural fit. They write:

“[...] policy makers and practitioners are increasingly adopting policy blue prints, management structures leadership practices and professional development programmes fashioned in different cultural settings while giving little consideration to their cultural fit.” (2000: 147)

This is a consideration which is particularly pertinent in the context of this research, the United Arab Emirates, where educational models appear to be purchased ‘off the shelf’ by the UAE government to be implemented, coordinated and led, often by expatriate leaders and institutions, frequently with negative results down the line (Gopinathan, 2006; Aydarova, 2012; Al Halami quoted in Swan, 2014). Possible reasons for the adoption of this approach to reform and development may be various; for example, there may be a colonial link that endorses the use of external educational models when they come from the old colonial masters. There may also be a desire to be closely linked to international educational agencies and thereby gain international legitimacy for local educational policies and the possibility of international accreditation.

Begley (2002), in a discussion of what he defines as “Cultural Isomorphs of Education Administration” (2002: 45), indicates that key educational terms like motivation, leadership and management that are used frequently may have widely divergent meanings across differing cultural contexts. He writes:

“By isomorph is meant social conditions or value postures appearing to share the same shape or meaning from country to country but actually structured of quite different elements.” (ibid. 45)

The implication of this is that, while management and educational leadership concepts may seem to be global in nature, “the actual practice of management is context bound, mediated by the beliefs, values and aspirations of the managers and managed” (Bottery 1999 cited in Dimmock, 2002: 37). This view has much in common with Ali’s (2009) discussion about how different cultures ascribe different meanings and interpretations to the notion of organizational structures (see section 3.2.3) However, it is noticeable in all of this that there is only limited focus on specific Arab contexts in research terms.

3.6.1 Leadership in culturally diverse environments

Self-awareness and a willingness to ask questions and explore the notion of self were discussed above as necessary qualities for effective leadership. For a leader working outside their own home context these qualities assume even more importance. Kemper (2003:168) describes this in terms of having the ability to be “an edgewalker” in the sense that one must function at both “margins and interface(s)” (Pusch, 2009: 72). Black et al (1999) and Deardorff (2006) extend the concept from willingness to explore self to a willingness to explore new cultures and others and discuss the traits of curiosity and inquisitiveness as necessary for success in intercultural leadership. Black et al (ibid, 68) write about these traits as being “the glue” that holds IC leadership together and make links between them and the ability to tolerate ambiguity. Ethical behaviour has also featured as an important concern in intercultural work, and being curious, as Black et al (1999) suggest, may contribute to making ethical decisions, taking into account the concerns of local people. Such decisions must be made recognizing that there is no such thing as a universal code of conduct, drawing on the knowledge of options and being sensitive to the cultural issues that may be involved.

Other terms that have emerged through the research that are linked to the notion of being curious, open to new cultural experiences, willing to explore or ask questions include behavioural flexibility and cultural empathy (Pusch, 2009). The latter focuses on the ability to empathize with and make emotional links to people and consider alternative experiences. It focuses on skills such as being a good and active listener and good relationship builder.

Another key competence which is part of effective leadership in culturally diverse contexts is, arguably, the ability to adapt one’s behaviour to meet the differing needs of people from other groups and unfamiliar settings. Pusch (2009) notes that developing knowledge of new cultural behaviours is a key to this skill and that its importance lies in the way it allows an individual to adapt to new cultural surroundings in the same way as a chameleon does to new landscapes. She describes this in terms of “cognitive flexibility” (ibid. 69) which involves being open to new ideas and experiences and storing them away for later recall and use.

To summarize, the research base suggests that leadership qualities which are seen as important vary across cultural settings and there is no universal or common set of qualities, behaviours and competencies that make up intercultural competence. The need to recognize this and foster and develop the attitudes, skills and abilities amongst educational leaders and managers that will allow us all to learn to live constructively and compassionately in a world where cultural diversity is growing is becoming ever more important if we are to avoid the conflict, dissent and ethnocentrism which is all too often what is portrayed by the media. This does not just involve a process of individual skills development and skills discovery, but also includes a need for each of us to explore the concept of self and bring to conscious awareness for scrutiny and discussion the foundational values and norms that shape our individual world views and behaviours so that they can be realigned to create new mindscapes that allow us to move beyond ethnocentric views of culture.

3.7 Chapter summary

This chapter began with a review of the research literature which I regard as pertinent to this study. It has covered areas relating to organizations and how they function, and discussed aspects such as structure, decision-making processes, power and how decisions may be made and communicated within organizations. The notion of organizational cultures was considered and this was related to the broader concepts of culture and intercultural competence. Coping strategies and where they may be linked to the concept of intercultural competence were also considered. The latter part of the chapter extended the discussion into the areas of leadership and management and explored some of the personal qualities and traits which are now seen as necessary for effective leadership and management in the increasingly international and globalised world of education.

It can be seen from the discussion that the notions of organizations, organizational cultures, and the leadership and management within them, together form a complex tapestry. The area becomes further complicated if one adds an intercultural dimension to the picture. For example, it could be argued that much of what occurs within an organizational setting results from the belief that individuals generally follow the 'rules' that govern that setting. However, when differing norms and values meet, when one individual's understandings of

the 'norm' interact with those of colleagues from differing cultural backgrounds and experiences, challenges may arise. It was noted at the beginning of this chapter that this study attempts to examine and understand how a small group of expatriate leaders and managers perceive and try to make sense of their workplace experiences in the UAE, as such it is rooted in the phenomenological tradition (Creswell, 2007). It is predicated on the view that human beings are not passive perceivers of an objective reality but rather they interpret and understand their world by making sense of it in their own unique ways, drawing upon their own background and frames of reference to do so (Merriam, 2002; Creswell, 2007). The tales participants tell of their lived experiences are retold and reconstructed by me, after the event, as qualitative reports. I recognise that these qualitative reports and any data collected in interviews cannot be regarded as "factual reality" (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 12) but is rather a "socio-psychological construction" (Maykut and Morehouse *ibid.*), in other words, a version of reality, co-constructed with me as the interviewer through the interview process and filtered through our respective biases and prejudices. Other recent studies have also attempted to explore the lived experiences of expatriates in the UAE (Hudson, 2013; du Toit and Jackson, 2014; Al Mazrouie and Pech, 2015) and there is a growing recognition that understanding experience offers researchers unique opportunities to "learn from the insights of the experts – research participants themselves" (Reid et al, 2005: 20).

In the next chapter, I will provide further details of the methodological design of this research and the research procedures I followed in my attempts to investigate and understand what challenges and issues faced those leaders and managers who participated in this study.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the methodology design which underpins this research. I begin by providing definitions for the philosophical terms that are of key importance to any research discussion. Troudi (2011) emphasizes the need for a researcher to state clearly how a study is positioned with regard to these issues as this can play a role in determining how the research may be evaluated. After a brief outline of these definitions therefore, I outline the broad research paradigm of interpretive research within which the study is located. This is followed by a discussion of symbolic interactionism as well as issues connected with the methodological design of the study including consideration of factors such as participant selection and the data gathering process. I also include a discussion of my role as researcher and the ethical procedures that were followed as part of the research process to safeguard participants' anonymity, privacy and security.

4.2 Paradigm

The notion of being systematic and controlled lies at the heart of most definitions of the research process (Cohen et al.2007: 7). Shank & Brown (2007: 3) note that it is important for the researcher to avoid the trap of being haphazard and the need for research to be "purposeful" in that it looks to test hypotheses, "public" in that its findings are shared, and "useful" in that it advances knowledge in some way. Ernest (1994), advises that being systematic should work on a variety of levels including linking to, and building on, an existing knowledge base and using systematic methods of research to provide justification for claims made.

However, while these descriptions are useful as they highlight the systematic nature of the research process, they do not include consideration of the key role an individual researcher's philosophical positioning inevitably plays in shaping the process. In brief, different researchers approach the process from differing philosophical or paradigmatic perspectives. Crotty (2003: 7) indicates that how a researcher makes sense of the world depends on the "theoretical perspective that is our view of the human world and social life within that world". Similarly, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999: 3) assert that the positions researchers adopt often

depend on “the background knowledge against which they made sense of their observations”. Punch (1998: 28) notes the important role this plays in influencing “what constitute proper techniques and topics of enquiry” and is the ultimate determinant of the methodological design and methods used in a research study. Grix (2002: 180) states “it is of paramount importance that students understand how a particular view of the world affects the whole research process”. It is within this frame of reference that the term paradigm is used in this study.

Key aspects of the personal background knowledge that inform a particular researcher’s paradigmatic stance stem from how they view social reality and their perspective on how people set about making sense of the world around them. In other words, their ontological and epistemological positioning. These terms will be discussed and defined as they are understood in this research in the two sections that follow.

4.2.1 Ontology: Differing perspectives

Crotty (2003) provides a succinct definition of the term ontology when he indicates that it is the study of being and how people view reality. Pring (2000), comments that one’s ontology, or one’s view of the nature of the world, is important as it is the start point for the research process from which epistemology and methodology derive.

Broadly speaking, there are those who believe there is a reality that exists separately to human beliefs and understandings (realism). Within this overarching perspective there are others who go further and say reality consists only of matter which is visible and tangible. In contrast is the perspective that there is no such thing as external reality and that this is to be defined in terms of human constructs and ideas (idealism). As noted in chapter three, this study is based on a perception of reality which accounts for individuals being unique in terms of what they think and how they behave. It also takes into account the fact that humans live together in groups and, therefore, share essential characteristics like language, perspectives on the world, values and beliefs, behaviours and expectations

4.2.2 Epistemology: The nature of knowledge and how it is acquired

Evidently different ontological positions lead to differing perspectives on the nature of knowledge and how it is possible to know about the world; these two factors form the basis of one's epistemology (Ernest, 1994). Crotty (2003: 8) describes the term epistemology succinctly as "how we know what we know". Questions of epistemology lie at the core of this study, the focus of which is on expatriate educational managers' and leaders' attempts to make sense of events and social realities in a professional and cultural setting that is both new and unfamiliar to each of them.

4.3 Interpretive research paradigm

This study falls under the broad umbrella denoted by the term interpretive research. Holliday (2002) offers the following comment about interpretive research:

"The qualitative belief that the realities of the research setting and the people in it are mysterious and can only be superficially touched by research which tries to make sense is interpretive. It maintains that we can explore, catch glimpses, illuminate and then try to interpret bits of reality. Interpretation is as far as we can go." (2002: 5)

The interpretive research perspective regards individuals, as unique and complex and considers that to understand human behaviour requires researchers to focus on the fundamental "subjective qualities that govern behaviour" (Holliday 2002: 5). Bryman (2001) describes the interpretivist researcher's epistemological position as

"predicated upon the view that strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action." (2001: 12-13)

The interpretive research position can be traced back to the nineteenth century German scholar Weber who suggested that, with regard to the human sciences, we should be dealing with understanding (Verstehen) rather than explanation (Erklären) which is the focus of research in the natural sciences. To summarize, the interpretive ontological and epistemological position is that it is not possible to see human affairs and social reality in the same objective light as natural world phenomena. Consequently interpretive research is commonly associated with a constructivist epistemology and a subjective view of reality.

The interpretive researcher works from the inside rather than trying to maintain an objective neutral research stance and their main purpose is to make sense of, interpret and build a gradual understanding, rather than to find proof, evidence or to look for conclusive, objective explanations. In essence this means it involves an inductive rather than a deductive analytical process, the development of, rather than the testing of, hypotheses, as well as the development of explanations that exist at the level of meaning and local context rather than context free explanations. This requires an epistemological stance that respects individual differences and the subjective nature of knowledge. As Crotty (2003) points out any individual's way of making sense out of the world is valid and as worthy of respect as any other.

4.3.1 Interpretive research: The criteria debate

Over time there have been frequent criticisms of the interpretive research approach which have come from those researchers who favour a science-based approach. Broadly speaking these include comments about interpretive research lacking in validity, reliability and methodological rigour which are terms traditionally used in the evaluation of quantitative research. While there is agreement about the need to address issues to do with the evaluation and quality in all research (Cohen et al 2007), the question of how to deal with these in relation to interpretive research remains contested. In a comprehensive review of the literature surrounding the evaluation of qualitative research, Spencer et al (2003) explain that the debate continues to rage even at the semantic level of defining terms such as 'criteria' and 'evaluation'. They comment that views range from those who accept the use of traditional criteria such as validity and reliability to those of researchers who see a need to replace them, and to those who reject them entirely. For example, Spencer et al (ibid.) cite researchers (e.g. Smith 1984, 1990) who argue against the use of any specific criteria to judge interpretive research stating that interpretive studies, in view of their relative nature, should stand free of overarching evaluative criteria. Nevertheless, as they also point out, there is undoubtedly a need for some reassurance that any given research has been conducted thoroughly and professionally. Angen (2000) and Alwan (2007) are representative of those who see a need to develop a new framework and argue that there is a need to develop

a criteria base that is more relevant to the ontological and epistemological foundations of interpretive research. Alwan replaces the traditional terms of validation and reliability with terms “dependable”, “trustworthy” and “transferable” (ibid. 3-20). Angen discusses quality in relation to interpretive research in terms of “ethical” and “substantive validation” (ibid. 388) indicating that ethical validation is concerned with the practical value, or usefulness, of the research, whilst substantive validation is concerned with the thoroughness with which the researcher has tackled the subject. I address the key concepts of trustworthiness and dependability in section 4.8.1.

4.4 Symbolic Interactionism: A conceptual framework for the study

Over time many different types of qualitative research positions have developed (Holliday, 2002; Radnor, 2002). The research position which seemed most relevant to me from the inception of this study is symbolic interactionism (SI). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) comment that this provides a theoretical and methodological framework that has often been used as the philosophical foundation on which to base studies that focus on the study of lived experiences. The philosophical assumptions underpinning SI are discussed in the sections that follow.

4.4.1 Symbolic Interactionism: An appropriate theoretical perspective

Broadly speaking, SI places the roles of social interaction and interpretation at the forefront of the social meaning-making process and presents a theory of how these may interact variously as part of a complex process of individual subjective meaning-making. It resonates with the notion that behavioural expectations are open to shaping societal forces such as culture while being simultaneously open to the pressures of individual agency (Merriam, 1998). The philosophical propositions that form the foundations of SI and the meaning making model form the focus of the next section.

4.4.2 Behaviour and the environment

Henry Blumer (1969) is commonly seen as one of the foremost spokesmen of SI. His thought was heavily influenced by the ideas of John Dewey (1938), George Herbert Mead (1934) and pragmatic philosophy in general. One of the key concepts that lies at the heart of SI is Dewey’s rejection of the notion that research

is a philosophical quest for a certainty that exists independent from individuals and is to be discovered. Another key concept that draws on both Dewey and Meade's work is that individual behaviour needs to be viewed in relation to the environment in which it occurs. In other words, individuals adjust their behaviour according to the environments or contexts they find themselves in. Broadly speaking, this resonates with the philosophical concepts that underpin the social constructionist view of meaning-making. Those who favour the social constructionist view of human meaning-making make a link "between human mental functioning on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional and historical situations in which this functioning occurs, on the other" (Wertsch et al, 1995: 3).

4.4.3 Symbolic Interactionism: Social interaction and interpretation

Gingrich (2000) explains that SI rests on the notion that human beings act towards things, situations and events on the basis of the meanings they hold for them as individuals. He further explains that meaning is made through a process of interpretation, reflection and input from others in the course of social interaction.

Meaning-making is therefore dynamic but it may also be regarded as opaque – if it is dependent upon individual interpretations it is clear that there is much scope for variation and misunderstanding and this may be accentuated in circumstances where individuals come from a variety of backgrounds and do not necessarily share common understandings.

Similarly, Crossman (2016) provides another useful summary of the SI position when she writes:

"SI analyses society by addressing the subjective meanings that people impose on objects, events, and behaviors. Subjective meanings are given primacy because it is believed that people behave based on what they believe and not just on what is objectively true. Thus, society is thought to be socially constructed through human interpretation. People interpret one another's behavior and it is these interpretations that form the social bond."
(2016: Para. 2)

Although SI could be said to be mainly concerned with discussing the meaning-making process from a mono-cultural rather than a cross-cultural perspective, I would argue that it provides a valid research framework for this study as the meaning-making model it presents allows for consideration of how successful

interaction may change rapidly into something that may be negative when individuals bring home culture values, norms and behavioural expectations to the process of making sense of social reality in professional and social settings where behavioural expectations may be very different from those they are most familiar with. As it was my intention to explore and attempt to understand the perspectives of individual participants as they themselves attempted to make sense of their experiences in the UAE, SI therefore seemed an entirely appropriate framework in which to place this study.

4.5 Research questions and methodology

As noted in chapter 1 the research questions underpinning this study are:

- What are the challenges faced by western educational leaders and managers when they come to work in the UAE tertiary sector for the first time?
- What coping strategies, if any, do they use to deal with them?

Crotty (2003) comments that methodology refers to the strategy or overall plan of action a researcher sets up as part of the process of conducting research. This will be reflective of a particular view of knowledge and how it is acquired and will include a number of specific techniques or methods as part of the data gathering process. Therefore, the terms methodology and methods are linked but not used interchangeably; the former refers to an overall strategy or plan of action adopted in conducting the research, whilst the latter refers to specific techniques used in the process of data gathering and/or analysis.

In brief this means that the first part of the research process involves the data being gathered in some way prior to it being reviewed and analyzed to enable theory to be generated. The specific technique used in this study to gather data was that of research interviews with largely western participants who were relatively new to the context and were in management and leadership roles in two institutions.

4.5.1 Methodological implications

A major tenet of the discussion so far is that to try and understand human conduct requires a researcher to explore, and try to understand, what may best be described as participants' covert behaviour. Manis and Meltzer (1978) make the point that if human beings act on the basis of their interpretation or meanings, it is important to try to develop an understanding of the roots of these meanings when trying to understand and explain their conduct. This line of thought can be traced back to the work of Mead (1934) who argues along similar lines. Delamont (1992), writing more recently, emphasizes the need to use procedures that allow for sympathetic introspection when developing an understanding of how people make sense of their own worlds. I equate this to the notion of exploration and the related need to follow a cyclical rather than linear research process and allow for participants to be revisited with the aim of gathering more data to clarify issues which may come across, in the research process, as opaque or unclear.

Blumer (1969) also acknowledges the importance of a researcher exploring when making an attempt to see things through participant eyes and develop an understanding of the way they behave, act and make sense of the world. He writes along similar lines to both Mead and Delamont in suggesting that adopting an exploratory research framework is the best way to work as it allows a researcher to develop as comprehensive and accurate a picture of the area of study as conditions allow. He also comments that this approach requires a researcher to consider multiple factors such as participants' conceptions of themselves, their perceptions of social and professional relationships as well as how they relate to the context around them. He notes that these may work variously to shape what and how an individual thinks, reacts and behaves in social settings.

In this study, it is the participants' voices which are the main vehicles through which an attempt is made to understand individual experiences and meanings. It is also clear from the discussion so far that to provide a robust and trustworthy foundation for later discussion of findings, this study needs to be reflective of input from both sides of the cultural divide. On this basis an attempt was made to include

Emirati educational managers and leaders in the participant sampling process, this is discussed further below.

4.6 The participants: A general comment

The first factor considered important in relation to participant selection was that they were chosen in an opportunistic or purposeful rather than random manner. This is necessarily a key strategy that is used in many qualitative studies (Gall et al, 1996; Holliday, 2002). Holliday (ibid: 24) points out that it is rarely possible to control the qualitative research setting using the same rigour required by quantitative research paradigms, and that qualitative research is about “grasping opportunities (.....) capitalizing on those that are available to us (.....)” as and when they present themselves. He goes on to write:

“much qualitative research , even within formal educational settings, is in response to problematic or otherwise puzzling social realities that people find around them, whether personal, professional or institutional. It is the responsibility of qualitative research to find ways to investigate these realities in whatever form they present themselves.” (ibid: 24)

To summarize, while I had access to the participants at a specific point in time it was unclear, in the volatile setting of ongoing educational reform in the UAE, how long either the individual participants would remain in place, or indeed how long the window of opportunity to gather the data would remain open.

4.6.1 Additional factors affecting participant selection

The first consideration in drawing up a list of participants from western contexts was to approach those who were newly recruited into the UAE and had no prior tertiary education work experience that related to the UAE or any GCC context. It was also seen as important to make sure they had similar levels of professional seniority with regard to their appointed positions within their organizations and to ensure they all had similar opportunities for professional and social interactions with Emirati peers. The third factor that was seen as important was to select an all-male cohort of potential participants in order to avoid the possibility of factors and issues relating to gender inequality featuring in the data collection and analysis processes.

Gender separation remains a key societal feature of the UAE with males and females having distinctly separate societal role, behavioural and dress parameters which vary widely with those of western settings. I see this as a related, but separate, research area with its own growing body of research. There is ample room in any Gulf setting for similar but separate studies to focus on the views and input of female leaders and managers and I believe potentially widely divergent findings are likely to emerge if the gender divide is bridged. However, to make the choice to include female participants would have been problematic at the time of this research as there are only limited numbers of female educational managers and leaders working in the UAE tertiary system who may be available to be selected as potential participants.

du Toit and Jackson (2014) comment that they encountered some reluctance on the part of expatriate educational leaders in the UAE to participate in their research and this was mirrored in my own experience. Securing the assistance of colleagues willing to participate in this research proved more difficult than I had anticipated, not only because the parameters I had set for selection were quite narrow, but also I believe because of the sensitive nature of the area I wanted to investigate. Out of a total of fourteen individuals from western settings who were approached as potential participants, seven eventually agreed to take part.

Although I used my personal network of contacts and former colleagues in a number of institutions to gain introductions to institutional leaders and managers relatively new to the context in instances where I was not personally acquainted with them, I believe the very sensitive nature of the topic, and the fact that I was not known personally to some of these individuals meant that they were reluctant to participate. Several declined politely on the grounds that they were “too busy” and two offered the view that they felt it would be “inappropriate” to discuss their employers with an outsider. In the event, the seven who finally agreed to participate were all known personally to me and were based in two different institutions one of which was my place of employment at the time of data collection. Although I myself was employed in a management position in this institution I was not in as senior a role as that of the participants. This was a factor that concerned three of these individuals who, in private conversations with me ahead of the actual

data collection interviews, raised this as an issue. The chief concern appeared to centre around how much confidential information they felt able to disclose to me as a subordinate. I gave absolute assurances that the information they provided would not be disclosed to, or discussed with, other colleagues in the institution and that in the final written thesis I would ensure that they and their institutional affiliations were de-identified. As current or former academic researchers themselves, they accepted that the work would, at some stage, be shared as part of the Exeter University Library collection but they sought further assurances from me that should any publications arise at a later date which might be shared on a wider platform, I would undertake any further modifications and edits which were necessary to ensure they were not individually identifiable e.g. removal of comments about specific events which might reveal their identity. I readily provided these assurances and I have ensured throughout this work that the participants could not be identified. I accept that should there arise any occasion in the future when this research may be shared in any wider forum, further modifications might be necessary and I acknowledge my gratitude to all the participants for their generosity in sharing their perceptions with me and for the level of trust they have placed in me.

It also proved difficult to gain access to Emirati nationals working at the level of tertiary education leaders and managers and I consider myself lucky to have had the opportunity to work with two as part of this research. Despite securing their agreement to be interviewed however, in the event they proved to be largely reluctant interviewees, sometimes even declining to answer specific questions. As a result, there is little in the way of pertinent information in much of the data they provided and it is for this reason that they do not figure prominently in this study. It is interesting to consider reasons for their reluctance: six potential participants were approached, but four declined my invitation, letting me know, informally, that they did not feel comfortable in participating in this particular research process. It is relevant to note that at the time of data collection central educational authorities were starting to take control of future research directions, funding and agendas within the UAE as well as controlling participant access. To summarize I consider myself fortunate to have been able to get the agreement of two nationals to

participate, but, as noted above, their contributions were limited in terms of the research questions.

4.6.2 Participants from western settings: The contextual factor

Four of the participants from western settings come from the southern hemisphere, one from an Asian background and two from a western European setting. Cultural variation of this nature is not considered to be an issue as it is possible to see their home contexts as being equally removed in terms of cultural distance from the UAE context in terms of professional educational management and leadership practices and processes. Their home contexts can be seen as relatively close in terms of professional expectations, values, beliefs and workplace norms and values. This perhaps stems from them having a common colonial historical, economic and political background as part of their national development. Black et al (1991) indicate that this is a possible factor to consider when dealing with issues of cultural adjustment and culture shock. They comment that when viewed from this perspective, some cultures may be regarded as more similar to each other than others and therefore easier to adjust to; Black et al go on to note the potential importance this has for the training and orienting of expatriate workers prior to sending them to a new context.

Initial discussions revealed that only one participant had anything other than fleeting contact with people from an Arab context prior to coming to the UAE and that this experience was sporadic in nature rather than prolonged. This experience, therefore, is not considered to be a potential problem to the trustworthiness of the research data. Indeed, as discussed in chapter two, Ali and Wahabi (1989), Robertson et al (2001) Smith et al (2007) warn against the notion of considering Arab contexts as one Arab world with one culture that cuts across all contexts.

4.7 Interviews as a data collection method

Kvale, (1996) writes:

“The research interview is not a conversation between equal partners, because the researcher defines and controls the situation. The topic of the interview is introduced by the researcher, who also critically follows up on the subjects’ answers to his or her questions.” (1996: 6)

In qualitative research an interview is guided by the researcher to produce a resource that can be drawn on to whatever extent they see as appropriate both during and after the interview itself. Kvale (1996: 3) notes that this kind of semi structured interview, when seen through the interpretive research lens, follows the “traveler” metaphor whereby the interviewer is depicted as a traveler wandering with the participants through unfamiliar landscapes “entering into conversations” and exploring, sometimes stopping to follow up “specific sites and topics” (Kvale *ibid.*) of interest. The tales they retell and reconstruct after the event are qualitative reports and represent individual interpretations of events, which means there is limitless potential for differentiated meanings depending on individual interpretations. Kvale (*ibid.*) contrasts this with a science based approach to interviewing within which he likens the role of an interviewer to that of a miner digging for objective ‘nuggets’ of fact or chunks of quantifiable essential meaning that exist and are there to be discovered. This provides a good illustration of the differing epistemological and ontological positions that researchers may adopt when using the interview as a data gathering method.

Bishop (1997) comments that some researchers liken the interview process to that of a conversation. However, for the purposes of this study the semi-structured interview is defined as a ‘conversation with a difference’, or a conversation with direction. A common feature of many conversations is that they wander, stutter, start, stop, jump about erratically or simply develop according to the interests and intentions of the participants. Interviews, on the other hand, may be seen as having more structure, direction and a clearer purpose. Kvale (1996) indicates they move beyond the notion of conversational exchange, with interviewers adopting a more controlling role than that of an equal participant in a conversation. Interviewers both ask questions and listen but also act to provide direction to the interview process in the attempt to develop awareness and understanding. When seen from this perspective the interview method, as it is commonly used in qualitative research, is inevitably a cyclical process as it is rarely possible to capture everything in a single encounter. Richards (2003) writes:

“There will always be issues arising from the first interview, some of them only revealed by subsequent analysis, and a second meeting will provide an invaluable opportunity to develop lines of investigation, check details, compare responses and so on.” (2003: 69)

This proved to be the case in this study and it was necessary, at times, to go back to individual participants to seek further clarification to enhance my understanding of their intended meanings. These discussions sometimes took place via e mail or SKYPE but more typically were in the form of informal discussions in the workplace when I was able to seek out individuals when they were available. I used the original transcripts as the starting point for any clarifications I was seeking but I did not record these additional conversations other than in the form of explanatory notes/memos or written quotations added to the original transcripts. In dealing with the data in this way I draw from the writing of Holliday (2002) who notes that qualitative data may be gathered over time but should be dealt with as a unified whole.

4.7.1 Design of the interview

Before beginning the process of interviewing I drew up a list of possible questions to guide the interview process. These questions were directly related to my research questions and initially aimed to gather background information about participants with regard to biographical detail which I felt was relevant to the aims of the study e.g. previous work experience, professional qualifications and development, career trajectory etc. I then included a number of subsidiary topics and prompts which aimed to specifically elicit participants' experiences of working in the UAE. I discussed these questions at some length with four interested colleagues, who were also doctoral candidates, and as a result made some changes to the wording of the questions that were ultimately included in the interview schedule. It is important to note that the initial questions I drew up were intended to be open-ended with the underlying aim of enabling participants to voice their own perspectives and experiences without being influenced in any way into giving responses they felt might be ones that I was looking for them to provide. Creswell (2002) notes that the use of open ended questions allows participants to create their own response possibilities. As noted previously, the 'big' questions in

the interview guide, which provide a frame for the interviews, derive directly from the research questions that frame this research.

4.7.2 Role of the researcher in interviews

It is important at this stage to comment on the potentially complex nature of the research interviewer role. Kvale (1996) outlines multiple factors that play a role in effective research interviewing and comments that the first component of being a good interviewer is having a sound knowledge base to enable an informed conversation to take place. He goes on to outline the importance of listening actively and effectively during the interview process along with allowing participants' time to respond and verbalize their thoughts and feelings as they wish, rather than moving ahead too quickly and rushing the interview. Kvale (ibid.) also comments on the need for interviewers to be aware of, and sensitive to, participants' non-verbal communication behaviour as this may provide signals as to whether there is a need to probe further or move on.

Richards (2003) and Petrie (2005) comment on the tendency for an inexperienced interviewer to focus on their role as an asker of questions instead of active listener and indicate how this can lead to unbalanced interviews which are incomplete and leave unanswered questions. Richards (ibid.) also comments on how difficult it can be for an interviewer to listen effectively during extended interviews as there may be numerous distractions. Consequently, there is a need for interviewers to prepare in advance and practice regularly to try and ensure this is not the case. I shall expand this point in the section below.

4.7.3 Piloting the interviews

Having drawn up a preliminary research schedule, as described above, I felt it was important to pilot an interview. In addition, given the complexity of the interviewing process (Kvale, 1996; Richards, 2003; Petrie, 2005) coupled with my own relative inexperience as a research interviewer, I wanted to take the opportunity not only to pilot the questions I had prepared, but also to pilot my own role as an interviewer. In order to do this, I conducted and recorded a practice interview based around the semi-guided interview schedule with an interested colleague and sought his feedback. This resulted in some further minor changes to the wording of the

questions. However, on listening to the first recording I realized how nervous I might appear to a listener, as well as how I seemed to focus on the questioning part of the role rather than the answers my colleague had provided. Therefore, I repeated the piloting process with two other colleagues to act as a 'rehearsal' ahead of the actual research interviews. I believe this 'rehearsal' was a worthwhile exercise as at least half of the interviewees from whom I gathered the live data for this study commented, after the event, on how well they thought the interviews had been conducted and how much at ease and relaxed they had felt throughout the process

4.7.4 Data collection

Prior to the live interviews, I provided the participants with a copy of the interview schedule and I arranged to meet with each one individually for a pre-interview discussion during which I explained the purpose of the research and went through the Exeter University research consent form to ensure they were fully aware of their rights as participants in the research process. This includes the right to withdraw from the process at any point along with a guarantee of anonymity, privacy and confidentiality with regards to the information provided at any point in the research process.

I then left them with a copy of the interview schedule for their further consideration and comment. The intention of this was to provide the participants with an opportunity to reflect on the purpose of the research and as a guide to enable them to raise suggestions for potential changes in terms of additions or omissions they may see as important from their perspective. I saw this as an opportunity to initiate the development of a potential dialogic relationship based on openness and trust and promote participants' personal investment and openness to self-disclosure. Jayaratne (1983: 145 cited in Westmarland, 2001 para. 21) indicates the value of approaching interviews in this way is that they may "convey a deeper feeling for, or more emotional closeness to, the persons studied". I also saw it as an opportunity to tap into their considerable, collective experience as academic researchers and get their input with regards to the interview process in order to enhance its overall quality and trustworthiness. In the event several of the participants provided helpful suggestions for possible inclusions which were incorporated into the final version of

the schedule and provided to interviewees ahead of the interviews. I also discussed the questions with both of the Emirati participants to make sure they understood them clearly and with the aim of ensuring a common understanding of the meaning of the questions themselves. The final version of the interview guide that was used is included as Appendix A of this study, as well as the slightly revised version which was used with the Emirati participants.

Kvale (1996) explains that the interview recording process is not just a simple task that involves pressing a switch on a recorder and recording an interview, but presents a data gathering context that can pose multiple problems for a researcher. Richards (2003) writes along similar lines when he comments that the first level of potential issues relates to the technology that is chosen for use in recording interviews. He points out that common pitfalls interviewers need to consider as part of their planning include ensuring recording audibility, the volume levels and amount of background noise interference. Kvale (ibid) echoes this and comments that if a researcher fails to deal with these issues effectively at the planning stage then the reliability of the recording is likely to be compromised. For the purposes of this research I used an unobtrusive voice recorder and small but high quality microphone. I conducted a brief voice test just prior to starting the recording process to ensure that the microphone placement allowed for good sound quality and that the volume level was appropriate.

As the participants from western settings all agreed to be interviewed in their offices at the close of the working day after other members of staff had left the premises, the interview location proved unproblematic. In contrast, the two Emirati participants both decided they wanted to be interviewed in a location that was both off campus and at a time that did not conflict with work schedules. In the event, they agreed to be interviewed separately, in my home, at a time when I was able to arrange for my family to be out. When they initially agreed to be interviewed, both had clarified that they were concerned with issues of anonymity and privacy and did not wish for their Emirati colleagues to know of their participation in the research.

Writing about interviews from a different perspective, Holliday (2002) comments that interviews may frequently not go to plan for multiple reasons. He notes that interviewees can respond in ways that are mysterious and often far from what may be expected, especially when the process involves participants from different cultural backgrounds who may not wish to divulge information for any number of reasons. As already noted, the Emirati participants proved at times to be reluctant interviewees sometimes avoiding answering questions altogether in a manner consistent with Daleure et al's (2015) assertion that members of Arab societies may simply ignore something as a means of saving face (see section 3.2.7). By contrast, the other participants were happy to share with me valuable input based on their personal research experiences as to what may be useful to consider when approaching this part of the process, as well as answering my questions candidly and fully.

4.7.5 Data transcription

I loaded software that came with the recording device onto the hard disk drive of a laptop and then transferred the interview audio files from the device onto the hard disk. I used headphones to listen to the recordings and transcribe as I listened. One of the participants had made me aware that simultaneous listening and reading was a good means of helping the researcher to catch as much of the hidden meaning that the data may include as possible. I used Microsoft WORD 2010 to transcribe the recordings using double line spacing to facilitate the keeping of notes as part of the analysis process.

The recordings were transcribed verbatim (see Appendix B for a sample transcript). This included grammatical and lexical errors and the common sounds used to hesitate and pause in natural speech. Where relevant, notes on non-verbal aspects such as long pauses, laughter and attitude were included. I then provided each participant with a copy and asked them to verify its accuracy; I also gave them the option to request deletion of any information they would prefer not to have shared. In the event, no changes were requested.

4.7.6 Data analysis

Once I had finalized and agreed the transcripts with each participant, I approached the task of familiarizing myself with the data. As noted above, the interpretive procedure that was followed was inductive. To get an initial level of familiarity with the transcripts I began by simultaneously listening to and reading them before moving on to listening, reading, and making notes in the margins as thoughts occurred to me. This initial period of familiarization was a lengthy process which I undertook over a period of about two weeks. It required patience and was frustrating at times as, in this initial stage, I often found myself to be overwhelmed by the volume and variety of information I was attempting to process. However, despite being time consuming I believe that taking the time to become familiar with the data before attempting any systematic analysis, was an essential part of the process.

4.7.6.1 Analytic memos

As I became more familiar with the data in each transcript I started to notice that in each case there was a large amount of variation in the clarity of meanings I was able to identify. In brief, some parts of the data seemed to be relatively clear and unproblematic, while others seemed harder to understand. Where ideas were unclear I numbered them on the transcript and then wrote a corresponding number on a post-it note. I used this to write an analytic memo to capture queries, questions and impressions that came to mind. Some of the memos took the form of a phrase, others a single sentence while others were even longer, in some cases spanning two or even three stick-it notes. Inevitably they took the form of questions that I felt needed answering. I include an example of one such memo overleaf to illustrate.

Data extract: Participant 2	Analytic memo: 13 July
<p>..about don't discuss Danish cartoons and don't discuss this and don't discuss that..erm...steer away from that, don't challenge..erm, I mean I've already got enough feedback from my own challenging of the people next door I told the (rank and position) ... of (name of organization) what I thought and erm ...it was not well received and erm it's not , it's not an open environment in which expatriates can feel totally in my opinion free to express their opinions.. it's always political in some way and guarded and deferential</p>	<p>No voice? No query? No challenge? Guarded. Deferential. In terms of work behaviour he seems to sense people are fearful → does he feel challenged in a situation where he can't voice his feelings? Is the result of this his evident frustration, lack of understanding?</p>

Table 2 Example of an analytic memo

In extreme cases, where I found it hard to move the process forward if an issue remained unclear I contacted the relevant participant, either via E mail or in person, to clarify a point or raise another question. I stored each of the analytic memos with the relevant transcript making sure that, as I redeveloped them, I stapled them together so I could go back to the beginning of the trail if I deemed it necessary to revisit any of them. I added a date to each as I produced it in order to help lay an audit trail of my evolving interpretations, impressions and thoughts.

I found it necessary to take regular breaks throughout to allow my thoughts to take shape and avoid my mind being overloaded with impressions. Indeed, I found if I did not take regular breaks I often got lost and became frustrated. In this way, I was then able to proceed to the long term process of coding the data by isolating viable codes and linking them to the research questions which lie at the centre of this study.

4.7.7 Data coding

Ezzy (2002: 94 cited in Cohen et al, 2007) describes data coding as:

“a process of disassembling and reassembling the data. Data are disassembled when they are broken apart into lines paragraphs or sections. These are then rearranged through coding to produce a new understanding that explores similarities, differences across a number of different cases [.....]” (493)

Ezzy (ibid.) goes on to comment that coding is a process that initially creates a mass of confused and seemingly unrelated set of “discrete units of meaning” which through time and familiarization allows a researcher to draw links between codes and broader themes may become apparent. In the literature the term theme is frequently used interchangeably with the term category.

Saldana (2009) writes along similar lines to Ezzy (ibid.) when he describes the data disassembly and reassembly process as a cyclical process of first, second and third cycle coding. He indicates that, for him, it starts with the initial identification of individual units of meaning which are described, or coded, followed by moving on to making links between individual codes to create broader categories or themes before the final overarching concepts can be identified.

Saldana (ibid) notes that there are a variety of coding methods that have been described and developed over time and that these are broadly similar in terms of the analytical process that they outline. Saldana also provides a detailed inventory of specific code types that may be used as a reference point for researchers, along with insights as to how they may be used to capture and describe the different discrete types of meanings. Saldana (ibid) comments that individual researchers may choose to code the same data in different ways and that this may depend on the filters that individual researchers bring to the interpretive process. This means that the code types I include as part of this data analysis would probably be different to those employed by another researcher. I provide an overview of the different types of coding used in this study in sections 4.7.7.1 to 4.7.7.3 below, and I include detailed samples of my coding in Appendix C.

As a code occurred to me I noted it down in the margin of each transcript either highlighting or underlining the relevant portion of the transcript it referred to. This left me with a set of random codes and reference points on each transcript. For the sake of clarity I assigned a number to each code and the relevant part of the transcript it referred to. I include an example below to illustrate this.

<i>Transcript data, Participant 1</i>	<i>Codes</i>
<p><u>At home we are imbibed with the tradition of of being formal¹ ... (OKAY) formal means things are properly spelt out, expectations are there².... Errrm <u>deadlines are met³</u> people wouldn't give wouldn't say things they don't mean.... of of course there are people like that but <u>generally in place of work and when certain deadline is given they may even have to work 24 hours to get it done of course the quality will be something that you will look at but they deliver⁴ ...</u> over here as they use time it is different</u></p>	<p>¹ Formal western management work tradition</p> <p>² Systematic, organized and structured</p> <p>³ Time-bound</p> <p>⁴ Efficiency</p>

Table 3 Coding sample

As initial codes that I assigned changed over time I found it a necessary part of the process to work in pencil rather than ink to enable me to erase codes and add new ones. I made a conscious decision to use the manual coding process described here rather than to use a computer based coding program because I felt more comfortable with, and more in control of, the process in this way. In some way, I felt it allowed me to be closer to the data. The codes used in this analysis are outlined below.

4.7.7.1 In Vivo codes

Researchers can choose to create codes from direct quotes taken from the data, known as “in vivo” codes, which are indicated by quotation marks (Saldana *ibid*:3). The in vivo code may take the form of a word, phrase, sentence or even take the form of a longer piece of text that a researcher considers relevant when trying to capture the salient meaning of a discrete unit of meaning (Radnor, 1994).

4.7.7.2 Descriptive codes

At the initial stage of the process I also found myself using descriptive codes to summarize units of meaning and I started out by trying to condense the meanings

that emerged into single word summaries. However, as I became more familiar with the data I realized many of the challenges and issues experienced by the participants were too complex to be captured by a single word as these seemed to serve to reduce, simplify and distort the inherent complexity of the meanings that emerged. There are examples of descriptive codes in the data that are presented in Appendix C.

4.7.7.3 Affective codes

Many of the meanings that I identified in the study were based in the affective domain in that they related to participant emotions, attitudes, conflicts, values and belief systems. It was noted in chapter three that Fantini (2009) maintains that effectiveness in post on an overseas assignment is dependent on the extent to which individuals are able to recognize and understand their own etic views whilst simultaneously uncovering and understanding the emic views of their hosts. The success or otherwise of this developmental process depends on each individual and a personal mixture of affective factors, cognitive skills, behaviours and adequate experience. Saldana (2009) comments that creating affective codes is an appropriate part of all qualitative research studies but is especially relevant to research which explores “intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions” (86). Since this study focuses on the challenges and issues that individual professionals may experience when they enter a context where the cultural values, norms and behavioural expectations are different to those they may be familiar with, I considered the identification and interpretation of affective codes not only appropriate but necessary to inform the analysis of the data in this study. Saldana also comments on the use of codes to capture emotions and include attitudes, norms, values which form an interconnected system that is reflective of both positive and negative personal facets that relates to participants either adapting successfully to the challenges and issues they faced, or failing in some way. The affective category is therefore, a very broad one and it is thus necessary to provide working definitions for the different types of affective meaning that emerged. These include participant values, attitudes and beliefs.

For the purpose of this study the term value is defined as the relative importance participants may attribute to themselves, others, things or concepts. In other words,

this is taken to mean the greater the personal meaning someone, something or an idea has for an individual, the greater the personal value they may attach to it.

Attitudes are defined as the way we think or feel about things, people and ideas. Shaw and Wright (1967: 3) note that our attitudes are often related to the “system of evaluative and affective reactions based upon and reflecting the evaluative concepts or beliefs which have been learned” as part of the process of growing up.

Beliefs are seen as part of broader system which is inclusive of personal attitudes as well as the personal experiences, opinions, prejudices and other forces that can affect our personal and individual interpretations of the world around us.

The types of codes that fall into this broad affective category are thus distinguished through the use of V for value, A for attitude, B for belief in the data that is presented in Appendix C. In some instances, the codes were also further tagged with a numerical system to indicate relative strength, with 1 being very strong and 3 being judged as relatively weak, to capture specific nuances and emphatic strengths or weaknesses.

4.7.7.4 Saturation point

Having reached a stage where I could no longer identify any new codes in a transcript, I began the process of systematically extracting the codes and transferring them onto separate A1 flip chart pages for each research question. I wrote the research question at the top of the chart and then divided each into seven columns, one for each western research participant. For research question two (coping strategies) I used three separate sheets of A1 paper which I labelled value, attitude and belief. As with research question 1, I divided the three flip chart pages into seven named columns. I then began the lengthy process of manually transferring the codes from the transcripts in the order in which they had occurred in a list beneath each name. Once this process was complete I studied the random lists I had generated to see if I could identify any correspondences or overlaps – drawing lines across each page to link the columns. At this point I realized that it was possible to discern that there were indeed links from what had initially seemed to be chaos. By cross-referencing across each column I was able to get a more systematic confirmation that a number of areas were recurrent, albeit expressed in

differing ways and with differing foci. It became apparent to me that many of the codes I had identified individually for each participant were overlapping, similar or even, in some cases, identical and could therefore be reduced. For example, a number of the challenges and concerns which participants raised were connected to ways in which their perceptions differed from that of their Emirati hosts which I thought could be grouped together. At this stage I felt that the data was beginning to take some form of structure but that I needed to move beyond a paper and pencil manual analysis if I was to reach a stage of being able to take a holistic view.

I therefore fixed the flip chart pages to the wall above my desk and simply transferred the lists to my computer after which I used the cut and paste function in Microsoft Word to begin the process of reordering and grouping the codes. As I reordered the codes into groups I was able to assign them into different categories and I was, therefore, able to start interpreting common themes, pulling together threads, grouping some of the codes together and identifying some of the broader themes that were becoming apparent in the data. The final stage of the process, therefore, was the identification of the overarching concepts which accounted for all the categories and themes. This happened organically as part of the coding process and I did not feel it was in any way forced. This was a stage where I took a holistic view of the data and tried to consider all of the transcripts together rather than separately.

Constant comparison and saturation are further features that contribute to the systematic nature of the process of data coding and its robustness when viewed from a research perspective. In essence, the application of multiple levels of coding requires a researcher to engage in a process of constant comparison whereby new and dynamic meanings are compared with existing codes and categories with links being made till the codes fit together in a researchers mind and are accounted for. Once this stage is reached and no new codes are apparent the data analysis stage is generally deemed to have reached a saturation point. Cohen et al (2007: 495) describe this in the following way when they write that a “partner to this is theoretical completeness, when the theory is able to explain the data fully and satisfactorily”. The process may not, in fact, have a final end point and there is

potential for the cycle to continue once new data is introduced or gathered and findings from related studies done after the event cause further reflection and the redevelopment of old categories and themes. The coding cycle may even lead to new research questions being generated.

4.8 Role of the researcher in data analysis

My personal experience of the coding process was that it was a time consuming undertaking, requiring me to constantly revisit and compare old and new findings, and messy in that the data were complex, unclear and opaque at times which required an unceasing search back and forth within transcripts and between myself and the participants as necessary. Richards and Morse (2007: 137) comment that the term coding “is an heuristic – an exploratory problem solving technique without specific formulas to follow”. Charmaz (2006: 45) provides an eloquent metaphor for the coding process when she describes it in the following terms as “generating the bones of your analysis..... Integration will assemble those bones into a working skeleton”.

Miller and Crabtree (1999, 138-139, cited in Schutt 2011: 323) liken the process to a “dance” and describe it as:

“[.....] a complex dynamic craft, with as much creative artistry as technical exactitude, and it requires an abundance of patient plodding, fortitude and discipline. There are many changing rhythms; multiple steps; moments of jubilation, revelation and exasperation.... The dance of interpretation is a dance for two, but those two are often multiple and frequently changing, and there is always an audience, even if it is not always visible. Two dancers are the interpreters and the texts.”

My experience of working with this data reflects the above description. I was very conscious throughout of the degree of my own tacit knowledge and experience of the context of the UAE that I brought to the research process and I tried to remain vigilant and mindful of how it might influence the results. It is also important to reiterate at this point that in this study the purpose that underlies the process is not to formulate final explanations and look for cause-effect relationships. When viewed from this perspective interpretations that may emerge lead to understandings that cannot be judged as either true or false. Patton (2002: 114) writes that analysis done in this manner sees “the text is only one possible

interpretation among many”. Schutt (2011) writes along similar lines when he indicates that a researcher analyzing data in this manner takes an hermeneutic approach to qualitative data analysis and in so doing constructs:

“reality with his or her interpretations of a text provided by the subjects of the research; other researchers, with different backgrounds, could come to markedly different conclusions.” (2011: 321)

4.8.1 Trustworthiness

An essential requirement for any research is that it must be deemed to be trustworthy for if the findings cannot be trusted there would be little point in undertaking the research in the first place. An important part of the concept of trustworthiness lies in being transparent and providing a clear rationale about all of the procedures that were followed during the research process. Spencer et al (2003) discuss this in terms of ensuring that the steps taken in the research can be clearly followed at every stage using the term auditability to explain this. They explain that if a researcher has laid a clear trail in terms of the documentation they provide, the sources that have informed the research, and the procedures they have followed the reader may then determine for themselves the quality of the research. They comment that this audit trail needs to include consideration of the perceived strengths and weakness of the data gathering methods used, criteria used to select participants and the inclusion of all relevant documentation in appendices, or in the main body of the writing. Consequently, copies of all the pertinent documentation have been included in this study and I have outlined in some detail the processes I followed and my reasoning for doing so. I have included, as part of ongoing discussions, some of the challenges involved in the data collection and analysis processes and I have outlined the steps I took to address them. I acknowledge and further discuss the limitations of this research in section 4.8.4 below.

4.8.2 Reflexivity

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983: 14, cited in Cohen et al, 2007: 171) note that “researchers are inescapably part of the social world they are researching” and bring much ‘personal baggage’ with them to the research process including professional and personal experiences, opinions, preconceptions and attitudes.

Reflexivity suggests there is a need for researchers to make a full disclosure about how this 'baggage' may influence the research process. There is, therefore, a need for researchers to understand and accept this and to be open in terms of discussing the measures they take to deal with it during the research process, rather than moving to try to eliminate it altogether.

Consequently, the measures I have taken to take into account reflexivity in this study include an explicit articulation of my epistemological and ontological stance in relation to the study. I have also attempted to be clear about the theoretical framework - symbolic interactionism - which I chose to use to inform this study and my reasons for doing so. In addition, I have attempted to provide a clear review of what other researchers have written about the specific field of study in the reading review chapter.

During the data gathering process itself I remained alert to the need to be mindful of my own position in the research and how I might influence it. As I have outlined in my preparation and piloting procedures for the interviews, I continually interrogated myself with regard to the decisions made about the framing of initial and follow-up questions and the need to phrase them in a way which allowed participants to express themselves freely rather than being steered or directed in any way. At the later, analytical, stage of the research process I use the participants' own words and comments in order to allow their voices to come through and be heard. It needs to be clearly stated that throughout the research process I was the only person involved directly in the processes of data collection and analysis, although, as I have acknowledged, I sought and received advice from others at certain points. I was also responsible for making key decisions about issues as they arose, and deciding if it was necessary to return to the participants to explore issues further or seek clarification on matters that I considered opaque or unclear. Radnor (2002) notes that with research like this it is important for the researcher to be in charge of the process from its inception to the end. She writes it is down to the researcher alone to:

“[.....] sort and analyze[s] the data, recognizing that although there are tools to assist her in the process, it is the researcher that is constantly, at each stage, making sense of things and decisions about the next steps.” (2002: 31)

Evidently one of the factors that differentiated my position as a researcher from the position of the research participants was the widely differing level of tacit knowledge and contextual experience of the UAE that I brought with me. I felt that such familiarity with the setting could act to both enrich my own understandings and help improve the overall research process (Cohen et al, 2000). Shah (2004: 556) argues that “a social insider is better positioned as a researcher because of his/her knowledge of relevant patterns of social interaction required for gaining access and making meaning.” Conversely, however, Hammersley (1993) maintains:

“there are no overwhelming advantages to being an insider or an outsider. Each position has advantages and disadvantages, though these will take on slightly different weights depending on the particular circumstances and purposes of the research.” (1993: 219)

Nevertheless, as someone who has spent many years working as an expatriate in management roles both in the UAE and in other contexts I felt that this experience might increase the likelihood of shared discourses emerging from the data and, as noted above, I have, therefore, been careful throughout to use participants’ own words and to allow their voices to be heard throughout the analysis in chapter five.

However, while closeness to the setting and institutional connections meant I was able to connect with the participant emotions, attitudes, hopes, fears and feelings easily, it also serves to emphasize the essentially subjective nature of interpretive research and in response to this I have attempted throughout to remain mindful of the need for reflexivity. With respect to this I believe the analytic memos described in section 4.7.6.1 above were a useful tool which helped me to untangle, interrogate and attempt to make sense of the data as I was reading through the interview transcripts. In addition, I respect the fact that the participants are all experienced leaders and managers as well as highly regarded academic researchers in their own right, and I believe that, they are more than capable of articulating the challenges they have experienced. Several of them offered valuable advice and insights into the research process which I, as a novice researcher, welcomed and benefited from. In this sense I believe I avoided the potential problem of ‘othering’ the research participants or imposing any research agenda. Holliday (2002) notes that it would be a mistake to perceive research

participants as passive cultural dupes rather than skilled creators and users of culture. He writes:

“[...] the setting culture is not the untouched place imagined by naturalists in which an ‘active’ researcher tramples on a ‘passive’ virgin culture, but a resource which enables a group of people to respond to a multiplicity of influences from other groups [...]. The research participants may be as culturally skilled as the researcher, and have the potential, if they wish, to be as much involved as the researcher in negotiating the research event. Indeed, both researcher and research participants enter into a relationship of culture making.” (2002: 149)

This echoes somewhat the perspective of Reid et al (2005:20) who take the view that research participants are in fact the ‘experts’ on their own lived experiences.

Mercer (2007) notes that insider researchers usually have greater levels of credibility and rapport with the participants in their studies which may engender a greater level of candour than might otherwise be the case. This was certainly true in this research and once they had received assurances of confidentiality, I believe that the participants shared their views and perceptions very openly and honestly with me.

Whilst the final interpretations and explanations I provide in my analysis are my own, I would like once again to acknowledge and express my gratitude to the participants for their frankness at various stages of the data collection and analysis process.

4.8.3 Ethics

The importance of dealing with ethical considerations when conducting research has been noted by many researchers (Deyle et al,1992; Stake,1994; Cohen et al, 2007). Stake observes that ethics play an important role in any qualitative research when he comments, “qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manner should be good and their code of ethics strict” (ibid. 44).

Merriam, (1998) writes along similar lines in terms of the need to provide participants with a sense of security when commenting on the ethical issues that frequently arise when one collects and analyses data and disseminates findings. The University of Exeter adheres to the policies of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) which provides clear guidelines for researchers to

structure the ethical aspects of their work. BERA requires researchers to pay specific attention to an ethic of respect for the research participants, for knowledge and democratic values, and for research quality (BERA, 2004). Therefore, before starting the process of data collection for this research I completed and submitted the necessary ethical form to the university for approval. This form is included as Appendix D. In addition, before commencing each interview I explained the University of Exeter Graduate School of Education Consent form to each participant and had them sign two copies, one for them to retain and the other to be retained in my files. I also include a blank copy of this form in Appendix D.

In addition, I have described in the sections above the processes I followed prior to interviewing the research participants and the steps I took to ensure that they were confident in my integrity as a researcher. As I interviewed the participants, I was aware that some information revealed to me in confidence could have profound implications in terms of employment and career progress. As I have already indicated, several participants indicated concerns about the sensitivity of the data and the personal and professional damage that could be done in the event that local educational authorities were able to establish identities. Strict adherence to established ethical protocols was, therefore, essential. As noted earlier, participants were assured that I would take all steps necessary to de-identify them insofar as personal names, nationalities and institutional affiliations are not revealed and assurances were also given that this would extend to any future uses of the data. In addition, I have actively disguised the identities of the institutions and city locations involved. Numbers are assigned to each of the research participants to identify them and the individuals they refer to in the course of the interviews have also been de-identified to protect confidentiality.

4.8.4 Limitations of the study

I have already discussed some of the limitations of this study in terms of the research process, however, a further limitation which must be acknowledged is that it is informed by the views of a relatively small body of participants and must, therefore, be regarded as a small-scale and preliminary investigation. This is unfortunate as I had initially hoped to elicit the participation of a greater number of individuals. However, I would suggest that the fact that several potential

participants declined to be interviewed is a revealing point which is perhaps indicative of the highly sensitive and politically charged nature of both the context and the subject matter of the research. This could be interpreted as an indication that research of this nature, whilst being highly sensitive, may also be worthwhile. A further limitation is that the study relies principally on interview data with some follow up discussions; I would envisage further research in this area to be larger in scope and to employ other data collection tools and methods, for example a large-scale survey extending to other Emirates might yield interesting data. Nevertheless, despite the limitations and shortcomings I have discussed, I believe the findings support the assertion that the area warrants further investigation and additional studies could provide useful guidelines for the recruitment, induction and retention of the kinds of qualified personnel who might best be able to support the UAE in its ongoing educational reform process.

4.9 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have outlined in some detail the research methodology I have followed in this study. I have defined key terminology, situated the study within a particular paradigm and provided a framework to support this research. In addition, I have outlined the steps and procedures I followed in data collection and analysis as well as addressing the questions of quality and evaluation of the research, in order to enable the reader to assess for themselves the authenticity and trustworthiness of this study. I have provided a detailed account of how I interacted with the data and I have included an example of one of the analytic memos I used to help me make sense of the data, as well an example of my coding as a work in progress. Underpinning this research is the view that the western managers featured in this study are “actors” (Colomy and Brown, 1995) who actively construct the meaning of their experiences and act upon the basis of those meanings. As the researcher studying this experience it is my role to attempt to see this experience, as far as possible, from the perspective of the participants. It became clear to me during the lengthy process of interrogating the data that, while each participant was fundamentally different in terms of personality and the traits and characteristics they displayed, they expressed certain common areas with regard to the challenges and issues they experienced. However, it was also

clear that some individuals displayed a rather more pragmatic approach to dealing with their daily workplace experiences than others. In brief, as I interpreted the data and attempted to understand the individual perspectives of the participants, it was evident to me that some of them seemed able to 'handle' the challenges they experienced in a way conducive to their own well-being, whilst others were not. Identifying these challenges and the coping strategies participants displayed lies at the heart of this research, and the categories I formulated are explored and discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Presentation and discussion of findings

5.1 Data presentation

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of this study. The findings that relate to each research question are summarized in table form at the start of each relevant section and are followed by discussion. The categories and themes that were identified a result of the data analysis process are displayed in each table along with an indication of the frequency of occurrence, shown as a number (n). Themes relating to the affective domain including attitude, value, and opinion are indicated with an alpha code “a”, “v”, “o” respectively. An indication of participant contextual origins in the form of western (w) or (UAE) is also provided. As noted previously, Saldana (2011) writes that affective factors are likely to play a significant role in the themes and categories that emerge in studies that deal with cultural issues.

The data are presented holistically, even though the analytical process described in the previous chapter took place over time, and often seemed to follow erratic, unpredictable and even fragmented pathways. My decisions about how the data are presented were influenced by several factors including feedback from my doctoral supervisor and discussions with colleagues who are active researchers, as well as drawing from my reading of qualitative research studies conducted by others. This reflects a view that there is no definitive way to present qualitative data, nor is there a universal template to be used for the purpose of write up. Holliday (2002) comments that there is a need for qualitative data to be re-organized to suit the needs of specific studies and research questions.

As mentioned previously, the findings are presented under each research question and this is then followed by a discussion to explore possible meanings and interpretations. There is agreement amongst qualitative researchers as to the need for rich description and relating findings to responses drawn from data when writing up qualitative studies; it is frequently commented that this plays a big part in an ongoing attempt to ensure a study can be regarded as being as robust as possible (Holliday, 2002; Cohen et al, 2007). The discussion of the findings therefore, includes extracts taken from raw data to illustrate the discussion of the categories and themes that emerged as part of the analytical process. For the sake of

maintaining participant anonymity, each has been allocated a numeric code, participant 1- 9, which is placed at the end of each response in the analysis.

Finally, the ways in which the data are analyzed and meaning is constructed and presented in this study is based on decisions taken by me, my interpretations and my personal constructions of each participant's meaning making. As noted in previous chapters, meaning making from the perspective of symbolic interactionism is taken to be both an ongoing and individual subjective process of interpretation, which means my findings in this instance may be different from those of another researcher who works with the same data. Throughout the course of the data analysis, it became apparent that cognitive strategies, attitudes and behaviours are closely inter-linked and complementary. For example, a particular cognitive strategy may lead to a specific behaviour, which, in turn, reflects in the individual attitudes displayed. The example of setting goals and monitoring how one sets about achieving them may serve to illustrate this: the setting of goals and the active seeking of the necessary information to achieve them is both a cognitive strategy and a behaviour and can be seen as reflective of a positive attitude. Therefore, whilst the data are displayed in the tables that follow in separate categories, they are considered holistically in the follow up discussions.

5.2 Working in the UAE: Differing perspectives of organizations

It was noted in section 3.2 that the most basic understanding of an organization is that of a group of people working together to achieve a common objective. However, it was evident in the data in this study that there were differing perspectives of the concept of a higher education institution and how it might function and be structured. The differing perceptions of individuals of the concept of organization together with differing, sometimes conflicting, role expectations combine to create a significant challenge for some of the participants in this study. This is presented and discussed in the sections that follow. The categories and themes which were apparent from the data in response to the first research question are displayed in table 3 overleaf. Although they have been separately highlighted in the table for the sake of clarity of presentation these themes should be seen as interlinked and interwoven, for example the differing perspectives on organizations amongst western and Emirati managers inevitably lead to differing

expectations about workplace roles, responsibilities and behaviours which in turn impacts on practical areas such as decision-making as well as more interpersonal aspects such as trust.

RQ1. What are the challenges and issues experienced by educational leaders and managers from western contexts when they are recruited for the first time to leadership positions in the UAE tertiary sector?			
Category	Theme	Participants	Total <i>n</i>
Differing perspectives of the concept of organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pyramid versus flatter collegial structures 	1,2, 4, 5, 6 (w)	5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western expectations meet UAE interpretations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hybrid 	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (w)	7
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Features of HE in the UAE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantity versus quality Teaching NOT research Transience and expatriation 	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	7
Differing views of educational leader and management roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders and the Led v Managers and the Managed (a) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect Followers and voice 	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (w) 8, 9 (UAE)	8
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let me speak, hear me, trust me! (v) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differing perceptions of trust Responsibility without authority 	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (w)	6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing Time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differing perceptions of time use Participant misunderstandings 	1, 2, 4, 6 (w)	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance and policy guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed v undeveloped Decision-making 	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (w)	7

Table 4 RQ1: Challenges and issues

5.2.1 Pyramid versus flatter organizational structures

There was a sense which emerged from the data that some of the western participants found the particular organizational structures they encountered in the UAE to be unfamiliar and, for some at least, unsettling. They spoke in similar terms about the challenges they faced. Several of the participants commented about what they perceived as a top down, multi-layered or rigid organizational structure existing in the UAE workplace as described by participant 6 (w): *“The top, so there are several tops there’s your immediate top.... which you know your section head*

or division head or whatever the term is and then there's his top and so on."

Similarly Participant 2 (w) commented about the autocratic nature of the organization:

"It's very top down its much more top down than you described in (name of place) is my feeling It's much more people don't question, people don't, unless it's behind closed doors". (Participant 2 w)

It was noted in section 3.2.6 that a characteristic of a collegial organizational structure in many higher education institutions in western settings is that discussions and decisions often take place within a committee structure (Bush 2011: 81). Participant 4 (w) contrasted his previous experiences in this type of collegial environment with his experience in the UAE which he seems to perceive in a negative light. It is clear that he finds the more autocratic, top-down atmosphere in his current institution to be, at the very least, "disconcerting". He says:

"It isn't surprising that we we we we don't seem to be able to find consensus with (name of governing body) either, there doesn't seem to be middle ground, there does tend to be that view and that view and one of them is right and the other one is wrong and the notion of a consensus view doesn't seem to exist whereas you know certainly within institutions that I'm familiar with erm and I've spent a lot of time on academic boards both as an admin and an academic and I know that you often erm get one point of view and the complete opposite being argued erm .. what often tends to happen is that the the board itself will explore the middle ground to see if they can move one of those two people towards it erm whereas here that doesn't happen which I find quite disconcerting". (Participant 4 w)

This comment echoes what Romaiti (2011) has to say about hierarchical layers and strict chains of command to be followed in Abu Dhabi government organizations (see section 3.2.3) which, she indicates, result in delays and inefficiency. Participant 4 appears to be describing a working environment characterized by discord where *"we don't seem to be able to find consensus"*. This would suggest that Participant 4 has not (yet) adjusted his expectations of what he can achieve in the workplace and continues to present his own views even when they are not listened to. He talks candidly, yet pragmatically, about how difficult he finds this; he says: *"So it's a very ...very different situation and it's quite a difficult shift to make"*. Similarly Participant 1 (w) also comments about the hierarchies he has encountered: *"there are different layers and different people you are*

responsible to and it certainly makes it tough"; nevertheless he acknowledges the need to accept this structure and work within it, saying: *"the only way is to ensure I have staff who understand the urgency of the whole matter and respond to the fact that we have to go to all the different levels to get final approval"*. To summarize, the idea that emerges from the data is that of an organizational structure that is ordered and needs to be followed without question.

It was noted in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.1) that public acceptance of a top down hierarchy has long been a characteristic of UAE society (Rugh 2007). Khuri (1990) contends that a respected leader is regarded as a father figure and treated with reverence. This concurs with the views of Participant 5 (w) who states that *"it's a leadership based society"* which he believes gives rise to a situation whereby leaders are naturally deferred to; he characterizes this as *"a hero based leadership society"*. These comments resonate with the work of Hurreiz (2002: 59) who traces the historical path and influences that have shaped the current formation of UAE society. Hurreiz uses the metaphor of a "pyramid" to describe the organizational structure of political power and social control that has developed over time in the UAE. He notes that the base of the UAE societal pyramid is made up of the extended family, with the supreme chief being at the apex. Hurreiz comments that all those who come in-between the base and the apex have a place, a role and clearly delineated behavioural expectations. Hurreiz (2002) further argues that contemporary UAE rulers skilfully manipulate forces such as heritage, tradition and patriotism to strengthen and maintain these traditional perspectives on the role of a leader.

From personal experience, and on the basis of discussion with colleagues working in various institutions in the UAE, despite ongoing development, reform and the introduction of new management practices from western contexts, this structure remains in evidence in contemporary UAE tertiary institutions. I would argue that the rigid pyramid hierarchy contrasts with a flatter organizational structure that is frequently a feature of western academic institutions. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that the western participants appear to find the organizational structure described previously to be unfamiliar, challenging and *"disconcerting"* (Participant 4 w). While the concept of a formal structure and hierarchy exists within many

western educational institutions, and indeed continues to exert a powerful influence in developmental terms, it is frequently driven by a different style of management (Bush, 2003). To summarize, Bush indicates that western organizations may be best described as being collegial in nature in terms of the way they operate, with staff at all levels being allocated a measure of responsibility and authority as part of the role they are recruited to in an organization. The leadership norms and practices within a flatter organizational structure are clearly different from those one may find in a more hierarchical organization. I will return to this point and discuss it further in section 5.3.1.

5.2.2 Western expectations meet UAE interpretations

In the quotation from Participant 4 (w) in the previous section, it appears that his expectations about the nature of the operational practices within the organizational structure he was entering in the UAE were not met. He refers to his previous experiences as a committee member in which debate and mediation were the norm to reach consensus, and he finds it “disconcerting” that this is not replicated in his new setting in the UAE. He clearly did not expect that his views and opinions would be disregarded if they did not concur with those of his Emirati colleagues and from his perspective he believes his Emirati colleagues do not appear to see any need for discussion or mediation. Similarly, Participant 1 (w) expresses his surprise about the way his Emirati colleagues interpret their role as members of a governing board which is obviously different from the structures he is accustomed to. He says:

“probably some members of the board do not know what their roles are and tend to micro manage and this is not something that would happen in (name of home country).....”. (Participant 1 w)

Participant 6 (w) also talks of differing expectations between himself and his Emirati colleagues about the way things should be done in terms of management style. He says

“Yes they expect a totally different approach ... even (name of Emirati colleague) expects that I will have a closed administration I will not let anyone come inside that admin but it’s our style our doors are always open for the students and for the teachers”. (Participant 6 w)

The above comment from Participant 6 highlights an interesting contrast with the views of Participant 1 (w) who, based on his own prior experience, expects students to follow some form of formal appointment process when trying to meet with him. He says:

“The only thing is the constant flow of students coming right in expecting to be met without prior appointment and quite often with grievances that they felt should be dealt with by the highest authority [.....] they just barge in and expect a solution from me which is not the case ... not the way it should be done so I send them away and tell my PA to keep them out and send them elsewhere”. (Participant 1 w)

The two contrasting comments above are interesting. From personal experience, the ‘open-door’ expectation is fairly common amongst UAE students and, presumably as a result of long experience in context, it does not appear unusual to me, but Participant 1, relatively new to the context, clearly finds it both unusual and uncomfortable. However, in the example from Participant 6, he appears to suggest that it is his Emirati colleague, rather than himself, who prefers a system of more restricted access. This clearly indicates that generalizations based simply on national background are unhelpful and that each individual should be understood as unique. However, it may also be a further indication of the shifts in UAE society discussed in chapter two which have seen a move away from an interdependent and egalitarian approach to leadership to one epitomized by centralized rule and a strictly controlled, top-down power hierarchy. In the example from Participant 6, the Emirati in question is a senior and very well-connected official who may not, therefore, expect to be challenged by those he might consider beneath him in the social strata. One might also speculate that Emirati students may have differing expectations of expatriate employees which do not necessarily involve the same kind of deference and respect which they might accord to their Emirati leadership. This echoes what Hudson (2013) has to say about the power differential between expatriate teachers and their students (see section 3.2.6). Clearly this is an area which would warrant further research before any conclusive observations could be made.

5.2.2.1 Hybrid organization

Some examples were provided in the section above to illustrate instances where expectations and interpretations of how the workplace should function might differ. This is perhaps not so surprising given what others have observed about organizational structures in the UAE. For example, Branine (2011) maintains that currently the UAE is best defined as a hybrid system of inherited, adopted and imposed practices that have developed over time, with inherited management practices, views of leadership and organizational structures that derive both from a traditional tribal way of life and the time when the country was a protectorate under the control of British colonial administrators (see chapter two). It was noted in chapter three that although structures may appear similar on the surface across cultures, each culture may ascribe different meanings to structural arrangements (Ali 2009). Others who have characterized UAE tertiary organizations as hybridized include Mercer (2005), Baalawi (2008) and Hudson (2013). It was also noted in chapter three that this tendency towards hybridization may not necessarily be confined to the educational sector in the UAE (see for example Naoum et al 2015). The example above of the differing understandings of the role of a member of a governing board is a good illustration of this. Participant 3 offered yet more information and perspectives about the ways in which the governing board of his UAE institution differs from that to which he is accustomed, and this is clearly a source of some frustration for him. He returns to this topic several times in the course of the interview but the two extracts below will suffice to illustrate how the governing board in this instance may have the same label as a western version of the same entity but not necessarily the same function:

“according to the paperwork the board had to be independent the board was never independent the board founder, the board chair found out very quickly that the board, she and the board could not take decisions they still had to go back to (name of a higher authority) for decisions and (name of a higher authority) didn’t take the decisions so the the decision wasn’t forthcoming so the board couldn’t pass the decisions on to us on the ground and that was where the frustrations lie.”

“Well they really had to grant the board autonomy but as the board had to report to (name of a higher authority) it was a dead duck ... (pause) the board actually had to report to a sort of a minister ...then it would have worked [.....] so it’s a political you know its its according to the law what is the function of

this board It is legal it's not even the minister and the minister's person it's the position it's a ... err I mean any board of a Uni in the west has got a law of the country that regulates that board So as long as the board operates within the law ... they carry on and the law usually grants them autonomy."

(Extracts from interview with Participant 3 w, emphasis added)

Participant 2 (w) also offers interesting insights into ways that organizational structures readily understood in a certain way in a western context may nominally exist but may function in different ways in the UAE. For example he makes this comment about the functions of a senior manager:

"me firstly coming from obviously obviously from my own culture if you are appointed the Dean of a school or Vice-Chancellor of a college or whatever in a university that's your job". (Participant 2 w)

He goes on to elaborate on what would be expected of him in such a role in his own cultural setting and offers yet more insight into the ways in which the Emirati perspective of the role of the board clashes with his perspective:

"you are appointed you roll up you are expected to accept responsibility, you are expected to sign cheques, and to make appointments and you'd only go to your board ..and all colleges have boards... for errm great big policy issues .. contextual stuff, whereas here as you know our board signs absolutely everything err gives no there's no authority devolved to our VC at all to the point where the boss can't spend a dirham as he often says". (Participant 2 w)

Participant 2 (w) also offers a fascinating insight into how his expectations and understandings of what his role in the organization would be were interpreted in a completely different way by his Emirati colleagues. He explains that Emirati officials had approached [name of institution] to act as a partner and model for the establishment of [name of institution] in the UAE. He clearly states his expectation that the adopted model would be the one followed and the key role he, as an educational leader and manager, would play in the implementation of it:

"the err Emirati err people who wanted [institute B] set up, who wanted the thing articulated ... who decided to set this place up and organize (name of partner institution) to develop a curriculum and to recruit senior staff so (name of partner institution) represented a vision of how this would work and how I as one of its leaders would contribute to the working of that which I was quite happy about because I know (name of partner institution) well". (Participant 2 w)

However, he goes on to comment that the reality on the ground did not match his expectations:

“and so when errm basically they said this is the scope of the type of work we want you to do you’ll be able to do errm that was that that was fine but it didn’t turn out to be that way neither for (name of individual) nor anybody else because errm we don’t have the scope to operate errmm as we might, they don’t let us operate”. (Participant 2 w)

Sanchez et al (2000, 98) comment that “technically qualified candidates are not always capable of easily adjusting to critical cultural differences such as those involving social status and group dependence” and this appears to be the case with Participant 2. His remarks above, together with those about research (section 5.2.3.2) and his perception of not being trusted to do his job (section 5.3.2.1) continue a theme for this participant. This is an individual who has come to the UAE from a western academic setting where his qualifications, experience and expertise afforded him a certain status which seems to be absent in his current post. He admits to feelings of “*discomfort*” (see section 5.3.2.1) and later expresses this more strongly as a feeling of having been “*stripped (...) of a lot of my confidence*” (see section 5.3.2.1). As his comments illustrate, Participant 2 seems to be having difficulty adjusting to his new environment. In his view he has been hired for his considerable experience and expertise but his Emirati hosts appear to have a different interpretation of his role and position. This raises questions about recruitment practices and criteria and is an area which I shall discuss further when I consider the implications of this study.

Further insights about different understandings and interpretations of roles are provided by Participant 1 (w) whose experiences seem to match those of Participant 2 (w) in this regard. When directly asked to clarify if he feels there was a mismatch of expectations between the Emirati side and the incoming partner he answers affirmatively:

Interviewer: *“So just to clarify here to see if I have understood you correctly. Are you saying that what you and [name of partner institution] wanted to put in place is at odds with what [name of Emirati authority] wanted to put in place, do you think there’s some sort of disconnect?”*

Interviewee 1: *“Yes”.* (Participant 1 w)

Interestingly, however, in his further discussion of the clash of expectations, Participant 1, rather than simply accounting for the situation in a bald 'Emirati versus Westerner', or 'us and them' clash as Participant 2 tends to do, offers a different perspective of how the mismatch may have come about. He accounts for it in terms of the culturally diverse staff recruited to implement the curriculum, recognizing that individuals bring unique views and perspectives to the workplace:

"we have a group of people that is the Deans and Heads and staff being recruited from all over the world each of them have their own idea of education their own ... which which can be a strength but at the same time can also be a weakness because they come with different views and different orientations". (Participant 1 w)

To summarize, it appears that there may be a number of issues interweaving, and perhaps clashing, in this situation. On the one hand it could be said that there is an expectation, perhaps naïve, on the part of the Emirati authorities, that having 'bought' a western model of education along with a group of largely western management to implement it, the process would be unproblematic. On the other hand there would appear to be at least some individuals in this group of western professionals who, based on their prior experiences outside the UAE, expect certain freedoms and authority to carry out their professional work in the way they see fit. It could be argued that this is a somewhat simplified over-generalization and clearly not every individual involved in this situation, be they Emirati or westerner, will have the same interpretation or perspective. Nevertheless one could make links to the discussion in section 3.2.6 which identified professional expertise as a significant source of power in tertiary educational institutions (Bush 2011) which might lead individuals to hold certain expectations. One might also speculate that, in this particular case, the transformational leadership skills which would be necessary to manage such a complex scenario may have been absent on both western and Emirati sides of the divide.

5.2.3 Features of higher education in the UAE

The previous sections have indicated that the organization, structure and operations of higher education institutions in the UAE may be viewed in different ways by different groups and different individuals. In the sections which follow I

shall consider features of higher education in the UAE which were identified by some of the participants in this study as differentiating it from that of other contexts.

5.2.3.1 Quantity versus quality

The question of quantity versus quality was a subject which was raised several times by different participants. A main concern seems to centre on the question of the quality of the student intake. Participant 2 explains that the original intention was to keep student numbers “*small but exclusive*” with a minimum entry score of 170 on the high school leaving certificate thus targeting only the best students for enrollment. However, as he goes on to explain, external pressures forced the institution into significantly lowering its entry requirements:

“but [name of UAE authority] are driven by an imperative which comes down from err offices of Presidential Affairs that says we have got 5000 students who got a CEPA 150 or High School 70 errm and haven’t got a tertiary place that’s ... put pressure on them ... and they did the same on us we we we took that CEPA score right down to 147 errm because they just said take another 50 another 100 err and all they all [name of Emirati manager] was interested in is getting a err a bum(sic) on a seat”. (Participant 2 w)

He also mentions the incentive of a free laptop given to each student who enrolled at the college in ironic terms, remarking “*we might as well offer them a free set of steak knives while we’re at it*”. Similarly, Participant 7 (w) comments about lack of motivation on the part of the students, questioning why they are enrolled in tertiary education at all and speculating that they may simply be there as a result of family pressures. Participant 6 also expressed concerns about the quality and levels of students noting that for some of the students, females in particular, tertiary education may simply be “*marking time before they are married*”.

Fox (2008) has found that large numbers of high school graduates entering the tertiary sector in the UAE have inadequate levels of skills in English to succeed at that level. However, it seems the problem of student quality may not be limited to English language skills nor only to be found in the tertiary sector. A recent Brookings report on education in the Arab world has revealed that almost half of the young people in schools in rural areas in the UAE, and more than 25% of those in urban areas, do not meet basic learning levels of literacy and numeracy (Steer, Ghanem and Jalbout 2014). It seems there is a ‘push’ on the part of the Emirati

authorities to promote tertiary education even if this involves the lowering of entry requirements or the use of additional incentives which might be considered unusual in the west. Dahl (2010: 14) goes so far as to claim that the distributive state paradigm which sees free education up to tertiary level for all UAE citizens has “led their young people into a false sense of entitlement and apathy towards work and education”. According to Hudson, (2013) this has created the potential for social tensions and a complicated picture as far as staffing of institutions is concerned. Citing, Findlow (2006), Hudson (ibid.) writes:

“... the decision of the government to invest in English-medium tertiary education has led to what Findlow (2006: 7) describes as a source of tension due to the need to keep citizens happy on two (often conflicting) fronts: firstly there is the demand to educate/train sufficient youth for self-sufficiency in a globalizing world, but at the same time they need to meet the societal demand to affirm traditional Arab-Islamic credentials through their institutionalisation within the higher educational system, a process that the reliance on imported non-Arab, non-Muslim faculty makes more difficult.” (2013: 64)

Participant 1 also raises the issue of quality, but from a different perspective. He expresses his concerns about the demands from the Emirati authorities to create study programmes “*at very short notice*” which he feels is likely to compromise the quality of both content and delivery. Pressure from the authorities to ‘conjure up’ courses of study with little or no planning time or preparation are consistent with the reports of the “policy hysteria” (Stronach and Morris 1994, 5) and the constant reinvention and restructuring (Riddlebarger, 2015) which have been reported as features of the educational reform processes in the UAE. Clearly issues of quality are a complex area which would certainly warrant further research.

5.2.3.2: Teaching NOT research

Emirati academic, Baalawi (2008) asserts that higher education in the UAE is primarily a teaching rather than a research driven enterprise. She further maintains that higher education management processes and systems in the UAE function along the lines of a “business model” (ibid. 76); this is a view shared by others (Mercer, 2007; Hudson, 2013). Certainly the issue of tight budgetary controls emerged as a source of concern for some of the participants in this study; as already noted in the previous section, demands for study programmes at very

short notice were a factor of concern for Participant 1 because he felt that neither time to develop programmes, nor suitably qualified faculty to deliver them were necessarily available. Also discussing budget matters, Participant 2 comments:

“they knock and rip lines out of our budgets and overrule our policy decisions.....this has a major impact on teaching and workloads...and as for time for research, well forget it! Our staff are actually working longer, teaching longer hours than their colleagues at (name of another tertiary institution)”.
(Participant 2 w)

He goes on to express his surprise at this approach and the apparent lack of interest in research:

“a country that is as wealthy as this country that wants to establish its own tertiary system and then funds it so poorly and in fact doesn’t want to let us give faculty err fund faculty reduced loads for research...what happens is that (we’re) losing staff because you are not competitive in wages and it’s err...it’s not a good environment for career...er career academics”. (Participant 2 w)

Participant 7 also comments that teaching loads are much higher than they would be in his home country. Participant 5 seems to recognize and accept that research very much takes a backseat place on the local agenda. He remarks, somewhat cynically:

“they buy in that capacity I am not criticizing that that’s fine but(laugh) this is the trick of the game the capacity they buy in which is us if you like ... we need to be aware of what their intentions are they know what their intentions are They are very clear about that I am sure there is no doubt in so and so’s mind that by buying in expertise resource A from America or resource B from Australia or the UK ... they know what they want us for and it’s not that [research] I think the mistake is on our side of the fence I think the westerners misread the situation very very badly.” (Participant 5 w)

In a study of the work experiences of expatriate academics in the UAE higher education sector, Austin et al (2014), also found that research was not a main focus in tertiary institutions. However, they report that this situation may be changing as efforts to enhance institutional stature on an international stage increase; nevertheless they conclude that “for the most part, rhetoric about research importance seemed to exceed actuality” (2014: 548).

Linked to the question of research is that of academic freedom or rather a lack of academic freedom. Most academic professionals who have spent time in the UAE recognize quite quickly that certain topics are not the subject of open discussion

and that to do so might give rise to “explosive and potentially job-threatening conflict” (Hudson , 2013: 8). Hudson (ibid.) reports about a group of ‘seasoned’ ELT professionals working in the UAE who have adopted a strict censorial approach to their work in order to remain in post. Hudson has likened this to “tiptoeing through [a] minefield” (ibid. 1) and explains that the self-censorship exercised by this group of teachers is one of their coping strategies as they negotiate a teaching environment which he maintains encompasses a “complex interplay of cultural, economic and religious ideologies” (ibid. 7). However, in this study at least one participant is clearly struggling with this issue and Participant 2 appears to have difficulty in adapting to this aspect of academic life in the UAE. His exasperation is clearly evident in the following statement:

“research at home...no no no censorship no restrictions no cautions except for stuff like confidentiality and privacy for individuals...obviously ethical stuff as well....that ..that’s a given...but none of the stuff you see, we have here, all this walking on egg shells sensibilities that are constantly drawn to my attention here erm there was a completely different environment [at home] About don’t discuss Danish cartoons and don’t discuss this, don’t discuss that erm steer away from that don’t challenge...”. (Participant 2 w)

Thus it seems that research is yet another area where there may be differing expectations. In the next section, I will discuss another feature of higher education in the UAE identified by participants in this study, that of the transient nature of employment within that sector.

5.2.3.3. Transience and expatriation

The transient nature of expatriate employment has been discussed elsewhere (see section 2.4), whether with specific reference to the UAE education sector (Hudson, 2013; Moussly, 2011; Baalawi, 2008; Mercer; 2007) or in more general terms (Richardson and Zikic, 2007). Transience is a particular feature in the UAE context because foreign nationals working in that country do so under a “time sentence” (Osland, 1995 cited in Richardson and Zikic, 2007: 170) in the sense that their employment is linked to work permits and limited time contracts with, at present, seemingly no possibility of achieving the permanent citizenship which may be available to expatriates moving to certain other countries. Despite this so-called time sentence, I have personally met numerous individuals who have spent many years working in the UAE and secured successive contracts in their institutions.

However, I have also encountered situations where employees occupying both senior and relatively low profile positions in educational institutions in the UAE have been unable to adjust and deal with the challenges they have found in the workplace and this has resulted in premature termination of employment, either voluntarily or otherwise. It was already noted in the section above that Participant 2 believes that a lack of academic freedom, from a western perspective, may be one of the reasons which leads some individuals to remain in post for a relatively short period of time. Hudson (2013) has studied a group of long-staying ELT professionals in the UAE and he found that self-censorship was a 'survival tactic' employed by the teachers in his study as they interpret their place and role in the landscape and hierarchy of their institutions. Hudson (ibid.) reports that, in order to maintain their jobs, some of the teachers in his study felt obliged to engage in a form of self-censorship because of the "precarious nature of their employment and their perceptions of their own subservient position in Emirati society" (242). Hudson further notes that educators operating under such perceived restrictions may well develop negative attitudes towards both local society and their students.

Hudson's study was focused on expatriate teachers and the strategies they adopt to remain 'under the parapet'; however, those employed in senior management roles in the UAE may not have that option as their high profile may put them under greater public scrutiny. As noted in chapter one, Moussly (2011) has characterized the situation in the tertiary sector to be a "revolving door of university leadership". When expatriates are appointed to more senior roles in an institution their profile is immediately raised as they may be required to take decisions and/or interact with other senior figures on a more public stage. Reflecting on the position of senior managers, Participant 5 expresses the view that this makes these individuals more vulnerable in the workplace:

"I think the high risk group is the high management group the middle management group or the lower management group or the educator or teacher group can stay for a long time because they have a sort of system to work with If for example you're a teacher you can go to the classroom lock the door run your programme decision-making there is not particularly errm demanding [...]". (Participant 5 w)

He goes on to offer an interesting personal interpretation of why expatriate leaders may fail in post and expresses his view that this may be because of a lack of awareness and cultural preparation for their role:

“some of them....they don't quite understand how to control their own values ... so their good protestant work ethic will tell them they ... I have got to do something ... this a problem we need to act they arrive and they just don't know where they are they haven't got their cultural bearings they probably don't study their culture enough they they often lack experience so you put together protestant work ethic you put together work place morality you put together the culture they come from and I noticed the [a particular nationality] are always very keen to be seen to be work(ing) hard as though you are rewarded for working hard I think you should be rewarded for working erm efficiently and the word I like to use is balance ... you have got to do things here in balance you may have to contradict your own values a little bit but that's the situation you have encountered ...”.
(Participant 5 w)

Participant 7 also refers to the workplace transience he sees around him but, unlike Participant 5, offers no explanations for it, rather he confines his observations to an expression of concern about the phenomenon:

“but it's something that concerns me because all this transience its nice you learn new things you meet new people but at the same time I think there's such a systematic waste of energy”. (Participant 7 w)

Whatever the explanations may be for this seemingly high turnover of staff at a senior level, there is a perception that it is unhelpful and damaging to the long term development of the tertiary sector. This is a view succinctly conveyed by Participant 4:

“... you know I was having a conversation with [name of Emirati colleague] at one stage and I said well if you keep treating people as though they are going to be here for three years then they're only going to be here for two or three years because they won't get any satisfaction generally ...we'll never get a good strategic vision of where we need to go and be able to drive towards it and the real key ... at the strategic level is getting a leadership team who are... is going to be there for quite a while”. (Participant 4 w)

This comment echoes the views expressed by Laursen (see section 2.4) who maintains that successful campus leadership depends on continuity of personnel and the building of an effective team of academic and administrative leadership which he believes will “root” an institution (Laursen cited in Moussly 2011, para. 10). The high turnover of expatriate staff who come and go as better employment opportunities present themselves can lead to the loss of valuable institutional historical knowledge and promotes the phenomenon of “reinventing the wheel” which has been identified as a systemic problem throughout the UAE education sector (Blaik-Hourani, 2011: 227). Clearly the issue of transience has implications about the quality of education students are receiving.

5.2.3.4 Summary

In the sections above I have discussed the themes which arose in the first category I identified in my analysis of the data, namely that there exist differing views of the concept of tertiary organizations and how they should function. In order to understand why there may be a lack of common understanding about organizational structures and the role of governance and transparency in organizations, it may be useful to place the notion of organization in the UAE against a historical background. Luomi (2008) comments that the work of tertiary organizations around the world is becoming ever more complex as organizations are being asked to adopt new initiatives and meet ever growing types of societal demands. Luomi (ibid.) further comments that meeting these challenges is difficult even in well-resourced contexts but is even more so in contexts that “have traditionally had little experience of higher education (such as the six Gulf monarchies) and now find themselves facing the same expectations as countries that have had centuries of experience in the field” (2008: 41-42).

I identified the perception of participants in this study that UAE tertiary organizations are generally hierarchical in nature and that this leads to unfamiliar and sometimes unexpected restrictions on the day to day work of the western senior managers as they attempt to navigate this landscape. I have also discussed the way that some of the expectations of participants in this study have not been met with regard to their roles and responsibilities; I have suggested that this might be accounted for on the grounds that the UAE may have adopted a kind of

'hybridized' model, nominally adopting certain structures but interpreting them in unique ways. Finally I have considered some of the features of the higher education landscape in the UAE which some of the participants have identified and which they feel may be particular to that context. Namely, the question of quantity versus quality in terms of both students and the levels of resourcing made available to institutions to develop and deliver quality programmes; the perception that the core business of higher education in the UAE is teaching rather than research and the transient nature of the employment experience for some of the expatriate academics and managers employed in that country. In the sections which follow I shall turn to a consideration of some of the differing views about the nature of the roles of educational leaders and managers that were apparent in the data.

5.3. Differing perspectives on the leadership and management role

The point was made previously, that institutions, wherever they may be located, develop organizational structures and working practices that are unique to the cultural context within which they are located. This may also include widely differing perspectives about the role of a leader, manager, and follower as well as differing behavioural expectations. There is a sense in this study that several of the western participants are challenged by the way their UAE line managers behave in the workplace, and some are able to cope with this better than others. The top down nature of the institutions in the study has already been raised in section 5.2.1 and the next section elaborates further on this point by incorporating some of the remarks made by the two UAE national participants who collaborated in this study. Their comments seem to confirm the impressions of their western colleagues about the top down nature of the working environment.

5.3.1 Leaders and the led, managers and the managed

As noted previously, Hurreiz (2002) characterizes the typical traditional UAE organizational structure as a pyramid with the supreme leader residing at the top. He comments that within the UAE, a leader of a unit is not just seen as an organizational leader in operational terms, but as "[.....] the social and political leader of a group whose members willingly accept his leadership and pay him

homage and respect” (2002: 59). Abdulla and Al Homoud (2001), writing from a more holistic Arab world perspective, echo this when they indicate that Islamic social philosophy continues to play a major role in shaping Arab views of organizational administration and the behavioural expectations of leaders and followers. They write this “is based on the principles of hierarchical organizational structure, chain and unity of command, obedience and compliance to formal authority” (2001: 509). Karolak and Guta (2015: 43-44) echo this in a discussion of Saudi Arabia, when they write that people in that setting “naturally accept a hierarchical order of society in which inequalities are inherent and subordinates are expected to be told what to do”.

As noted in the introduction to this section, a sense of this hierarchical system of leader versus led also emerges from the data provided by the two UAE participants. For example, participant 8 (UAE) explains that as a leader he is responsible for all aspects of the work environment and all decision-making ultimately falls to him. He comments:

“they all see me in charge and responsible for everything even though it is not written... I can give others responsibility but in the end in their heads everything is on me to guide and organize and tell them what to do even if it is written down... this is the way here ... I am the boss and a shepherd”.
(Participant 8 UAE)

Participant 9 (UAE) echoes this when he comments that his staff expect him to make all the decisions even when he is away. He says:

“a lot of calls come for me even when I am not in the country when they want to do things ... it is my job to decide even if I am not here errm ... I am in charge and have to tell them what to do and how it must be done even though they know this is written somewhere”. (Participant 9 UAE)

These examples also hint at the notion that benevolence may also be part of the UAE perception of the leadership role *“I am the boss AND a shepherd”* (emphasis added). Al Mazrouei and Pech (2015) report that UAE nationals expect a certain level of paternalism from their leadership which involves not only decision-making, but in so doing, also “caring for staff, showing regard for their feelings and showing concern for (...) personal issues” (88). This also resonates with the work of Hurreiz (ibid) discussed previously, who indicates UAE nationals expect their sheikhs and leaders to be strong and decisive as well as supportive, guiding and caring.

5.3.1.1 Leadership and respect for leadership

It appears to be the case that in the UAE leadership and respect are closely tied to notions such as “compliance”, “homage”, “obedience” and “silence” mentioned previously. The data show that some western participants appear to become aware of this on arriving in context, but there is a sense that it may be unfamiliar to some of them. Participant 2 (w) states that he has become aware of the need to accept that leaders are “*well respected here*”, and continues by commenting about the need to learn to listen “*without comment or else*”. Participant 4 (w) echoes this when he states that when in the presence of an Emirati line manager one needs to “*be quiet and patient and respect them to do their job*”. Participant 5 (w) adds to the idea that respect equates to silence and listening when he says there is a need to “*show respect (...) and learn to listen and learn from that*”.

The notions of “compliance”, “obedience” and “silence” in relation to UAE perceptions of respect and leadership may differ markedly from western perspectives. For example, Bush (2003) writing about organizational structure, comments that in many western institutions behavioural expectations can be very different to those in other cultural contexts and writes that it is accepted practice for leaders to approach subordinates for advice and input, and even expect them to use independent initiative to formulate ideas. Bush writes:

“structures are not inevitably hierarchical. Those which are apparently hierarchical may be used to facilitate delegation and participation in decision making. This may occur, for example, where budgets are delegated to departments” (2003: 50).

The next section illustrates how western participants who do not comply with the UAE notion of respect described here may suffer if they are not aware of it and behave as they would in a more familiar home setting.

5.3.1.2 Followers and voice

As described previously, it may not be uncommon for staff in western organizations to expect to have individual voice and be able to comment on decisions and issues they may disagree with. Bush points out that staff who work in the setting of a western organization are likely to expect to share common understanding of the goals and objectives of the organization and see it as part of their role to work

together in an atmosphere of collegial trust to achieve these in a timely, efficient manner. The following comment from Participant 2 (w) illustrates how he found out the hard way that voicing his opinions may be seen in a negative light by Emirati counterparts:

“eerrm.... I mean I’ve already got enough feedback from my own challenging of one of the people next door you know I told the (title/position) ... of (name of organization) what I thought and errm was not very well received and errm it’s not an open environment in which expatriates can feel totally in my opinion free to express their opinions ... its always political in some way and guarded and deferential”. (Participant 2 w)

Bush (2003) writes that there is no universal description that provides a fit when describing power and society. He comments that “in certain societies the significance of hierarchy is further reinforced by the tendency to accept unequal concentrations of power” (2003: 50); this is a view echoed in the work of others (Walker and Dimmock, 2002; Bush and Qiang, 2000). In a discussion of leadership seen through a Chinese lens, Bush and Qiang (2000) borrow from Hofstede’s dimensions research into cultural variation and describe that context as a high power-distance society where teachers tend to have a great respect for the positional authority of those in the levels above them. If one accepts that there exist differing perspectives across cultural divides with regard to leadership, it is perhaps not surprising that westerners who have no prior experience of working in the UAE may feel challenged or react negatively when coming to that country for the first time to work as leaders alongside UAE national citizens.

To conclude, it is clear from the comments above that some of the western participants in this study appear to be more familiar with working in the kind of flatter, collegial structure described in section 5.2.1 and see some of the leadership behaviours they experience from their Emirati colleagues as something that is unfamiliar. Some of them clearly found this to be a challenge.

5.3.2 Let me speak, hear me, trust me

I would argue that within a flatter western type of organization the notion of trust between colleagues is also key to promoting educational institutional effectiveness and that is likely to include a feeling of reciprocal trust existing at all levels which enables staff to work together to achieve common goals. Coleman (2010) writing

from a western perspective, comments that there is a well-established base of research evidence that supports this (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Hoy, 2002; Hoy et al, 2006; Goddard et al , 2007; Cosner, 2009). Coleman goes on to comment that trust plays a role on various levels within educational institutions such as supporting student achievement, leadership success and the sharing of good practice between colleagues, to name but a few. Cummings et al (2007) indicate that trust informs the lens through which memos and other organizational messages are interpreted and viewed and helps reduce cynicism. Coleman also points out that there is likely to be a negative impact when trust either does not exist, or is perceived by staff members as broken. This is echoed in the writing of Hofstede (2009), who comments that an effective trust relationship in an organization is indicative of it running in a smooth manner. In writing about the important role trust may play in the management of a harmonious and smooth running organization he indicates it “makes social life predictable, it creates a sense of community and it makes it easier for people to work together” (2009: 87). He goes on to indicate that perspectives on trust are likely to vary across the cultural divide and that this is likely to have an impact on management practices in multi-cultural settings, especially if parties across the cultural divide are not aware of these. Trust, or a perceived lack of trust, was an issue which emerged in discussion with several of the participants in this study. This is discussed in the section which follows.

5.3.2.1 Differing perceptions on trust

There are several examples in the data of the frustration experienced by some of the western participants with regard to a perception of not being trusted to play a role in the organizational decision making process in the UAE. They express their surprise at finding they are not assigned authority to make decisions and indeed, are often not asked for their input. They see this as being a part of their role as a leader of an educational institution and the fact they do not have it seems to create the perception that they are not trusted. An example was provided in section 5.2.2.1 where Participant 2 expresses his surprise at not being trusted to have sign off powers on budgeting decisions. He goes on to elaborate on how frustrated this

makes him feel and his sense that his professional competence is being called into question:

“there is this context of of not being trusted and some sense of professional errm feeling professionally slighted by the fact ... but you brought me over here based on a set of professional competencies which I have already demonstrated because I’ve run errm organizations actually much bigger and much more complex than this successfully and it was because of that you recruited me to come here and now I am here you don’t trust me to make the even the smallest professional decision so that’s that’s discomforting”.

(Participant 2 w)

He later elaborates further, and in a rather heated manner, about the personal price such a situation has exacted from him. He says:

*“working in this environment stripped has stripped me of a lot of my confidence in my capacity to work as an educational leader errm by virtue of the the constraints **and the constraints are a lack of trust no no space to operate as a professional decision maker”.*** (Participant 2 w)

Both participants 3 and 4 also talk about their perceptions of not being trusted to do their jobs as they interpret them. Participant 4 expresses his fear that the western leadership in the college will never be trusted to make decisions which concern financial matters. He says:

“the fear is we never will, the Emiratis will just dole out money on a programme basis and will not trust us to to to handle an allo... a full allocation so we are trying to convince them we know what we are doing here’s what we want this is why we want it, this is the way we are going to spend it , you give us the money and our board will answer to errm your control on spending it”.

(Participant 4 w)

Participant 1 also talks about the lack of trust he has experienced and acknowledges that this has made his work more difficult:

“it is quite peculiar ... you know ... had it been a different context I know and in (name of country) where I come from I would have full authority on everything.. but here we have to establish err our working relationship with them and they also have the confidence in us to see that we are honorable and I don’t see why they should be doubting us but you know it takes time to bring about this level of confidence ...and they question every single decision we make...but you know, you’ve got to trust the person and leave them to do their job...otherwise it makes it tough”. (Participant 1 w)

The remark above would indicate that Participant 1 does not appear to take the lack of trust as personally as Participant 2 - accounting for it more in terms of the

time needed to build relationships than any particular lack of trust in him as an individual per se – however, it will be seen in section 5.3.2.2 which follows, that this individual may not in fact be as philosophical or objective about this matter as he appears in the above remark (see below).

As the above discussion has illustrated, some of the participants in this study felt that they were not trusted by their Emirati colleagues to carry out the responsibilities of the positions they had been recruited to and the resulting perception that their professional competence may be called into question was obviously an area of concern. However, the question of duties and responsibilities also threw up another perspective, that of responsibility without authority; this will be the subject of the next section.

5.3.2.2 Responsibility without authority

Several participants felt they had a certain responsibility, or obligation, to operate at a certain level by virtue of their interpretation of the duties of the position they were recruited to in the organization; however, there was a parallel perception that the authority necessary to do this was not given to them. Participant 5 comments, somewhat ironically, about the dilemma of being put in a position where decisions are required but authority to take them is not given. He says:

“When I don’t have a policy I have to make decision ... but here’s the next part I don’t get to make decisions because nobody gives me any authority There’s no policy on the delegation of authority”. (Participant 5 w)

The perception of a lack of delegated authority also gave rise to a sense of what might best be described as unease for some participants, and a feeling that there was a prevailing culture of blame in the workplace.

Participant 2 expresses this in the following way:

“and my err my view is that maybe that experience has taught us among others things to be too scared to take those risks but also there’s a kind of scaredness which comes or fearfulness which comes in any authoritarian society that errm err and and this is also another characteristic here I have really noticed having worked in [names of other countries] is the blame err that I notice here not in .. I didn’t notice it in [name of country] I never got a sense of of errm wanting to sheet home blame as you do here”. (Participant 2 w)

He continues by asserting that his Emirati colleagues seem to:

“be more keen on finding fault and criticizing bringing us down than in any way helping us...every step of the way it..they try to foil us...it’s a bit like trying to do the job with our hands tied behind our back”. (Participant 2 w)

Clearly, for participant 2 at least, the situation, in terms of working relationships, has deteriorated to a very low point of what appears to be mutual suspicion; other participants did not express their views quite so strongly. Nevertheless, Participant 7 commented in the following way about failure/mistakes in the workplace: *“you have many opportunities to succeed but failure only takes once”*. I interpreted this to mean that, in his opinion, a previously exemplary workplace record could be indelibly tarnished by a single mistake – in other words attitudes towards mistakes or errors of judgement may be harsh and unforgiving.

Participant 4 alludes to an underlying perception of threat in the workplace. He says:

“...sometimes it’s absolutely desperate and they make it quite clear that if something doesn’t happen right now then the whole thing’s going to fold...it tends to have an effect.... If we don’t get such and such sorted out by today then you are going to have all of these negative consequences ...it’s extraordinarily reactive it really is ...”. (Participant 4 w)

Another interesting perspective on the question of responsibility without authority comes from Participant 1. As noted above, he expresses the view that the lack of trust may be a result of having had inadequate time for relationship building. Nevertheless, despite his earlier comments, he later reveals that he personally feels pressure and a sense of failure at his inability to move things forward in a timely manner. He expresses his concern that his faculty and staff may regard this in a negative light and may hold him responsible for the situation even though, from his point of view, he is powerless to move things forward as he would like. He seems to have certain expectations of himself as a leader and is frustrated at his inability to live up to his own standards. Clearly this challenges his sense of his professional self and he feels uncomfortable with this:

“... if I were in [home country] or in most parts of the world the buck stops here ... the responsibilities and the authority ... one thing I find here is we are given the responsibility but not the authority ... that’s the frustrating part ... I... the Deans and the Heads realize the working style that we are adopting ...but when it comes... when a submission comes to me and I fail to get it done ...and then I couldn’t produce the kind of decision or timely decision ...I could understand their feeling when they are very frustrated frustrated not only with

the process but also think this guy err is not really doing his work and to a certain extent I don't blame them feeling that way .. but I hope that they will have a macro view of the circumstances not only ... that I am in the culture that we are all in and and and be a little bit more understanding but I can't afford that you know ...". (Participant 1 w)

Another area which illustrated differing views of the role of the educational leader was that of differing perspectives on the use of time. This will be discussed in the next section.

5.3.3 Managing Time

Hall (1981), discussing the concept of the use of time, distinguished between cultures that can be classified as either monochronic or polychronic. Hall argues that when time is viewed from the monochronic perspective it is frequently regarded as a commodity made up of segments or units which are to be scheduled, planned, arranged and managed. He goes on to indicate that in contrast, time viewed through a polychronic lens is often perceived in a more fluid fashion. According to Hall, these broadly differing perceptions can be linked to the differing development paths societies have followed through time. He maintains that western contexts are usually classified as monochronic and argues that this may be traced back to the industrial revolution and the impact it has had on western perspectives of time. This is inclusive of expectations such as punctuality, planning and following schedules, meeting deadlines, goal setting and achievement. In contrast, Cohen (1997) notes that with cultures that are often classified as polychronic, such as many Arab contexts, perceptions of time may often be less formal, with more importance being placed on factors such as the maintenance of traditional practices, religious calendars and personal relationships. In such contexts factors such as punctuality, scheduling and personal goal achievement may not be top priorities. In a recent investigation of the use of time in organizations, Kemp (2015) studied the use of time in meetings in a UAE organization via nonparticipant observation. Kemp found that in the particular multi-cultural context she investigated, there was a tendency towards a polychronic perspective on the use of time which led her to the recommendation that individuals working in multicultural teams need to be made aware that there are differing perspectives on the use of time. Kemp concludes that differing

perspectives on time can have a significant impact on the success, or otherwise, of the daily functioning of an organization (2015: 175) and argues that flexibility is required in dealing with this. Although others have touched on differing perceptions of time as a workplace feature in the UAE (e.g. Al Mazrouie & Pech, 2015; Badawy, 1980) Kemp (ibid. 163) maintains that her research is the only existing study solely focusing on this area as it impacts organizational meetings in the UAE. Kemp's research is both preliminary and limited in scale but the findings are nevertheless interesting and suggest that this is an area which warrants further investigation.

5.3.3.1 Differing perceptions of time use

In this study the concept of time emerged as a significant issue for two of the participants. Participant 1 was clearly frustrated by what he perceived as inefficiency:

“Well time here is .. well I don't like about it is whether its timeless if they don't meet you now they meet you half an hour later or they meet you tomorrow ... it doesn't really matter and erm so in that sense I find that erm it's a bit difficult to to have the confidence that certain work will be done by a certain timeso I am really frustrated in wanting to be efficient and wanting to do well to ensure that erm we move at a correct pace but then we're held back by something that's really beyond us and erm that's very frustrating and erm that's certainly caused a lot of nightmares and strain”. (Participant 1 w)

Participant 2 (w) expressed a similar view:

“... I erm I I erm I think erm that the time continued to be the most frustrating the most difficult erm thing erm at a whole the whole business of planning for a meeting that would to start at 9.0 clock and the meeting actually did not actually start till half past 11 erm and we were nowhere near as productive as we could have been”. (Participant 2 w)

5.3.3.2 Participant misunderstandings

The two examples in the section above seem to indicate that neither of the participants had the flexibility to accept that others might have a different view about the use of time. Indeed Participant 1 goes so far as to refuse to accept there are other perspectives on the use of time that may be different to his and clearly expects all his colleagues, regardless of nationality, to follow his lead. He states:

*“there is no way to have or accept cultural err differences or variants in the workplace anything that you've got to do it that's all... **how you do it is***

different but you've got to do it by a certain time otherwise you get nothing done”(raised voice, hand banging table and overt anxiety).

(Participant 1 w)

Participant 1 seems to interpret his colleagues' differing attitudes to time as almost a personal slight and considers them to be “*inefficient and wasteful*” which leads to “*holding me back*”.

Participant 2 also interprets the behaviour of his Emirati colleagues in a negative way, contrasting this with what he sees as “normal” behaviour. He says:

*“because they have err different attitudes to .. and err and sort of different sense of importance placed on punctuality and erm and the **protocols of normal meetings**”*. (emphasis added) (Participant 2 w)

He goes on to explain that he interprets this as a kind of deliberate power game designed to make him feel uncomfortable and he clearly takes this very personally:

“Yes there was there was never any any coming over here it was always being summoned to see them at their convenience and stupid things that you would have not that it was erm [name of Emirati colleague] is very very very busy clearly as busy as can be ... he'd play these sort of games like keeping you waiting and then declaring you can only have 10 minutes and then one or two minutes into the thing opening up his little err emaily phone and putting his ear piece ... and talking on the phone and initiating a phone call half way through a conversation we were having.. now that kind of erm rudeness it's part of a power game that was played ... ”. (Participant 2 w)

The example above contrasts with the views expressed by Participant 4 (w) who demonstrates an awareness of the potential challenge differing concepts of time could pose. He draws on previous experience to manage the adjustment process, commenting:

“Fortunately the (name of ethnic group) have a different notion of time to the Europeans and other westerners in (name of context) and if you have some sort of exposure to that like I have ...you feel more comfortable with the notion that sooner or later these things will happen (.....) it will just take a bit more time. You just learn to accept it” (v). (Participant 4)

Participant 6 (w) also recognizes a need to be more pragmatic with regard to time to bring him into closer alignment with a UAE perspective. He indicates that westerners coming to work in the UAE who bring their familiar norms and values with them and are unable to adjust usually end up with feelings of failure and bitterness. He comments:

“(...). I want to get things done too but you have to see its different here and if you can't then what comes out in conversations outside work about work and time and inefficiency is bitterness and anger. The truth is that they have errm they have failed to adjust to the circumstances, quite frankly that's the problem” .(v) (Participant 6 w)

In the two sections above I have discussed the concept of time and how differing perspectives of this have the potential to be challenging in the workplace. Time was commented upon by four participants in this study but was a serious problem for only two of them. Nevertheless I took the decision to include this as a theme due to the strength of emotion it elicited in these two individuals as illustrated in their various comments above.

5.3.4 Governance and policy guidelines

The notion of bureaucracy in the form of operational processes, policies and procedures to be followed in an organization was discussed in chapter three. This kind of bureaucracy functions internally to ensure the smooth running of an institution. At a different level, the link between the organization and the external community is managed by a system of governance that is usually overseen by an independent body composed of members of the broader community. Governance ensures that a smooth linkage exists between an institution and the external agencies it is accountable to and often takes the form of a board or committee of governors or trustees. It has already been noted in section 5.2.2.1 that nominally such structures may have been adopted in the UAE but that their functions may be interpreted in different ways; for example, frustration with the way the governing board functions has emerged several times already in this discussion as a challenge for some of the participants, particularly with respect to the resulting delays in decision-making. There was a perception in some quarters that the relatively under-developed state of bureaucracy and governance structures was a source of problems. This is discussed in the next section.

5.3.4.1 Developed versus undeveloped

Participant 4 (w) makes it clear that he feels the lack of coherent and well documented bureaucratic and governance structures has made his work in the UAE problematic. He says:

“ (.....) the fact that we had no clear governance structure that gave us clear direction (.....) we knew internally what had to be done but there was no one to communicate it to (.....)”. (Participant 4 w)

This comment is echoed by Participant 3 who states that *“we operated in a vacuum we had no governance structure that gave us clear direction I think that was the biggest problem”*. He goes on to comment that *“the whole structure is fundamentally flawed”*. In section 5.2.3.2, Participant 5 was quoted commenting about what he sees as the lack of capacity building in the UAE (see also Kirk 2015) and he sees this as resulting in a *“non-disciplined managerial environment”*. He accounts for this in terms of the speed at which the country has developed. He says:

“if you look at Britain for example ... that took centuries to move from leadership to distributive managed type of social democracy ...went through civil wars and changes of you know parliaments and kings yeah this is the maturing of a nation of course in the locale here they want to move there very quickly which is admirable but erm errr needs a lot of controlled measurement....”. (Participant 5 w)

Clearly it would be an overgeneralization to state that bureaucracy and governance structures are lacking in all UAE institutions, but it is nevertheless true that in such a relatively young, and rapidly developing context, policy documentation may very well be a case of ‘dynamic documentation’ (Quirke, personal communication 2010) which is in a state of constant flux. For participant 1, the lack of clear and documented guidelines was obviously an unsettling area. He says:

“over here your decision could be changed because of some other reasons, just because one of them disagrees with you, and that’s that’s the kind of thing that is err personally not healthy and also not good for the system or the college”. (Participant 1 w)

Participant 5 makes the same point albeit in a rather more forthright manner:

“that gets back to policy and structure when you have none of that stuff you can change the erm steps of the dance whenever you like and just call up a new dance”. (Participant 5 w)

Jreisat (2009), commenting from a GCC perspective, writes that in that region many of the cultural contexts and institutions are in a state of becoming and are having to develop new understandings of working and management practices that may either be new or imported from western contexts. Branine (2011) and Jreisat

(2009) echo each other when they comment that in some cases leaders of GCC based organizations may appear to show very little regard for labour laws and working regulations. They point out that while many organizations have achieved substantial progress in many areas, they remain in a troubled phase with regard to building administrative capacity and developing a capacity for good governance, and that this can lead to unexpected decisions being made at times, including deviation from documented operational policy.

5.3.4.2 Decision-making

Recurring themes throughout this analysis so far have centred around the perceptions of top-down hierarchy, lack of delegated powers and the resulting restrictions and limitations this has placed on western managers as they attempt to fulfill what they regard as their job within the institution that they have been recruited to (see for example 5.2.1; 5.3.1 etc.). The lack of delegated powers has been repeatedly mentioned with respect to the aspect of decision-making and several participants have expressed their frustrations at either not being able to make decisions, at having decisions over-turned or at having important decisions delayed because they require authorization at the highest level. Participant 3, for example maintains that *“even the minor decisions still had to be referred to the top person that takes all the decisions”*. Participant 4 notes that he finds the decision-making process *“frustrating”* and he believes that the unwieldy processes that must be followed have seriously impacted on the quality of the organization. He says:

“the ability to get decisions in a timely way is crucial to delivering .. you know good services both to academics and good services to the students and our inability to do that is frustrating and has led to I think very poor quality services being delivered within the college ... erm .. I think we can we can point to say erm we have identified problems before they have become problems but we haven't been able to resolve them there's been fairly huge erm huge dissatisfaction within the organization...”. (Participant 4 w)

Section 3.2.6 discussed some of the complex and varied ways in which power may be exercised in an organization to influence the decision-making process, referring to the possibilities for upwards, downwards and lateral channels of influence (Bacharach and Lawler, 2000 cited in Bush, 2011). However, in this study, Participant 5 was categorical in his opinion that no such possibilities exist in the UAE, at least as far as his experience has shown. He says:

“In my experience, it’s pretty vertical you know there’s not a lot of lateral erm room to move here it’s a vertical line and if anyone comes in and thinks because they are the head of section or the vice-chancellor of well they have only got as much power as the bloke above will give them”. (Participant 5 w)

It was noted in section 3.2.7, that some studies have argued that Arab Gulf managers have a strong preference for a pseudo-consultative style of decision-making (Ali,1989; Romaiti, 2011) but that this kind of style can lead to long delays and certainly delays and frustration have been commented on several times already by participants in this study. A couple of the western participants in this study were suspicious of apparent attempts at consultation. For example

Participant 4 comments:

“I don’t think its actually genuine .. at meetings they’ll ask for opinion but its more a ploy in terms of trying to see where where where people are in their thinking .. is there a cohesive view of particular issues .. I don’t think it’s a genuine interest in one person’s opinion or another’s There’s an ulterior motive to it”. (Participant 4 w)

Participant 2 made the same observation in even more direct terms commenting *“they listen politely but then they do what they want anyway”.*

Participant 1 experiences the same phenomenon but describes it more in terms of the face saving techniques outlined by Daleure et al (2015 see section 3.2.7). He says:

“I can run and chase them and err err err but when it goes beyond that err it is something that we cannot seem to be too pushy ...I have found that err they find very hard to say no ... and they say they’ll give it due consideration and err fair enough but after that you find that it might be forgotten and err if you pursue it again you may not get the answer and by that time you just simply err .. have to abandon it”. (Participant 1 w)

Clearly the whole aspect of decision-making and decision-making processes and powers is another complex area which would warrant further investigation.

5.3.4.3 Summary

The sections above have addressed the first research question and have detailed some of the major challenges experienced by the participants in this research which have largely centred around the frustrations of navigating the unfamiliar terrain of organizational structures and operational practices in the UAE. I offered a

number of examples which could be seen as illustrative of a disconnect between the two sides that may not have been openly discussed or when it was, resulted in workplace friction and misunderstandings. For example, Participant 2 refers to discussions taking place “*behind closed doors*” and Participant 4 describes a contentious workplace environment where it is difficult to reach any kind of consensus because alternative perspectives are simply not accepted. Participant 1 openly states that he feels there is some kind of “*disconnect*”. Also referred to were differing views about management style (Participants 1 and 6), differing expectations about the role and function of a governing board (Participants 1, 2, 3) and so on.

Participant 5 also describes this situation when he indicates that in his opinion western recruits are often left to ‘read between the lines’ or ‘double guess’ what their hosts expect from them. He expresses his opinion that the Emirati hosts ‘*buy in*’ capacity from the west with a specific purpose in mind but that the westerners they recruit do not always recognise this which, in his view, lies at the root of many misunderstandings.

In the section that follows, I will address the second research question relating to the coping strategies participants used to deal with the challenges they experienced.

5.4 Coping strategies: Introduction

It can be seen from the preceding discussion that all of the western participants in this study experienced challenges to some degree or another in their working experiences in the UAE. The second research question deals with the issue of how the participants coped with the various challenges they encountered. A number of coping strategies emerged from the data and, when examined closely, it became apparent that these could be broadly categorized as cognitive, attitudinal, or behavioural which is indicated in the first column of the table overleaf. As noted previously, Bennett, (2008: 97) indicates that this classification represents “an emerging consensus around what constitutes intercultural competence” (see section 3.3.7.2) and it is argued that individuals who work with these three factors in tandem and, while doing so, reflect on new experiences and ask questions, are

better able to develop awareness of themselves, their own culture and that of cultural others. The second column lists the themes which were apparent in the data. When I deemed the themes to be helpful for participants to cope with challenges I labeled them as positive (p), conversely, when themes could be interpreted as detrimental for participants, I labeled them as negative (n). Herman et al (2010), comment that research shows there appears to be a close relationship between conscious efforts to seek coping strategies and successful adjustment amongst those expatriates who work in unfamiliar contexts. They go on to comment that those who react emotionally to challenges when in an unfamiliar setting are more likely to be linked to negative outcomes and even eventual non-adjustment and failure in post. Herman et al (ibid.) seem here to be referring to the kinds of emotional coping responses which can serve to impede problem-solving responses. However, as discussed in chapter three, emotional responses should not necessarily be automatically deemed as negative or detrimental and can, in some circumstances, prove to be better coping choices, particularly when they function as a 'psychological buffer' serving to minimize further damage to morale (see section 3.3.7.1) . The third column in the table indicates which themes emerged for each of the numbered participants and the fourth column shows the total number of participants in each theme.

RQ2 What are the coping strategies they use?			
Categories	Themes	Participants	n
Cognitive	Active Knowledge seeker (p)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-starter (p) 	3,4 5, 6,7 (w)	5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-aware (p) • Happy to make mistakes (p) 	3,4,5,6 (w) 3,4,6,7 (w)	4 4
Attitudinal	Positive attitudes		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive outlook (p) 	4,5,6,7 (w)	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient and pragmatic(p) 	3,5,6,7 (w)	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curious 	3,4,6,7 (w)	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerant of others (p) 	3,6,7 (w)	3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humour (p) 	3,5,6,7 (w)	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerant of ambiguity (p) 	5, 6, 7 (w)	3
	Negative attitudes		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take things personally (n) 	1,2,5 (w)	3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflexible\not open to new ideas (n) 	1,2,5 (w)	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I give up” (n) 	1 (w)	1	
Behavioural	Beneficial behaviours		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover others norms and values (p) 	3,4,6,7 (w)	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek social interaction opportunities (p) 	3,5,6,7 (w)	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe and watch (p) 	3,4,6,5,7 (w)	5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laugh at self (p) 	5,6,7 (w)	3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen and learn (p) 	3,4,5, 6,7 (w)	5
	Detrimental behaviours		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress, anxiety and frustration (n) 	6,7 (w)	2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflexible reject new norms (n) 	3,4,6,7 (w)	2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reframe time in post (n) 	1,2, (w)	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take extended leave (n) 	1 (w)	1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave post early (n) 	1, 2 (w)	2	

Table 5 RQ2: Coping strategies

5.5 Cognitive strategies

In this study the term cognitive strategy is used to refer to those processes participants may consciously decide to put in place in order to generate new knowledge about an unfamiliar culture. These strategies can be closely linked to the category of problem-based coping mechanisms outlined in chapter three. In cases where people adjust effectively to a new environment, the cognitive strategies they adopt and their subsequent behaviours seem to work together, interacting to form a complex and individual tapestry that guides expatriates towards positive outcomes when they are in an unfamiliar setting. Some of the western participants in this study report having made conscious decisions to formulate ways of coping with the challenges and issues they experience, and do not display high levels of anxiety, frustration or stress as a result. However, it is noticeable that two of the participants (1 + 2) become quite emotional when discussing the challenges facing them in the UAE and both report to high levels of stress and frustration. It is significant that both of them appear to be unable to adjust to the work setting of the UAE, indeed in one instance, that of Participant 1 (w), the stress and frustration he experienced reached the point where that particular individual suffered health issues which compelled him to leave post early. Examples of both the positive coping strategies as well as the more negative emotional reactions displayed by the participants are provided and discussed in the sections that follow.

5.5.1 Active knowledge seeker

Burke et al (2009) argue that being conscientious in terms of setting goals and being persistent in achieving them can be seen as an indicator of positive individual cognitive activity in expatriate situations. Deardorff (2006) and Herman et al (2010) make a link between individuals who are conscientious in this way and the notion that they may be extroverts who are willing to interact with others. The argument is that such people are likely to actively seek solutions to issues without being prompted and operate by using their personal initiative, and in doing so display various attitudes and behaviours that seem to complement each other when coping with challenges. For example, asking the right questions, being aware of personal knowledge gaps and moving to fill them, being tolerant of making

mistakes and learning from them. The links between such attitudes and behaviours and the development of intercultural competence are clear. As the literature review in chapter three illustrates, curiosity and openness are factors that facilitate the development of “intercultural thinking” (Bok 2006, 156) as they enable individuals to explore and discover the ‘emic’ perspectives of their hosts (Fantini, 2009, 458). This study appears to corroborate this as the participants who seemed most at ease in their environment and appeared the most cognitively active, displayed these attitudinal and behavioural tendencies. There are several instances in the data where participants seem able to draw upon problem-based coping strategies to facilitate the processes of adapting to the host environment and becoming interculturally competent within that context. These are discussed below.

Being a self-starter or active knowledge seeker are evidently useful attributes for these participants in view of the lack of orientation support provided as part of the recruitment process. Participant 4 (w) demonstrates the use of a problem-focused coping strategy to supplement this deficit and describes his conscious efforts to be proactive in terms of asking questions and finding answers for himself. He comments:

“It was coming in cold and the only grounding that I got was from my own research from the web and [name of website] is very useful in providing information for newcomers and it’s public information and I used that oddly enough and talking to the people who were already here that was a useful thing to do too”. (Participant 4 w)

Participant 5 (w) also appears to be a self-starter who consciously sought out a mentor to guide him. He states:

“I would say if you can find someone who can mentor you through the early stages of induction into the society and culture and can tell you how things work and what you need to know that’s really useful, that’s what I did”. (Participant 5 w)

Participant 6 (w) describes how, on arrival in post, he set about finding out as much information as he could to orientate himself to the new environment:

“so basically they know everything about the place...they are already herehow the place works and what is the structure for ...and they know .. even the more more ..the smallest details so I picked their brains”. (Participant 6 w)

This same participant describes how he too has relied heavily on a mentor figure to help him acclimatize to his new environment:

“of course it is a challenge to communicate but luckily I have [name of local colleague] who has always been a big help in translating and creating an environment where we can really communicate”. (Participant 6 w)

Participant 4 (w) shows he is aware that mistake making is a normal part of the process of adjusting to unfamiliar contexts and that learning from errors is a natural part of this process, he states:

“making mistakes... I make them all the time here and we I mean the family, colleagues and me all laugh when I discuss it with them it’s all part of the process eh it’s just another way to learn”. (Participant 4 w)

5.6 Differing attitudes

It was noted in section 5.5 above, that participant attitudes appear to relate closely to participant behaviours, for example, in this study, participants who are positive about the UAE appear to be open to discovering others’ norms and values, appear to display tolerance and the ability to suspend judgment, and are apparently patient and curious about their surrounding environment. All of these behaviours have been identified as features that support the development of intercultural competence (e.g. Kim, 1992; Deardorff, 2009; Fantini, 2009). However, there are differing views about the links between attitudes and behaviours. Ajzen (2005), Nosek et al (2002) and McLeod (2009) writing from a psychological research perspective, indicate that individuals, depending on the social settings they find themselves in, may opt to hide personal attitudes if there is a possibility that they may be seen by others to be unacceptable. In this respect context becomes a crucial factor in the sense that individuals may, or may not, feel able to express their views and attitudes openly. The aforementioned authors comment that the relative strength with which an attitude is held is a good predictor of the way an individual may behave. Evidently, the stronger the emotional attachment the better the predictor it becomes. They go on to comment that attitudes derived from direct experience of a situation are likely to be more strongly held than attitudes formed through indirect means such as hearing from others or reading (McLeod *ibid.*). As the participant behaviours as reported to me in data-gathering interviews stem from first-hand experience of the context of the UAE, the attitudes expressed in the

study are likely to be both strongly held and good predictors of the participants' behaviour. In addition, as discussed in section 4.8.2, I believe that the participants in this study felt able to speak to me with a degree of candour and openness which leads me to regard the views they expressed as genuinely indicative of their thoughts and opinions at the time of data gathering.

5.6.1 Positive attitudes and beneficial behaviours

Deardorff (2009) writes that a major theme that emerges from research on developing intercultural competence is the important role having a positive attitude appears to play in enabling people working in unfamiliar settings to adapt successfully. She comments that the concept of positivity is both conceptually and terminologically complex and states links are often made in research to a variety of other concepts such as tolerance, being open minded, non-judgmental and curious. In short, having a positive attitude in turn leads to beneficial behaviours. For the sake of clarity I have listed attitudes and behaviours separately in the table above, but in this analysis I discuss them together as the two are so closely interlinked that to attempt to discuss them separately would lead to an unnecessary degree of repetition.

There is general agreement that, in leadership terms, curiosity lies at the heart of being positive (see section 3.3.7.3). Mendenhall (2001) comments that curiosity is the fuel that motivates people to explore and be open to new experiences and seek social interaction opportunities. Gregersen, Morris and Black (1998: 23) echo this in a discussion of the attitudes displayed by successful global leaders when they note the participants they interviewed:

“stated repeatedly that inquisitiveness is the fuel for increasing their global savvy, enhancing their ability to understand people (...) augmenting their capacity for dealing with uncertainty and managing tension.”

Obviously it would be an overstatement to claim that the participants in this research were operating at a global level, nevertheless they were all recruited to leadership positions in their respective institutions and faced the challenge of adapting to the unfamiliar context of the UAE. It can be seen from the data that curiosity plays a key role for those who are comfortable and successful in their UAE posts. For example, Participant 6 (w) openly comments:

“I have never seen moving to a new place where I know very little about how people live and work as a big problem. I like it and I like being in a situation where I have to deal with new challenges and learn new things... I like to ask questions like what might this mean? and what do I see here? I would be bored if I always stayed in the same place and did the same things all the time”. (Participant 6 w)

One can infer from this that this participant is able to suspend any assumptions and judgments when in an unfamiliar setting, and indeed actively embraces new and different perspectives. Judging from the comment above this participant appears to be open to discovering and exploring new norms and values and is prepared to observe and listen to what he sees and hears around him. He appears to display behaviours and skills that enable him to adapt (Kim 1992 see section 3.3.7.3 for discussion). Participant 6’s comment above about observing his new environment and attempting to make sense of it through reflection about the possible meanings of what he sees around him, seems to exemplify Earley’s (2002) description of developing IC as a process of “putting together patterns into a coherent picture even if one does not know what the picture might look like” (277) (see section 3.3.7.2).

Curiosity appears to lie at the heart of a host of additional positive attitudes and behaviours, such as patience, tolerance of others, being able to suspend judgment and being open to asking questions; all of these attitudes and behaviours have been identified as important components that support the development of IC (Deardorff, 2009; Kim, 2009). Deardorff (2009) argues that these, along with curiosity, form part of a complex picture relating to the role the affective dimension appears to play in the development of IC and which assist an individual to behave in ways which allow them to adapt with more readily to a new context. Participant 4 (W) illustrates this when he comments that one needs *“to ask questions, watch closely what reactions they elicit and learn from what one observes”*.

Participant 6 offers interesting insights about his patient and pragmatic approach to life and work in the UAE. In the comment below he demonstrates a fairly relaxed attitude which seems to offer a good illustration of an instance when an emotion-

focused coping strategy which allows him to accept situations over which he has limited control, may contribute to his psychological well-being:

“you just have to go with the flow otherwise you you erm you know it doesn't help to stress about something that you cannot influence ... we just have to be patient we have to show.... err ... them we respect their culture that we respect their traditions” Participant 6 w.

In a further illustration of what appears to be an emotion-focused coping strategy in action, participant 6 later admits that even though there are times when he feels some frustrations, he is able to put them aside by being patient and adopting a pragmatic stance:

“of course you feel there are small periods that you feel frustrated but then you have to think that okay I am here I can't change the system in one year... not even in five years not even in five, six, seven years ...What I am here to do is to do the best I can, make sure the students get the best we can offer, if there are some obstacles I have to I try to get past them if I can't get past them I am not wasting too much of my time trying because you're there, sometimes you can't win you can't beat the system so you have to do what you feel is for the best”. (Participant 6 w)

Participant 4 makes a strikingly similar observation:

“I think you've got to deal with it as ... in a much more pragmatic way so but if I believe that its important enough that this thing needs to be done then I'll try and find another way of making it acceptable getting that decision done ... but at the end of the day I'll go home, at the end of the week. knowing I have tried my best ... you know normally you get to say I am going to do this today whereas here to think that you are going to get anything done in the week is just wrong erm ... and I think you can get terribly frustrated if you try and keep score like that”. (Participant 4 w)

With regard to taking a pragmatic approach, Participant 5 represents an interesting case. In response to a question about whether he had felt prepared or briefed for his role he answered with more than a hint of cynicism:

“No because that would be erm that would be oh what an admission of commitment and that means that err the that the purchased resource would then have a position from which to defend him or herself so it's better to leave that... it open ...”. (Participant 5 w)

I feel his choice of words in this remark, describing himself and his colleagues as “*purchased resource(s)*”, is interesting. As noted above, the cynical tone of the remark could suggest a negative attitude towards his employers, or alternatively it may indicate a level of personal detachment and objectivity which enables him to

analyse his position without becoming emotionally involved. This individual is one of those participants who consistently revealed himself throughout his interview as someone seemingly able to deal with the various challenges he encountered. Thus, one might speculate that he was able to draw upon pragmatic coping strategies that seem to counterbalance any negative sentiments he may feel; at the same time this raises questions about his motivations for employment in the UAE. In his 2013 study, one of the questions Hudson addressed was that of the motivations of expatriate teachers in the UAE. One of Hudson's key findings with regard to this area was that, for a number of teachers in his study, the salaries and benefits on offer in the UAE were a major factor underpinning their decision to seek employment there. However, Hudson also found that the financial rewards came with a high cost for at least some of his respondents who had come to regard themselves as "trapped wearing the golden handcuffs' working at jobs they have come to detest" (2013, 242). It was not the focus of this study to address individual motivations for seeking employment in the UAE and in the absence of any further explanations from Participant 5 himself on this point, one can only speculate as to his reasons for remaining in the UAE.

Humour and laughter also featured in this study as positive behaviours and emotion-focused coping strategies which support the notion of navigating an unfamiliar context. Talking about humour, Participant 7 openly states that laughter is a good reliever of tension and can be used to good effect in the maintenance of smooth relationships with colleagues. He clearly shows that he is open to social interaction opportunities with workplace colleagues:

"Really you've got to see the funny side...I can say in a very positive sense is that the err working in the Emirates teaches you many areas of wisdom and it's great when you are having a chat to a bunch of Emirati colleagues and joking and laughing with them it has an amazing spin off in terms of getting things done.... Have you noticed that here?". (Participant 7 w)

Participant 5 displays a degree of 'gallows' humour. When faced with challenges he adopts a 'head down, keep calm, wait and see' attitude. He depicts this rather colourfully and, arguably again displaying a degree of cynicism, or pragmatism depending how one interprets it, in an extended battlefield analogy. He says:

"I always think it's better just to remain calm in battle okay ... so if you are stuck in the trench and the bullets are flying ... and the officer's panicking you don't jump out of the trench and lead a rebellion you basically look to your foundations and you say okay ... errr err I'll wait for that decision to come back in the meantime I'll communicate to those people tell them to wait keep them calm and err and do house-keeping in the meantime". (Participant 5 w)

5.6.2 Negative attitudes and detrimental behaviours

Not all the participants display positive attitudes and behaviours and two participants in particular – Participants 1 and 2 – stand out in this respect. For example, Participant 1 comments about his experience of working in the UAE as follows:

"I think it works pretty well in (name of context) I come from ... errm I don't see that here... it's hot and dusty and I find the language hard and the way they do things ... well it is not easy to understand .. I like to know what works and what doesn't and feel frustrated by that and get angry sometimes and upset". (Participant 1 w)

This could be interpreted as an example of intolerance on the part of someone who is apparently lacking in curiosity which leads him to appear judgmental. It seems this individual would prefer to operate in another setting where he may feel safer and the environment is more familiar. Referring to Gregersen et al's research, quoted previously, into the attitudes displayed by successful global leaders, one might suggest that the lack of curiosity about the UAE displayed by this participant renders him unable to build a local knowledge base, in other words to *"fuel their [...] savvy"* which leads to the inevitable uncertainty, frustration and tension that not understanding the unfamiliar world that surrounds him inevitably creates. Lack of flexibility is also a trait displayed by Participant 1, for example, it was noted in section 5.2.2 that he was uncomfortable about the level of personal access UAE students expected from him as an institutional leader and manager. He reacts to this by banning students from entering his office unannounced, and instructing a secretary to act as a gatekeeper of the students. This is clearly a behaviour that is likely to create a negative impression in the eyes of the students who expect unimpeded access to him. It could be said that this individual seems unable to develop the degree of intercultural competence which might make his stay in the UAE more personally rewarding.

Participant 2 also shares his dissatisfaction and unease with his working environment in the UAE:

"I would have been better off in terms of my soul and my sense of professional self and enjoyment of work had I gone to (name of context) because I would have been much more productive (.....) I don't feel I am productive at all here (.....). I cope by reframing what my aspiration is".
(Participant 2 w)

Participant 2 hints in the comment above that he is reconsidering his position in the UAE. Later he reveals that he has in fact decided to "give up" and will return to his home context before completing his contract period. Participant 1 also 'gave up' and left his post early, after a period of extended leave. In his case, despite extended sick leave, health issues arising from his seeming inability to adjust to the unfamiliar workplace context and the resulting stress this caused him eventually forced his premature departure from the UAE.

The participants quoted in section 5.6.1 above each displayed an ability to remain somewhat detached from their environment and did not appear to take setbacks personally. As noted above, this contrasts with views expressed by both Participant 1 and Participant 2 a number of which have already been used in this analysis (e.g. 5.2.1; 5.2.2 etc.). Participant 2 in particular seems to take things very personally. For example, in section 5.3.2.1 he is quoted as feeling "*stripped of (his) confidence*" by his experiences in the workplace. In another quote from him (see section 5.3.2.2) he suggests that his Emirati colleagues seek to "*foil us*", "*find fault*" and are trying to "*bring(ing) us down*". These and other similar comments would suggest that the process of adapting to a new environment had stalled for the individuals involved and one might speculate that both were suffering the effects of culture shock.

5.7 Summary

The discussion in the latter part of this chapter has addressed the second research question and focused on participants' coping strategies, attitudes and related behaviours. It is clear that these categories and the related themes in the data are inter-linked in various ways with one impacting on others depending on the individual participants. All of the western participants in this study talked of experiencing challenges in post to some degree or another, but at least two of

them appear to find adjusting to the UAE to be a particularly problematic and uncomfortable experience, whilst others appear more at ease and capable of coping with the issues and challenges they experience. In line with Herman et al (2010), positive coping strategies, attitudes and behaviours that were beneficial for individuals were apparent in the data; conversely heightened emotions rather than reasoned reactions in the face of unfamiliar situations and challenges, were also apparent in the data in some cases. Troudi (2005) writes of the need for expatriate educators to develop critical cultural knowledge in order to best understand and cater to the needs of their students, but he also cautions that this requires “patience, motivation, tolerance of differences, curiosity and a passion for knowledge” (2005: 123).

Similarly, Kim (2009) in a discussion of intercultural competence provides a good summary about adapting to new environments when she argues that at its deepest level successful adaptation is arguably located at the level of the individual who is curious to learn more about others and learning in general, is happy to make errors and learns from them, and is capable of forming open relationships with people from different cultures which are based on trust and respect. She writes that this adjustment process operates at the level of the individual who is capable of transcending:

“... traditional group boundaries They are the ones who can better engage and cultivate meaningful relationships with people who are different. And they are likely to do so not as an act of surrendering their own personal or cultural integrity but out of genuine respect for cultural differences that leaves neither the lender nor the borrower deprived.” (2009: 62)

In the final chapter of this study I shall turn to a consideration of some of the implications of the findings of this research and what they might mean, as well as offering some suggestions for possible areas of future research.

Chapter 6 Summary of key findings and implications

6.1 Introduction

The research questions which began this study were as follows:

RQ1: What are the challenges and issues experienced by educational leaders and managers from western contexts when they are recruited for the first time to leadership positions in the UAE tertiary sector?

RQ2: What coping strategies, if any, do they use to deal with them?

The interpretations and findings arising from the interrogation of the data in this study were presented and discussed in detail in chapter five. In the sections that follow I first provide a brief summary of the key findings with respect to the two research questions before presenting a discussion of the possible implications that arise from them, as well as suggestions for potential opportunities for further research that may derive from the study.

6.2 Research question one: challenges

The key findings with respect to research question one seem to fall into two related areas. The first concerns the day to day organisation and functioning of the institutions where, as noted in chapter five, it could be said there was a mismatch of expectations between the western managers and their Emirati employers. The second group of findings are less to do with the structures and functioning of organisations but are more concerned with the day to day practical realities encountered by individuals working in UAE institutions.

6.2.1 Organisational structures, culture and functioning

A key finding of this study is that the higher education (HE) environment in the UAE represented a complex and unfamiliar milieu for some participants leading to challenges at a variety of levels. The data illustrate that tertiary educational institutions in the UAE, although apparently sharing organizational and structural similarities with western tertiary institutions, may not always operate in the same ways.

Differing expectations of roles and responsibilities: It was clear that some of the participants expected the organizations they had joined to be similar in terms of structures, modes of functioning and shared understandings to those of the organizations they had left behind in their home contexts. This (mis)understanding appears to stem from a degree of terminological confusion:

the 'borrowing' of western models, for example in the area of job titles, seems to have led the participants to the belief that they were recruited to fulfil roles and functions in their UAE institutions that were the same, or at least similar to, those they had left behind in their home contexts. Believing themselves to have been appointed to senior roles, they expected to be able to make decisions and influence the day to day operations of the institution(s) in the same way they would in a western setting. However, as the data also show, the scope of their role(s), their decision-making freedoms and levels of responsibility were interpreted in different, usually more limited ways by their Emirati hosts.

Responsibility without authority: A further related finding with respect to roles and responsibilities was a perception that the high public profile of the leadership role came with a degree of personal risk. This was linked to a perception that, despite limitations on the extent of their power and authority, as titular leaders they nevertheless remained accountable for decisions which were beyond their control; the resulting sense of a pervading organisational culture of blame was a contributory factor to the stress some of them clearly felt in the workplace. The limitations and perceived lack of democratic freedoms, together with the tensions created by a sense of 'responsibility/accountability without authority' was a source of frustration for some of the participants resulting, for some, in a questioning of both the professionalism of their Emirati employers as well as their own sense of themselves as successful professionals. At least two of the participants experienced a damaging loss of personal and professional confidence which further exacerbated the challenges of transitioning from their former working environment to their current roles in the UAE.

The role of governance and policy guidelines: Linked to differing definitions and understandings of roles and responsibilities was an apparent lack of common understanding about the role of governance and transparency in organizations. The data reveal that participants encountered a level of top down hierarchy which was both unexpected and unwelcome. There was a perception that organisational infrastructure and governance guidelines were either undeveloped or not adhered to, resulting in a degree of unpredictability and instability in the day to day functioning of the organisation; this was at variance with what they had expected based on experience in other contexts. Participants perceived that there was a limited democratic approach to dealing

with issues; in their view factors requiring discussion and decision often seemed to be dealt with behind closed doors by local leaders and managers and out of sight of other staff.

6.2.2 Unexpected realities

The second group of findings with regard to challenges encountered are related to some of the features of HE which may be unique to the UAE context. Certain aspects of the UAE HE landscape were perceived as both unexpected and unwelcome intrusions into the day to day working lives of some participants. These are summarised below.

Questions of quality and standards were challenging for some participants and in some instances a source of workplace stress. Participants expressed concerns about the quality of the programmes that were being delivered, noting that imperatives 'from above' for rapid development of courses and programmes of study placed undue pressure on organisations lacking in the resources and capacity to develop them adequately, thus compromising standards. Another related area where quality concerns were raised was connected to the nature of the student body. It was felt by some participants that external pressures were being brought to bear which required institutions to accept students who, in some cases, had only limited interest in their studies, or in other cases lacked the necessary skills to complete them.

Lack of a research agenda: A second key finding linked to the daily working practices of the institutions in this study was that their primary function was as teaching establishments with limited provision to support a research agenda. Some of the participants found this surprising. The primarily 'business model' organisation of the institutions meant that little time or funding was available for the research activity participants had expected to be part of the working environment in their new places of employment. Linked to the lack of research agenda was a perception that academic freedom was lacking. This was a considerable challenge for at least one of the participants.

High staff turnover: The final key finding which constituted a challenge for participants in this study was linked to the transient nature of the workforce in the UAE. Several participants in this study raised the issue of the impermanent nature of the workforce and the resulting lack of continuity this creates. For

some participants the high staff turnover was linked to a sense of a prevailing 'culture of blame' and the perception that missteps in the workplace could sometimes be met with severe consequences.

6.3 Research question two: strategies for coping with challenges

The second research question addressed the issue of what coping strategies participants used to deal with the challenges confronting them. The data show that participants drew upon a variety of strategies - cognitive, behavioural and/or affective - to help them navigate their workplace. The data also show that not all the strategies were equally helpful, or resulted in positive outcomes for participants. Indeed the complexity and variety of participants' responses to the various challenges they encountered in their working lives serves to further reinforce the unique and subjective nature of individual interpretations as participants struggle to make sense of their experiences. However, the key finding with respect to this research question was that participants who were able to draw upon attitudes and behaviours associated with the ongoing development of intercultural competence seemed to cope with the challenges they encountered in ways which were more beneficial to them in terms of their individual well-being and peace of mind.

6.4 Implications of the study

As the brief summary of key findings above has shown, the workplace for western leaders and managers recruited to educational institutions in the UAE may present complex and unexpected challenges. Academic leaders and managers may be faced with a terrain where unfamiliar interpretations of the "cultural isomorphs of educational administration" (Begley, 2002: 45) require them to function as "edgewalkers" (Kemper, 2005: 168) in order to navigate the dual tasks of meeting the expectations of their hosts whilst retaining their own sense of equilibrium and professional well-being. In a study of the impact of the UAE environment on the lives and work of teachers, Hudson (2013) has found:

"Conflict may arise from potential differences between the social norms and values of 'Khaliji' (Gulf Arab) students and those of the 'Western native speaker' ELT professionals providing English medium tertiary education in the region [...]. Given the incomplete nature of each groups' understanding of the others' social norms and values [.....] the possibility of classroom conflict remains". (Hudson 2013: 8)

I would argue that the findings of this study imply that a similar situation might apply to the boardroom and management offices as well as the classroom. Expatriate academics seeking employment in the UAE may be unaware of the differing operational practices which differentiate working life there from that of western contexts, and unprepared for the short-term, impermanent nature of their employment which may contribute to feelings of job insecurity. Not all western academics recruited to this context will succeed in navigating the difficulties they encounter, and it seems clear that the choices and decisions individuals make to deal with the complexities of their working lives are bound to impact in some way or another on the quality of the leadership and management they offer to their respective institutions and, by extension, the quality of education on offer to students in these institutions.

6.4.1 Global models with local characteristics

The past three or four decades have seen an unprecedented growth in higher education in the UAE and the leadership of that country, in common with other Gulf states, has made the deliberate policy decision of importing standards, systems and, crucially from the perspective of this study, expatriate personnel, often from Western Europe and North America (Smith, 2008), in order to achieve their goal of creating a globalised higher education system. However, despite the presence of large numbers of expatriates, the data in this study indicate that UAE HE institutions, whilst appearing to represent global models of tertiary education in surface terms, are likely to be local in terms of their perspectives, expectations and operational practices. Austin et al (2014) have commented on the role national contexts play in shaping the work of academic institutions, pointing out that these institutions are shaped by local laws, policies and the cultural norms within which their roles, practices and organizational hierarchies are to be understood. This local shaping of the work environment was a feature of the experiences of the participants in this study.

Traditionally educational borrowing/lending has been viewed as a feature of developing countries where a donor-beneficiary relationship has been the norm. Historically such partnerships have been characterised by an unequal power distribution whereby a developed nation has imposed structures and practices upon a less developed one. However, in the contemporary educational landscape of the UAE today, that power dynamic has been inverted, and the

relationship between borrower and lender is more akin to that of provider and client (Thi Phan, 2010). Thi Phan (ibid.) argues that this importation of western higher education represents a paradigm shifting phenomenon characteristic of contemporary views of education as an internationally traded commodity. As the data in this study indicate, processes of transferring and implementing foreign educational models into a local context may be more problematic and unpredictable than anticipated in the planning stages. Far from being the passive recipients of a foreign 'brand' the host sponsors appear reluctant to relinquish control, preferring instead to retain an active role in controlling the financial terms and conditions of the partnership which, from the perspective of the 'providers', can impact negatively upon educational and administrative decisions.

As Thi Phan (2010) asserts, the traditional view of "granting a Western education" (para 5) is no longer applicable in a context which is economically able to choose, buy and import educational products and services and it is therefore, unsurprising that the Emirati hosts should seek to retain a measure of control over issues concerning their own educational system. Indeed, what could be considered perhaps more surprising is that those invited to work in the UAE may not always appreciate this. It could be argued that there is an element of patronage in the attitudes of some of the individuals in this study who appear to believe that their (western) academic credentials and experience should automatically garner both respect and trust. A more charitable interpretation, however, might be that there is a lack of understanding of the cultural context of the UAE and a failure to recognise the need to foster positive interpersonal relations as an essential precursor to the building of relationships of mutual trust in that context (see section 3.2.7). On the Emirati side there appears to be a problematic lack of clarity with regard to their expectations of foreign leaders/senior managers - they expect these expatriates to implement international models and standards of education, but at the same time they reject any threat this may pose not only to local cultural and social beliefs but also to any loss of local control.

Clashing expectations between host and guest workers coupled with differing interpretations of how organisations should function, together serve to create a complex environment and one which requires active cooperation and

engagement from both sides if mutually beneficial outcomes are to be achieved. It would appear that a key issue here seems to lie in a need to bring to conscious awareness amongst all parties that differing viewpoints and perspectives may exist (Bennett, 2009). Before a gap can be bridged there needs to be a level of awareness that a gap may exist, in other words one cannot explore, interpret or understand a phenomenon if one is not conscious of it. Shared understandings can be reached only if there is open and frank discussion and exchange of views and this is an aspect of workplace practices that the data seem to indicate does not always take place. Evidently this raises questions about the initial preparation of newly appointed expatriates in leadership positions. There is clearly a need for these expatriates, at the very least, to receive thorough and skilled briefing and support about local cultural norms and expectations at the basic level of “culture-general knowledge” (Johnson et al 2006: 530) if simple, surface misunderstandings and misinterpretations are to be avoided. This has implications for briefing materials to be developed to clarify and develop understandings of leadership and management roles.

It has been claimed that “cultural sensitivity training” (Weber 2011:63) is rarely, if ever, provided by educational institutions in the (Gulf) region and this could be seen as a significant omission. The UAE, as already noted, is heavily dependent on an international workforce and, as far as teaching staff are concerned, there is a perception that expatriate teachers are in plentiful supply and therefore, expendable (Mercer, 2005; Baalawi, 2009; Hudson, 2013). With regard to senior staff, the ‘talent pool’ is considerably smaller and the financial costs incurred in the recruitment and placement of these individuals considerably greater, it would seem logical therefore, that institutions might be well served by paying greater attention to ‘protecting their investment’ by providing not only adequate and relevant initial orientation, but also ongoing professional development which highlights the social, cultural and managerial aspects of educational management from a local perspective. The corporate sector has long recognised that proactive and supportive management of expatriate executives is a major determinant of success or failure in post (Chew, 2004) and that time and money spent in researching how best this may be achieved can pay long term dividends both financially and strategically.

However, it seems that the UAE education sector, despite borrowing much from corporate management models (Mercer, 2005, 2007; Picard, 2007; Baalawi, 2009; Hudson, 2013) in many aspects of their daily operations and organisational cultures, lags behind with respect to how they manage the integration of their senior (expatriate) personnel into the organization. In this respect further studies to investigate the management practices of UAE nationals could make a useful contribution to further enhance understandings of this area.

Professional development and awareness-raising could take the form of regular coaching and mentoring sessions with a designated local 'buddy', candid but respectful discussion in open forums, as well as one on one discussions. Mayer (2012) reports on the positive impacts of such strategies on the promotion of an "open-minded organisational culture" (23) in an engineering organisation in South Africa. Admittedly, to achieve an organizational culture of this nature would likely be difficult, and identifying suitably qualified local colleagues who could fulfil this role might not be either easy or always feasible. Nevertheless, I would suggest that this is an option that should not be dismissed out of hand given the importance of education in the national development agenda; if the Emirati hosts wish to get the very best from the expatriate leaders they have recruited to assist with their reform agenda then they need to ensure that these individuals have a clear understanding of their expectations, perspectives and intentions. As long as local and international accreditation remains a major issue for UAE tertiary institutions as they seek to gain recognition on an international stage, the need for ongoing employment of expatriate managers and academic faculty is likely to continue. How the relationship between 'local' and 'international' is interpreted and managed is crucial if the two are to be blended harmoniously and successfully to ensure mutual benefits. Clearly the development of local models with global characteristics offers rich areas for further research and investigation.

6.4.2 Human Resource (HR) practice

It has already been noted that national contexts play an important role in shaping the nature of tertiary institutions and that an understanding and acceptance of the context is essential if expatriate employees are to be effective in adapting to the workplace. As discussed, this raises questions about the

extent of their preparedness, whether by their own efforts or by the efforts of the recruiting institutions, as well as questions about whether they have the necessary personality traits that will facilitate successful adaptation; in other words whether they are 'the right person for the job' or not. Both of these areas have implications for institutional human resource departments, and how they operate.

6.4.2.1 Selection processes

Information shared by some of the participants during data collection revealed that most had been recruited by an interview process that focused on academic credentials as the principal selection criteria. Mercer (2005) has termed this tendency to recruit employees on the basis of advanced academic credentials as "cherry-picking" (ibid. 284), but as Baalawi (2008) points out, this leads to a perception that these individuals are experts who need very little in the way of further professional support before they arrive in post, or indeed afterwards. It has already been noted that some of these individuals display what could be seen as a sense of entitlement based on their (superior) academic credentials.

Research has long shown that expatriate failure is primarily caused by an error in selection (Adler, 1981; Tung, 1981; Arthur and Bennett, 1995; Harvey and Novicevic, 2001; Chew, 2004) and that selection of expatriates based purely upon technical competence fails to take account of other, more important, interpersonal skills (Clarke and Hammer, 1995). For the participants in this research, there appears to have been little, if any, attempt to explore individual attitudes, motivations or personality traits. One has to query why these aspects were omitted from the participants' recruitment interviews. du Toit and Jackson (2014) indicate that more attention needs to be focused on these factors during the recruitment process. They comment:

"More nuanced and contextualised discussions of personality and expatriate higher education leadership is required in order to enable better selection of expatriate managers to ensure stability of higher education institutions in the UAE" (2014: 68).

There is an abundance of research on expatriate managers which has identified certain traits or characteristics as predictors of expatriate success (Chew, 2004). In addition to technical/academic ability and managerial skills/experience these include personal traits linked to the development of intercultural competence which can ease the transition to the new environment. Thus factors

such as cultural empathy, adaptability, positive attitudes, curiosity, emotional stability and maturity come into play (Chew *ibid.*). After studying HR recruitment practices in the UAE, du Toit and Jackson (2014) suggest a focus on the three areas of emotional intelligence, hardiness and openness might improve the process. They point out that the employment of leaders who understand their own emotions and the social contexts within which they work are beneficial to organizations and note that a number of organizations are now considering professional development for leaders in the areas of social and emotional intelligence for this very reason.

A major implication of the omission of any consideration of personality-related factors in this study is that the interviewers missed an invaluable opportunity to highlight issues that might have contributed, at a later stage, to a candidate's potential success or failure in post. Evidently, this raises questions about the nature of the HR departments in the organizations involved, and how well developed the specific interview and selection processes they used were. It also raises questions about the selection processes used to bring interview teams together and the type of training provided for the interview teams to ensure informed decisions could be made during the recruitment process. Intuitively one might conclude from the data that, in the case of these specific institutions, the recruitment practices used may not have been as well developed or thorough as they might be. Clearly, this has implications for those particular institutions in that there is an obvious need to examine recruitment interview processes and procedures in order to identify areas for improvement. Given that a host of commercially available tests exist to assess intercultural competence as well as a variety of pertinent personality traits, time spent on systematic research into the availability and suitability of the various instruments for the individual needs of particular institutions could be of value.

6.4.2.2 HR practices: orientation and induction

Linked to issues of initial recruitment are the questions of orientation, induction and ongoing support. These have already been touched upon briefly in section 6.4.1. In this study it seems that little attempt was made by individual HR departments to plan or prepare for orientation, induction and ongoing support sessions once the new recruits had arrived in country. This lack of adequate briefing and induction implies that the participants were left to draw upon their

own resources to cope with the challenges and issues they faced in the unfamiliar world of the UAE. The likelihood that some individuals will be casualties of this 'sink or swim' approach and lack of organizational coordination at the post interview stage is high, and was the case for at least two of the participants in this study.

Evidently, HR practice in UAE tertiary institutions is an area that could benefit from targeted research. This might lead to a focus on inter-organizational benchmarking and enable sharing of best practice between organizations.

6.4.3 Commitment, interaction and integration

In section 6.4.1 it was indicated that there was a lack common understanding about roles and workplace expectations of the participants in this study. The data suggest that some participants had only limited workplace interaction with colleagues outside their immediate expatriate circle. Clearly, this is likely to have been a factor leading to misunderstandings, for example Participant 2 remarks that he rarely interacts directly with either Emirati staff or indeed the student body, communicating instead through intermediaries.

This lack of interaction seems not to be limited to the workplace alone but is a feature of life in the UAE wider context. Despite a cosmopolitan mixture of people from countries all over the world, it is claimed that there is only limited social interaction between different nationality groups in the UAE. Azmeh (2010) has observed what he terms a "ghetto factor" (2 para.1) to be a feature of day to day life and asserts that different cultural communities tend to keep together rather than intermingling with other nationalities. One of the participants in this study commented about this very feature of life in the UAE noting that he had met many expatriates who had never even met or interacted with Emirati nationals.

Foreign nationals dominate numerically at almost every occupational level in the UAE due to the demographic imbalance characterising the country, but the limited opportunities, or even apparent desire, for interaction amongst different social groupings inevitably results in a lack of social integration and contributes to the sense of impermanence and transience felt by many expatriates. The reasons behind the lack of interaction, let alone integration, could be interpreted in a variety of ways but one possibility is that the Emirati motivation behind employing large numbers of expatriates in their country could be viewed as

largely instrumental and by the same token, it is possible that the expatriate employee also has instrumental reasons for working in the UAE. After all the UAE offers, at least for some sectors of the expatriate workforce, a luxurious lifestyle with generous financial packages and rewards exceeding what may be on offer in their home contexts. Crucially, however, what is **not** on offer is any chance of permanent residence, citizenship or true social integration. I would argue that this sense of impermanence could very well lead to a lack of commitment or 'buy-in' on both sides; this is a finding borne out in Austin et al's (2014) study of the workplace experiences of expatriate academics in the UAE in which they report that a general sense of being unappreciated pervaded the comments of the majority of their expatriate respondents. Austin et al (ibid.) found that this fostered views which held that if the employing institution was not committed to them as individuals nor to their career development, then they, in turn, owed no special commitment to the institution. Clearly the potential lack of commitment or 'buy-in' must be considered a contributory factor in the high turnover of personnel and is suggestive of workplace dissatisfaction, be it on the part of employer or employee. Research has shown that operational practices and policies in the tertiary workplace exert a powerful influence on employee satisfaction and commitment to the institution which, in turn, feeds into institutional quality and success (Gappa et al 2007).

High turnover of personnel at any level poses a challenge to the long term success of Emirati higher education but one might argue that high turnover in leadership positions exacerbates this further. Studies in this area have not yet received much scrutiny within the UAE and as this is still a relatively young context in developmental terms in comparison to other global contexts this may not be surprising. However, I would argue that heavy dependence on expatriate academics and leaders to manage UAE tertiary institutions means that such research should be treated as a priority area.

6.5 Summary

Appointing the 'right person for the job' in any context is imperative if the individual occupying a given position is to be successful in their role. It is clear from this study that this aspect of the recruitment process may have received inadequate attention and this, as well as other HR practices, are obvious areas which might benefit from the attention of focused research. For example, an

examination of the personality traits displayed by successful expatriate leaders in the UAE could usefully inform recruitment decisions in that context.

It has been suggested that the importation of foreign educational models and personnel is a deliberate tactic on the part of the Emirati leadership who, in the pursuit of competitive performance on the global stage, seek shortcuts to achievements and accomplishments that might otherwise require many years of local development (Aydarova, 2012). There is nothing inherently wrong with this strategy but unless all parties have a shared understanding about what needs to be done and how they might work together to achieve this goal, progress is likely to be problematic. Therefore, the challenge for both Emirati and expatriate leadership is to find ways to work effectively together in partnership to achieve the goal of creating a tertiary education system that can compete on a world stage.

6.6 Limitations of the study

Some of the main limitations of this research have already been discussed in section 4.8.4 which acknowledged that the study is modest in scope, being informed by the views of a relatively small number of participants and limited to data they alone provide. It has also been acknowledged elsewhere that the views and perspectives of UAE leaders and managers, which would have added an additional dimension to this study, were difficult to obtain due to the politically sensitive nature of the context and the specific focus of this research. Securing the cooperation of UAE nationals in further research of this nature should be regarded as a priority as it would doubtless provide invaluable additional perspectives on the research area in question. In addition, this study relates to the specific cultural context of the UAE and the particular institutions featured in the data, the findings should not therefore be extrapolated to cover other contexts. It should also be noted that, in analysing the data in this study, a tacit assumption has been made that attitudes, particularly those deemed as negative/detrimental, displayed by participants in discussion of their workplace challenges, bear a direct causal relationship to their experiences in the UAE context. However, it is not impossible that these attitudes, especially so-called 'negative' ones (e.g. taking things personally or not being receptive to new experiences), might be traits/dispositions of the individual personalities involved regardless of what context they find themselves in.

Nonetheless, I believe this study to be of value as it examines aspects of the UAE and its tertiary sector which remain relatively unexplored by research. I argue that the UAE is an important emerging context within which the tertiary sector is playing an ever more important role in development terms and that it is, therefore, important to highlight and explore some of the issues and challenges these institutions currently face as developing organizations. It is also noteworthy that the UAE depends on international recruits to provide much of the educational leadership and management they need, and there is a relatively high turnover of such professionals. Clearly some of these professionals experience issues and challenges which can be costly in financial, professional and personal terms, to both the institutions involved and the individuals themselves. If local ambitions to achieve world class standards in education are to be achieved, it is important to seek understandings of the reasons why such difficulties may occur and begin the search for solutions. It is hoped this study may provide a modest contribution to this area.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Semi Structured Interview Questions

Participants! Thank you in advance for agreeing to participate in this study. I have laid out some of the questions that I might ask during our discussion for you to see in advance. They are pretty much the same as I outlined in our recent meeting during which we briefly discussed the proposed study and its aims. They should be seen as possible guides to the discussion rather than providing a fixed structure to be followed in the interviews.

Personal Background

Can you summarise your career as an educator?

Can you briefly describe your experience in educational management and/or leadership positions? (Where? How long? Job titles?)

What drew you towards Ed. Management\leadership in the first place? Do you see a difference between them?

Were you prepared with pre-post training prior to taking up your first educational leadership position?

In your experience what is the best Ed. Management\leadership position you have had so far? Why?

What has been the most difficult leadership post you have taken on and why?

Are there any particular reasons why you chose to work in the UAE?

Context of the UAE – Living and working

What prior experience have you had of living or working with people from other cultural backgrounds? What was your impression?

Were you given any cultural orientation prior to coming to work in the UAE?

How did you prepare with regard to finding out about the UAE and its culture prior to coming to work here?

Can you describe the type of support provided by your organization with regard to cultural/work related issues while you have been here?

What are your impressions of working in a UAE organization? Can you touch on any differences you may have noticed?

What do you like about working here?

Appendix A

Semi Structured Interview Questions

What don't you like about working here?

How do you personally handle the process of coping with differences when you come across them?

How would you describe what you see as a typical UAE leader?

What are your impressions of the concept of "organization" in the UAE?

Do you socialize with UAE National colleagues outside the work place?

Are you learning Arabic while you are here?

Appendix A

Semi Structured Interview Questions

Emirati version

Thank you in advance for agreeing to participate in this study. I have laid out some of the questions that I might ask during our discussion for you to see in advance. They are pretty much the same as I outlined in our recent meeting during which we briefly discussed the proposed study and its aims. They should be seen as possible guides to the discussion rather than providing a fixed structure to be followed in the interviews.

Can you summarise your career in education?

Can you briefly describe your experience in educational management and/or leadership positions?

What drew you towards Ed. Management\leadership in the first place? Do you see a difference between them?

Were you prepared with pre-post training prior to taking up your first educational leadership position?

In your experience what is the best Ed. Management\leadership position you have had so far? Why?

What has been the most difficult leadership post you have taken on and why?

How do you personally handle the process of coping with differences when you come across them?

How would you describe a typical leader in the UAE ?

What are your impressions of the concept of “organization” in the UAE?

Have you ever experienced any challenges when working with expatriates in your country? Can you explain them?

- Interviewer: Right ... I'll just leave that there ...
- Interviewee: Sure
- Interviewer: erm I gave you a couple of days back err
- Interviewee: That's right
- Interviewer: I think I gave you this which is a slightly more updated version ...
- Interviewee: sure
- Interviewer: to the first one that we looked at
- Interviewee: erm ... the questions below
- Interviewer: the questions are on page 2
- Interviewee: Yeah
- Interviewer: erm I wonder if you could just sort of briefly outline your experience in Ed management leadership where you started
- Interviewee: Okay ... well my experience been limited to whatever I had in (name of context) so I don't have the international perspective like some other staff had but I started as a school teacher for 18 years at different levels before I went to do my undergrad at the age of 35 and masters after that ... then I became the VP of (name of institution) and after 1 year I was invited to join the teachers college to be involved in T. preparation T. training Well when I was in school of course I my my main specialization of course was err err a number in a primary school as usual err but in err when I was teaching in a Junior college itself I was a Head of Dept (name of institution)
- Interviewer: err alright okay
- Interviewee: err because in (name of context) Health Ed is a big thing and err right through the Junior College I was there and when I was a VP of course I was overseeing in fact (name of context) over 2000 of the students
- Interviewer: Okay
- Interviewee: and they err are just rearranging from 16 to 18 then when I was in the TT college I became the Dean of (name of institution) and then

Therrrr later on the college merged with (name of institution) in 1981 and I continued being the Dean from 1991 to 2000

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: and after 2000 I was working in a Directors Office the title called (job title) which is executive err person of the Director helping him in every aspect ... so ... in terms of my management skills I think it is mainly through osmosis rather than something formal

Interviewer: I was going to say were you trained or was it just something that you you just took on board as you went?

Interviewee: Well let's say it something that I learnt and I went on and I gained confidence and others have confidence in me and invited me to respond to a position

Interviewer: Did you ever when you were in (name of context) were you working with foreigners or was it just with (name of ethnic group)?

Interviewee: No mainly ... (name of context) practically all (nationality) except for some of our international programs where we have students from (name of context) and we have errr management courses for academics and ministry officials from different parts of the world where we have our leadership Ed program

Interviewer: Did you find its difficult to work with them or strange to work with them or were they different in any way?

Interviewee: Not at all (name of context) is multi-racial

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: so we have a good mix of (names of different nationalities) and other races which consist about 5% And since we were administrators and the rest are there as err students errr there wasn't much problem at all ... so I grew up in a very err I wouldn't say rigid but very systematic way of doing things ... while it has its plusses always its minuses too

Interviewer: So how did this place come about? I mean how did the sort of position of here come about ...?

Interviewee: Well you know I ... jokingly about 5\6 years ago since 2003 when (name of institution) was involved in this project ... in sending

Professors here to run various courses (RIGHT) ... jokingly I remembered when we had our breakfast meeting once a week ... among the senior management and I was jokingly asked eh you might be called to go to the ME and I said no no no there's way ... I said I that's that's an area that I have not ... I have no knowledge of you know working style and so forth ... I just put it aside so anyway (name of person) was the one who was earmarked and he was working with them all the while

Interviewer: Right

Interviewee: but unfortunately nearer the date of errm of the signing of the contract and and err agreement his son was (taken ill)

Interviewer: Oh oh how nasty!!!

Interviewee: Yeah! so (name of institution) had to fill its promise to send someone to help start the college so I was called upon to fill that position and leave my position in the Director's office and I I of course I was pretty flattered when my Director said he was actually giving the right arm in his office to come over here and I received the letter from (name of Emirati) on the 21st March and he wanted me to be here 1st April ... so I said there's no way I can swing it by so anyway I left on 11th April and started working on 15th April.

Interviewer: Yes I remember I remember meeting you I think ... err I was over there with (name of person)

Interviewee: Yes that's right people were here ... yeah I think so you were err interacting quite a bit with (name of person) on a number of positions yeah so I came here and err I was one of first few academics and then was about a dozen staff ... and as I look back the last 14\15 months I was just wondering how I managed in a sense that we were interviewing staff about 8 a day writing reports getting things done meeting staff doing 1 oral ... I think if you came during that time you probably didn't see a blade of grass ... or very wiry kind of grass and versus what we have now ...

Interviewer: Sure

Interviewee: and err number of staff we recruited and students and so everything was done within 4 and half months and err that that's that's how and of course a lot of help came from (name of Emirati authority), (names of people) and err those who were here

Interviewer: What sort of ... from a cultural level what were the main sort of differences that struck you straight away?

Interviewee: I think one thing I found here of course errr errr that we had to consider in our renovations err male entrance to the college (nervous laughter) and a female entrance to a college struck me something that I read about when I was in the States when in ... err in the ... last century

Interviewer: Right

Interviewee: Where there were specific entrances for male and female ... not I am not implying that you know this place is backward its just that it's a different thing and brought back in time and of course there when err I landed the plane and it was the first time I came to the Middle East and err I saw the attire ... clothes ... you know it's quite different

Interviewer: Right

Interviewee: and err and of course the the weather here is something .. although (name of context) is hot and humid but this is different altogether err so of course language wise is quite different too ... In (name of context) practically everybody speaks English and over here you have you know a large number who don't speak any Arabic ...

Interviewer: Right

Interviewee: and all these are new experience to me and they are different in that sense

Interviewer: Did you find it difficult to begin with?

Interviewee: Err well I speak to those who could speak English (ERRM) (NERVOUS LAUGHTER) and errm others don't come and speak to me because probably I look very much ... they know I am not from this region so nobody of ... other errm came to me for anything ... so I interact with people that I have to and errr I just got along ... I think it works pretty well in (name of context) I come from ... errm I don't see that here... it's hot and dusty and I find the language hard and the way they do things ... well it is not easy to understand .. I like to know what works and what doesn't and feel frustrated by that and get angry sometimes and upset.

- Interviewer: Would you would you have found the language useful to have ... if you had been able to speak Arabic you know ... would it have been a good idea?
- Interviewee: Oh yeah definitely I understand here they're err ... very rich tradition on words and language and err also certain words may mean very differently by certain groups of people or previously by certain I wouldn't ... I don't know whether the right word to use is tribe you know ... different groups of people ...
- Interviewer: Yeah I think so yes I think it's a fair word to use...
- Interviewee: So .. so yeah so erm so in a sense that the words used here are very precise and err might be misunderstood or misinterpreted and err so that why we have to be careful yeah
- Interviewer: Would you I mean again sort of leading it forward a little bit from a management perspective would you have found it useful to get any orientation? ... well I presume you didn't get any orientation?
- Interviewee: No not at all I just came here to fulfill the err agreement that was signed and a strong desire to fill fulfill that agreement and knowing that is also a govt to govt kind of initiative and I just dived straight in and got on with it without understanding errr the differences of work style, work culture, everything else is different here
- Interviewer: Right
- Interviewee: So it was a steep learning curve for me ... and err I would advocate that anyone who comes need to have some kind of orientation
- Interviewer: Right
- Interviewee: for sure and so that's something that perhaps we could bear that in mind err for our new staff coming this coming semester
- Interviewer: Right
- Interviewee: the HR Dept got to be more ... more active in that area yeah
- Interviewer: I have always found it strange actually because err my very first job overseas err was in (name of context) ... in the err Arab world and I was only going out as a teacher I know but ... I had a 2 week orientation ...

- Intervee: 2 weeks
- Interver: In-house ..
- Intervee: Okay
- Interver: In country with Teaching Practicum the lot ...
- Intervee: sure that that'd certainly be useful but ours is a start-up and err I think we'll get more organized as we go along ... (laughter)
- Interver: Sure no I mean I am not suggesting
- Intervee: no no no yeah
- Interver: I mean from a management perspective have you found it to be very different here than say working in (name of context)
- Intervee: Err that's for sure ... in fact ... err ... I think that that's the essence of what you want to find out and talk about
- Interver: Yeah ... this is what I'm doing ... I am interested in where you are coming from (YEAH) in terms of work background cultural background
- Intervee: See erm (name of context) was (name of context) and to a certain extent at home we we are imbibed with the a tradition of of being formal .. (OKAY) formal means things are properly spelt out, expectations are there erm deadlines are met ... people wouldn't give wouldn't say things that they don't mean .. of of course there are people like that but generally in place of work and when certain deadline is given they may even have to work 24 hrs to get it done of course the quality will be something that you will look at but they deliver ... over here as they use time it is different time as I I attended one of the orientation provided by someone from erm someone on the cultural differences ... I don't know whether
- Interver: (name of person) ... wasn't it ...?
- Intervee: No not (name of person) ... this ...
- Interver: (name of person)
- Intervee: No not (name of person) ... we had erm someone an Emirati
- Interver: ah right ... yes yes yes yes I remember

Intervee: Well time here is .. well I don't like about it is whether its timeless if they don't meet you now they meet you half an hour later or they meet you tomorrow ... it doesn't really matter and errm so in that sense I find that err it's a bit difficult to to have the confidence that certain work will be done by a certain time ... so I am really frustrated in wanting to be efficient and wanting to do well to ensure that err we move at a correct pace but then we are held back by something that's really beyond us and errm that's really frustrating and err that's certainly caused a lot of nightmares and strain ... I certainly appreciate those who who respond very seriously and keep to it but there are others who are not and that's one of the things that I find difficult because at my level I have deadlines to meet

Interviewer: Right

Intervee: and when requests are made I am responsible to to to certain people outside the college like say the (name of governing body) or (name of Emirati authority) and when errn when I am made a certain request and it is promised at a certain time and it is not delivered err it will reflect badly not just myself but the college as a whole

Interviewer: Sure

Intervee: so it's something that err I want our staff to be aware of and err I was told of course even by local ones that I need to expect that and I think later when we talk about coping strategies .. err one way of course is to start the process earlier knowing that more time is needed .. but even then it is still difficult ... what surprised me most is that some of our staff who have been working in other parts of the world and then work here for a number of years have already adopted this kind of of of err approach to work which is a bit surprising ... I suppose again as a coping strategy if they work on a certain timeline and they don't get it then they'll be frustrated and they'll be stressed err so but I find it a bit difficult because err I am responsible for a whole host of things

Interviewer: Sure

Intervee: If I were not a (job title) err you know ... some other deadlines doesn't really matter someone will bear the responsibility but in my case err its dealing with err very senior people outside and implications and reflection on the college

- Interviewer: As a matter of interest have you found that sort of notion of time you've talked about the sort of local attitude to time being totally different have you found that across all levels of the people you have had to deal with here?
- Interviewee: Errm ... to be fair I think that those err senior level err they generally ... err pretty conscious of time unless they are delayed and quite often they explain you know their previous meeting was delayed err but .. from the very start of my first day of meeting 15th April I arranged a meeting at 10.00 clock and I was able to start when only a dozen people only at err 10.15am and then I blasted them .. and you know
- Interviewer: Hey you are late!!
- Interviewee: Yeah ... in a sense that you know that you should have been here 10 minutes before at least 5 minutes before you know and not come after that
- Interviewer: Were these Arabs?
- Interviewee: Ah well .. probably 1 or 2 ... and the were others who were from this region errm and therefore err that was my expectation at the beginning and I think subsequently I think everybody knew that err time set were pretty serious about it ... and I think that was err good ...
- Interviewer: What other sort of things have you err have you noticed? ... Err do you do you find the sort of management structure here the same as in (name of context) or is it different?
- Interviewee: Well I think this err the structure here was err in a way err created with the advice of (name of institution) with err a VC with a structure of Deans, Heads and various different departments so its largely the same ... largely the same
- Interviewer: I suppose what I mean is not so much within the college but let's say here ... I presume in (name of context) you you sort of as a (job title) ... when you when you left there you had your own offices at the top of the building ... and people didn't come up to see you .. sorry you you weren't necessarily open to people all the time
- Interviewee: Right

Interviewer: people had to get appointments to see you ... have you found that to be the same here

Interviewee: Errr I think most most err most times dealing with within our college being professionals who have worked elsewhere they know appointment is necessary and I certainly wouldn't mind it at all The only thing is the constant flow of students coming right in expecting to be met without prior appointment and quite often with grievances that they felt that should be dealt with by the highest authority ... err level possible

Interviewer: Right

Interviewee: whereas they don't understand the process that is the S's affairs whom they could write in and err then of course time is needed to look into the matter errr quite often they just barge in and expect an immediate solution from me which is not the case ... not the way it should be done and so I send them away and tell my PA to keep them out and send them elsewhere err my secretary is quite often have in a way err err held them back err and quite often not to disturb because just in case we are having a formal appointed time and others just knocking the door and we shouldn't be responding to that and sometimes they will errr respond to that kind of behaviour and they would repeatedly do it the same thing when they have been told what is the right way to do and that could be a learning process for them and that important

Interviewer: And how did you get around to coping with that did you find it frustrating or not ?

Interviewee: Well errm the key is my sec here ... err who have to be the gatekeeper and in a sense that she has been pretty successful and of course she knows what type of grievances and what sort of problem and direct them to the right level

Interviewer: Right

Interviewee: because even then if they come to me I may not I don't have the answer because I don't have the background or understanding ... or they are not happy with something that's happened at the S's level the student affairs person (name of person) will provide the best solution to their problem or at least the answers to them or promise to look into it whereas I won't so definitely it's not the right approach to

take .. (Errm) but it's a learning experience and over here I think they might have been told that when they are not happy they must go right to the top to get things done or else nothing will be done .. so they have been told that and therefore they believe that is the way and that is their practice err and err ...

Interviewer: I think that is the reality you know I think that's just the way they just do things anyway ... and why go to the monkey when you can go to the organ grinder ...

Interviewee: Yeah yeah

Interviewer: that's probably the way they look at it

Interviewee: right right sure

Interviewer: Errm in terms of I mean when you were in (name of context) you obviously had the university (name of institution) functioned as a unit by itself ...

Interviewee: Yes

Interviewer: Have you found that sort of structure getting decisions made at management level between here and (name of Emirate authority) have you found that similar or has it been very different?

Interviewee: No certainly not ... if I were in (name of context) or in most parts of the world the buck stops here ... the responsibilities and the authority ... one thing I find here is we are given the responsibility but not the authority ... that's the frustrating part ... I The Deans and Heads realize the working style we are adopting ... but when it comes When a submission comes to me and I fail to get it done ... and then I couldn't produce the kind of decision or timely decision .. I could understand their feeling when they are very frustrated frustrated not only with the process but also think this guy err is not really doing his work and to a certain extent I don't blame them feeling that way .. but I hope that they will have a macro view of the circumstances not only ... that I am in the culture that we are all in and and and be a little bit more understanding but I can't afford that you know ...". we have a (name of governing body) who ... of course we have gone through a trying time for the last year and I think you know

Interviewer: Sure

Intervee: You have suffered the consequences of some of the delays but things are improving ... erm bt erm probably some members of the board do not know what their roles are and tend to micro manage and this is not something that would happen in (name of context) a (job title) is the person who will ultimately decide when you appoint someone at that position you've got to trust the person to do so and leave the person to do their job and over here ... there are different layers and different people you are responsible to and it certainly makes it tough and that's that's the the thing that is really stressing me out you know. I find it's inefficient and wasteful erm yeah and now I realise its acting like holding me back now.

Interver: Okay and how are you coping with that that must be very difficult if you are not used to that

Intervee: Yeah ... its difficult after we have been brought up ... I am already 62 years old ... I started when I was 16

Interver: Wow

Intervee: So you know I have been in Ed for 45 years except for the last 1 year

Interver: Sure

Intervee: so my approach to solving problems has been the way I have been doing it in (name of context) but of course they said you go to as new place you have got to adapt but the process of evaluating and making decisions is the same although the circumstances may be different but ultimately you still need to meet a certain need a certain time line ... student report for orientation for start of the academic year .. things have to be ready for him ... there is no way to have or accept cultural differences or variants in the workplace ... anything that you've got to do it that's all ... how you do it is different ... but you've got to do it by a certain time otherwise you get nothing done... so I l'm very concerned and err err as I mentioned just now the only way is to ensure that I have staff who understand the the urgency of the whole matter and respond to the fact that we have to go different levels to get final approval then we can the start the process early that's the only way and err and staff have been cooperating and that ease but even then once you submit anything its beyond us and err somehow err I hope err the different level will see the urgency ... and not just delaying

- Interviewer: Have you found the picture that you were presented with when you arrived here ... has that changed in terms of the end goals and objectives has that changed again?
- Interviewee: Err the the the goals that were presented to me err is pretty the same it hasn't changed as much but how I go about achieving those goals new to me and I am learning every day because you are dealing with different people and err different levels of people err different influences they come from all directions whereas in (name of context) we are pretty clear who we are responsible to
- Interviewer: Right okay
- Interviewee: and err ultimately as a (job title) I am responsible for everything and I make decisions and err I got to go with it ... over here your decision could be changed because of some other reasons, just because one of them disagrees with you and that's that's the kind of thing that is err personally not healthy and also not good for the system or the college
- Interviewer: so who's I mean if in (name of context) you would make the decisions ... who's making the decisions here is it (name of emirate authority) or do you think it goes beyond?
- Interviewee: Well previously it was (name of emirate authority) and until (name of emirate authority) until March (name of emirate authority) delegated end of March delegated to our interim board and our interim board consisting of 2 board members who expected a full board be formed ... so as a result they felt that they couldn't decide on many things
- Interviewer: Right
- Interviewee: all our policies our budgets and everything else .. and they had to wait for full board and rightfully so because the decree indicated that so the number of decisions were held up because of that ... and when the full board came we met so far twice the first time we met was the 11th March and there're a whole of things to look into and understand the chairman person (name of Emirati official) has helped us a lot in accessing info from different universities so we can make comparisons because we have no historical basis for anything .. everything is new and of course they will question us because this is never dealt with before ...

- Interviewer: Okay
- Interviewee: and err so it was difficult but erm err so everything will have to go beyond I wouldn't say everything most things have to go beyond our college and it depends they're full time in other areas and sometimes meetings are cancelled sometimes they are not able to help us and that is why it drags on and on its sensitive therefore its difficult ...
- Interviewer: Alright is it fair to say it's it's it's not a very flat structure it's very top down very linear
- Interviewee: Ah well Yeah well you can say that err but err but it is not meant to be that way I am sure ... but it's just that the personalities that are involved want it to be that way
- Interviewer: What about erm people being prepared to take initiative ... use their own initiative and make decisions quickly erm have you found that's happened with your Emirate colleagues?
- Interviewee: Err well .. you you're specifically Emirati ..
- Interviewer: Yeah
- Interviewee: Well I think from what I gather err with the limited Emirati staff that I have ...
- Interviewer: Right
- Interviewee: Err
- Interviewer: I mean within (name of emirate authority) rather than actually within the college itself
- Interviewee: Within the college of course ... an also within (name of emirate authority) you find that err err within the college is within my control I can run and chase them and err err err but when it goes beyond that err it is something that we cannot seem to be too pushy ... I have found that err they find very hard to say no ... and they say they'll give it due consideration and errr fair enough but after that you find that it might be forgotten and err you pursue it again may not get the answer and by that time you just simply err .. have to abandon it after so much work is done for example lets say some cases of interviews early on
- Interviewer: Right

Intervee: and then the .. by the time for whatever reason was delayed and when we made the offer the person would have caught other positions and so all the work done by the Heads and the Deans and a whole process of HR going through collecting err referees reports and everything is all wasted so in that sense it it has been difficult yeah so so that's why

Interver: Do you think that was deliberate or do you think it's just because they forget things or are forgetful about it they leave things

Intervee: I think it could be both ... it could be both I won't say not both at the same time there are times when it could be one reason or the other ..and err its unfortunate that it should happen even though quite often we specify the time line and err and emphasize the urgency and importance of the matter but they still err err somehow they seem to think that there's time ... yeah err and there's still a lot of time and in some ways that's true but they don't think that while waiting ... errr thinking that they can view it the the next week the following week but then it's forgotten or other more pressing matters come and then it is errm under the bow

Interver: and how do you I mean it must be quite frustrating to have dealt with this for the last year err in terms of initiatives or people being interviewed and recruiting and all this has sort of it must have been like walking through cement rather than running down a race track errm I mean how have you been able to deal with that .. ?

Intervee: Well err ... with great difficulty I must say the it's been hard to adjust to it here we must all realize that we are in the culture that we are in and and and be a little bit more understanding but I can't afford that you know ... to say take it easy and don't worry you know as I mentioned there are time lines ... I wish I could have the luxury of saying them my .. we will try next month or the following month but we can't you see ... so I am really stressed about wanting to do well

Interver: I can imagine

Intervee: Yeah yeah

Interver: Errm say somebody coming out from (name of institution) after you if that was to happen ... what would your advice would be from a management perspective?

Intervee: well given it is the same situation the only thing I could do is to share my what I what I have gone through and the only strategy (LAUGH) I have is for them is have lots of patience plan way ahead ... have a strong team if have my way all over again and tell (name of institution) management in term of managing a project like this you must send more than one person you don't expect a (job title) to make a difference you must a send a team with key people err over and of course it could be a costly affair but if the authorities want for example a stronger (name of institution) influence and also where we have better control of their destiny One have a large team and secondly negotiate such that the (job titles) have the ultimate decision in deciding and not someone from outside so these are two things that are valuable that I feel that err must be in place

Interver: So just to clarify here to see if I have understood you correctly. Are you saying that what you and (name of institution) wanted to put in place is at odds with what (name of Emirati authority) wanted to put in place do you think there's some sort of disconnect?

Intervee: Yes ...

Interver: Was it clear (ERR) to you were they very open and say this is what we want and how we want it done?

Intervee: I I think they were clear but somehow when we come to implement and doing it it doesn't turn out the way it would be but if you look at it more objectively errit couldn't be any better the reason is that to get a foreign country ... that's (name of institution) (LAUGHTER) foreign system that have gone through 50 years of Ed (ERRM) and we inherited of course a British system again because a lot of national exams at the age of 16 (RIGHT) the GCE O level 18 GCE A level I think something you may be familiar with (SURE YEAH) are are very structured and the the curriculum is centrally controlled (RIGHT) and when we come over here err HEY (name of Emirati official) come in come in hey thanks for comingLet me wrap up in a sense so the the the expectation of (name of institution) is that they are able to write an international curriculum err and then could be adopted here for use ... I think it's the right time for you to to listen to this as a board member (LAUGHTER) and understand the perception and no doubt (name of institution) has sent Profs over here since 2003 working with PD and then before they finalized the curriculum they visited a school of course I don't know how many schools they visited

within in a week and went back and they supposedly modify the (name of institution) curriculum (OKAY) bearing in mind that the instruction has got to be of international standard ... now having delivered that then we have a group of people that is the Deans and Heads and staff being recruited from all over the world each of them have their own idea of education their own ... which which can be a strength but at the same time can also be a weakness (TRUE) because they come with different views and different orientations ... (THAT'S RIGHT) and so and then of course then we look at the students that's coming to us ... that's the 3rd component the curriculum, the staff and the students the 3rd component the students haven't been schooled in the areas of Maths and Science like (name of institution) curriculum where they are very strong in Maths and Science for that reason they were taught in teams you see and for that reason I think that's why (name of Emirati official) gravitated you know to us (name of context) you know you know to (name of context) to help (YEAH) so when you look at the curriculum and you have a staff who is expected to interface there's no way that you can just take it and use because the students are very different so I think you err (name of Emirati official) please bear in mind therefore the staff have to interface by writing it modifying adapting it ... this is expected this process is expected because there is no way they can just plonk in and then you find the end result is different (SURE) so when the review of (name of institution) curriculum what they have done what has been modified that process you must recognize must happen or else you will be a failure (YEAH) so in trying to do that err there is certain mismatch of expectations (name of Emirati authority) says you know you are supposed to write one that can be used (name of institution) says it is of international standard ... a staff come the levels are different so that's where right now they are talking about the review curriculum how much is being done how much of the of the the agreed sum should be paid because modification is done you see (SURE) so that's where the mismatch is I think that's probably where ...

Interviewer: Ok I'll leave you guys I'll leave you now

Interview resumed three days later

Interviewer: Now I know that we touched on areas I mean areas that you've already sort of touched on in the last session were I think some of the cultural issues that you found I wouldn't say hard ... but new on

arrival such as the sort of issues such as men and women issues of weather for example the issues of erm from a man more management perspective the sort of top down rigidity of it (SURE) erm the time we touched on and the notion that time was problematic here .. was there sort of anything else in reflection that (YEAH) you think you can remember

Interviewee: I think to to put it in perspective we must realize that (name of institution) is a start-up had it been an established university with its processes in place then probably some of the difficulty we face wouldn't be as acute and I err think even in that situation our college is again unique because of a long delay in the formation of a (name of governing body) ... in some universities they call it a council and err and whatever name they call err because the decree mandates that err we be err be under or have the over sight of the council of of the the board to see to the progress of the development err and development of the college Now .. I was told from err my early days of arrival that the board would be formed very soon very soon you know ... and finally was only formed in March ... erm as a result a lot of key issues like HR policy financial policies even our budget which require the endorsement of the full board were delayed and that accentuated the problem ... so had it been formed much earlier err then the err by now and err in fact I said by now in fact by now means over the past easily six to ten months err we would have gone into a steady state instead of you know just recently ... in fact we had only our 2nd board meeting only on err only on 13th May ... just two or three weeks ago where all the policies were endorsed and err the level of authorization ... do you need it ..?

Interviewer: No I am fine thanks ...

Interviewee: And the level of authorization was finally given to me ... erm

Interviewer: What does this mean? So you can make err start making decisions...?

Interviewee: Yes of course decisions up to a certain level again you know... over here it's hard for them to give full control

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: It is quite peculiar ... you know ... had it been a different context I know and in (name of context) where I come from I would have full

authority on everything.. but here we have to establish err our working relationship with them and they also have the confidence in us to see that we are honorable and I don't see why they should be doubting us but you know it takes time to bring about this level of confidence and they question every single decision we make ... but you know you have got to trust the person and leave them to do their job ... otherwise it makes it tough ...

Interviewer: So is it fair to say ... that putting the (name of governing body) in place in college has introduced another level another layer of bureaucracy because I still believe you are beholden to (name of Emirati authority) beyond that ...

Interviewee: Err yes I would say to a certain extent it is ... err perhaps a replacement of (name of Emirati authority) ... now (name of Emirati authority) is little bit more removed and (name of Emirati authority) previously felt responsible because of the final approval body but now that the (name of governing body) is the final approval body (name of Emirati authority) is still the overall umbrella organization where (name of institution) comes under but they have decided that they will leave it to the board

Interviewer: Right

Interviewee: So in a way the (name of governing body) now replace replaces the role of (name of Emirati authority) as in the past Err but sometimes it all depends on the personality in our board and errm err so we have to find the right level right level but err my fear is that err the same concern still exist ... in terms of confidence and errm ... I hope a matter of time errr the full authority be given to us ... err of course financial authorities has its limits you know up to a certain sum and therefore we can never be free from that you know err but in other decision making will be left to us since the guidelines and policy are in place and I am optimistic that err we will be able to go on our own .. because err we have been around for nearly a year now

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: Err

Interviewer: Well would you have thought these things should have been in place last September or August when we started up?

Intervee: I I should think so you know in fact in most new start ups they would have got the full board formed and they have decided on the policies ... actually HR financial policies errr that's I wouldn't say peculiar but pertaining to UAE for example (YEAH) err could have been drawn togethererr right now we have to rehash everything ourselves they were no single policies as written and we got to do all that while starting new programmes you know and then you know trying ... you know increase our scope and serve the emirates ...

Interver: Is there a problem ... with standardization there or is it are we allowed to just write whatever we like?

Intervee: Oh no no Errm well you know our staff as you are aware come from all over and my senior staff four of us besides myself from (name of context) there are two from (name of context) and one from (name of context) through (name of context) err so we have err in fact we adapt a number of err administrative experience in different universities ... you could come up to a century really ... so we are here with a wealth of experience ... err things that policies that err are quite standard in terms of running an ed institution errr you know are put together but they are errr practices that's typical of the local emirates that we had to be aware of ... err one disconnect is that err we err have been given a mandate to make this into an international institution err to attract people in the region not only just UAE err but the region and internationally ...

Interver: Where did that mandate come from?

Intervee: Err fr from the very start when they worked with (name of institution) that's why (name of institution) asked (name of institution) to write an international standard curriculum so that's why (name of institution) came here and wrote an international standard curriculum (UHHUH) but you know the product is here so there are a lot of interface that got to be done and that's why they are just the problem right now disputing whether (name of institution) wrote something errr that is really tailored for UAE but at the same time maintaining international standards

Interver: Right

Intervee: Err but at the same time errm looking at the product we have our staff have to interface with intermediary modification and so forth so that's the issue errm .. so the point that I am I am making is that errm while

we are given this mandate but we have a board who wants us to conform to local standards and norms

Interviewer: Right

Interviewee: so that's where they tried to perhaps put those constraints on us without realizing what our err mandate were ... and of course if they were to go with the original err policies or agreement that was drawn err ... then they would realize that but since then there are a change of people over here documentation is ... previous documentation is hard to come by

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: and so we have to contend with that and just push the envelope err gradually and build their confidence err (name of institution) itself is quite unique because we will be one of a few that err very first few that have instruction totally in English up to a BA program and big pioneers in this area in any place will have its problems

Interviewer: Would you would you ... for you what are the main sort of coping strategies with that because it must be must be very difficult to be in the position that once you were able to make autonomous completely independent decisions ... and now all of a sudden you ... you are constrained but you are not quite sure by what or by who

Interviewee: Well I think err the main difficulty is that erm that being start-up we should be given greater liberty to build up ... when we build up something err it means that the resources could be there before before the justification comes in

Interviewer: Right

Interviewee: Errr typically it is that you must have the number of students first before you can recruit ... I understand that ... but at the same time err when they want us to run programmes at very short notice is given and hiring of staff takes a while so we can't assume a core can't assume that they can't assume that we automatically will bring in a core of students and run programmes and that we will get staff later on as if we have spare capacity but since we are just building up We don't have the spare capacity ... I would say by the time we go into 4th or 5th year being in a steady state and with many years in place then we have staff handling and there could be certain savings or collapsing that we could spare staff to do new programme but now

we are questioned on every position and they only give us a position when we have the students and how do we consider new programmes that they constantly tell us to do so and I understand why they are doing so but so they must give us the liberty little bit more err liberal little bit more generous staff student ratio than to put the constraint on us and ask us to follow this university that has been here for 10 years and the other that has been there for 30 years ... so that that's where the difficulty lies ...

Interviewer: You say you understand where they are coming from why they are doing it but why why do you think they are doing it? Is it because they are concerned about the money or ?

Interviewee: Yeah I I think err basically they see themselves as fulfilling a responsibility to be gatekeepers ... but if you get gatekeepers who are understanding they will protect us and say you know whoever question they will say hey you know we are in developmental mode we are growing mode and therefore you know either you hold back or err and don't ask us to to mount new programmes you know understand our figures or allow us to be or give us a little more leeway to recruit a little bit more so we can handle that kind of request ... so err I think that kind of battle is not only what we see here but I think it is everywhere err we are always six months err from my experience in (name of context) we are always six months behind in term of recruitment staff err because you must have the students to justify the budget and then when you have the students then you can say when the budget comes you can recruit staff so that kind ... I think it's a perpetual the tussle between the err the finance people and those of us who are running new programmes

Interviewer: How do you feel to change the subject slightly ... working with the local Emiratis in (name of Emirati authority) do you find them willing to take independent initiative or do you find them constrained hampered in some way?

Interviewee: I think err from my past experience because of the fact that err there's a new (Emirati job title) so I can base my experience on the past this new one (RIGHT) I have not even had a chance to meet him in fact I am just drafting the letter he is asking me to write rather his office I don't know whether it came from him to even write to him for an appointment (Laugh) (RIGHT) I am in the midst of it right now (OKAY) Errr so I don't know know the working relationship will be err

I am sure it will be cordial but it's just that err this is you know a get getting used to another personality again ... but in the past I would say that errr they were fearful of the responsibility placed upon them when they are a little bit removed in the sense that we are making a lot of decisions (RIGHT) our our ourselves and err they have to be the final authority which makes it difficult and I understand how they feel ...err as result they could adopt to say that we have full trust in you again you know this thing come about and err and err whatever you decide I'll just you know help you and endorse on the other hand they do not know me and or my senior staff and they question every single decision we make err and it has been difficult that's where the stress came ... err in a system and also on myself (SURE) you know where I have you know have to take time off you see

Interviewer: So would you say that your coping strategy for that was to take time off or was there any other reason?

Interviewee: Well no no the the taking time off is because I was so stressed

Interviewer: I can imagine

Interviewee: and err the the reason is that the timing also because the interim board the two members held back a lot of decisions and interview reports in anticipation of the new board being formed ... and the new board was delayed in its formation and when it did turn up they were dealing with more global issues than specific let's say approval (OKAY) so as a result there were no approvals for about two months ... err the heads and deans work hard to get the interview report in and then I couldn't get them to endorse it and that therefore I felt that err the pressure from my heads and deans and on the other hand I can't get it through and err of course I would just say well it's not my fault it's theirs but I feel very responsible... you know when you get someone to work for you you must also deliver in timely fashion ... err but I could be philosophical about it but I am just one of those who are involved and feel terrible and went through a difficult patch

Interviewer: Before you came here did you do any research into the Ed system here?

Interviewee: No not at all ... as I I think I mentioned it maybe not I just because I made this point at different times to different people is that I err just responded to to the fact that err (name of person) who was supposed to come (RIGHT) but his son was ill and therefore he could not come

... I just stepped in and err with the strong sense of err err err of of fulfilling the agreement (name of institution) has with (name of Emirati authority) (RIGHT) and also err for a colleague who was in a difficult situation and so I came err without an understanding of where (name of institution) was err in terms of our policies and everything else and then then I realized that we really start from square one and err while trying to put it in place and simultaneously trying to recruit staff and students it's was really tough and I think it's taken its toll on me ...

Interviewer: I'm sure I mean it must have been terrible ... (YEAH) What I find interesting is that a lot of the work that should have been done before you came has been left to you to do (THAT'S RIGHT) and it this place is where it should have been now ten months ago ,....

Interviewee: That's right that's right that's precisely yeah a lot of policies I've mentioned just adopted today err we are just putting all the policies together to give to err the chairperson of our board (RIGHT) those things should have been done beforehand really the curriculum also should have been in place also right now of course our staff are still still writing some of them and errm so I would say that this pressure and stress is not only felt by myself and the senior staff but heads and staff altogether so all of us are are are err working under very tight schedule and err err trying to fulfill what's expected of us in the best way we can ...

Interviewer: Do you find it's the sort of working atmosphere that is organized, proactive planned you know where you are going or you do you find that when you come to work on a weekly basis there's going to be something different happening?

Interviewee: No err I I deal with much global .. err issues in anticipation of what's coming months ahead and err as I mentioned earlier one of the coping strategies is to start whatever we want to do earlier because it will take a long process time (SURE) so I have been doing that but however sometimes due to the err difficulty in making decisions and the timeline for err some of our staff is quite different

(Break in order to welcome new staff members)

Interviewee: I was saying that errm (PLANNING AHEAD) ... Yeah planning ahead that's right yeah ... planning ahead so err for the past months we are talking about err staff housing because the acute situation will come in august when staff are reporting ... errm also the acute situation for

student housing because they are now housed ... some of them about 22 of them at (name of place) ... err they have increased their rates by 60%

Interviewer: WOW

Interviewee: and err they also don't seem to keen to have our students and for some administrative problems we are also keen that they be our students are put in a err a different environment.. so we discussed this months ago and err the new students the present students are going to return and new students going to be added on to the number and err now its June and we have to look real hard to look for alternative accommodation for them and err there's no ready kind of err err hostel for them we've got to negotiate for service apartments and then reconfigure them because they need to have a common area to meet err so so yeah so there are lots of things to do and err erm and therefore decisions got to be made real fast for (name of person) ... in view of the fact that we thought ahead (name of person) about more than a month ago found four villas together with a surrounding wall and err came back and said that err you know whether we could you know book that place and I said sure so I wrote ... higher up to ask to prepare a cheque for 2.7 million well ... err you can guess whether that cheque arrived you know (RIGHT) so that was about one and a half months ago and we are still at that point in time and so besides coping strategy it's part of my its part of my things my duty to plan ahead so that we wouldn't get into that kind of acute situation but sometimes in spite of that we still have to be in that kind of err err tight situation

Interviewer: So is it fair to say it's more that they are more reactive than proactive?

Interviewee: I would say proactive but end up being reactive because of an an inability not able to get decisions made at the right time for us to ensure that things move smoothly.

Interviewer: and that's because from my perspective ... I am not trying to put words in your mouth ... but that's from my perspective is because they ... they are scared of being accountable for some reason

Interviewee: well yeah that that in a way err aptly describe some situations yeah yeah ... the thing is erm I mention that they give us the responsibilities but not the authority .. unfortunately and then when

they have the authority to decide on matters they feel that err that err they shouldn't be making those decisions because err they are not sure whether those are right decisions and again bring down their confidence and trust and you know when to make recommendations is the best possible but of course we are always open for discussion but sometimes they just can't simply come to come to that kind of decision to help us to help the college

Interviewer: So is it fair to say that the way forward potentially would be to build would be to build a sort of relationship of trust relationship of friendship

Interviewee: Yeah that's right yeah

Interviewer: in which case has the college made any move (WELL) to make any sort of I hate to use the word social event to mingle with people from (name of Emirati authority) but has the college made any move to sort of set in place any sort of extra curricula social events service meetings whatever you want to call it ?...

Interviewee: Yeah ... I think err I think the path to socialize and get ahead with more contact is certainly good but the fact that the scenario has changed ... we now deal less with (name of Emirati authority) but more with the board ... (RIGHT) so the same principles you suggested apply and we should do that but we realize we are still under (name of Emirati authority) so for example our staff seminar we have extended to them and now occasionally one or two pop in (RIGHT) and they say some topics are very relevant to the schools and they want us to to speak to the teachers and I said yeah why not we we are keen but you arrange everything our staff will go there as guest speakers .. (ERRM) for example our next week we are having the appreciation lunch for the mentors and we invited (name of Emirati authority) a certain level of (name of Emirati authority) and our full (name of governing body) and errm we are trying to do that yeah we invited out board also for err our exhibition art exhibition so trying to keep them informed errm besides bringing them but also to tell them that we are doing more than just what they see which is important as you know taking care and having interests of students and staff at heart I think ... so I think err the social aspect is important but bearing mind that sometimes it also got to be got to be two way ... two ways err they for whatever reason don't want to be too familiar with us for .. you know for for their for some reason of their

own and I also understand ... the other point is that err sorry is just is just that they are also very busy people ... this is err voluntary work for them and it takes a lot of their time to

Interviewer: Sure ... and I suppose that will change ideally change with the new change of staff you know in terms of (name of Emirati official) going .. it's more (name of Emirati official)

Interviewee: No (name of Emirati official)

Interviewer: Right (name of Emirati official) coming in errm .. again that to me sort of is a another potential problem that that from a management level is the lack of continuity

Interviewee: Yeah ... I would think so it it's it's errm the only thing I would say is that they are little more distanced than what we were with the previous (job title) of (name of Emirati authority) err so the impact is not felt but I am not saying it's less important because they are the ones who still improve our budget and err the better working relationship we have with them the better understanding of our work by the new (Emirati job title) and the support of the other senior staff is critical because he is equally busy and he doesn't come to his present office err every day because he has other offices to go to and he has to rely on his senior staff and some of his senior staff are are hopefully err could be more supportive (RIGHT) to our work err to ... I think that's also important

Interviewer: Why do you think you say you are hoping they are going to be more supportive to your work why do you think they weren't fully supportive in the first place?

Interviewee: Well ... for reasons of their own some of them ... have not been too supportive or to use a strong word have been critical of what we do ... I think I'll give you a reason off the record (YEAH) and err and obviously the person who oversees our dept also err had some err grievances with some of our our meetings and discussions and err we have hoped that it could been more professional you know you disagree on ideas but err not necessarily err affecting relationships that we want to be objective over the whole thing ... (RIGHT) I think ultimately he must see that (name of institution) help[s] fulfill the role and strategic plan of ADEC so the greater support they give to us to fulfill the role the better they are in achieving their key performance indicator but if they going to put in place blocks and make things

difficult for us err then the err we we... err firstly we won't be able to fulfill move as fast and secondly won't achieve the overall mission of Abu Dhabi emirate ...

Interviewer: So why do you think they have done that?

Interviewee: Well they come from different perspective ... different parts of the world err different views errrr perhaps of the fact of err err lack of good PR in some meetings and err rough wedges err ruffled feathers
.....

Interviewer: From their perspective...?

Interviewee: I would say both sides to be fair to be fair ... sometimes we want to put our ideas across we put across too strongly (RIGHT OKAY) and errr therefore therefore the person take too hard and if the person were generous would say that well they just one of those things but they keep it in their heart and it manifested in some other other road blocks then it was not going to be helpful for us ...

Interviewer: Do you think errm following on from what you've just said ... do you think that some form of cross cultural awareness training would have been beneficial to the senior management team before they got here?

Interviewee: Err I I am certain those things could have helped for sure err errm but the cross cultural things is something we've got to come to grips very fast and the sooner we understand them the better and I think we do .. but how to overcome them you know the differences will be the challenge but I think some of these err dissension in views err not able to rise .. above the personal and be professional err happens anywhere and err there is no way of overcoming it unless err there's a mediator and at this point in time I don't see any possibility of that and secondly I think that err if the person who came and err in a way where (name of institution) comes under his wing ... understand the role of of he plays errm then the better it is but unfortunately sometime in the the enthusiasm to expand their scope comment on things that are not necessary err it makes makes things difficult acutely again I can tell you off off of the record

Interviewer: I can imagine that err if I am right in what you are saying it's personal relationships which have been problematic and there's potentially a

level there where maybe some form of cross cultural awareness from both sides (YEAH) would have been beneficial

Intervee: Yeah definitely definitely yeah I think so

Interver: Well how do you cope with that?

Intervee: well you got to err make the best of it err by as you mentioned just now err social and hopefully err regain their confidence and err show sincerity and err we don't we are professionals and we need not err disagree for a sake of disagreeing you know but we've got to have the best interest of the college and of course (name of Emirate official) err educational goal in mind ... that will be the only way to go ...

Interver: And what do you see as the long term way forward..is (name of institution) still going to be in place here?

Intervee: It must depend on (name of Emirati authority) really our staff being recruited all over the world and they come with different perspectives to say that (name of institution) has err branding or brand still exists I must truthfully say is getting less and less each day errm the original notion by (name of Emirati authority) and (name of institution) think that err just by writing the curriculum and sending a (job title) here only really didn't make any differencefar from it ... err I would say that if I had a team of people here key people and err with the full with commitment to ensure that all the new staff recruited follow their path then I would say that is the (name of institution) ... and to ensure (name of institution) link ... but now we have senior staff who have different perspectives err on on things and err and also add value to what (name of institution) write ... I'm not saying (name of institution) curriculum design is perfect ...add value to it ... make changes here and there which they should because as I said a product that come through our programme is very different and (name of institution) had been told to write something up there (RIGHT) so it's becoming less and less each day and err right now for example we hear that the new things that our staff have written which (name of emirati authority) wants to know before they pay their bills (Laugh) (OKAY) (name of institution) ... (laugh) (name of institution) errm so but (name of institution) is ready because (name of institution) is quite active in this region and internationally but they will only respond when (name of institution) is invited because err we don't want to err insist that we should do certain things in a certain

way because uhuh it must depend on the political and social conditions (SURE) here plus the professional input of existing staff err might be totally I won't say err hundred and eighty degree different but some degree of differences ... so that continuity is much left to (name of institution) to invite (name of institution) to be involved

Interver: Sure .. if you were going to summarize your year here how would you summarize it?

Interver: Well I must I would say that its been very challenging at the same time very frustrating and errm I must say that errm the stress is not just on myself but on the senior staff and all staff concerned err and I have been appealing to our staff to understand that we are a start-up and be a little bit more err I won't say understanding a little bit more patient in getting things done errm and I feel for them because they are really out there facing the students in the classes and err the staff in the department everyday err but the goodwill can only go so far ultimately there ought to be changes and then I think the changes with regard to the adoption of policies on 11th May we just turned round a corner errr for example err the stresses on housing allowance which the board approved you some some extent as depending on levels some there's increase of as much as 50% some increase only 5% you know which which which (SURE) so it's in the budget but until we hear that the budget is approved you know then we can really put it into practice but at least the board has approved that ... so some of the things will come a little bit later because it involves finance and has to go through that process ... err other things err you know getting a new photocopier getting the server and the internet working it's a daily challenge and errm the sooner we get to the new building the better for the prepare prepare ... and then in term of having the best facilities possible right now I am just hoping that everyone will still err understand that even though it's new it's an old building here but err at least we have something and work within the constraints (ERRM) when you are trying to do more than what you are being provided for then that is where the frustration is so my advice is to work within the constraints and do the best possible and that will be good enough for anyone

Interver: Okay well that's great I am very conscious of the amount of time that you have given (YEAH) and I would like to thank you very much (OH NO NO) err it's been brilliant ... when I've done the transcription I'll give you a copy of it

- Intervee: sure why not yeah yeah
- Interver: and then
- Intervee I hope that it makes sense because I think I may have wondered all over but when you analyze it ...
- Interver: Don't worry I mean I mean what I'll do with it is I'll I'll either do it physically myself or I'll put it through NVIVO or something like that and then I'll start classifying and looking at the issues and cross referencing between you and (names of people) and see what comes up because what makes it interesting is all of you are here in the UAE with no prior experience of the UAE and that's what's going to be interesting ...
- Intervee: Sure ... I think erm I think ultimately as academic exercise you could quote but when eventually when eventually you write the paper I think you've got to be a little bit more sensitive to
- Interver: It'll be totally anonymous ... erm none of you will be even on the transcriptions will be mentioned by name you'll be called interviewee ... it 'll be transcript 1, transcript 2, transcript 3 etc... err there will be no allusion to any institutions where any of you have worked before errr there will be no allusions as to what your particular role was here other than you are in the senior management position and that will be common to all of you ... so there will be no allusions on a personal or individual level in any way whatsoever
- Intervee Okay ... while we want to be very candid but at the same time the other aspects of err err subsequently when it is published ... yeah we don't want ... err
- Interver: This is not going to be published on the open market ... this is for an Ed.D and it will only be seen by Exeter University (SURE) and by myself ... I may choose to use the data again but I would make sure no one could be identified
- Intervee: Okay I think I appreciate it ... you know
- Interver: total anonymity and as I say in the transcript if you see things that you ... you don't agree with you didn't say feel quite free to say so and of course if you feel you wish to withdraw at any point as I have explained, that is perfectly OK....I will make sure that you are kept in

the loop at every stage of my analysis so that you are fully aware of what I have written

Intervee Okay that's good okay, I appreciate that. It will be very interesting I'm sure

Interver: That's brilliant (name of participant 1) thanks ...

Appendix C Data coding types

<p>Transcript Data Participant 3</p>	<p>In Vivo code</p>
<p>Oh I think language is actually the biggest challenge (Right) I think that **** was mistaken in not putting as a job criterion ... that erm ... someone needs to be bilingual in this job</p>	<p>“Language”</p>
<p>Transcript Data Participant 3</p>	<p>Descriptive Code</p>
<p><u>I find the decision making processes here frustrating I have to say I've erm ... tried to cope Mine is just to accept what I am told at face value and move on ¹ from there and <u>if I can't get something one way I'll try to get it another way²</u> I certainly won't bang my head against a brick wall and say this must be done You try to find a more acceptable way of doing it here ...<u>I do not take it personally and get upset ³</u></u></p>	<p>¹ Coping strategy 1: flow round the problem ² Coping strategy 2: look for alternatives ³ Coping strategy 3: Do not personalize things</p>
<p>Transcript Data Participant 6</p>	<p>Affective Code (Attitude)</p>
<p><u>I always think its better just to remain calm in battle okay So if you stuck in the trench and the bullets are flying And the officer's panicking You don't jump out of the trench and lead a rebellion ... you basically look to your foundations and you say okayerm I'll wait for that decision to come back and in the meantime I'll communicate to those people tell them to wait , keep calm and err just do the house keeping</u></p>	<p>Stay Calm (A) (1)</p>

Transcript Data Participant 6	Affective Code (value)
<p>Lets use the dance analogy some come with their own tune they often bring their own music (right) whereas other people come with an open hymn sheet you know and they'll sing whatever song is next on the listsort of brought up with disciplines, and systems and structures and they arrive here and errr these things are not in practice ... so they often struggle so they often resign and go home the key concept here is flexibility</p>	<p>Be flexible (V) (1)</p>

Transcript Data Participant 1	Affective Code (belief)
<p>I could understand their feeling when they are very frustrated, frustrated not only with the process but also think this guy errr is not doing his work.... So I am really frustrated in wanting to be efficient and wanting to do well to ensure we move forward at the right pace ... but then we are held back by something that's really beyond us and errm that's very frustrating and errm that's certainly caused a lot of nightmares strain and ...</p>	<p>Leadership is being an achiever in others' eyes (B) (1)</p>

APPENDIX D

- 1. University of Exeter Ethics form**
- 2. University of Exeter blank consent form**



Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval

DISSERTATION/THESIS

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/> and view the School's statement 011 the GSE student access on-line documents.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter).
DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: Aidan John Thorne

Your student no: 570036637

Return address for this certificate: c/o Emirates College of Advanced Education, PO Box 126662, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Degree/Programme of Study: EO.O. TESOL

Project Supervisor(s): Dr Susan Riley, Or Jill Cadorath

Your email address: athorne@ecae.ac.ae

Tel: +971 025099586 (w) or +971 504703866 (m)

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis (delete whichever is inappropriate) **to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.**

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aidan John Thorne'.

date: 1st May 2011.

NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must not be included in your work. It can be kept for your records.

Certificate of ethical research approval

Your student no: 570036637

Title of your project:

An Investigation into the challenges facing educational leaders\managers from western developed contexts working for the first time in tertiary institutions in the United Arab Emirates and their coping strategies

Brief description of your research project:

The study may be seen as significant as there is a clear knowledge gap in the literature on educational leadership and management that refers to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This is not surprising in view of the fact that the 7 emirates which make up the UAE only united recently as a federation in 1971. Since this point in time massive development funded by wealth derived from oil revenues has taken place across all sectors of society and this, along with a will on the part of the country's leaders to place the UAE on the international map, is leading the UAE out of the shadows onto a broader international stage and making it a context worthy of research.

With reference to the educational sector, ongoing educational reforms processes are currently taking place in all sectors. With regard to the tertiary level, in addition to the setting up of new universities by UAE ministries the educational authorities are experimenting on a large scale with various western models and many well-known American, French, Australian and British universities have been invited to come into the context to set up branch campuses and introduce internationally accredited degree programs. This has involved the recruitment of large numbers of expatriate educational leaders and staff many of whom are new to the UAE and regular reports in the local media indicate that the process does not always go smoothly with many institutions, leaders and faculty experiencing problems adjusting to the local educational context. From personal experience this can lead to a fast turn-around of staff, or even institutional closures along with the dissemination of negative comments and images of working in the UAE. Clearly, this is not beneficial to the success of the long term success of the reform process and poses many questions about the nature of the context and different types of role expectations that may exist.

The aim of the research is to investigate the potential challenges experienced by educational leaders and managers coming from western developed contexts to work in the UAE tertiary sector for the first time along with their coping strategies. The study, done in the interpretive tradition will use semi-guided interviews in its first phase as the method for gathering data. As questions arise from the initial analysis of the interview data additional methods such as follow-up interviews and focus groups will be used as part of the ongoing research process.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

The study will not involve children. In phase 1, the semi-guided interview stage, participants will involve 6 Western adult expatriate educational leaders\managers from contexts including Australia, Singapore, S.Africa and up to 6 Emirati educational leaders.

The participants will be provided an outline of the research, along with details of the interview format in advance and the opportunity to seek further information should they require it.

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

- a) **informed consent:** Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). Copy(ies) of your consent form(s) you will be using must accompany this document.

I will be using the suggested consent form for all the research participants to sign prior to the research. This was downloaded from the Exeter University website.

Participants will be informed that they are free to withdraw from the research at any point in the process. The consent process will also involve asking their permission to reuse the data for a period of up to 5 years after the interview and that at this point the data recordings, transcriptions and notes will be destroyed.

b) anonymity and confidentiality

All participants will be informed in advance that the data they provide will be kept in a secure location and that neither the transcription or final thesis will contain details which might reveal either the contextual background of individual participants or provide any clue as to their identity or institutional affiliations. To summarize, participant names, nationalities and institutional affiliations will be replaced either by pseudonyms or codes as part of the interview transcription process and final write up of the thesis.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Participants will be informed in advance of the research and intended interview process for phase 1 and any queries they may have about the semi-guided interview process will be answered. The location and timings of the interviews is to be determined in advance by the participants themselves. The recordings will be transcribed and analysed using a grounded theory approach using NVIVO software. This will lead to follow up methods being included in the methodology design as part of the ongoing research process (see section on description of project for details).

Prior to the interviews participants will be informed that the recordings will be kept in a secure location. They will also be informed that data gathered as part of the follow-up process will be dealt with in the same manner whether this involves hard copy notes from focus groups, data from surveys or recordings.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

All data gathered including recordings, transcriptions and hard copy notes will be stored in a secure location in my place of residence in a locked filing cabinet.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

This is a sensitive area of research and therefore informed consent and the right to withdraw will be emphasised and strictly adhered to at all points in the research process

This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

N. B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: 1st May 2011 until: 31st December 2011

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): S.M. Riley date: 11th May 2011

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.

GSE unique approval reference: D/10/11/69

Signed: Sarah date: 13/05/2011
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Title of Research Project:

CONSENT FORM

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation and may also request that my data be destroyed

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations

if applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.....
(Signature of participant)

.....
(Date)

.....
(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of researcher(s):.....

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

.....
OR
.....

* when research takes place in a school, the right to withdraw from the research does NOT usually mean that pupils or students may withdraw from lessons in which the research takes place

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised fo