

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Culture inevitably shapes the way in which people interact with one another in social environments, including organisations since different cultures promote unique sets of values, norms and expectations (Hofstede, 1994:5). Kh. Metle (2002:256) states from her observations of Kuwaiti women that “the conservatism and the invoking of tradition affect the view that women have of themselves as members of the workforce” (Kh. Metle, 2002:256). It is, therefore, not surprising that experiences and perspectives of participants in this study are strongly influenced by their culture.

The findings of this study obtained as a result of data analysis of planned observations, transcripts and document analysis are presented in this chapter. It commences with a summary of the biographical data of participants (Table 5.1) and the categorisation of findings after data analysis (Table 5.3). Next, a description of the findings triangulated with relevant literature provides an in-depth discussion of the emergent major categories, sub-categories and manifestations.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

In terms of the data management, findings of this study are organised into biographical data and categories. Both the biographical data and categories are summarised in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 respectively.

5.2.1 Biographical data

The participants who contributed to this study were divided into three homogenous groups, namely, educational leaders, experienced teachers and novice teachers (Section 4.4.3.1 & Table 4.3). Biographical data of participants collected from the profiles provided by the MOEY Personnel Department and during individual interviews (**Appendix F**) are presented in Table 5.1.

TABLE 5.1: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF PARTICIPANTS

Criteria	Educational Leaders	Experienced Teachers	Novice Teachers
Number of participants	The number of educational leaders who participated in focus group sessions were six, while those who participated in individual interviews were eight.	The number of experienced teachers who participated in focus group sessions were nine, while those who participated in individual interviews were ten.	The number of novice teachers who participated in focus group sessions were eight, while those who participated in individual interviews were eleven.
Age	They were in the age range of 40–50 years.	They were in the age range of 30–45 years.	They were in the age range of 21–25 years.
Status	Most educational leaders were single or divorced. Only one participant was married.	The majority of experienced teachers were married.	Most of the novice teachers were single, but many were betrothed. Two participants were married.
No. of children	Five educational leaders had children. The average number of children for this group was four.	Nine experienced teachers had children. The average number of children for this group was six.	Only one of the married participants had a child.
Age of marriage	Married or divorced educational leaders were first married in the age range of 15–19 years.	Married experienced teachers were first married in the age range of 16–24 years.	Both novice teachers got married at 22 years.
Highest qualification	Most educational leaders had a first degree or diploma with only two participants having further postgraduate qualifications. None of the educational leaders had a management qualification.	Most experienced teachers had either a teaching diploma or a first degree. Only one participant had a Masters degree.	Novice teachers had a first degree only.
Number with initial non-teaching degrees	Five educational leaders with initial non-teaching degrees.	Six experienced teachers had initial non-teaching degrees.	None of the novice teachers had other degrees.

Position	Educational leaders were in the position of principal or supervisor and above.	Most were teachers, but two participants were head teachers.	All were employed as teachers.
Number of years of service with the MOEY	Most educational leaders had between 15–20 years of service. Only one participant had six years of service.	About half of the experienced teachers had between 5-10 years of service, while the other half had between 10–15 years of service.	All novice teachers had less than a year of service.
Number of years of time delay prior to employment	Educational leaders were employed immediately after graduation.	Some experienced teachers had time delays of between 2–4 years.	Most novice teachers had between a few months to 2 years of time delay before being placed by the MOEY.

5.2.2 Major categories, sub-categories and manifestations

Data were analysed using a combination of Giorgi (1985:10-19) and Kerlinger's (1986:447) methods (see Section 4.5) in which units of meaning that related to the holistic interpretation were placed within two clearly identified major categories, namely barriers and leadership. Various sub-categories and their manifestations were identified within the major categories. An organisation of the major categories, sub-categories and manifestations is provided in Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2: ORGANISATION OF FINDINGS INTO MAJOR CATEGORIES, SUB-CATEGORIES AND MANIFESTATIONS

Major Category	Sub-Category	Manifestation
BARRIERS	Barriers to entry into the education sector	Education as an occupational choice Time delays in employment Resistance to employment in the private sector
	Barriers to career progression	Conflict of roles Career breaks Female informal " <i>peer-pal</i> " networks Women-only networks Woman-to-woman mentoring Lack of awareness, confidence and motivation Promotion criteria Changes in the job responsibilities Men are " <i>ear-marked</i> " for top positions
LEADERSHIP	Leadership defined	
	National women as leaders	Positive role models Inspiring and encouraging employees Developing, teaching and coaching subordinates
	National women's participation in decision-making	The setting and the interaction dynamics <i>"Resist turning over the apple cart"</i>

A detailed description of these findings as categorised in Table 5.2 (above) and triangulation of these with relevant literature is presented below. The findings are in addition interpreted in accordance with the aim and objectives of this study.

5.3 BARRIERS

Barriers refer to invisible rules, situations or problems that prevent women from entering the workforce and/or attaining leadership positions (Section 1.6). With respect to barriers, two sub-categories emerged from the data, namely,

- Barriers to entry into the education sector; and
- Barriers to career progression.

5.3.1 Barriers to entry into the education sector

Even though most educated national women entering the workforce in the 1980s were employed as teachers, educational leaders emphasised that national female educators have better opportunities and fewer social barriers to entry into the work environment today, compared to teachers a generation ago. An educational leader shares her experience, *“My father and uncles refused to let me work at first. It was unheard of and seen as a shameful thing to allow your daughters to leave home and work in those days. Today, girls are lucky because a working woman has become more acceptable and fewer graduates face social barriers especially when they wish to teach”* (ii050303)¹.

Social barriers experienced by some educational leaders were due to the fact that they were part of the first generation UAE national women entering the workforce. Table 5.1 shows that most educational leaders had between 15-20 years of working experience. They were pioneers as the first *career women* and *working mothers* in their society. An educational leader mentions, *“We were part of the first group of educated national*

¹Identification of participant comments in focus groups and individual interviews is based on the date of interview. For example (fg050303) represents focus group session held on the 5th of March 2003, while (ii050303) represents individual interview held on the 5th of March 2003.

women to challenge societal norms that a woman's place is at home" (ii180203). Dr. Ayesha Al-Sayer, the first woman in the Emirates to obtain her doctorate degree, reiterates this experience when she states in an interview that "while in the past working women were scorned, the concept of a working UAE national woman is becoming more common and more accepted today" (Mahmoud, 1996).

Teaching is undoubtedly considered a women's job in the UAE and is thought to be an acceptable career choice for national women. Most families have no objection in permitting female members of their families to work in this occupation area because of the maintenance of gender segregation in the workplace and the reasonable working hours. In a statement made to the Gulf News, Dr. Ibrahim Ismail, social services coordinator at the Ajman Educational Zone stated that "women prefer teaching for social considerations. It is regarded as a suitable job for females in a conservative society and one that suits their nature" (Zeitoun, 2002:3). Findings in a study on national employment conducted by Morada (2002:6) confirm that job satisfaction rates were highest amongst UAE nationals employed in organisations that were sensitive to their culture and religion. In the present study, experienced and novice teachers confirm this observation by mentioning the support they received from their families and communities with regards to their career choice. This is an achievement in a society in which the concept of a working woman is still emerging and gaining acceptance by the larger population. An experienced teacher commented in this regard, "*We are guiding and educating the future generation, in this way we contribute to building our nation. How can our families object to such a noble deed?*" (ii060103).

The acceptance by families and UAE society of women working as teachers is a big hurdle that national female teachers have overcome in comparison to other occupation sectors in which females may not be permitted to work. In light of this and the statistics which show that the MOEY is the highest employer of national women (see Table 2.3), it may seem as though there are no barriers to job entry in the education sector. However, the findings of this study indicate three barriers to job entry that are faced by national women. These relate to:

- Education as an occupational choice;
- Time delays in employment; and
- Resistance to employment in the private sector.

5.3.1.1 Education as an occupational choice

Despite the general acceptance by families of teaching as a suitable career choice for females, university enrollments show limited demand from UAE nationals for the teaching sector. For example, the numbers of teachers opting to major in Education at UAEU in 2001 was forty-four (Zietoun, 2002:3). Low enrolments are also observed at Zayed University's (ZU) College of Education and the HCT teacher training programs. The number of nationals entering the teaching profession is therefore far lower than the "estimated need of around eight hundred national students required to graduate with a degree in teaching every year for the next twenty years" (Zeitoun, 2002:3). The lack of popularity of education as an occupational choice could be attributed to:

- *"Teachers are not respected anymore,"* (educational leader, fg181202);
- "We teachers are not appreciated and we don't get enough incentives. We don't get any salary raise(s) no matter how long we work," (Ghanem, 2003 as cited by Al-Nowais, 2003a:1); and
- Economic prosperity means that career and employment (for nationals) is a matter of choice not a financial necessity (Al-Aboodi, 2003 as cited by Al-Jandaly, 2003:2).

The majority of responses received from participants to the question "Why did you choose a career in education?" indicated that for most participants it was the only occupation area in which their families would allow them to work. The lack of family resistance to the school environment was due to the mandatory gender segregation practised at schools. Fewer participants chose a career in education because they,

“...loved children and really wanted to teach,” (experienced teacher, ii230303). Therefore, it is expected that as more occupations become available to national women in the future, there may be a decline in the number who choose to become teachers.

Some participants in this study had initial non-teaching degrees (Table 5.1). I probed further by inquiring from them, “Why didn’t you pursue a career in your area of study?” Participants provided reasons by offering one or more of the following responses:

- *“My family preferred that I work as a teacher,”* (experienced teacher, ii240203);
- *“Employment by the MOEY was easily available because there was a demand for national teachers,”* (educational leader, fg181202);
- *“The salary, benefits and working hours are better than in private companies,”* (novice teacher, fg220103); and
- *“It was the only suitable job I could find at the time,”* (educational leader, ii140403).

The practise of haphazard selection of UAE nationals to fill job vacancies has become a widespread concern. According to Al-Qutaimi (as cited by Al-Baik, 2003:1) “establishment’s recruitment plans should draw from a scientific basis and the selection of candidates should be made carefully.” MOEY officials have confirmed that the practise of employing national teachers with non-teaching degrees still exists in areas where there is a shortage of qualified educators. At present, there is a demand for English, mathematics, science and information technology educators while there is a surplus of Arabic, Islamic and social science teachers (MOEY official). It is hoped that better communication between the MOEY and teacher training institutions will remedy this situation in the future. Nevertheless, according to Al-Qutaimi, “the right selection of a UAE national employee according to the requirement of the work and the candidate’s capabilities is very important for the success of Emiratisation. It doesn’t do any good if UAE nationals are offered jobs that are not suitable to their aptitudes and academic backgrounds” (as cited by Al Baik, 2003:1).

According to an MOEY official, the recruitment of 2 073 expatriate teachers in 2002 for placement in government schools throughout the UAE confirms the need for human resources in the teaching sector. Therefore, novice teachers expected to be placed and employed by the MOEY on a full-time basis immediately after graduation. However, this has not been the experience of most experienced and novice teachers who participated in this study.

5.3.1.2 Time delays in employment

A novice teacher complained, *“Reality hit me hard after I graduated. I thought I would start working immediately, I had no idea that there would be a long application procedure and that there would be a waiting list,”* (ii210103). Time delays experienced by experienced and novice teachers were between one to four years (see Table 5.1). Some participants mentioned that the time delays resulted in many teachers giving up and not entering the labour market or in a few cases they opted for employment in non-teaching environments. All participants who experienced time delays in this study mention their frustration during this waiting period. An experienced teacher recalls, *“It was as if I had studied for nothing. They don’t realise how demotivating it can be for us to sit at home because the Ministry’s employment procedures are so complicated. You lose your sense of confidence, your zest and your skills in that uncertain time. Most of all it’s the embarrassment of saying to people that you’re doing nothing,”* (ii110203).

Some reasons for the time delays in placement by the MOEY include:

- A need for stronger cooperation between the MOEY and academic institutions so that teachers could be directed in their training in areas of specialisation required by the MOEY (Zeitoun, 2002:3);
- Problems experienced with strategic planning at the MOEY in two respects, firstly, absorbing new graduates in relation to human resource

- needs; and secondly, adequate budget projections to employ new national teachers (MOEY official);
- “*Complex and unclear application procedures and processes for employment,*” (novice teacher, ii210103);
 - A lack of information, awareness and general job application skills by new graduates (MOEY official);
 - “*Loss of application forms is common at the MOEY, so we have to continuously track our applications,*” (novice teacher, fg220103); and
 - A lack of incentives and part-time positions to attract graduates who eventually opt for jobs other than teaching primarily because of time delays with MOEY employment processes (MOEY official).

As the public sector becomes saturated and in the absence of real growth in this sector experts believe that the private sector is the only alternative for the government to support its Emiratisation drive and prevent a severe unemployment problem (Kawach, 2003a:1). A MOEY official reiterates the same message when she stated that absorbing new graduates by the Ministry is not likely to improve in the future. Academic institutions should therefore, engage in preparing national students for employment in the private sector.

5.3.1.3 Resistance to employment in the private sector

All participants in this study preferred to be employed in the public sector (i.e. MOEY) and responded negatively to employment in the private sector. The impression of an experienced teacher is significant, “*The government is seen as part of the family, I mean in most Ministries you work in an environment sensitive to Emirati culture and you feel as though you are helping to build your country. Women and their families are comfortable with this,*” (ii190303). It is important to note that all participants were in agreement that most national women educators want to be employed in the government sector where they wish to use their skills. Sayed (2001:67) found that UAE national

women gravitated towards employment in the government sector for the following reasons:

- It is considered safer and more respectable than the private sector;
- Working hours are short and flexible;
- The work is not stressful;
- They are contributing to the betterment of their country; and
- There is an opportunity to be involved and engaged in decision-making at governmental level.

Probing the impressions and opinions of participants about employment in the private sector, I questioned participants by asking, “If you were not placed by the MOEY, would you consider working in a private school?” All participants in this study responded negatively to this question revealing the presence of constraints with working in private schools. A sample of reasons provided by experienced and novice teachers for their resistance to applying for jobs in the private sector included:

- *“Private schools would not employ locals in the first place, so there is no use in applying. Besides the salary, benefits and working conditions are poor,”* (novice teacher, ii080102);
- *“My family would object and they would prefer me not to work at all”* (novice teacher, ii160303);
- *“The work load in private schools is heavier compared to the government schools and the working hours are longer too,”* (novice teacher, fg220103);
- *“I would not like to work in the private schools where there is a big mixture of nationalities. Usually expatriate children are not very well-behaved with us as local teachers and during my teaching experience, I found classroom and the management of students at these private schools very hard,”* (experienced teacher, ii240203);
- *“There is no support for new teachers in these schools,”* (experienced teacher, ii070403);

- *“Most private schools have a mixed environment. I will not be allowed by my father to work where I would have to interact with men or teach older males,”* (novice teacher, ii100403); and
- *“There is no professional development in the private sector and the medium of instruction is English,”* (experienced teacher, fg040103).

A contradiction is noted because most participants in this study mentioned that they did not have to work for financial reasons yet, low salary and benefits were the most common reasons cited for resistance to employment in the private sector. This finding compared well with research conducted by Morada (2002:10) who found that lower salaries and unsuitable working conditions were the main reasons for UAE nationals resisting employment in certain sectors (Table 5.3). This finding is in contrast to the fact that nationals generally command higher salaries and benefits in all sectors compared to expatriate employees. It also highlights the inability of the private sector to compete with the public sector in terms of salaries and benefits. An article in the Gulf News (Shaghouri, 2003b:1) confirms the complaint about low salaries made by private school teachers. According to Shaghouri (2003b:1), many private schools have failed to comply with Ministry regulations of a minimum salary of AED 2 000 per month for qualified teachers.

TABLE 5.3: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS CITING REASONS FOR NATIONALS FORMING A SMALL MINORITY IN SOME WORKPLACES

Reason	Percent (%)
Few nationals have the skills and qualifications needed in this organisation.	17.9
Nationals find salaries in this organisation inadequate.	56.2
Nationals find working conditions in this organisation unsatisfactory.	33.3
No job security for nationals in this organisation.	16.0
Working hours are not convenient.	17.9
Employers prefer to recruit non-nationals.	20.4
Employers find nationals too expensive to employ.	22.2
Total Responses = 162	

% does not add up to 100% because of multiple responses.

Source: Morada (2002:10)

While starting salaries in the private sector are much lower than in government departments, it has been found that the possibilities for career progression and increases in salaries are higher in the private sector. Therefore, in terms of long-term career progression and development, the private sector might offer better opportunities than is at first visible to the graduate. In studies conducted by Morada (2002), nationals working for the federal government (Morada, 2002:7) and local government (Morada, 2002:15) agencies for at least five years cited limited career prospects, low increases in wages and benefits and their preference for a wider range of work experience as major reasons for moving on if the opportunity arose (Table 5.4). In contrast, all participants in this study, were reluctant to consider finding alternative employment. They considered the gender segregated environment, higher starting salary and benefits, comparatively lower work load and working hours offered by the MOEY attractive. This was despite the fact that salary increases are low (average annual increases were less than 3%) and prospects for career development are not as good in the public sector.

TABLE 5.4: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS CITING REASONS FOR WANTING TO LEAVE THEIR ORGANISATIONS WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Reason	Federal Government (%)	Local Government (%)
Prospects of career development limited	61.9	58.9
Low increases in wages and benefits	57.1	58.9
Work load too much	30.2	24.7
Working hours not suitable	25.4	13.7
Retirement	22.2	9.6
Prefer to have a wide range of work experiences	9.5	41.1
Total Responses	63	73

% does not add up to 100% because of multiple responses.

Source: extracted from Morada (2002:7&15)

While employment as a job seeker in the private sector was resisted by all participants in this study, most experienced and novice teachers welcomed opportunities for entrepreneurship. They appeared interested in the concept of starting up their own schools as job creators in the private sector. Experienced teachers complained of the lack

of financial resources (in their personal capacities) and business experience for national women to start their own schools. Novice teachers on the other hand mentioned the need for some teaching and managerial experience before embarking on such a venture. An experienced teacher shares her experience, *“I have been thinking about starting my own school but for that I would need a loan and I don’t think I know enough about business to be successful,”* (ii110203). Novice teachers mentioned a national women’s business group at the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ADCCI), which they thought could help them if they required assistance with such a venture. I had an opportunity to speak with Ms. Al-Rumaithy, chairwoman of the national women’s business group at the ADCCI who indicated support for any UAE national woman with vision and a reasonable business plan. The ADCCI women’s business group provides resources, financial support and legal advice to national women operating small businesses. Educational leaders, in contrast, were reluctant to enter the private sector as many were close to retirement, were comfortable with their positions and preferred to continue their services with the MOEY. An educational leader responds, *“I can’t change my life now that I’ve already reached the top. I’m looking forward to my retirement”* (ii020203)

The provision of resources and opportunities for UAE national women to start their own schools may be an avenue that needs further exploration by the government. National women appear keen to create their own job environments and, in so doing, they can still make a contribution to the UAE economy, perhaps not as job seekers but as job creators. While barriers to job entry challenge those wishing to enter the profession, barriers to career development and progression challenge those already in the profession. These barriers were confirmed by participants in this study and were therefore explored further.

5.3.2 Barriers to career progression

According to Wirth (2001:100), men and women’s career paths differ significantly because females generally do not enter employment with a career plan. The results of this study show that national women educators were no exception. Participants from all

groups in this study reiterated the comment made by an educational leader, *“I never gave any thought to my career and to promotions,”* (ii290103). In addition, experienced teachers shared the complaint of a focus group colleague, *“Teachers are over-worked and therefore, too tired to think of their careers,”* (fg040103).

An analysis of the data revealed that a number of barriers to career progression were experienced by national female teachers. These included:

- Conflict of roles;
- Career breaks;
- Female *“peer-pal”* networks;
- Women-only networks;
- Woman-to-woman mentoring;
- Lack of awareness, confidence and motivation;
- Promotion criteria;
- Changes in the job responsibilities; and
- Men are *“ear-marked”* for top positions.

5.3.2.1 Conflict of roles

The gender division of time between work and family is regarded as the most significant gender issue and explains many of the differences between work patterns and the job types of men and women (Wirth, 2001:16). Statistics show that in industrialised countries, it is easier for men to have a career and a family while many women forego marriage and children to devote themselves to a career (Wirth, 2001:16).

In the UAE constraints are placed on working women because of the time needed for their primary role as care-giver. It is also important to note that most participants in this study mentioned that they did not have to seek employment for financial reasons and confirmed that they could stay at home if they chose to do so. The conflict of roles as care-giver and career woman discourages some women from working and/or aspiring to

career progression. An educational leader mentions that her husband would only, “*Allow me (her) the privilege of working after marriage so long as it does not interfere with my (her) household responsibilities*” (ii140403)

According to Table 5.1, most experienced teachers were married with children, while in the case of educational leaders only one participant was still married (Table 5.1). Some educational leaders and experienced teachers were married early, at the age of fifteen or sixteen (Table 5.1). Fewer novice teachers were married, but most indicated that they intended getting married within the next twelve months (Table 5.1). A change in the age for marriage was evident with novice teachers getting married later compared to women a generation before them. In addition, most married or divorced participants with children had their first child within the first year of marriage.

As is the case with women internationally, participants in this study who were married and had children found it more challenging to maintain a career compared to single women or women with no children. This fact was reaffirmed in an article in the Gulf News (Al-Nowais, 2003a:1), in which a representative from the Abu Dhabi Model School said that “teachers resign after a year or two from their jobs because they do not find the job worth the effort. A female teacher takes time off from home and children to teach seventeen lessons a day. It is a lot of responsibility and in the end teachers are not appreciated.”

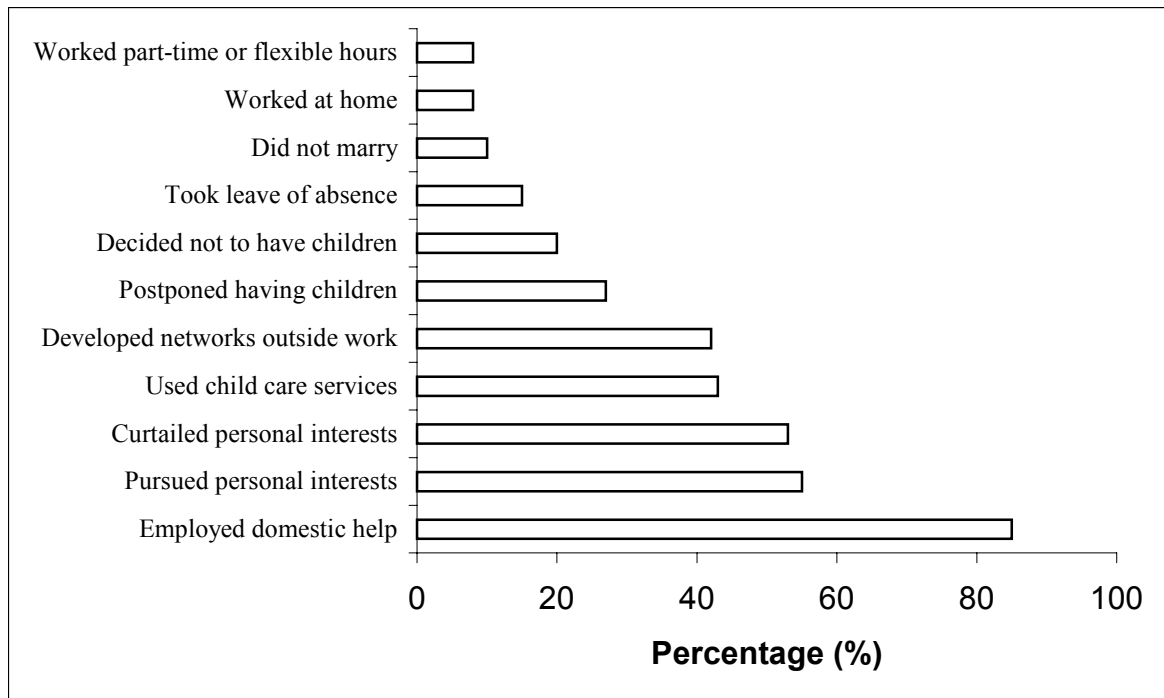
Family sizes are also generally large with the UAE having the highest population growth rate (7.6% in 2002) in the Arab world (Kawach, 2003b:1). Experts attribute the rapid growth to high fertility rates amongst nationals who are encouraged by the government to have more children so that they would not be a minority in their own country (Kawach, 2003b:1). However, large family sizes have implications for the career progression of working women. In this study, educational leaders and novice teachers had fewer children compared to experienced teachers (Table 5.1). Most experienced teachers indicated that their role as care-giver was more demanding because of the number of children they had to rear. An experienced teacher explains the challenges experienced by

women, *“I complain all the time about decisions and policies forced on us by the Ministry but I can do nothing about that, I have a full workload. After my day at school, I go home to six children who are still very young and need my attention,”* (ii250103).

It is also common for extended family members to live together communally. While living together may be beneficial in terms of support and child care, in some cases it may contribute to an increase in a working woman’s household responsibilities which may include the care of older family members. The majority of participants with children in this study depended on female members of their extended family and/or housemaids to take care of their young children and their household responsibilities when they were at work. An educational leader mentioned, *“When I am at work I forget about home, it’s out of my mind because my mother takes care of things for me. If it were not for her this would have not been possible,”* (ii180203). In contrast, participants who used the services of housemaids for the care of their children were less comfortable. They found that investing additional time to their careers became a hindrance because it interfered with their need to be at home with their children.

For most participants who had children the working hours at school were advantageous and were a consideration when they wanted to continue working after having their children. In addition, participants in this study indicated that they were satisfied with the length of maternity leave and the breaks provided by the MOEY for nursing babies. Figure 5.1 shows survey results on how women balance their family life and careers in the United States. Participants in this study used similar strategies to those used by women in the United States, however a few differences were noted. For example, most participants, employed full time domestic help even if extended female members of their family cared for their children. Fewer participants in this study used child care services or developed networks outside work. In addition, a few married participants with children used a career break as a strategy especially when their children were young.

FIG. 5.1: BALANCING CAREER AND PERSONAL LIFE



Source: Catalyst (1996:2 as cited by Wirth, 2001:19)

5.3.2.2 Career breaks

Participants who took career breaks mention being disadvantaged because of their interrupted service record. One experienced teacher considers her career, *“I taught for two years and then left full time teaching because my children were young and they needed me. Now that they are older and I feel that I can manage both my home and work, I’m back. But it’s so different coming back, in fact it’s harder. In some ways, it’s like starting all over again”* (ii030303). For this participant coming back to teaching after a career break meant losses in terms of promotion, depreciation of job skills, in-service training and personal development.

In the case of educational leaders, those who did not take a career break often progressed faster than women who had interrupted service records. An experienced teacher who took a career break recalls her struggle to pursue promotion opportunities after she got back to full time employment, *“It was about four years after coming back that I decided to apply for promotion. This year it was my third application, which has been turned down. I think the biggest sacrifice that you make by staying home for a while is that you lose your previous experience and people are not that much confident about your commitment and abilities. You lose something to gain something,”* (ii240203).

According to Wirth (2001:115) employers may hesitate to promote married women because of the danger of career breaks. Indulging in career breaks inevitably means that women with children would have to wait longer for career progression. Current international trends show that *“many women opt for establishing careers before starting a family”* (Wirth, 2001:115). During interview and focus group sessions, I attempted to explore whether this was an option for participants in this study.

The findings were that most married participants did not have a choice regarding when they got married or when they started a family. Women are expected to marry when a suitable proposal arrived and it is common for them to have their first child as early as possible in the marriage. A novice teacher explains, *“I got married in my last year of*

study and fell pregnant soon after. It is hard but it's what my husband wanted," (ii120103). In addition, the experiences of novice and experienced teachers indicate that in the past there was a danger of husbands marrying again particularly, if his wife did not have a child soon after marriage. This threat did not appear to concern novice teachers who appeared confident of monogamous relationships. However, they also felt that pursuing a career would not be an acceptable reason for delaying marriage or having children.

In general, UAE national women often start their careers with family responsibilities so their struggle to maintain a balance between their homes and careers begins early. Married women with children more often curtailed their personal interests and they were too exhausted to get involved with community activities. An experienced teacher mentions, *"I'm too tired to socialise and don't have enough time for myself much less to give to others,"* (ii250103). Single women by contrast, are thought to have more time and, therefore, were more likely to pursue personal interests and form relationships with other members of the community.

5.3.2.3 Female "*peer-pal*" networks

Networking has been identified as a useful process to assist women who are seeking to advance their careers in some way (Still & Guerin, 1986:5). In the UAE, culture and religion play an important role in the personal, familial and social structure of its people. The findings of this study with respect to attitudes towards networking relate well to another Middle Eastern study in which an attitude towards women scale showed that Qatari and Kuwaiti professionals, college students and their parents hold very conservative attitudes about women's roles, rights and responsibilities (Abdallah, 1996:29).

Most participants revealed that they were not able to easily maintain contacts outside their families and place of work. Even participants who were single, mention the impact of living with an extended family. Many claimed that they were restricted by male

members of their family as demonstrated by the experience of an experienced teacher, *“Being single does not mean unlimited freedom and that you can do whatever you please even if you are forty. We are still answerable to our fathers and brothers and live in accordance to the rules with the house,”* (ii060103). There was also agreement amongst all participants that in a society where gender segregation is a norm, networking with other women is permissible and encouraged while networking with men would be considered inappropriate. Nevertheless, opportunities for networking even with other women outside their own communities was considered a challenge by most participants (across all groups in this study) because of time constraints and travel restrictions.

Discussions at focus group sessions yielded the following responses:

- *“Women are generally not allowed to travel alone so going to conferences and workshops out of town is out of the question. So meeting other people is not always easy or possible,”* (educational leader, fg181202);
- *“In the work environment respectable women interact with men as little as possible then too, on business issues, nothing else,”* (educational leader, fg181202);
- *“Lack of communication and lack of awareness is a big problem because certain leadership styles cannot allow for friendships. My principal is up there and I find it hard to approach her on school issues, much less socialise with her,”* (experienced teacher, fg040103);
- *“I’m much too busy to indulge in these coffee sessions so unfortunately for me, I’m out of the in-group,”* (experienced teacher, fg040103); and
- *“With a full school day and so many personal responsibilities where is the time?”* (experienced teacher, fg040103).

While networking with individuals outside school in their personal time may be problematic for UAE national women, participants did mention the value of informal networking with other professionals during working hours and at workshops, seminars and meetings. Informal networks to which participants belonged were in the form of what

is termed by Ehrich (1994:7) *peer-pal* networks. This type of informal network usually consists of women in the same position who meet informally once or twice a month (Ehrich, 1994:7). This network acts as sounding board for most women but generally lacks power and has limited effectiveness in providing career advancement (Ehrich, 1994:7). Participants mentioned that networking with other more experienced peers was helpful in improving their teaching skills and in creating teaching resources. Fewer responses indicated career benefits related to *peer-pal* networks.

Educational leaders in particular mentioned their observations of the importance of informal networks for career development, *“It’s only when I joined the Ministry I saw how men used their wasta (contacts) for promotions. I realised too late and many years were lost by then,”* (educational leader, ii140403). This observation is also mentioned in studies conducted by Still and Guerin (1986:6) in which males appear to use their networks more successfully to promote themselves and they tend to evaluate contacts primarily as keys to providing them with favours and help, while women prefer to establish warm relationships with peers, rarely evaluating contacts on the basis of a pay-off later on.

In addition, most participants in this study with the exception of educational leaders, were not informed on the concept of formal networking nor aware of the benefits to career development related to belonging to a professional organisation. In addition most experienced and novice teachers were not aware of any formal networking organisations they could belong to nor had they considered networking with neighbouring institutions or organisations.

5.3.2.4 Women-only networks

Some educational leaders networked formally by belonging to the UAE General Women’s Union (GWU) chaired by H.H. Shaikha Fatima bint Mubarak. The GWU is an organisation, which provides support and enables the sharing of information amongst women in-line with the development of, “women-only networks, which is becoming

popular internationally” (Wirth, 2001:128). Like most women networks the GWU “has consciously duplicated an unconscious process, is publicly visible and is formally constructed” (Ehrich, 1994:5). These networks are in contrast to the *old boy networks* which are informal, closed and difficult to access (Berkelaar, 1991:22).

In the UAE, “*Males network through majlis gatherings, which are informal and cannot be directly accessed by women due to a strong culture of seclusion ethics,*” (educational leader, fg181202). However, unlike the observations of Still and Guerin (1986), who found that formal networking organisations for women were less powerful compared to male networks, most participants in this study viewed the GWU as “...*the UAE women’s voice,*” (educational leader, fg181202). An article in the Gulf News (Al-Nowais, 2003a:3) showed that teachers approached the GWU to raise their concerns over the lack of finance and incentives for female teachers and the lack of proper buildings for schools in the Abu Dhabi Western Region. The result of this meeting was the promise by H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, that a “supreme authority for Abu Dhabi female teachers would be formed in addition to inviting the Minister of Education to meet with the teachers” (Al-Nowais, 2003a:3).

As a group, teachers felt comfortable with approaching the leadership of their country with their grievances, but as individuals they lacked confidence in using the organisation as a means of formal networking. The comment of one experienced teacher reinforces the attitude of most participants, “*No, no, I can’t be shoulder to shoulder with them. Who am I?*” (ii180103). When the same participant was asked if she would consider participating in GWU activities with a group of friends, she replied, “*Maybe, it would be easier and I would not feel out of place. We could get involved together, that’s much better,*” (ii180103).

Increased participation by the GWU and its sister organisations in the education sector would help UAE national women feel confident about using the organisation as a networking tool. The organisation is also equipped to reach the leadership of the country and has played a vital role in the development of women as equal members of society.

Interaction with senior female educators and female leaders is more likely if educators join and actively participate in the GWU. This would promote opportunities for better communication between the different levels and teachers may then have the opportunity to formally network. In addition they could benefit from the experience and advice of these female leaders who can act as effective role models.

The limited use of formal and informal networking as a tool for career progression also implies limited formal mentoring opportunities for women in the UAE.

5.3.2.5 Woman-to-woman mentoring

Mentors have appeared in history as significant others who have provided valuable support and sponsorship to men and women (Ehrich, 1994:4). Supportive mentors are thought to be critical components of a successful career, particularly in its early stages. Women generally form alliances easily because they are socialised to adopt a caring, collaborative stance in which relationships are highly valued (Ehrich, 1994:4). Paradoxically, the common experience that women share in the workplace should be a natural attraction for a mentoring relationship but, in practise, this appears to be harder to achieve particularly when the mentor is a superior.

In this study five participants were protégés to either superiors or more experienced colleagues while four participants were mentors to subordinate national women (Table 5.1). Informal mentoring relationships are explored in this study because there is no formal mentoring programme instituted by the MOEY. While participants who were mentored by more experienced peers expressed satisfaction and connectedness with the mentoring process, “*She is like my big sister always looking out for me,*” (novice teacher, ii280303), mentoring relationships with superiors appeared problematic and harder to achieve. The experience of one participant (experienced teacher, ii120403)² can help to illustrate some of the problems experienced in superior-subordinate mentoring.

² The actual names of the participant and her mentor has been changed as a measure of confidentiality.

Researcher: *“So you were finally promoted.*

Habiba: *“Yes, finally, well it was not a big jump if you know what I mean. It was a small promotion after twelve years but I was so happy, elevated, ecstatic about finally getting somewhere. It was a bonus also that Fatma was going to be my new supervisor.”*

Researcher: *“Why was this important to you, Habiba?”*

Habiba: *“I was happy because I personally felt privileged to have Fatma as my new boss. She had very successful career at the Ministry and she was involved with many important projects. I was among so many people that respected her. Everyone knew how knowledgeable she was, at that she was well connected. Well, you can say that I looked up to her like a role-model and I knew that I would move quickly if I worked hard and got direction from her. I have seen this with other people who have worked under her before. Actually it was also because I knew that there would be no resistance from home because my husband would not object to me accepting this promotion since I am working with another female. He may have objected if my supervisor was a man.”*

Researcher: *“You mentioned that Fatma was role-model to you. Can you tell me more about your relationship with her?”*

Habiba: [Pause – 15 seconds] *“I was among many women and men for that matter that looked up to her and respected her, almost like an elder sister or a mother. Her reputation and her quality of work was well known but at the same time many people were afraid of her. In fact my colleagues congratulated me on my promotion, but at the same time they sympathised with me because of Fatma. Everyone knew that she was a tough and a difficult person to work for. She was always serious type of person and she acted as if she was a cut above the rest. She was not someone you could get close to, she would never mingle or socialise with staff. I guess being a principal for so many years made that strictness part of her personality. I often felt like a child in front of her. Her reputation was well known and behind her back people would call her...[pause 5 seconds - to translator] shoo ma'naa il-maraa il-jaleediyah bil engleezee?”*

Translator: *“This means ‘ice lady’ in English.”*

Habiba: *“Yes, they would call her ice-lady because she was so cold, never smiling. But even then I still felt positive about working for her*

after all she chose me for this promotion. To be fair on her, for the most part she turned out to be a very supportive person giving me lots of help and encouragement when I started working for her. She often also trusted me with responsibilities relating to some high profile projects. In some ways it was almost too good to be true. She was generally a tough boss always wanting her way, which made me feel a bit restricted at times because she would get angry with me for doing some things differently. Another habit of hers that made all of in the department feel uncomfortable was that she would ask us to sneak around and find out bits of information for her from other departments. I was not at all comfortable with this but like the others I never mentioned this to her but also would not do what she asked. Things got even worse between us because she was not a very tolerant person. To her the job came above all else. I can recall that one day my husband came to the office to pick me up early because my child was sick at school. Fatma would not release me because there was an important meeting she wanted me to attend. I left without her permission and in tears that day. Thinking that we would talk about it the next day when we were both calmer I returned to work. She made it quite clear that she was tired of baby sitting and covering for her staff. It was easy for me to sit there and cry over my problems and she was fed-up with it. I was issued a warning and I had to fill in a leave form also. I suffered her sarcasm for days after that, it was like she was punishing me for being a mother and that she was making me feel guilty for accommodating my family's needs. I forgave her though because I knew that she was not married nor did she have any children, so how could she possibly understand. These were trivial matters for her."

Like Habiba and Fatma women often discover that mentoring relationships with superiors are unsatisfying. While Habiba considered Fatma a role-model and mentor because of her position, reputation, years of experience and her involvement with high profile projects, she also found that she could not relate well with her because of differences relating to their personal circumstances. Fatma was single with no children and she had devoted much of her life to furthering her studies and career with the Ministry. Habiba, on the other hand, was married with children and she was hoping to balance her career pursuits with a satisfying family life. This experience of Habiba is important because mentoring relationships with superiors are often more rewarding than those with more experienced peers in terms of career development.

Senior women report feeling either *discounted* or *overburdened* as mentors while junior women complain that senior women are *competitive* or *unreceptive* to them as potential protégés (Parker & Kram, 1993:7). According to Ragins and Cotton (1991:57 as cited by Parker & Kram, 1993:7) many women report being just as interested as men in mentoring but perceive it as a risk to their careers. They complain that it takes too much time and that they do not feel qualified to mentor. Studies conducted by Parker and Kram (1993:7) show that obstacles to women's connections exist but they suggest strategies that can be implemented to overcome obstacles. These include increasing self-awareness, making undermining dynamics discussable, challenging untested assumptions, building multiple relationships and creating a supportive culture. These strategies may assist in improving superior-subordinate mentoring relationships, but at the same time, it may encourage women who reach the top to mentor other women.

Formal mentoring relationships are not in place at the MOEY. If these relationships are occur, they are informal and dependent on the motivation of superiors and subordinates. Problems with such relationships (as in the case of Habiba and Fatma) are indicative of the need for training and the formalisation of such relationships. Superior-subordinate mentoring is important for career progressions and it may be a way in which younger women can be made aware of opportunities, and it could contribute to building their confidence and motivation in terms of career planning.

5.3.2.6 Lack of awareness, confidence and motivation

Participants in this study displayed a general lack of confidence in planning their careers. Most participants were of the opinion that someone (usually a superior) would recognise their efforts and, *"When I am worthy, I will be asked to apply for promotion,"* (experienced teacher, ii060103). A number of educational leaders and experienced teachers mentioned being aware of promotion opportunities only when they were approached and asked by a superior (principal or supervisor) to apply for promotion. In general, participants across all groups were not themselves actively involved in any kind of career planning. In all instances, uncertain responses were obtained to the questions,

“Where do you see yourself in five years time?” and “Explain some of the strategies you will use to achieve your goals?” It was not uncommon to get an initial response like “[pause] *I don’t know,*” (experienced teacher, ii070403). The lack of vision amongst teachers was in contrast to what educational leaders expected from women entering the teaching sector. As an educational leader mentioned, “*Teachers of today have every opportunity to progress. With the right vision and attitude they can move very quickly,*” (ii020203).

Principals and supervisors are usually the first to be informed by the MOEY when promotion opportunities become available. They may, “...*announce these at staff meetings,*” (experienced teacher, ii190303) or personally encourage certain members of staff “...*by asking me (them) to apply*” (experienced teacher, ii110203). In many instances participants mentioned, “...*waiting to be asked to apply,*” (educational leader, ii250303) as if it was a natural and expected thing to do. There appeared to be a kind of prestige related to being asked and participants regarded this as being part of the protocol. Participants mentioned that often “...*be(ing) asked...*” (educational leader, ii250303) meant support from the principal or supervisor, indirectly signaling to the candidate that, if they applied, they were likely to get promoted.

A general lack of confidence in actively seeking and applying for promotion was evident in observations and in responses given by most participants. Participants expressed uncertainty with respect to the procedure for application and the requirements for promotion. One experienced teacher achieved promotion very early in her career (after two years of teaching) because she had been recognised “...*by accident,*” (experienced teacher, ii180103) for her outstanding work by an assistant undersecretary. This indicated that there may be opportunities for visibility but none of the participants in this study appeared to know how to find or take advantage of these. Most educational leaders and experienced teachers felt that, “*The only way forward is for you to either apply for promotion to become a principal or supervisor*” (experienced teacher, fg040103). In reality, the MOEY has a large infrastructure with various departments in which teachers

could potentially apply for positions in departments such as curriculum design, evaluation, and research and documentation and so forth.

While it has been confirmed that lack of awareness by teachers of promotion opportunities may limit their application for posts, there also appeared to be a lack of awareness relating to promotion criteria.

5.3.2.7 Promotion criteria

Educational leaders and experienced teachers identified certain promotion criteria while novice teachers were less aware of the requirements. This was to be expected because novice teachers were at the beginning of their careers and had limited working experience. Two important promotion criteria identified by educational leaders and experienced teachers were teacher evaluations conducted by both supervisors and principals and the upgrading of skills, competencies and obtaining higher qualifications.

a. Teacher evaluation

An experienced teacher mentions, *“I knew that my evaluation was not very good therefore I did not get the promotion. My experience and qualifications are adequate,”* (ii190303). Supervisors and principals generally conduct performance evaluation of teachers. While principals conduct on-site evaluations as part of daily interaction with teachers, supervisors are responsible for evaluation of teacher’s performance in teaching competency and classroom management. These evaluations are conducted on a formal basis twice a year for most teachers. Novice teachers are visited and evaluated more frequently as part of orientation and on-the-job training. Supervisors employed by the MOEY are resident at the Educational Zones and are allocated areas in which they supervise teachers. Supervisors may monitor and work with between thirty to sixty teachers (MOEY official). Visits to teachers by their supervisors may be announced or unannounced depending on the management style of the supervisor. They have authority to use their own judgment with regards to the number of visits made to teachers. It is usual practise for supervisors to keep a roster and visit all teachers in their area as much as possible.

It was clear that most participants, even novice teachers understood the purpose of evaluations and considered them useful in providing feedback on their performance. A novice teacher commented, *“I was scared of this at first but now feel comfortable that my supervisor visits my classroom twice a month. I know that I’m improving and benefiting from her guidance and support,”* (ii230203). While participants knew the value of evaluations from a performance feedback perspective, they appeared less aware of the power of performance reports when applying for promotions. This was observed in particular amongst novice teachers.

A consistent comment made by participants was the lack of information provided to them about the evaluation process. Most novice teachers were not given any induction on the evaluation process and the criteria for evaluations were not formally discussed with them. It was noted by one novice teacher that, *“The evaluation process is not transparent”* (ii100403), and another novice teacher captured her lack of comfort by providing an analogy when she commented, *“I don’t mind the critique because it helps me to plan better and to improve my teaching, but every time I have an evaluation the problem areas are different. I wish there was a way of knowing what the questions on the exam paper were that I’m answering,”* (ii080103).

Educational leaders involved with supervision were asked about the evaluation process and the researcher also conducted planned observation of the process. Observations and participant responses revealed that the process of evaluation was flexible and that, *“There is no compulsion to use standard checklists provided by the Ministry,”* (educational leader, ii250303). The checklist used for evaluation contains various categories of teaching competency like observation of a lesson, documentation, classroom management and teaching style. In fact an experienced teacher mentioned, *“It (the checklist) is so broad that it is open to interpretation,”* (ii190303). Al-Raway (1988:154) in his study showed that, “the checklists used by supervisors to measure teacher competencies were inadequate and required modification to include forty-five teacher competencies which were not present in the current list.”

This is possibly one reason why no induction or information about criteria used during the evaluation process is provided to teachers by supervisors. It has also been observed that due to the lack of consistency, two supervisors may produce different reports if they were to evaluate the same teacher (MOEY official). Al-Nayadi (1989, 175) confirms that the evaluation system requires improvement and that there was a strong indication that MOEY supervisors required training in supervision.

Supervisors spend a considerable amount of time with novice teachers, *“Providing them with feedback and suggestions for improvement,”* (educational leader, ii250303). In practise, though, most teachers learn the requirements of evaluations with time or from other teachers (peers). Even though teachers may be visited by their supervisors at different times and with differing frequencies depending on their experience, a single combined evaluation report is usually submitted to the MOEY for teacher performance. This report is a combined effort by the school principal and the teacher’s supervisor (MOEY official). Most participants revealed that the outcome of these final evaluations was never discussed with them. An experienced teacher commented, *“I never saw a single one of these final reports but I heard from my friends that we are given a final mark each year,”* (ii060103). Another experienced teacher mentions, *“Come to think of it I never thought to ask my supervisor or my principal why we never discuss the final evaluation,”* (ii030303). With the result, one participant felt, *“My promotion never materialised because I know that my evaluation must have been less than excellent,”* (experienced teacher, ii250103).

When supervisors were questioned about the lack of transparency, they seemed surprised that these reports should be discussed and comments from educational leaders were as follows, *“...and I never gave much thought to discussing the red tape with teachers,”* (ii290103) or, *“I have so many teachers to supervise that it would be difficult to sit with each one and provide feedback on the final evaluations,”* (educational leader, ii250303). Another educational leader felt that it was not up to supervisors to provide teachers with information because, *“All Ministry regulations and procedures are published and*

available for teachers to consult. It's not my duty to hold their hands with this matter," (ii290103).

Another interesting perspective was brought to light by supervisors participating in this study. They stated that while there is power in evaluations with respect to promotions, the same does not hold true when a teacher is found to be incompetent. Even though additional training may be recommended and provided when there is a lack of competence, it is not likely that a consistently poor evaluation results in dismissal. As the experience of one educational leader spoke, *"An English teacher I supervised was very poor and despite the many training sessions and the continuous support I provided she still ended up with poor evaluation reports from both myself and her principal. She did not care because she was connected higher up so we continued making recommendations, but nothing happened. For eight years I continued to visit her classroom, make similar recommendations and see the students suffer,"* (ii250303).

Undoubtedly, an evaluation serves an important role in promotion in the education sector and is regarded as a measure of a teacher's performance. In addition to good evaluations another promotion requirement is an upgrade of skills and competencies by means of professional development. Although not necessary, a higher educational qualification also assists when teachers are considered for promotion (MOEY official).

b. Skills, competencies and higher educational qualifications

Training and development opportunities are available for teachers and many resources are made available so that "teachers are kept abreast of latest developments in their fields" (Zeitoun, 2002:3). Participants mention professional development opportunities made available by the MOEY are usually in the form of workshops and seminars (in-service training). Other types of professional development involve on-the-job training usually provided to novice teachers and when teachers are promoted to management positions. A management degree or qualification is not a pre-requisite for promotion to a management position. None of the educational leaders in this study had a management qualification (Table 5.1).

While participants were grateful for the opportunities provided by the MOEY most felt that, *“More could be done by way of relevant training and professional development leading towards promotions,”* (experienced teacher, fg040103). Some participants complained that training opportunities were provided at the end of a school day, which made it difficult for female teachers to attend. In addition, transportation to the training venues was a problem for some employees. Novice teachers in this study were very positive about the training they received. One novice teacher indicated that, *“It was helpful in improving my teaching and giving me new ideas,”* (fg220103). It also appeared that novice teachers were more willing to attend in-service training sessions away from their place of work and they were more independent compared to their more experienced counterparts. Most novice teachers already had their drivers’ licences and their own vehicles for transport compared to educational leaders or experienced teachers who usually depended on MOEY transportation or had drivers to transport them. While this may seem trivial in many other countries, it is quite a big step for national women as novice teachers are probably the first generation female drivers in their household and community. The problem of transport and travel continues to be a problem for most experienced teachers who miss opportunities for self-development because of these restrictions.

Many experienced teachers questioned the, *“...relevance of some of the training,”* (educational leader, ii060403). In the case of educational leaders and experienced teachers, they felt that they were *“...beyond being taught how to manage a classroom. I (they) need more,”* (experienced teacher, fg040103). On-the-job training after promotion is intensive because little management training is given to teachers before they are promoted to management positions. This results in some women resisting promotion because they cannot commit to, *“...intensive training and quick solutions,”* (educational leader, fg181202). This adds to the barrier created by changes in job responsibilities because teachers who are promoted have to be prepared for intensive training in their own time and in addition to the challenges of a new job.

A number of participants also voiced their dissatisfaction with the absence of further study opportunities. Most experienced teachers had either a first degree or a teaching diploma only (Table 5.1). Few institutions in the UAE provide part-time Masters or Doctorate level studies for teachers. Participants expressed a deep sense of frustration because they were not allowed to travel abroad alone for further studies. One experienced teacher reacted to the question, "What kind of further studies were you hoping to do which would help with promotion?" by saying, "*I've contacted so many institutions in the UAE in the hope of doing a Masters degree but without success so far. This frustrates me because I cannot go forward without the qualifications and I cannot go abroad to study,*" (ii230303). Another experienced teacher talks about her experience, "*Because I'm involved in research, many times people I meet and who have come across my work address me as Dr. X then I say I'm not a Dr. X just X,*" and she continues, "*I could be so much more than I am if there were opportunities to study further. In the past I complained of not having enough time, now that I have time, I find there are no resources,*" (ii250103). Research conducted by Morada (2002:5) confirms that there is a tendency for females to stop studying once they enter the labour force because of a lack of time or institutions available in the UAE. As a result, many participants claimed that not only do they face barriers to career progression, but they also lagged behind with respect to their salaries which are determined by qualification and years of experience (Morada, 2002:5).

Recognising the need for more part-time learning the UAE Ministry of Higher Education and Learning is considering e-learning as the best way in which to develop human resources (Al-Nowais, 2003b:1). In addition the Gulf News has reported that Zayed University's Center for Professional Development will soon launch a Masters Degree in Educational Leadership (Staff Reporter, 2003b:1). Implementation of on-line programs and the availability of post-graduate degrees in local institutions will undoubtedly be an answer to women who wish to study further but face travel restrictions. In some instances, participants in this study met the criteria for promotion in terms of experience and qualifications but changes in job responsibilities after obtaining a promotion formed a barrier to further career progression.

5.3.2.8 Changes in the job responsibilities

Research by Harris *et al.*, (2002:1-14) shows that women in America are known to give up promotions and better job opportunities when job responsibilities change. In considering women who travel in commuter marriages, Harris *et al.* (2002:2) reveals changes to male and female roles within marriages to accommodate the career development of women. The concept of *peer-marriage* (Harris *et al.*, 2002:2) is becoming increasingly popular wherein male partners shared household and child care responsibilities. This participation and assistance provided by male partners was found by Harris *et al.* (2002:2) to be the key factor in contributing to successful marriages especially when job responsibilities change. In the case of UAE national women, who are bound by cultural stereotyping in which the role of a woman is seen as primary caregiver, the concept of peer-marriage is currently non-existent.

It was, therefore, not surprising to find that some national teachers resisted applying for promotions because it would mean a change in job responsibilities and job environment. Promotion to positions of vice-principal or principal were most popular amongst experienced teachers. The major reason provided for this choice was location, *"I'll still be based at the schools,"* (experienced teacher, fg040103). Promotion to other positions may mean, *"A change to a mixed work environment and travel requirements,"* (experienced teacher, ii180103). As schools offer an all-female environment it is a preferred career choice for UAE national women. Social constraints exist when women work in mixed environments. The experience of one experienced teacher is pertinent, *"I was promoted to the evaluation department in the Ministry but I had to turn down that opportunity because my husband was not happy with the fact that I had to work at the zone with men and that I would need to travel as part of my job,"* (ii110203).

In addition, the workload and hours of work as teachers were considered reasonable by married participants because they felt that they *"...had adequate time in the day to take care of my children and household responsibilities,"* (experienced teacher, ii230303).

This becomes a source of conflict when women are promoted because a lot more effort and time at work is required. New positions would require intensive on-the-job training and possibly travel. These factors may serve as one of the reasons why women resist applying for certain jobs or promotions because the changes in job responsibilities may conflict with their primary roles.

In the case of participants in this study who were promoted, they still appear to accommodate their families first. An educational leader shares her view, *“We have no children so my husband has no problems is letting me travel when required. But when I do plan to go away he is informed of my plans in advance and I will only go away for as long as my job requires, [pause] not more,”* (ii180203). A novice teacher explains her transition from studying into a full time job, *“I had to deal with it independently and work the changes around my household duties,”* (fg220103). National women who accept promotions and the increased responsibility and workload must do so with the knowledge that their primary role should not be affected in any significant way. Within a marriage there may be *“...little or no tolerance when women have demanding jobs,”* (educational leader, ii050303). While women face a number of challenges to career progression, they are also unable to compete with national men who are career tracked as soon as they enter the profession.

5.3.2.9 Men are “ear-marked” for top positions

Career tracking for men is common in most organisations but women remain invisible without any special commitment from management to career track them systematically and consciously in some way (Wirth, 2001:128). This is also found to be true in the case of UAE national men (see Table 3.6) who benefit and obtain rapid career progression because, *“Men are ear-marked for top positions in the Ministry,”* (experienced teacher, ii030303). Even as teachers, *“...they are given opportunities to participate in decision-making activities both at school and at the Ministry that are not shared with female teachers,”* (educational leader, ii140403). It is also not unusual that when it comes to competing for promotions men would get, *“First preference purely because he is a man,*

no other reason,” (experienced teacher, fg040103). Similar observations were made by Al-Lamki (1999:12) in her study of female Omani managers where a participant stated that, “...merely being a woman is a major obstacle.”

It was the opinion of most participants in this study that if they were competing with a national male for a job in the Ministry, it was unlikely that they would get the promotion. The number of national males entering the teaching profession is lower than that of females (Table 3.5), which explains why there are no time delays in employing national males. In fact, *“In order to attract national males into the profession, higher salaries, benefits and accelerated promotion opportunities are available to them,”* (educational leader, ii180203). Another practise mentioned by an experienced teacher is indicative of gender discrimination, *“Women lose a portion of their salaries after marriage because she has a husband to take care of her, but men are given an additional stipend to support a family when they get married,”* (fg040103). This is contradictory to the UAE labour law of equal pay for equal work irrespective of gender.

A participant’s experience (experienced teacher, ii110203)³ of gender discrimination is relevant in reflecting this as a barrier to UAE national female career progression.

Researcher: *“What qualifications do you have?”*

Fawzia: *“I have a BA in history from UAEU.”*

Researcher: *“How many years have you been working at the Ministry?”*

Fawzia: *“Umm...in total 16 years. I started my career as a History teacher in a girl’s secondary school and then I was asked to apply for a research position in the Department of Information and Statistics. I’ve been working in this position for the last twelve years doing mostly research.”*

Researcher: *“Tell me more about the kind of work you do?”*

³ The actual names of the participant and her supervisor has been changed as a measure of confidentiality.

Fawzia: *“I am involved with various research projects required by the Ministry and I have done both qualitative and quantitative research sometimes in the capacity of lead researcher but at other times I help consultants hired by the Ministry. My most recent project in a collaborative team concerns the reasons why national teenagers⁴... Another activity that I’m currently busy with is training teachers...I really enjoy my work and it thrills me to see my work being used in a constructive way. The results I get are useful and are used for decisions-making. The best thing about my job is that nothing stays the same each day brings something new.”*

Researcher: *“Is there anyone who has influenced your career, that you consider a role-model?”*

Fawzia: [immediate response without hesitation or thought] *“Miss Salma who was my supervisor when I first started at the Ministry. She was a wonderful person and she taught me all I know today. She inspired me and brought out the best in me. Without her support and guidance I would not have had the confidence to do half the things I’ve done. But she is gone now, she retired about two years ago and I miss her very much. Till today I miss her,”* [pause 10 seconds - deep sense of loss apparent, lowering of voice]. *When Miss Salma left, she asked me to apply for her position, she was confident that I had the capability of being director of the department. I applied for this position and as you know from my records I did not get promoted.”*

Researcher: *“Yes, I am aware of that, tell me what happened?”*

Fawzia: *“It’s really a long story.”*

Researcher: *“We have time if you are willing to discuss this.”*

Fawzia: *“Okay, no I didn’t mean it like that, I want to talk about this.”*

Researcher: *“Take your time.”*

Fawzia: *“Well, I applied for the position because I knew that Miss Salma would recommend me and I also felt ready after being with the department for twelve years. My family was also supportive because both my children are older now and my husband also thought it was a good opportunity for me after all the years. I applied, went through the formalities of an interview and all that and then waited for a response. Here things often take time, so I was not too concerned. After some months I was called in by the*

⁴ Project details were omitted as a measure of confidentiality.

Assistant Undersecretary and told that a colleague was found more suitable for the job and that my application was turned down. It was not me or my work, he was just more suitable. For a few moments I was speechless with disappointment when I heard this. I wished [pause – drink of water] I wished that the ground would swallow me. I guess I was rather over confident. I composed myself eventually and asked who was appointed. When they told me that a male colleague from my department was the one, I was not ready for it because he is a young man with little experience. In fact he was employed by the department for two years only. The funniest thing you know is that Miss Salma asked me to show him the ropes when he first started. He worked with me on two projects before he was allocated his own work. I have more experience and over the years I've represented the Ministry in conferences and at several summits internationally. I still don't think they made the right choice or that that he got the post in a fair way, none of the reasons are valid. He is a man and in this part of the world that's all that counts."

Researcher: *"Did you take the matter further, I mean did you voice your feelings and dissatisfaction with the process?"*

Fawzia: *"Yes, I tried. In the beginning I spoke at length to the Assistant Undersecretary who said she understood but could do nothing and I've complained to quite a few people higher up, but I achieved nothing by doing so. He is still there in that post and I am still in mine but I've accepted my fate, I don't care to fight over it."*

Researcher: *"How has this experience affected you?"*

Fawzia: *"I still enjoy my work but my new boss and I can never have a relationship like with Miss Salma. He can never replace her. I still find it hard to relate to him because I know that I am better than him. We have a professional relationship but I think that I have become bitter and I don't feel the same way about my place of work. It makes no difference now because I can retire soon and forget about all this."*

Researcher: *"What about at home?"*

Fawzia: *"Right now its even worse for me at home. While in the past my husband encouraged me, these days he is not as supportive. Recently he refused to allow me to travel to Egypt because he feels that why should I travel, work so hard and sacrifice my family time when it's getting me nowhere."*

The problem of gender discrimination is not unique to the UAE and was also found to be a problem internationally with archaic attitudes and stereotypes forming the basis for the distribution of *male* and *female* tasks. In addition, Fawzia's experience is confirmed by the general opinion of participants in focus group sessions and by research conducted by Amiri and Al-Hammadi (2003 as cited by Ahmed, 2003:1). In their study entitled, *Challenges facing women leaders in UAE organisations* (Amiri & Al-Hammadi, 2003 as cited by Ahmed, 2003:1), the authors found that professional national women were facing challenges at the workplace because of gender discrimination. According to statements by women leaders who participated in their study it was concluded that "they (men) believe that a woman is not better than them. Also they don't trust her judgment because they think her decisions are affected by her emotions" (Amiri & Hammadi, 2003 as cited by Ahmed, 2003:1). The study also found that "men believe that woman are not capable of acting in a leading position and try to blow a woman colleague's promotion into an ego tussle" (Amiri & Hammadi, 2003 as cited by Ahmed, 2003:1). A similar view was held by Omani participants in a study by Al-Lamki (1999:25) in which she found that predominantly male employers regarded women as being less capable than men. Participants in this study, however, did indicate that they understood why men would be chosen over women for promotion although they did not necessarily agree with the practise. A experienced teacher mentions, "*Men are responsible for taking care of the family, his success will ensure the success of his family*" (fg040103).

According to Wirth (2001:151), promotion and career progression opportunities should be available equally to both men and women. It is an international perception that governments should take a comprehensive approach involving legislative and practical measures to address all sources of discrimination and to encourage the principle of equality (Wirth, 2001:156). The UAE has to consider and find ways in which the job environment can succeed in empowering women to overcome the barriers preventing them from accepting leadership role opportunities. In so doing they will participate equally in the UAE economy and in the decision-making process of their country.

5.4 LEADERSHIP

Leadership is an inherently subjective notion (Moss & Jensrud, 1995 as cited by Pounder & Coleman, 2002:123). Amiri and Al-Hammadi (2003 as cited by Ahmed, 2003:1) concluded from their study that in order to succeed “a woman leader should stress on the work to be accomplished, keep open communication, be logical and rational in decision-making, be tough and she should avoid showing that she is emotional. She should be objective and never express her personal emotions since male colleagues would take a negative point against this.” To reinforce this finding, an attitudes and opinion survey amongst college students showed that 45% of males and 50% of females agreed that, “women are too emotional to be leaders in society because they were too soft-hearted,” (Sayed, 2001:27). Therefore, in the UAE leadership is generally considered a male realm with very few national women being profiled in the media and in the community as leaders.

Participants from all three groups in this study were given an opportunity in focus group sessions to define the concept of leadership.

5.4.1 Leadership defined

Participants defined leadership as a combination of responsibility, ethics and intellect. Key words or phrases to describe leadership were as follows:

- Responsible leaders were defined as people who took, “*personal accountability for their actions, organisation and society,*” (fg220103) and were “*...responsible for the development and upliftment of their people,*” (fg181202)
- Ethical leaders were those who had, “*self control,*” “*strength of character,*” “*are honest,*” “*loyal,*” “*courageous,*” “*fair,*” and “*have integrity,*” (fg181202); and

- Intelligent leaders were those who were, “*knowledgeable,*” “*wise,*” “*clever,*” “*creative,*” “*imaginative,*” (fg220103) and someone, “*who understands people,*” (fg040103).

They viewed a good leader as a person who embodied characteristics of a responsible, ethical and intelligent leader as defined above. Participants did not consider gender when discussing the qualities of a good leader. However, to most participants H.H. Sheikh Zayed, the President of the UAE is the embodiment of the above characteristics. Many also chose their fathers as models of leadership second to H.H. Sheikh Zayed. It is interesting to note that even though they provided male examples of role models they did not use terms like *tough* or *emotionally strong* in their definition of a leader. This observation is in contrast to the findings of Amiri and Al-Hammadi (2003 as cited by Ahmed, 2003:1) and Sayed (2001) who found that according to their participants women lacked the ability to be good leaders because they were not *tough*, are *too soft-hearted* and *not emotionally strong*. Although leadership is rarely tied to a seat or post, educational leaders in this study were placed into leadership category because they were in management positions.

5.4.2 National women educators as leaders

It is important to recognise that participants in this category covered a wide spectrum of posts with access to varying degrees of power and leadership possibilities. All educational leaders were in senior management posts from the level of principal and above (Table 5.1). Findings of this study revealed that leadership is a multi-dimensional concept with participants taking on many different roles often shaped by the participants work environment. Cheng (1994) and Sergiovanni (1984) propose the following multi-dimensional characteristics:

- Structural leadership through rationality, efficiency, structure and policies;
- Human leadership through facilitation and empowerment;

- Political leadership through negotiation, networking and erecting coalitions;
- Symbolic leadership through emphasising rituals ceremonies and stories; and
- Educational leadership through the dissemination of educational knowledge and instructional information.

Evaluation of educational leaders in terms of Cheng's model (1994) showed that they placed more emphasis on the structural, human and educational leadership aspects of their role. This finding is consistent with Coleman's (2000 as cited by Pounder and Coleman, 2002:124) observations of female head teachers in the United Kingdom. From the findings of the present study, educational leaders emphasised their transformational leadership style in three areas, namely,

- They were positive role models;
- They inspired and encouraged employees; and
- They spent time developing, teaching and coaching subordinates.

Each of these aspects is described below in terms of observations made by the researcher, self-evaluation made by educational leaders themselves in interviews, and from the experiences of novice and experienced teachers.

5.4.2.1 Positive role models

Educational leaders were observed to committing themselves to longer working hours compared to their subordinates. They considered themselves, "...*dedicated and loyal*," (educational leader) and they preferred to "...*lead by example*," (educational leader, ii190103). An educational leader's comment is pertinent when she says, "*How can I demand commitment and dedication from my staff, if they see a philosophy of do what I say?*" (ii180203). Even though many observed to be time-strapped, they often arrived earlier at work than their subordinates. It was also usual for them to take additional work

home. An educational leader mentions, *“I am usually the first one to arrive at school, it gives me time to start of the day by standing at the gate and informally meeting and greeting my staff, my students and their parents. At the same time, it also emphasises my policy of punctuality. I believe in practising what I preach,”* (ii060403). Their willingness to work hard and offer dedication to their institution stemmed from the ownership they felt of their school, teachers or department. Consistent with this, were comments like, *“...my school,”* and *“...my staff,”* (educational leader, fg181202).

Educational leaders were incredibly accommodating. In her interactions with these women the researcher observed that women in this category never ignored a knock on the door or a ringing telephone. Unplanned interruptions during discussions and interview sessions were a common occurrence. A novice teacher shares her experience, *“My principal is a role model for me. She is supportive and encouraging, but the thing I like most about her is that she is available. No matter how busy she is, she makes the time for me,”* (ii100403). One of the most visible outcomes of this, *“... open door policy was that I make each member of my staff feel important, that they are worth something and that their problems are my problems,”* (educational leader, ii020203). An educational leader commented, *“My job is not to be locked up in an office dictating to my staff, I want to be part of the pulse of what goes on out there,”* (fg181202).

A sample of responses obtained from educational leaders to the question, “How would you describe yourself as a leader?” is given below:

- *“I don’t see myself as up there and they are down there. My school is like my family. I respect my staff and students and treat them with dignity but like a mother who has to teach a child right from wrong, I must intervene when I see that something going astray. I prefer to consult my team but at times also inform them of my position on certain matters. They know that I am with them, their success is my success,”* (ii140403);

- *“I personally prefer structure, I like my staff to know their place and what is expected of them. Some think this is too formal but it’s a system that works for me and more importantly, it works for them,”* (ii290103); and
- *“A leader can only lead if there are followers to follow. My team is my strength so I work with them. I am focused on achievement and they share the same vision. It’s not an ideal world with everything running smoothly all the time, in my job I have to make tough decisions all the time and I make them,”* (ii250303).

From these responses it is clear that educational leaders preferred team work and they wanted their subordinates to share the same vision. They believed in the success of the team and wanted to work closely with subordinates. However, educational leaders mentioned they had to sometimes make decisions against their teams. They were not comfortable with using their authority. An educational leader commented in this regard, *“It’s not easy to force your will onto people but sometimes you have to, you have no choice,”* (ii290103). This indicates that educational leaders were genuinely concerned about the people in their team and that they more often opted to solicit their support rather than make decisions against them. However, when the need arose they were courageous enough to make the decision. For example, an educational leader shares her experience, *“It took me days to mull and brood over what they wanted and what they were proposing. It just didn’t make sense to me and they were being stubborn and short-sighted. I called up a meeting after a week and told them with reasons why I saw things differently. They murmured and muttered but I stuck to my decision. In the end when we were given a certificate and recognised by the Ministry for our efforts. They saw the wisdom behind my actions,”* (ii060403). She added, *“Whether you like it or not respect is earned,”* (ii060403).

In general, they considered the success of the team more important than individual success. Educational leaders’ management of people was consultative, democratic and based on sharing the same vision. Observation of the interaction of educational leaders in staff meetings (Table 4.4) showed that they worked with their staff and that they

supported their initiatives. Educational leaders were in control of their staff meetings, discussed matters openly and appeared uninhibited. They also provided a relaxed atmosphere at staff meetings in which teachers were observed bringing in their tea or a staff member or the principal providing snacks for the group.

While these observations are consistent with Hall (1996) who emphasised the development of power-sharing teams in which women head teachers indicated a preference for *power for* rather than *power over* junior staff; they were in contrast with the findings of Raey and Ball (2000:145-159). In their study of head teachers, Raey and Ball (2000:154), found that in practise, women's ways of working in the educational market were multifaceted and contradictory to the feminist conception of "nurturant, affiliative and good at interpersonal relationships." The women in their study often used masculine stereotypical behaviour to maintain authority, position and power. For this reason, an explanation for the consultative and transformational behaviour of educational leaders was sought.

I solicited participant opinions in focus group sessions by asking, "Research conducted in the UAE shows that national women are not tough or emotionally strong enough to be leaders and that they lack the ability to make decisions independently. What do you think?" Most participants disagreed with this notion. An educational leader qualified her opinion by stating, "*...being tough does not mean being feared or being aggressive. You can still be tough by standing your ground. As a leader is it not more important to convince and persuade rather than by being tough?*" (fg181202). It was the opinion of most participants that women may come across as weak leaders that are not able to make independent decisions because of their consultative approach. Participants reiterated the opinion of an experienced teacher that "*In our (their) culture, there is generally a strong sense of sisterhood where women spend more time with each other. Women tend to be consultative as part of their general behaviour whether at home or in the workplace. Anyway look at our government, even with the top leaders no decision is made without the consultation of the people, so why should it be different in the workplace*" (fg040103). Another experienced teacher added, "*The benefit related to the team sharing*

the same vision is more beneficial to a harmonious working environment which we all want,” (fg040103).

In addition, educational leaders did not feel threatened by their subordinates who respected them and worked with them to achieve common goals. In most instances women in this category did not appear self absorbed or concerned about power. They were women, “...*who got the job done,*” (educational leader, ii020203). Being a positive role model also meant that educational leaders were successful in inspiring and encouraging their subordinates towards new goals, visions and change.

5.4.2.2 Inspiring and encouraging employees

The primary role in which women occupy a powerful position in society is as mother (Raey & Ball, 2000:152). It is not surprising, therefore, that female managers assume a maternal role or that their subordinates treated them as a maternal figure. Mothering is routinely associated with caring yet traditionally involves censor, discipline and control alongside listening and comforting (James, 1989 as cited by Raey & Ball, 2000:152). Educational leaders in this study were no exception as they were often older than subordinates, had more experience and were genuinely interested in the well being of their employees. They were often said to be “...*mothering,*” (novice teacher, ii310303) subordinates. A novice teacher shares her experience, “*In the beginning I had so many classroom management problems that one-day I walked into the principal’s office in tears. She was so understanding and so easy to talk to. I felt as though she was a friend or like my mother rather than my boss,*” (ii090403). Even though some educational leaders were single and did not have any children, they appeared comfortable with taking on a maternal role. The maternal role seemed to open up a relationship of trust, support and encouragement, especially amongst younger female subordinates. Novice and experienced teachers mention feeling a sense of pride if they were approached and asked to be involved in projects personally by their superiors. An unwritten protocol appears to exist amongst national women educators in which they trust their superiors, “... *to do what’s right for me,*” (experienced teacher, ii190303). There is an expectation of the

leader to take care of subordinates like, *“A mother would take care of her children,”* (educational leader, ii190103). There did not appear to be any danger, *“...that a leader would be self absorbed and do things for personal gain. We work with each other to achieve common good,”* (educational leader, ii250303).

“I would not have had the courage to do half the things I’ve done were it not for my principal,” (ii070403) says an experienced teacher. Most educational leaders mention using, *“Positive psychology or motivation before asking a teacher to do things that would require more time commitment from her,”* (educational leader, ii060403). An experienced teacher supports this, *“When she calls me I know what I’m in for. I walk in there with a firm resolution to refuse more work but when I walk out, I couldn’t tell her no. She wins me over with her flowery talk and positive reinforcement,”* (ii180103). Positive reinforcement and motivation was also achieved by participants rewarding their subordinates. It was not uncommon for participants to recognise subordinates in staff meetings or recognise them with an internally developed reward system. A simplistic reward system used by one educational leader seemed have the right effect. She had been principal of a school for the last twelve years, during this time she instituted the policy of issuing small tokens to subordinates when she considered their performance outstanding. A subordinate mentioned to the researcher in this regard, *“It must seem childish for us to collect those trinkets. You can’t believe what people here get up to earn them, one would think they were medals or something. She issues them only when it is truly deserved. I have four of them in ten years so getting them is not an everyday thing. When you do get them, believe me everybody wants to know,”* (experienced teacher, ii240203).

Educational leaders delegated tasks but found it difficult to allow subordinates to work completely independently. The result of this was that they spent a lot of time checking that allocated work is done and they had a need to approve correspondence or material leaving their offices. Subordinates in turn, felt supported by this approach and often solicited advice from their superior. A novice teacher shares her experience, *“Being in the classroom for the first year is not an easy thing but I’ve felt so supported and encouraged in my effort because of my colleagues and my supervisor who have been*

genuinely interested in my problems and have given me great solutions, I feel like I'm benefiting from their experience," (ii100403). Educational leaders appeared to be in close contact with subordinates because they often spent some time developing, teaching and coaching subordinates.

5.4.2.3 Developing, teaching and coaching subordinates

Educational leaders were concerned about the quality of their teams. They wanted teachers who could provide quality education and who were concerned about the students. In addition, they supported their staff by informing them and encouraging them to attend workshops, seminars and other training opportunities. For example, applications for in-service training held for school librarians showed that more females applied for training compared to males because of supervisor support. In fact, the one male candidate did not attend the workshops after realising that he was the only male attending (Al-Muhairy, personal communication). Educational leaders were concerned about impressions that they were using, "*...outdated teaching and management techniques,*" (fg181202) and they expressed the expectation that staff members would perform their functions well and that they would participate in management issues related to them. Educational leaders were not threatened by subordinates and commented on "*...providing some opportunities for senior staff members to get involved with management issues,*" (ii290103).

Where problems existed with the quality of teaching, or where a novice teacher was inexperienced they attempted to find solutions that would help the teacher to improve. A educational leader mentions, "*Sometimes asking a senior staff member to help an inexperienced teacher is a better answer than frequent visits because the new teacher is insecure and the last thing she needs is to feel that her supervisor is breathing down her neck,*" (educational leader, ii250303). Another educational leader developed a roster for training and development needs of her staff and actively solicited assistance from a local university to help her in upgrading the skills of her staff.

Recently, a study by Al-Haj (as cited by Kawach, 2003c:1) recommended school reforms for UAE public schools. In this study, teachers were criticised for their outdated teaching and administrative styles, therefore, it is expected that intensive in-service training would be required alongside changes in curriculum and evaluation techniques. In preparation for these reforms, which are intended to be phased in over the next twenty-five years, line managers and Ministry staff are working on a teacher training programme (MOEY official). I found that educational leaders involved in this study were planning for the reforms at both micro and macro levels. In several instances female managers (educational leaders) took initiatives to seek opportunities for teacher training. For example, teachers are being provided with opportunities to familiarise themselves with technology. An educational leader mentions, *“This year, I started an ICDL (International Computer Driving Licence) programme to help my teachers. We used a large proportion of our budget and some teachers volunteered their personal resources to get this project going. Technology is the way of the future and we want to be prepared for it,”* (ii190103). The vision and foresight of managers in instances like these reinforce their commitment to the team. It also reinforces the trust relationship of subordinates, who believe that the female educational leaders will, *“do what’s right for me,”* (experienced teacher, fg040103).

It is anticipated therefore, that subordinates were confident of their female leader’s ability to represent them at meetings in the Ministry and higher up where “policies are framed and decisions are made” (Gold, 1996:2).

5.4.3 National women’s participation in decision-making

An attempt was made to observe national female’s participation in decision-making at the Ministry level. Planned observations of strategic planning and committee meetings (see Table 4.4) were conducted by the researcher. In these Ministry meetings the participation of national female members (which included some educational leaders) was observed.

5.4.3.1 The setting and the interaction dynamics

Ministry meetings were almost always held in a formal boardroom. Although places were not allocated by means of name tags, men and women knew their places. Women were always accommodated on one side of the table. In most meetings it was observed that national women were older than national men, but fewer in number. When there were fewer women, the set up of the meeting room made their scarcity immediately visible. Delays in starting meetings were the norm and it was not unusual for members to join in after the meeting had already commenced.

The researcher observed that most female members came to the meeting room with an agenda, notes or prepared visual material which they used if they were giving feedback or providing additional information. Most of the women sat formally making notes or writing down action points rarely making eye contact with male members even when they spoke. The men in contrast often sat casually in meetings. For example, in one meeting the researcher observed a male member hanging on to an empty swivel chair next to him which he continued to swing all through the meeting.

At the Ministry meetings, male members usually dominated conversation providing detailed discussion on issues, or creating debate when there were disagreements. National female contributions comprised short responses often providing responses or discussion when they were addressed or when they were asked to provide feedback. They seemed inhibited to converse openly or volunteer their views in discussions and they also rarely disagreed with their male counterparts. In fact while males would debate, most of the women were visibly silent, “...*waiting for the commotion to subside*,” (educational leader, ii140403). It appeared as though the women in these meetings were not comfortable with debate and generally did not participate. Such observations in terms of meeting dynamics between male and female members are consistent with the findings of Gold (1996:6-7) and Roberts (1995, 1-152) as explained in Section 3.4.1.2.

When attending the meetings, female members generally appeared well-prepared, spending at least a few hours of work time on preparation. When asked to provide feedback, they usually did so in an organised manner, with well-prepared supporting

documents and/or pertinent visuals. Most male members did not provide visuals and supporting documents were generally scant (usually just a table of figures). Even though they seemed better prepared, female members appeared to panic visibly when they were challenged or if they were not able to respond to queries or questions on the spot. The researcher noted changes in body language for example, wiping hands with tissues, wringing the tissue, pushing up of spectacles or biting of the lower lip showing signs of discomfort. Males in contrast, appeared confident even when they lacked the information. These observations were also consistent with the findings of Roberts (1995:23) where she found that women felt less confident and more intimidated when addressing a meeting compared to men.

The researcher explored these observations in more detail because of differences noted in interaction by educational leaders in Ministry meetings compared to their interaction with subordinates in staff meetings. I asked some educational leaders later on during interview sessions “Why are the women so quiet at Ministry meetings?” Most participants did not realise that they were quiet, “...*did you really think they were silent?*” (educational leader, ii020203) or “...*that’s funny we women are often accused of speaking too much,*” (educational leader, ii190103). Another educational leader commented on her discomfort “*I’m not sure about the others, but for myself, it took me a long time to have the courage to speak up in those meetings, I think the large room, the faces and the formal nature of the meeting that scares me,*” (ii050303). Participants did not mention the presence of more males and fewer females as intimidating. These observations are consistent with research conducted by Roberts (1995) and observations made by Gold (1996) that women feel less powerful at meetings and in committees, both of which are areas of high visibility.

Observations made at the Ministry meetings led me to enquire from some educational leaders, “How do you feel you make a contribution to decision-making at the Ministry?” and “When a male colleague disagrees with you, what strategies do you use to convince him?” An educational leader’s response to the latter question summed up the strategy

used by female educational leaders, namely, “*Resist turning over the apple cart,*” (ii020203).

5.4.3.2 “*Resist turning over the apple cart*”

The observations made with respect to female participation in Ministry meetings may easily lead one to the conclusion that females were less assertive and took on an inferior role compared to male peers in terms of active participation and discussion at meetings. They were visibly uncomfortable with aggression and displayed anxiety when they were challenged. However, further probing by the researcher revealed a strategy that was consciously applied by female educational leaders. The approach worked for them and demonstrated their consistent consultative behaviour.

Educational leaders were of the opinion that they made an impact on decision-making by volunteering to take on extra responsibilities thereby, “*...arming myself (themselves) with being in an informed and authoritative position to provide relevant and pertinent information to the committee,*” (educational leader, ii050303). They were unanimous about making a contribution, and their presence felt, without the use of aggression or power struggles. An educational leader comments, “*The women here have very little to worry about, their years of teaching experience and their qualifications provide them with authority over these younger men who have just walked in today,*” (ii140403). Educational leaders were confident of the quality decisions that they made and they mention using various persuasive strategies when the need arose, for example, “*...patience,*” (ii020203) “*...addressing the disputed issue at another place or time,*” (fg181202) or “*...forwarding the matter to a higher authority,*” (ii050303) rather than forcing their opinion or aggression

The views of educational leaders correlated well with the findings of Eagly and Johnson (1990), Gevedon (1992) and Rosener (1995) related to the experiences of women managers elsewhere. In many countries worldwide, women work harder and are better qualified than male colleagues (for example, Wirth, 2001), which relates well to the

observations in this study. As educational leaders participants did not feel the need for power struggles or aggression to further their views or careers once again emphasising a more relationship oriented style of management, one that thrived on support and a harmonious work environment.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The detailed analysis provided in this chapter has identified the barriers facing UAE national female educators. Knowledge of the barriers relating both to entry into the education sector as well as to career progression will assist employers and the government in bringing about changes which would enable national women to overcome these. In addition institutions preparing national women to enter the workforce could use the insights provided to enable women to obtain further degrees and better training that are more suited to the labor market in which they have to compete. While the ability for women to manage and lead within organisations is not questioned, the impact of their leadership style and the challenges that face them in positions of leadership are of importance. If misinterpreted, the perspective that women are not *tough* enough or *too emotional* to lead may prevent their climb to the top.

The perspectives obtained in this chapter will be summarised in the next chapter. In addition, pertinent conclusions, recommendations and possible areas for further research are explored.