

EIG Education Intelligence

WINTER 2020 | ISSUE 02

Dubai vs HK: What these two great cities can learn from each other

2nd Annual Teacher Survey: Your views on salaries, teaching, and your career in the UAE

Crisis! Panic!: ... Or not. Are global headlines on teacher shortages just scare mongering?

down

Is there an end to over-supply and fee reductions in UAE schools?

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The times they are a'challengin'

'There are lies, damned lies and statistics'. Numbers have had a bad rap since Mark Twain coined his infamous quote. But numbers are what we could do with more of in the UAE education market at the moment.

There's been a developing and marked reluctance to share numbers by schools over the last few years. It's not surprising, of course, given that market conditions are, as we all agree, 'challenging'. Evaporating waiting lists and the rapid blooming of availability of places in schools which could formerly afford an offhand approach to parents desperate for admission, tells a different story.

So what numbers do we know?

The KHDA says that school enrolment numbers are growing by 2.1% year on year which accords with overall population growth according to the figures released by the Dubai Economic Department.

Our discussions with parties who are near the coalface of school admissions confirm that this figure is broadly in line with their experience. They qualify this with the observation that, in their view, the rate varies considerably depending on several factors – location, how established a school is, for instance – but that one factor looms above all – price.

“Whereas some schools in the ‘affordable sector’ are looking at double the average figure or more, the premium sector would be delighted with a growth rate pinned at the average.”

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Whereas some schools in the ‘affordable sector’ are looking at double the average figure or more, the premium sector would be delighted with a growth rate pinned at the average. Some premium schools are experiencing less than half the average and some are in negative territory.

But ‘fortune favours the brave’ and the brave in this case is Royal Grammar School (RGS) Guildford, its partner Cognita and locally based developer Majid Al Futtaim. RGS is set to open in September 2021, a premium English National Curriculum school located in the newly developing community of Tilal Al Ghaf.

The arrival of the leading international school group Cognita into the region at this time is particularly interesting. It has more than 70 schools across the world and is especially strong in the UK. Unlike the other major international player, Nord Anglia, it does not apply a strong parent brand to its schools, allowing each school to present its individual identity and offering to its particular market.

Other premium schools, particularly those which are situated near the new arrival, eye the cranes and diggers busily constructing on Hessa Street nervously. It will, however, be instructive to see whether RGS/Cognita have absorbed the lessons of recent years and apply that knowledge accordingly. We’ll see.

The RGS project marks the beginning of Cognita’s plans for Dubai, the UAE and the wider region. The choice of school, the partnership with such a prominent Dubai organisation and the location of its launch project delivers a clear statement of intent.

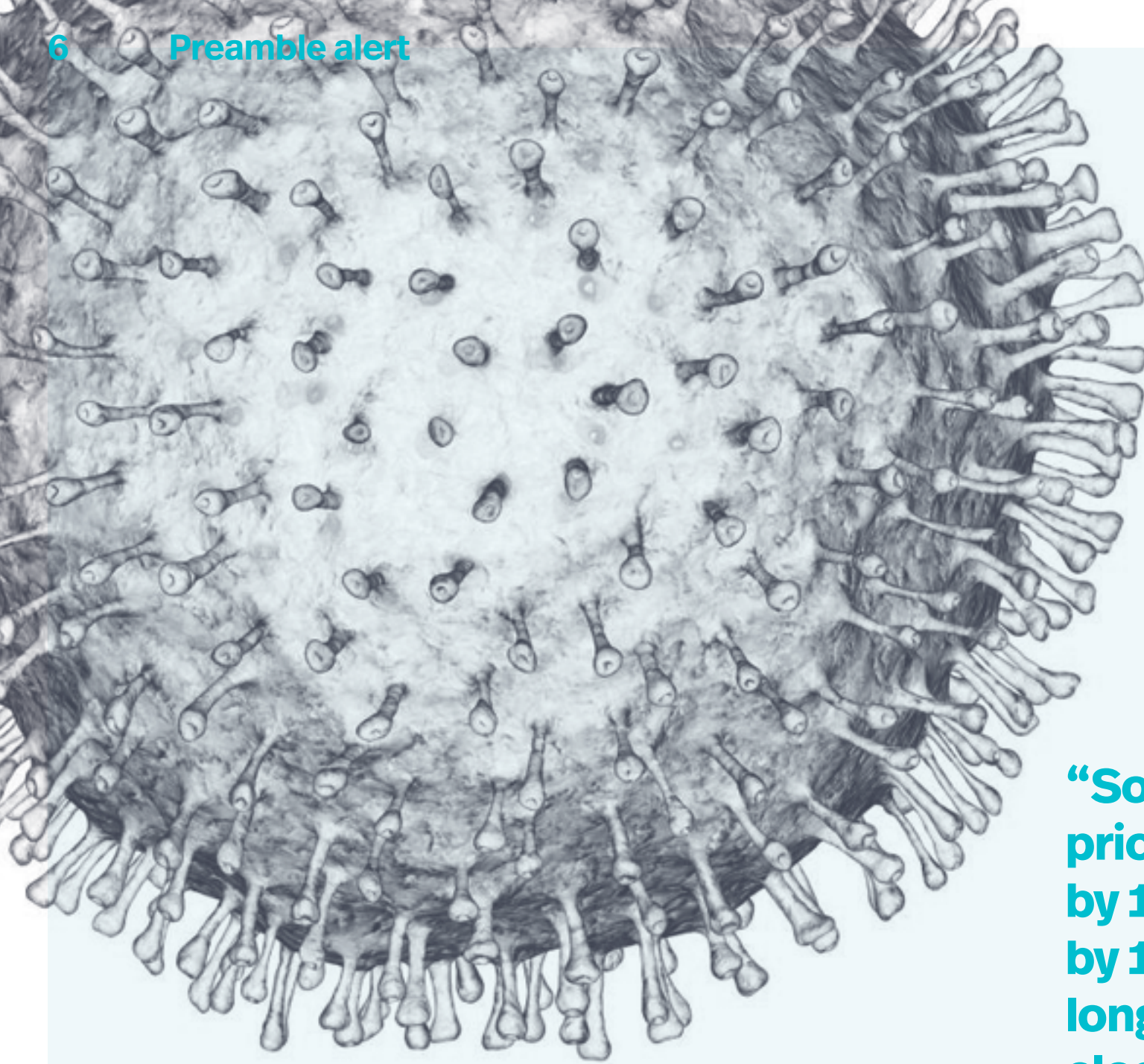
Cognita’s strength in most of the other markets where it operates has been in the mid-market, affordable sector. So while it may be the premium schools which are looking over their shoulders at the moment, owners and operators in this area would be advised to expect further developments over the coming years.

With recruitment (and retention) of students, recruitment (and retention) of staff, teacher licensing, a change to the DSIB inspection regime the Principal’s in-box is looking pretty full for the year ahead. And that’s before we factor in the old reliable that could knock them off course. As the late British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan allegedly replied when asked about his greatest challenge: ‘Events, dear boy, events’.



Coronavirus

An Event



We began working on this latest ElG report at a time when the vast majority of the world had no knowledge or appreciation of the role of Wuhan in the 21st century's global supply chain. As we wrap up we realise it is not the U.S. we need to worry about, not even China at large... Now we know it is it is when Wuhan sneezes, that we all catch a cold.

So far analysis in UAE media has focused, naturally, on what is being done to contain the coronavirus. Less has been written about its effect on the economy. This is completely understandable, and right: Health of humans comes before the health of the economy. It is also too early to estimate the damage to the global economy the coronavirus is, undoubtedly, already wreaking.

China is the factory of the world. And it has largely shut down. According to reports up to two-thirds of the Chinese economy is shut, 80% of its manufacturing industry, rising to 90% for export-

“So far crude prices have fallen by 15%, copper by 13%. The longer China is closed off, and the coronavirus spreads, the more the price of these commodities, and the share prices of the companies that use them, are likely to slide further still.”

ers according to media reports. Hyundai has already closed its factories in Korea because it lacks key components coming from the Chinese mainland. It is the world's fifth largest car company. China is deeply integrated into the global economy - supplying essential components to everyone from Apple to Tesla. For how long can China be closed off before all manufacturers begin to slow or close production?

A tell tale sign for global economy watchers is the crude price as well as other commodities used in manufacturing. When the globe's economy is in rude health, prices rise as analysts predict demand inventory. A global economy in full throttle clearly consumes a lot more crude than one that is running at half speed. So far crude prices have fallen by 15%, copper by 13%. The longer China is closed off, and the coronavirus spreads, the more the price of these commodities, and the share prices of the companies that use them, are likely to slide further still.

For the UAE we are still very much in wait and see mode. Dubai is of course a very open economy, reliant on tourism, finance, logistics and trade - all hit by border, monetary and other controls. Abu Dhabi, the real money behind the UAE economy, is highly dependent on oil and gas prices, which in turn is [are] dependent on the health of the global economy ...

The full extent of the coronavirus impact will depend on how long it continues to spread, if/how fast manufacturers can find alternate supply chains, whether the spread of the virus can be slowed or even stopped. Fortunately Dubai Expo 2020, which will rely on international, not domestic visitors, does not begin until October 20th this year. This is time - you would hope - for the virus to have run its course. But nothing is guaranteed.

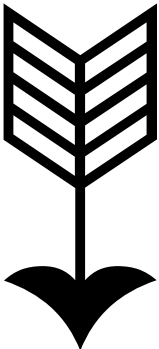
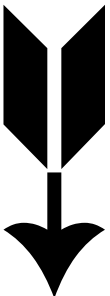
Moreover, the uncertainty is likely to stem investment long before then. For the UAE's education sector that may mean l

ess entrants to the market which, for incumbents, would be considered a good thing. However, it will also slow down foreign direct investment, which means, ultimately, less international students looking for places in its existing schools.

As we wrote in the Preamble, a long time before the coronavirus went global, it is events that can overtake us. How prescient that line has proven to be. ■

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Fees are going down, down, down...



Headlines across the UAE seem to have one major focus where educational matters are concerned – that of the ongoing growth in school places and reduction in fees.

W

hether schools have set out to offer fees within the “mid-market” or “affordable” range, or have adjusted their fees to be there, it seems that there is no end to the over-availability of school places, and reductions in

fees or the inclusion of benefits that were previously chargeable.

Schools in Dubai are said to be struggling to fill their seats as an oversupply of educational institutions hits the emirate. Latest information from the regulators indicates that there are now 639 public and 580 private schools across the UAE. Four years ago, Dubai had just 173 private schools compared with 208 this year and a planned 211 for 2020 with 13,000 more seats made available once all the new ones open.

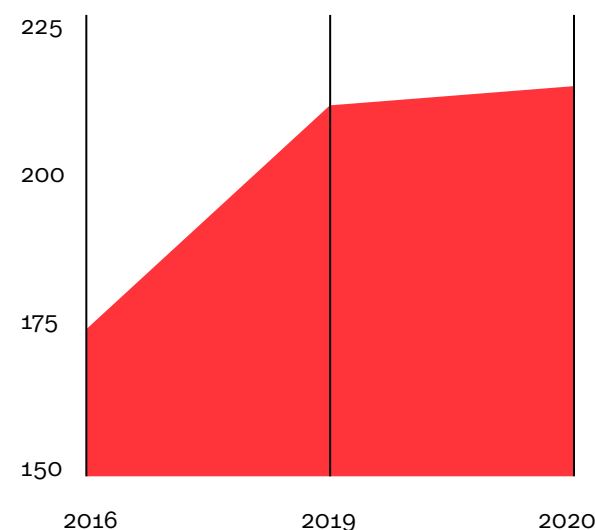
In Abu Dhabi, official figures show that from 186 schools with 250,000 seats in the academic year 2015-2016, the number had grown to 198 private schools offering 295,000 seats for 2018-2019. The number of students who had enrolled in private schools across Abu Dhabi in the last academic year reached 251,000 – an over-capacity already of over 40,000 places. By 2020-2021, the number of students is expected to go beyond the 280,000 mark, according to the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK).

In June 2018, the Abu Dhabi Executive Council approved an ADEK proposal to develop private schools with a yearly limit on tuition fees of between AED 20,000 and AED 30,000 per student. Ten new schools are apparently planned to open in Abu Dhabi in the near future. Whether this will lead to a move away

UAE private vs public schools
2019/2020



Dubai private school numbers
2016–2020



from premium to affordable schools remains to be seen.

Mid-market schools that target working families are dominating the market and have given parents more options than ever, as most of them offer discounts.

Recent research conducted with 3,000 parents released by the *Education Intelligence Group* and *Property Finder*, identified that around 64 percent of parents in Dubai received no contribution towards schools fees from their employers this year, compared to 50 percent receiving fee assistance from employers in 2014. The research also showed that 80 percent of families spent between five and 25 percent of their household income on their children's education.

The average age range of parents was between 31 and 44, with 15.5 percent earning less than AED 10,000 a month, 23 percent earning up to AED 20,000 per month and 16.8 percent earning up to AED 30,000. Approximately 20 percent declined to give salary details.

Despite the reductions in fees and discounts offered, more than six out of 10 parents believe school fees are too high in Dubai.

How successful have the newer schools been in attracting students?

GEMS Founders School Al Mizhar, an affordable British school with fees ranging from Dh23,000 to Dh30,000, was the only school to open last year with more than 1,000 pupils, boasting 1,325 children on its register. Transportation fees at the school range from AED 5,200 to AED 7,250 per year, depending on the location of students, so still making it an affordable option for those who are happy to have their children spend more time on the bus.

In 2019-20, GEMS appears to have stolen the show again, with GEMS Cambridge International Private School in Sharjah having opened in September with over 850 students in the Primary section of the school. Again fees range from AED 22,000 in pre-KG (FS1) to AED 30,000 for Grade 12 (Year 13) which will open several years from now. Grades 6, 7 and 8 will open in September 2020.

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Al Salam Community School which opened in September, also managed to open with what is considered a reasonable number—but given that the new school incorporates 388 students from the Secondary section of the original Al Salam Private School (the planned number was 400), it did start out with something of an advantage. They also managed to attract a further 420 students to Al Salam Private School (which has reverted to Primary only).

New to market in September 2019, Ambassador International Academy, an affordable International Baccalaureate school, is providing incentives to parents amid increasing competition. Tuition fees at the school, which range from AED 28,400 at the kindergarten level to AED 36,600 for grade four students, include after-school activities as well as music lessons. The school opened with just over 200 students.

The Aquila School, a mid-market school with a capacity of 2,000 students, opened in September 2018 with 67 students. By the end of June 2019, it had attracted 155 students and in September 2019, 352 students attended the school. The Aquila School offered a 15 percent discount on fees to all families who enrolled in 2018 and 2019, along with a variety of incentives, including free school lunches for a year, free bus service for a year and free uniforms.

Similarly, Arcadia School in Dubai, which opened in 2016 and is expanding with the opening of its Secondary school in September 2020, wants to ensure that it gives parents good value for the money they spend on tuition fees. The school offers a longer school day with Foundation stage students able to stay in school until 4pm, which means parents do not have to send their children to a nursery after school hours. Older students have after school activities which allows students to stay in school until 5.30pm. Parents do not have to pay for uniforms at the school.

Owners of Dubai Heights Academy, Seven Tides, probably launched one of the more unusual incentives—an exclusive promotion at its Seven Residences, The Palm project. Potential buyers can purchase studios, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments in the luxury Palm Jumeirah development and receive free tuition for one child for one academic year – September 2019 to June 2020, or alternatively September 2020

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to June 2021—at the Academy located in Al Barsha South.

Renaissance School, located in Dubai Sports City has offered a 50 percent reduction on fees, meaning parents only pay AED 17,500 for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten places instead of AED 35,000. For students in grades three and four, fees have similarly been reduced from AED 45,000 to AED 22,500, according to the school's website.

What about new Premium market schools?

At the premium end of the newer school market, Dunecrest American School in Dubai, expects it to take “a few years” for the school to reach its full capacity of 1,200 students. The school opened in September 2018 with 150 pupils and a year later has a little over 320 students. KHDA approved fees start at AED 46,000 pre-KG and rise to AED 89,000 for Grade 12. Currently, the school is offering ‘new joiner’ discounted fees (for a period of two years). These discounted fees start at AED 39,950 for pre-KG, rising to AED 82,650 for Grade 12. Sister school, Fairgreen International opened with 220 students in 2018 from a capacity of 1,150. The student body has grown to 380 in 2019-20. Deliberate action was taken to discount fees in a movement towards being more affordable – reductions range from 13-30% of KHDA approved fees.

It is not just newer schools that are reducing fees in an effort to continue to maintain and attract families.

The Taaleem Group which includes Outstanding-rated Raha International and Dubai British School has applied for fee reductions for several Dubai-based schools which will come into effect in September 2020. 10 schools in the group have frozen their fees for 2019-20 by not taking advantage of the fee increase approved by the KHDA based on the schools' inspection ratings.

CEO Alan Williamson said “Taaleem is a group of premium quality schools. We don't have mid- or low-tier prices. So, for us, it's all about maintaining the quality and pricing. We've actually held our fees for two years now. Last year, we had the edict from the government to hold fees and we're actually holding our fees again in the current academic year. There is no doubt that in

“It is not just newer schools that are reducing fees in an effort to continue to maintain and attract families. The Taaleem Group which includes Outstanding-rated Raha International and Dubai British School has applied for fee reductions for several Dubai-based schools.”

some sectors of the market there is, at present, oversupply; this is especially true in the premium sector. With 13 new schools that opened in Dubai in September 2018, five that opened this academic year and three next, the KHDA have done a great job in attracting new entrants into the market, especially to the mid-tier sector,” he contended.

Parents at Taaleem’s Dubai British School Jumeirah Park are being offered discounts, including an AED 10,000 reduction for all students from year one to nine and an AED 25,000 discount for those in years 10 and 11. Fees at the school from year one to six are AED 65,000 annually, whilst fees for students in years 10 and 11 are AED 75,000 per annum. Furthermore, the school revealed it has reduced its fees from September 2020 to AED 58,000 from FS to Year 4 inclusive.

New students joining Taaleem’s Jumeira Baccalaureate School in September 2020, who enrolled before December 31st 2019, were offered a further AED 1,000 discount on fees that have been reduced throughout the Primary school (pre-KG to Grade 5) by as much as AED 20,000.

Other well-known names at the premium end of the market are also offering incentives to parents. Brighton College, North London Collegiate School and even Outstanding-rated Repton School, have decided to offer substantial discounts.

Repton School said it had offered a 5 to 10 percent discount to parents who paid their fees early. To be eligible, fees for the current academic year had to be paid between October 2018 and February 2019. Additionally, students who had been awarded an IGCSE scholarship—given to individuals who achieved outstanding results in their IGCSE exams – were also entitled to a 10 percent fee reduction. A sibling discount of five percent is being offered where three or more children attend the school. Repton is one of a number of schools offering more generous sibling discounts of up to 10 percent to families with three or more children at the school.

Newer schools who offered Founders discounts as part of a strategy to attract more pupils as the faculty built its reputation and size have continued to offer these fees well past their original “sell by” date. North London Collegiate School, Dubai,

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has continued its founders' discount for a third year to allow parents to get a 15 to 20 percent discount on fees. The strategy seems to have worked with student numbers having grown from 250 students in 2017, to 500 in 2018-19 and now a little under 800 according to data released to EIG.

Downward fee trend set to continue

With no immediate sign of a sudden upswing in families relocating to the emirates – despite the gains originally expected in advance of Expo 2020, which, at least in Dubai, in large part drove the rush to develop new schools – and no promises of improved fee packages for parents, it seems the downward fee trend and incentive offers, especially for the newer, less established schools, is likely to remain the norm for the foreseeable future.

The challenge for schools in the near- to mid-term then is to simply maintain quality whilst reducing costs. Given that teachers are usually the largest ongoing investment that any school makes, this balancing act is likely to be a precarious one ... 

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15 People

On the move

With an estimated average staff turnover of 20-22% annually in international schools in the UAE education sector, we know that senior staff can be expected to move on regularly. This section is a round-up of changes that have already been announced. Please feel free to update us with those that have not yet reached us by emailing editor@whichschooladvisor.com

Henning Fries

who joined **The Dwight Schools** as Chief Operating Officer

Alan Williamson

who joined **Taaleem** as CEO following the retirement of Ros Marshall

Marion Henriot

who has been promoted to Chief Operating Officer at Evolvence Knowledge Investments

Simon Crane

who joined **Brighton College Dubai** as interim Principal from Brighton College Abu Dhabi

Pablo Fetter

who joined **Capital School** as the Interim CEO

David Flint

who joined **PACE British School Sharjah** as Principal

Mark Ford	who joined The English College as Principal
Adrian Frost	who joined Amity International School AD as Principal
Brendon Fulton	has moved to Dubai British School Jumeirah Park as Principal from Dubai British School
Brett Girven	is the new Principal at the Arbor School
Dr. Neil Hopkin	has joined Sunmarke School as Principal following the promotion of Mr Keith Miller, who has been promoted to Director of Education at Fortes Education
Albie Huyser	has joined GEMS Cambridge International Private School Sharjah as Founding Principal
Alison Lamb	has joined Dubai Heights Academy as Principal
Andy Lyons	has joined as the Director of Ignite School
Dr. Bruce Major	has joined Collegiate American School as the Superintendent
Heather Mann	has moved to Abu Dhabi to join the Charter Schools project for Taaleem
Lizzie Robinson	has taken over as Principal at Jebel Ali School following the departure of Peter Hill due to ill health.
Tracey Crowder-Cloe	has joined Repton School Dubai as Head of Senior School
Tim Hollis	has joined Kent College as Head of Senior School
Dr. Fahd Khalaoui	has joined The English College as Vice Principal
Ian Thurston	has joined Dar Al Marefa as Head of Secondary
David Wilcock	has joined The English College as Head of Primary

If you have senior level jobs you want advertised in the Intelligence Report, add them to the WSA web site. Your school will need an account on the site.

Report your movers and shakers to our editorial team. Editor@WhichSchoolAdvisor.com.

Staff matters

Whilst Senior staff can often take their pick of key positions, the EIG team also wanted to find out what steps were being taken to support teachers in less advanced positions – those who have remain in front of their students, some year in year out, and those who are just starting out. We felt it was time that Staff Wellbeing was also highlighted – hopefully some food for thought as schools try to retain the best and develop the rest ...



We are pleased to see that there is increasing recognition at all levels of the value of teaching staff. We wondered what is happening in the UAE to suggest that this under-rewarded and undervalued group of people is finally being recognised – because by all accounts if schools want to retain staff they need to be.

Improved employment terms for teachers

Recent changes to the Employment Law in relation to teachers suggests that the government recognises the need to support teachers more actively through limiting the amount of time teaching to 18 hours per week (which means 24 periods per week if the duration of period is 45 minutes, and 27 periods per week if the duration of period is 40 minutes). This is designed to enable teachers to undertake ‘research and development activities’. Per the Labour Law, the maximum number of ordinary working hours for adult workers ‘shall be eight hours per day, or 48 hours per week’.

Teacher Supply concerns

Certainly the demands for and dreams of teachers seem to be more in the public eye. Based on a recent article in the Guardian, whilst there are teaching staff who are apparently wholly committed to teaching internationally, the benefits of working abroad, they say, don’t just include sunshine, free accommodation and tax-free earnings, but small classes, more resources, better work-life balance, freedom to travel, capacity to save, private healthcare, and free flights home.

However, an article published in the UK’s Times Education Supplement suggests that concerns raised both in the UK and internationally as far as teacher supply is concerned, are only getting worse. Experts have calculated that there are 4.5 million teachers in the traditional recruiting grounds of the UK, Ireland, Australia and the US and that by 2029 there will be 18,929 international schools. The number of corresponding teaching posts will rise from 506,900 at present to 1.03 million requiring a further 400,000 teaching staff to service this demand. A quarter of teachers in those traditional recruiting countries would have

“The benefits of working abroad, they say, don’t just include sunshine, free accommodation and tax-free earnings, but small classes, more resources, better work-life balance, freedom to travel, capacity to save, private healthcare, and free flights home.”

to move abroad to teach in international schools each year up to 2029 to meet the sector's growing demand. This is an unprecedented demand on the global workforce at a time of global shortage in domestic systems.

UAE teacher recruitment already challenging?

Recruiters in the UAE are apparently already finding attracting and retaining staff a problem. Rising demand for teachers abroad left some schools in the Emirates struggling to fill posts at the start of the academic year. More competitive salaries offered by schools in Asia, Australia and the UK are thought to be partly behind the difficulty in recruiting core staff.

Gavin Walford-Wright, an HR officer at UAE education provider Taaleem, said stronger offers from overseas was one reason for the issue. He said schools in Asia had been targeting international teachers in the Middle East by offering “inflated salaries to secure growing demand. We have been hearing reports that there has been an increased number of teachers declining contracts at a later stage this year [in the UAE],” he said. “This is notably coming from counter offers from their home countries that have teacher shortages, such as the UK and Australia.”

Garrett O'Dowd, founder of Teach and Explore, an overseas educational recruitment agency based in Ireland confirmed that the growing demand for teachers elsewhere in Asia, and a resulting increase in salaries there, was affecting the UAE. “The salaries on offer in Asia are now consistently beating the UAE,” he said. “This was not the case before. In some schools salaries have stagnated and come down in the UAE.”

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, if the current trend continues, 33 countries will not have enough teachers to provide good quality education by 2030. Also, the UIS found that 69 million teachers need to be recruited across the world to achieve universal primary and secondary education by 2030.

The UAE also needs to bear in mind that UK teachers alone are based far and wide in countries as diverse as Vietnam, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Azerbaijan, Qatar, Spain, Italy, Slovakia, Colombia, Sweden and Germany. And also France, Bali,



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Gavin Walford-Wright, Taaleem, founder of Teach and Explore

Singapore, Seychelles, Tanzania, the US, South Korea, Brunei, Japan, Hungary, Belgium, Oman, Jordan, the Czech Republic, Bahrain, Ghana, Ireland, Russia, Zambia, Luxembourg, Cyprus, India, Latvia, Ecuador, the Philippines, the Netherlands, Israel, Uganda, Kuwait, Borneo, Peru, Austria, Kazakhstan and Hungary. Not forgetting Ascension Island, Egypt, Myanmar, Norway, Saudi Arabia and Moldova. Interestingly, not one of the 300 teachers who responded to the Guardian was from the UAE.

With such a wealth of overseas opportunities – and such a potential shortage of qualified teaching staff – perhaps international schools in the UAE should be considering how they are going to find staff to bridge this potential gap.

Possible solutions to the anticipated teacher shortage?

One bright light on the horizon – at least for the short-term – is the UK election result, which is likely only to encourage teachers in the UK to seek opportunities overseas. However, articles in the UAE press are likely to be a concern for any teacher considering a move to the UAE, given some recent comments.

And hot off the press, the announcement that The Chartered College of Teaching's flagship CTeach programme is to be delivered in the UAE after the professional body partnered with the UAE Research Schools Network and BSAK Leadership and Learning Academy, suggests that school groups are responding to the call to develop more teachers locally. Although initially the UAE partnership will deliver the course to teachers at schools within its own network, they could provide it to others in the future.

CTeach, is a 14-month course designed to represent excellence in teaching, has previously been delivered in its entirety by the Chartered College itself. The professional body's membership numbers passed 30,000 in the autumn.

The College has been under pressure to become financially independent and although the need to raise money isn't thought to be the main driver for the use of a total of 11 external delivery providers going forward, the change will help the College scale-up its operations and creates a bigger pool for potential trainees. If

“The announcement that The Chartered College of Teaching's flagship CTeach programme is to be delivered in the UAE after the professional body partnered with the UAE Research Schools Network and BSAK Leadership and Learning Academy, suggests that school groups are responding to the call to develop more teachers locally.”

this pilot cohort works well, leaders hope to recruit a wider pool of providers to work with in future.

The partners will provide training and mentoring to support teachers in the cohort launching this April to achieve chartered teacher status. However, the assessment and quality assurance elements of the course will still be run in-house by the College.

Overseas teachers will only be able to participate if they meet the requirements for College membership. The organisation's rules state that only those who did their teacher training in the UK, Ireland, a crown dependency or British overseas territory can join.

Improved status and recognition for Early Years teachers

Reported in the National, Elisa Guerra, a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) International Commission member for their Futures of Education Initiative, said Nursery teachers play a vital role in a child's future development and should not be seen as "glorified nannies". People do not realise the importance of early childhood development but there is extensive research suggesting that investment in early years education is what creates the greatest impact for children," said, Ms Guerra, "Even now early childhood educators are seen as glorified nannies in many parts of the world."

Teacher Workload and Support networks

A further article in the National – 'Our Children's Future depends on Happy teachers' – also noted a worrying trend among the men and women "we rely on to shape the minds of future generations" with a growing number of teachers leaving the profession. In the last three years, more than 1,000 public school teachers in the UAE have resigned, according to the Federal National Council. "The workload for many teachers is beyond what they can manage," one former teacher, who quit after a decade, told The National. The same issues apply to staff in private schools, who may be rewarded better but are still faced by substantial amounts of mandatory paperwork and heavy workloads which may add



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Elisa Guerra, UNESCO

up to six extra working hours by day and force dedicated teachers to give up the job they love. The UAE is not alone in this; schools around the world are losing dedicated staff because of the impact of overwork on their wellbeing, which can have a knock-on effect on their family life and mental health.

So difficult has the situation apparently become that a support network—Teacher Socials – set up three years ago by a British teacher based in the UAE, following his own concerns about a fellow teacher based in Sharjah, now has 10,000 members. Interestingly, most of the members are from Western countries, who despite their higher salaries and benefits, tend to find it harder to adapt to their job and life in the UAE. Robert Welsh, who started the group, notes that “They are far from home and don’t have the same support networks as people from neighbouring countries or those who have large communities here. They are not familiar with the laws and customs, which can lead to problems.” The group has 12 counsellors on hand to offer advice to those under pressure.

Education groups respond to potential staff shortages

It seems that the potential shortage of staff is being appreciated by some teaching groups in the UAE. Having announced a pay freeze for all its teachers in mid-2018, GEMS Education had already reversed the decision by November (less than six months later), in time to start the contract renewal and new staff recruitment process for 2019-20. Interestingly, GEMS has also widened its search locations, with staff from South Asia being brought in and trained “on the job” to teach the UK curriculum. Take GEMS Cambridge International School Sharjah – almost all staff are from India, none had previously taught the UK curriculum. Numerous traditional UK curriculum schools attracting predominantly Indian families in the UAE are also staffed by teachers from the sub-continent. Is this approach the answer for other schools and curricula? And would it be acceptable to parents?

One thing is for sure; benefits, and development will become a still greater focus if schools wish to attract and retain key staff. ■



[Our members] are far from home and don’t have the same support networks as people from neighbouring countries or those who have large communities here. They are not familiar with the laws and customs, which can lead to problems.”

Robert Welsh, founder of Teacher Socials

Teacher Survey

Q1-4 2019

Teachers are one of, if not the, biggest cost for a school. They are also the soul that, in combination with leadership and culture, make each school what it is.

Given this, understanding the motivations, aspirations, and goals of teachers within each of the UAE's schools is essential if its leaders hope to maximise the effectiveness of what is their most essential, and powerful, resource.

Any school wanting to understand their specific school in context with these results, should not hesitate to contact us.

A note on our pricing brackets

Value schools are those with average annual fees, across year groups, of AED 20,000 or less.

Mid priced schools are those with fees of between AED 20,000 and AED 45,000 annually.

Premium fee schools are those with average annual fees in excess of AED 45,000. Note: we also have a price banding for Premium Plus schools of AED 65,000+, however we do not refer to Premium Plus fee schools in this analysis.

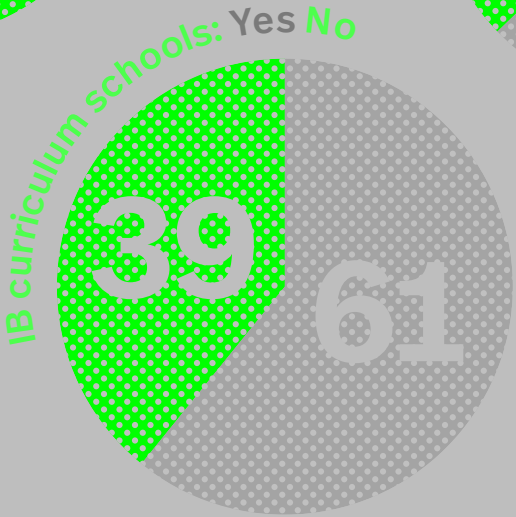
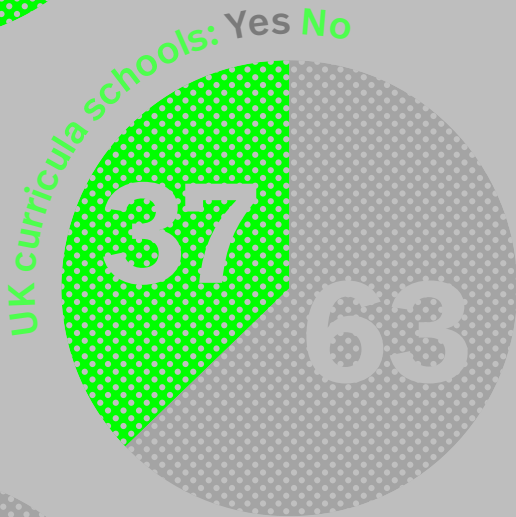
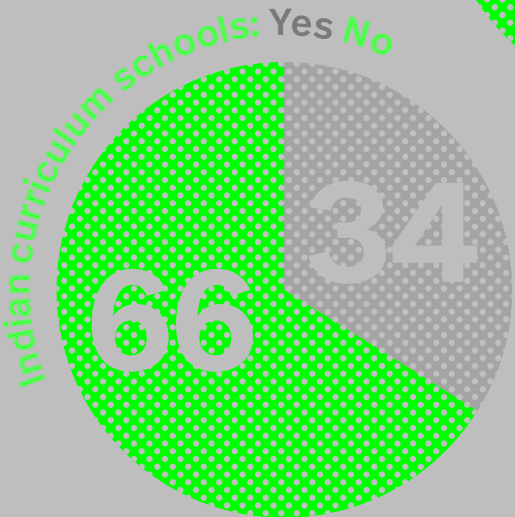
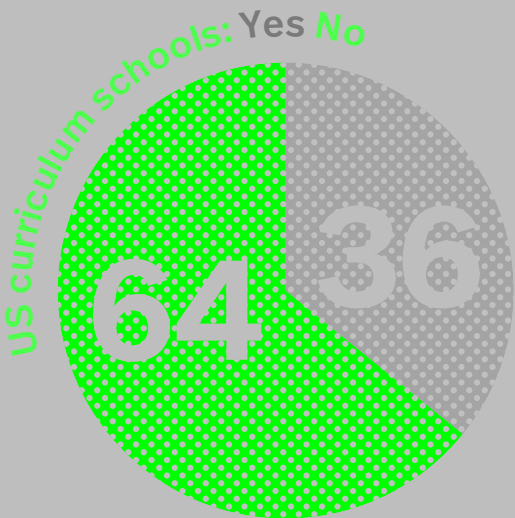
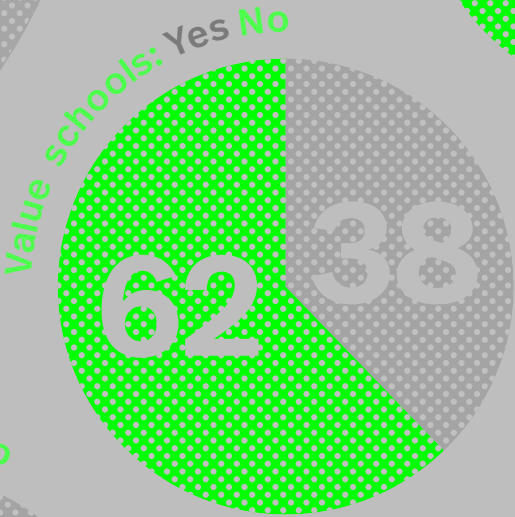
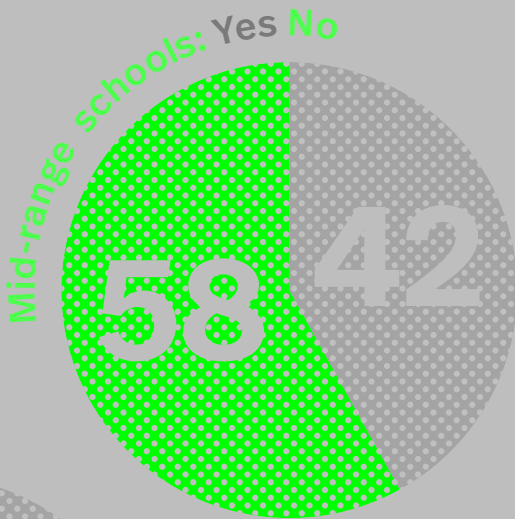
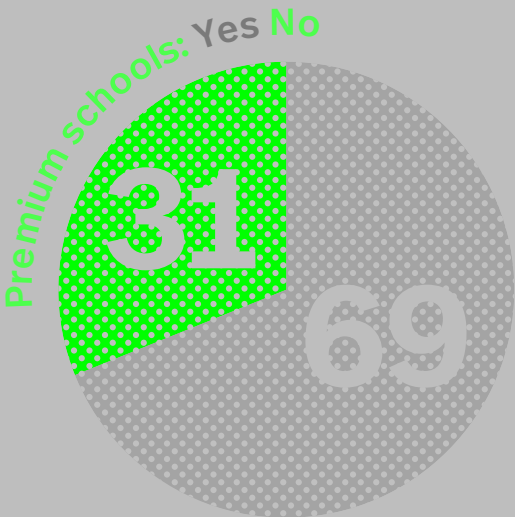
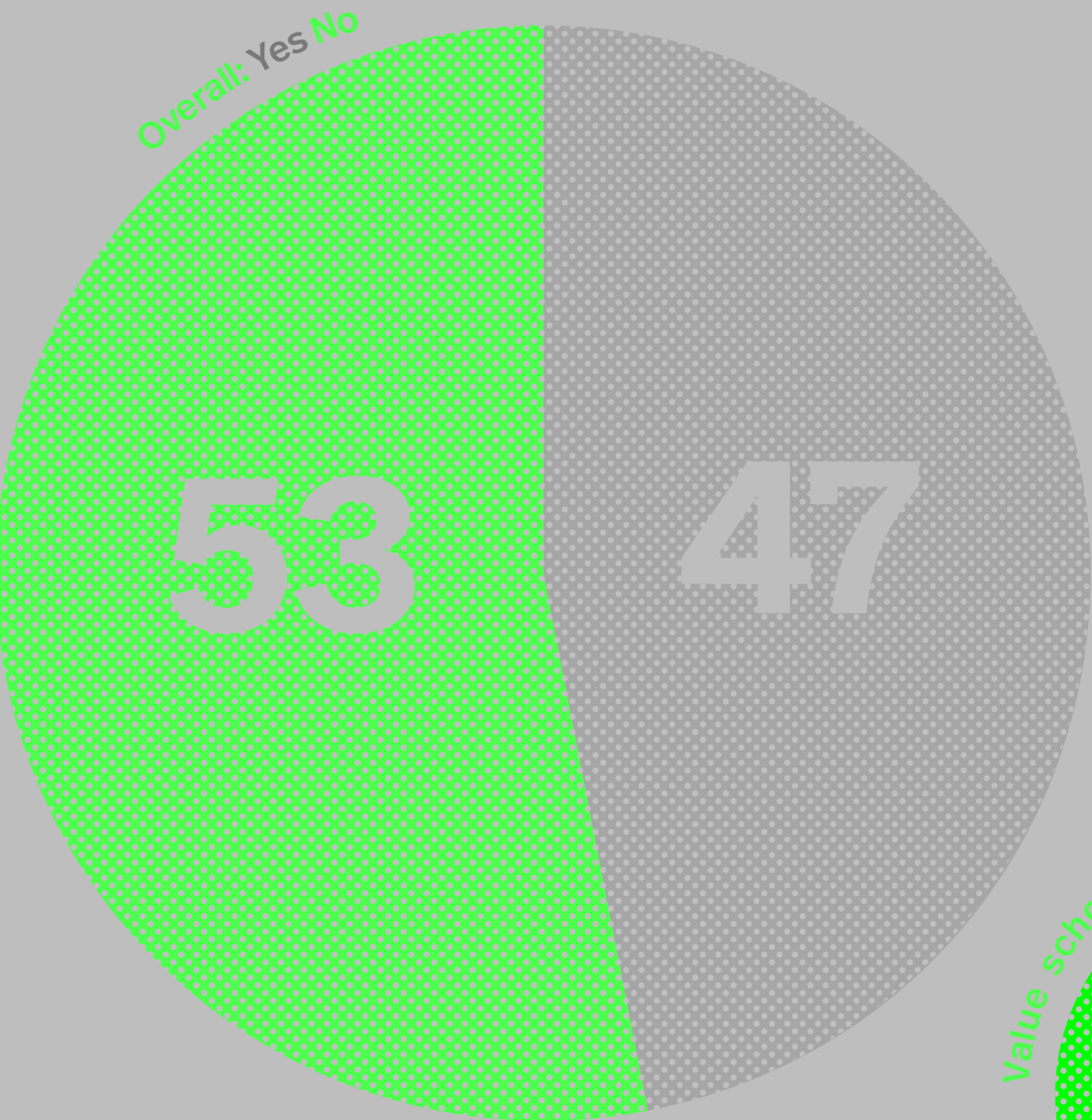
Teacher Salaries: How much is enough?

Happiness regarding salary is rarely about just the amount someone is paid, a fact our survey proves. Teachers working in US curriculum schools earn more than their counterparts in Indian schools, and yet have the same, low, satisfaction levels with their take home pay. Recognition, performance appraisals, frequency of salary increments, career advancement, amongst other things, all play a role.

That said, teachers in UK and IB schools, who are the best paid, are also the most likely to agree their salary and compensation is fair. A definite factor then, just not the only one.

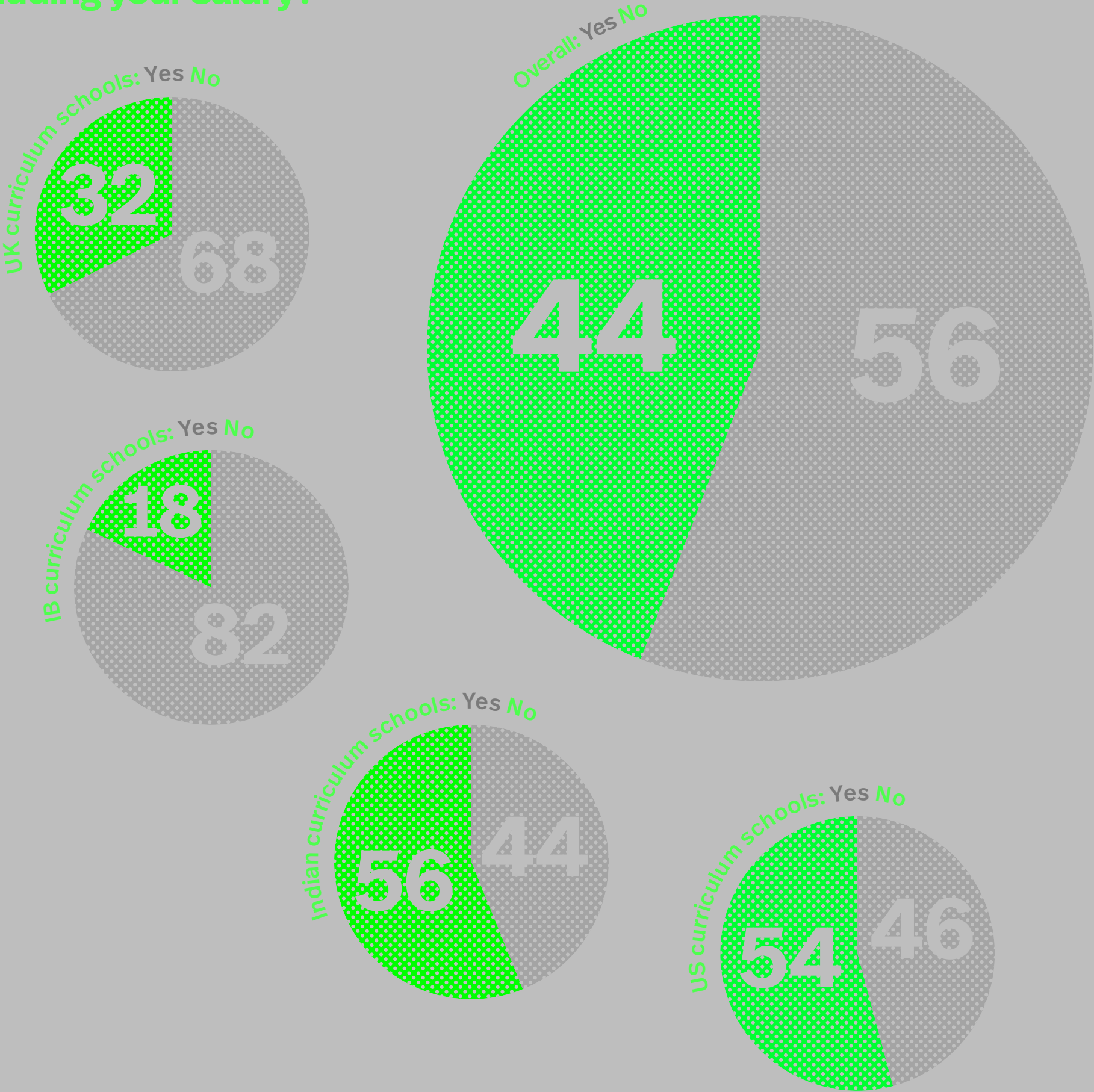
Note: This survey is based on 574 surveys from across the UAE. You can take the survey for 2020 right now on [WhichSchoolAdvisor.com](https://www.WhichSchoolAdvisor.com).

Do you think your current salary is fair?



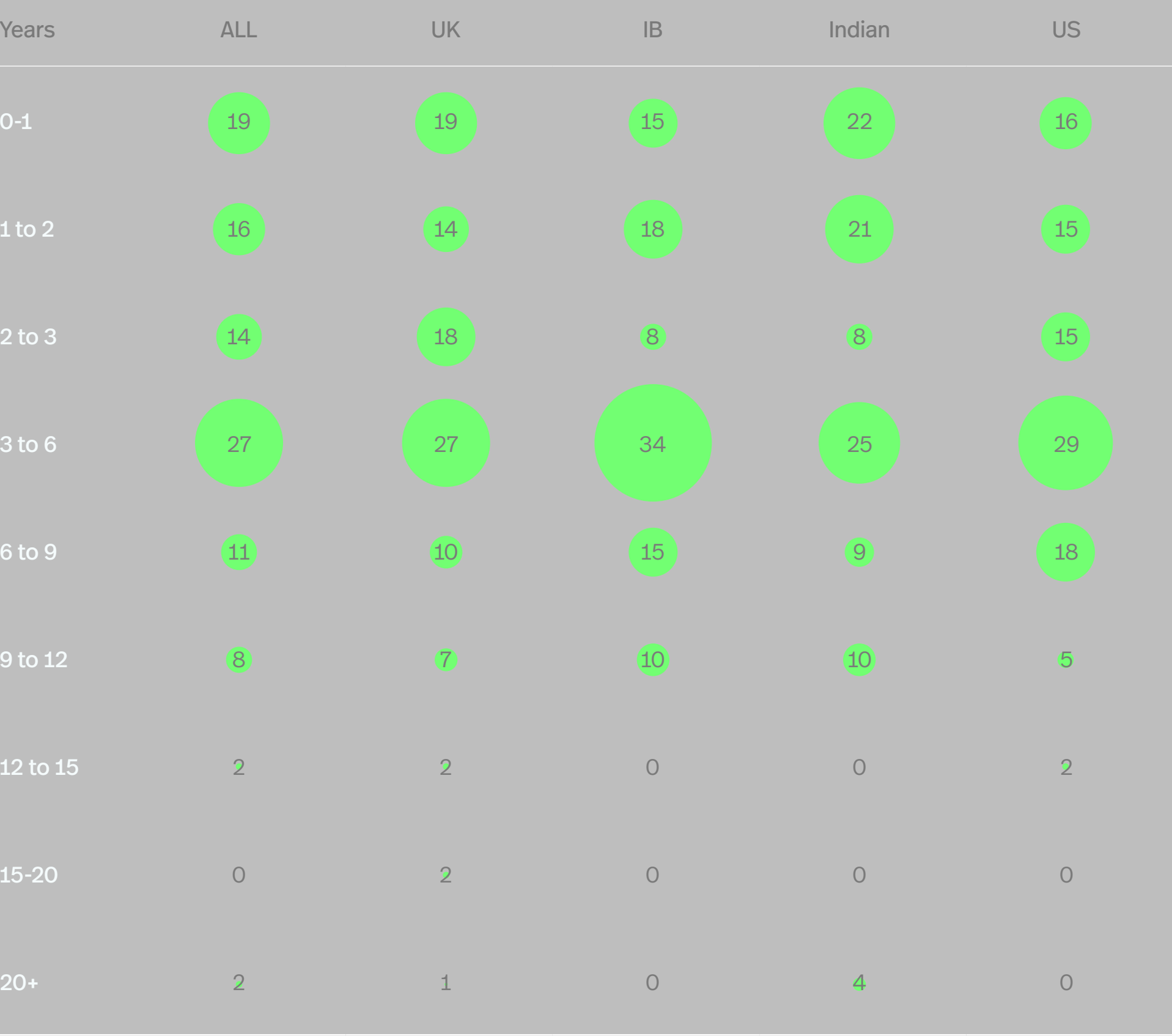
IB and UK schools and US and Indian schools tend to perform similarly when it comes to teacher’s thoughts towards the fairness of their salaries. In neither the case of UK/IB nor US/Indian are actual salaries similar however.

Are you happy with your package excluding your salary?



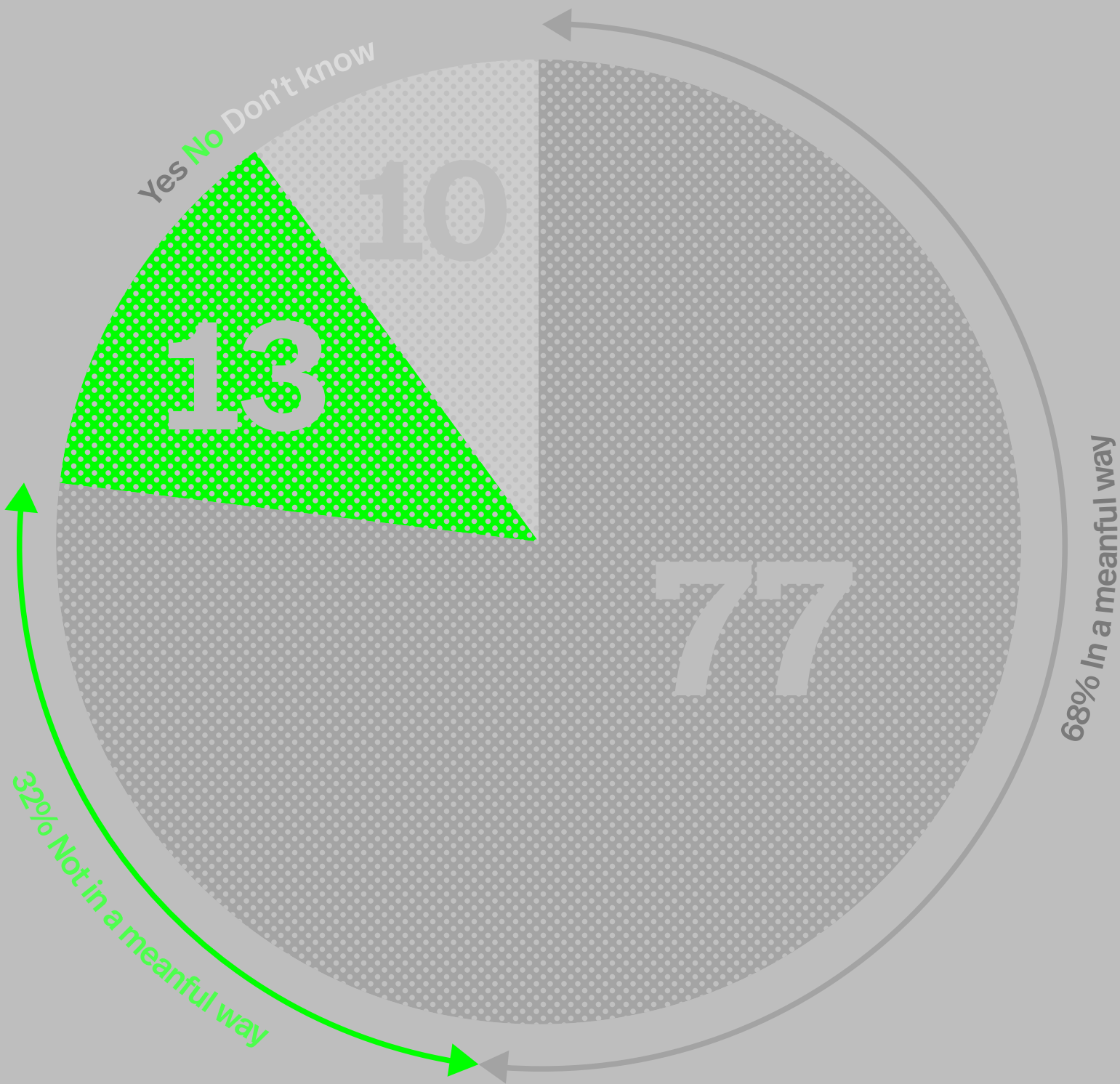
A teacher in an IB school is almost twice as likely to be satisfied with his or her package than a teacher in a US or Indian curriculum school... While UK and IB schools perform similarly in regards to perceived fairness of salary, IB schools pull ahead with their overall package.

For how many years have you been a teacher in your current school?



50% or more of teachers within UK, US and Indian curricula schools have been at their school for less than three years. (IB schools have fewer new teachers). Indian schools tend to have a greater percentage of teachers that have been in their post for less than 12 months. This is a major source of parent complaint to WhichSchoolAdvisor.com, with parents citing it as a cause of a lack of continuity.

Does your school have a performance appraisal process and if so, do you feel the school uses the appraisal process in a meaningful way for you?



Note, of the 77% of teachers who say they do receive a performance appraisal, only 68% believe it to be meaningful and to have value for them, and their school.

What is your current monthly salary in USD



Each curriculum has a definite, dominant salary band. For the Indian curriculum, this lies in the \$1,000 to \$2,000 range (75% of salaries), for the US curriculum it lies in the \$2,000 to \$3,000 range (41%), while for IB it lies in the \$4,000 to \$5,000 range (44%). The UK curriculum is the least defined when it comes to salary range, which makes sense with by far the most schools in the UAE, positioned across premium-, mid- and value-fee levels.

Did your salary last year increase?



Partly explaining the similarity in salary contentment levels between US and Indian schools is that, while salaries are lower in Indian schools, its teachers were considerably more likely to have had a pay rise last year. 75% of teachers in US schools either did not receive a pay rise last year, or received one that was below UAE inflation, making them, in real terms, worse off in 2019 than they were in 2018.

Aside from your salary, what other benefits does your school offer?

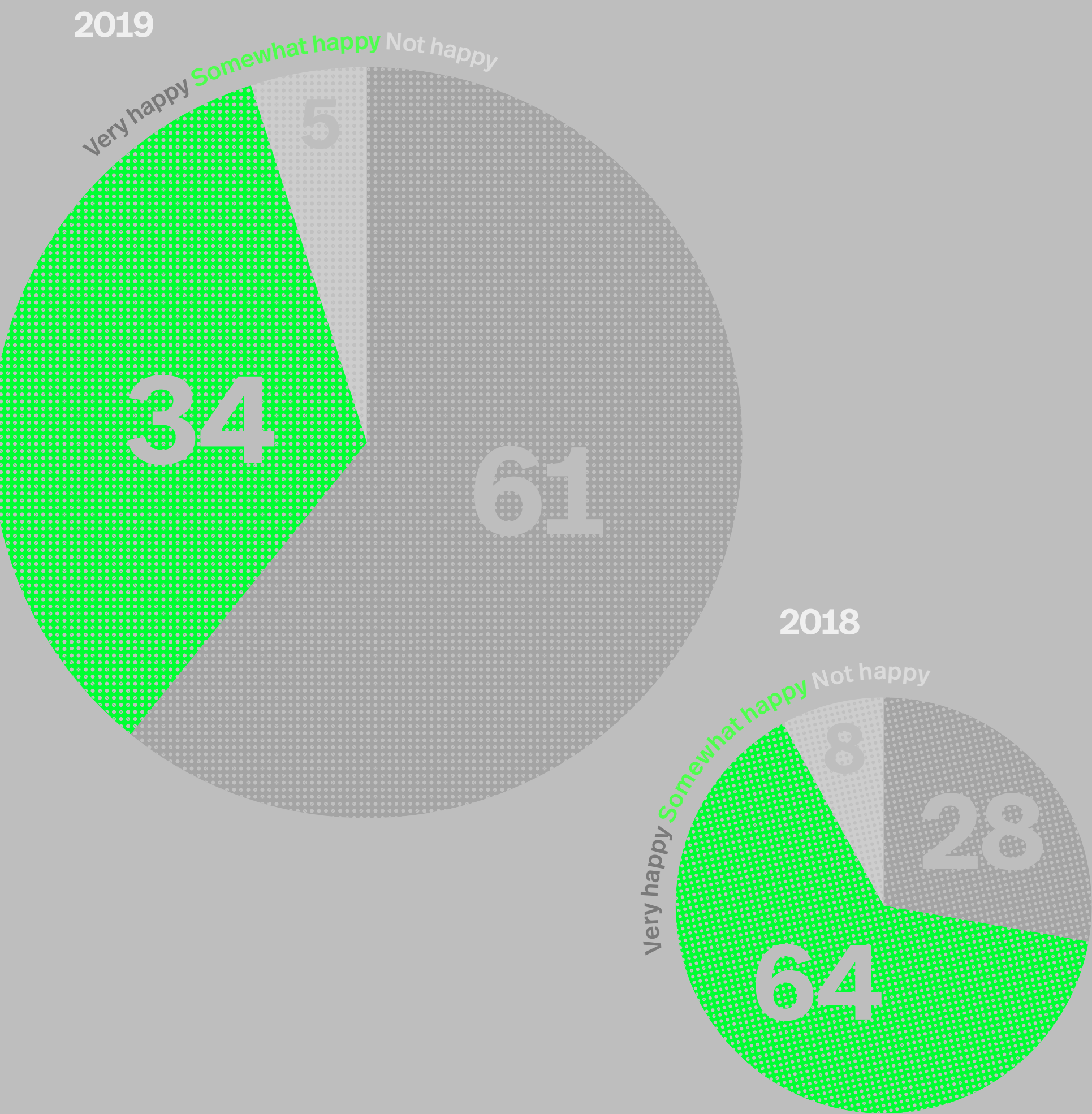
Years	Average	Premium	Mid	Value
Housing	10	8	11	10
Housing allowance	13	14	17	9
Furniture allowance	1	2	0	1
Relocation allowance	3	6	0	1
Annual air ticket for me to my home country	15	15	18	16
Annual air tickets for my family to my home country	5	8	3	2
Health insurance	22	17	26	19
Family health insurance	4	7	3	2
Gym / club memberships	1	1	0	0
CPD allowance	2	4	0	2
Discount card	2	4	0	3
School fee allowance	13	12	11	16

Teachers in value schools are far more likely to get a transport allowance, which given the salary range will also mean more to them. Teachers in value fee schools are far less likely to get a housing allowance, however, than their peers in mid- or premium-fee schools.

Keeping the talent behind your school's success

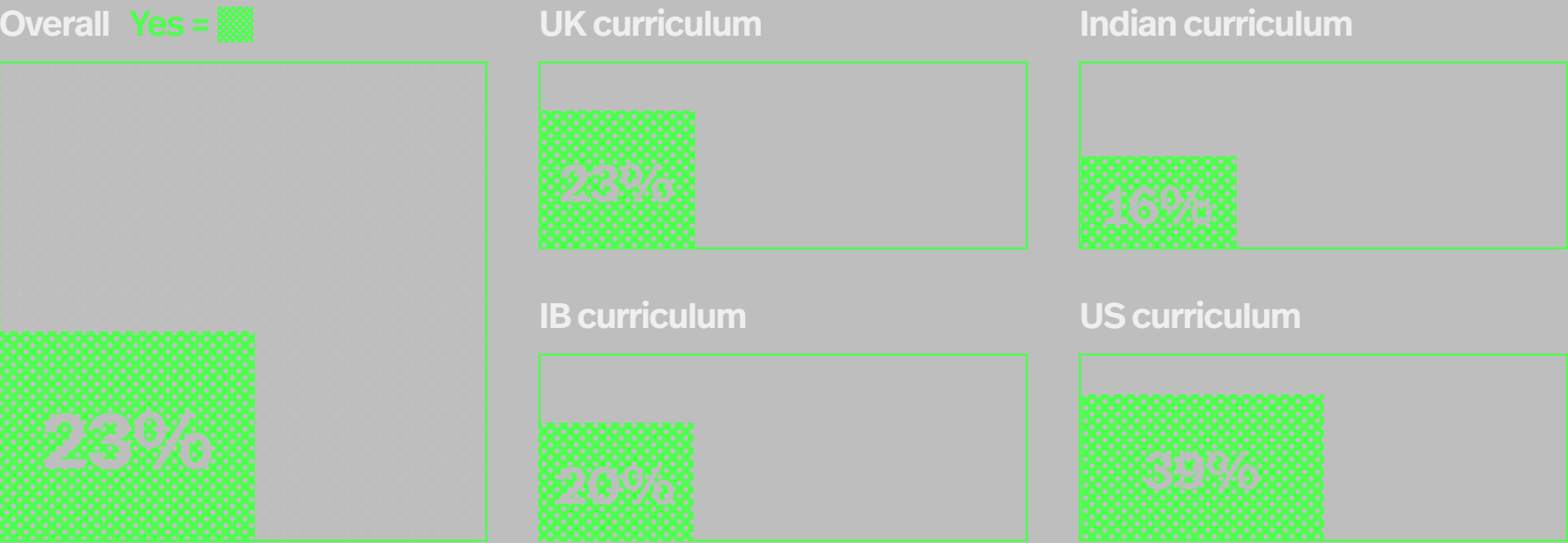
So, how are teachers in the UAE feeling right now? This year we have seen a very big rise in the number of teachers saying they are Very Happy, from being Somewhat Happy. This is partly because we have moved to our own Survey platform which may have skewed the results slightly, but it seems also UAE schools have been doing a lot right with an increasing number of initiatives to keep teachers longer. From our discussions with senior leaders, there is a growing awareness it is a lot less expensive and time consuming to put measures in place to retain good teachers, than it is to recruit them.

How happy or unhappy are you with your current role?



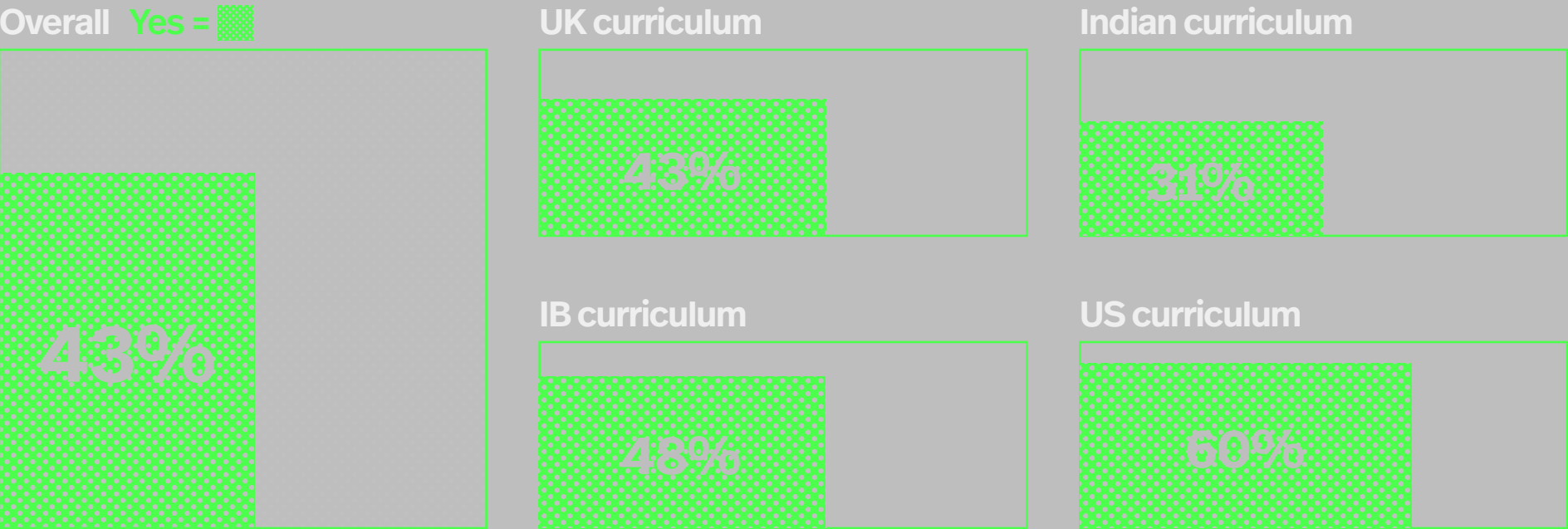
While the number of unhappy teachers has remained relatively unchanged, there has been a big move this year from ‘Somewhat happy’ to ‘Very happy’.

Are you actively seeking another job?



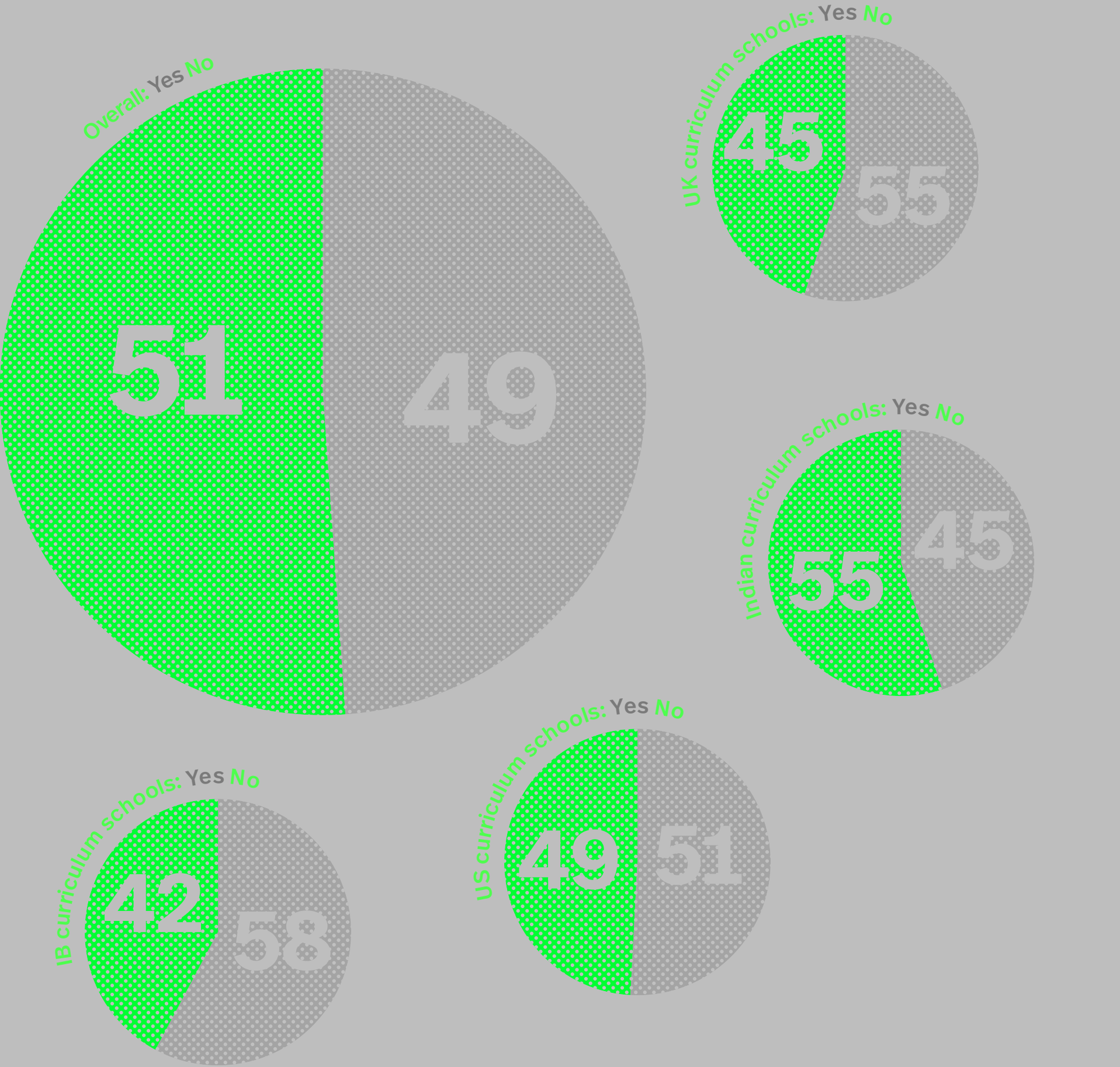
Teachers in Indian curriculum schools may be paid the least, but they are also the least likely to be looking for another job. Teachers in US schools are the least loyal. They are the second poorest paid segment of teachers, the least likely to have had a pay rise, and have greater global opportunities than their Indian curriculum peers.

Would you consider leaving your current position for another job in your current country?



In general, teachers in the UAE are far more likely to leave their current role for a job in ANOTHER country (see the next page), than to move schools in the Emirates itself. The exception to the rule is US teachers. An incredible 6/10 teachers in US schools in the UAE would consider moving to another school in the country.

Would you consider leaving your current position for one in a DIFFERENT country if the opportunity came up?



IB and UK curricula teachers are the most global in outlook when it comes to career opportunities. In both cases, a significantly higher percentage of teachers in these schools would consider a new job in another country, than a new job in the United Arab Emirates itself.

Which countries are you most interested to move to for work (excluding current country)?

Country	Average	UK	IB	Indian	US
Canada	13	12	7	16	12
Singapore	9	9	9	8	8
UK	9	13	6	9	2
Australia	8	9	6	11	5
Other Europe	8	9	11	5	8
New Zealand	6	6	5	8	5
USA	6	4	4	7	6
India	4	2	0	13	0
Hong Kong	3	5	5	5	4
Malaysia	3	3	4	2	4
Oman	3	3	2	4	3
Qatar	3	2	4	4	4
Thailand	3	3	4	0	3
China	2	2	4	0	2
Ireland	2	3	4	2	2
Japan	2	2	2	2	5
Vietnam	2	2	3	0	2
Other Asia	2	2	5	0	3
Other Americas	2	2	4	0	2
Korea	1	1	3	0	4
Lebanon	1	0	0	0	5
Other Africa	1	0	3	0	2

Indian school teachers are the most limited when it comes to choosing other countries in which to teach. Experience in UK, US and IB schools delivers a passport of fairly equal power to teach internationally. Canada is the most popular destination overall.

What is the single most effective thing your school could do to make you want to stay longer?



Retention is not all about the salary, although if you ask teachers to name the single most important thing the school could do to keep them longer, it really does dominate. There are other levers to pull however, with non-salary based incentives working most effectively on teachers who are already ‘well’ remunerated.

IB teachers for example, the best paid of all teacher groups, are half as likely to consider better salary as the most important lever a school can pull to keep them compared to Indian curriculum teachers (23% to 46%). They are also by far the most likely to cite work/life balance as a single most effective thing their school could do to keep them (with 27%).

The secret of (recruitment) success: word of mouth

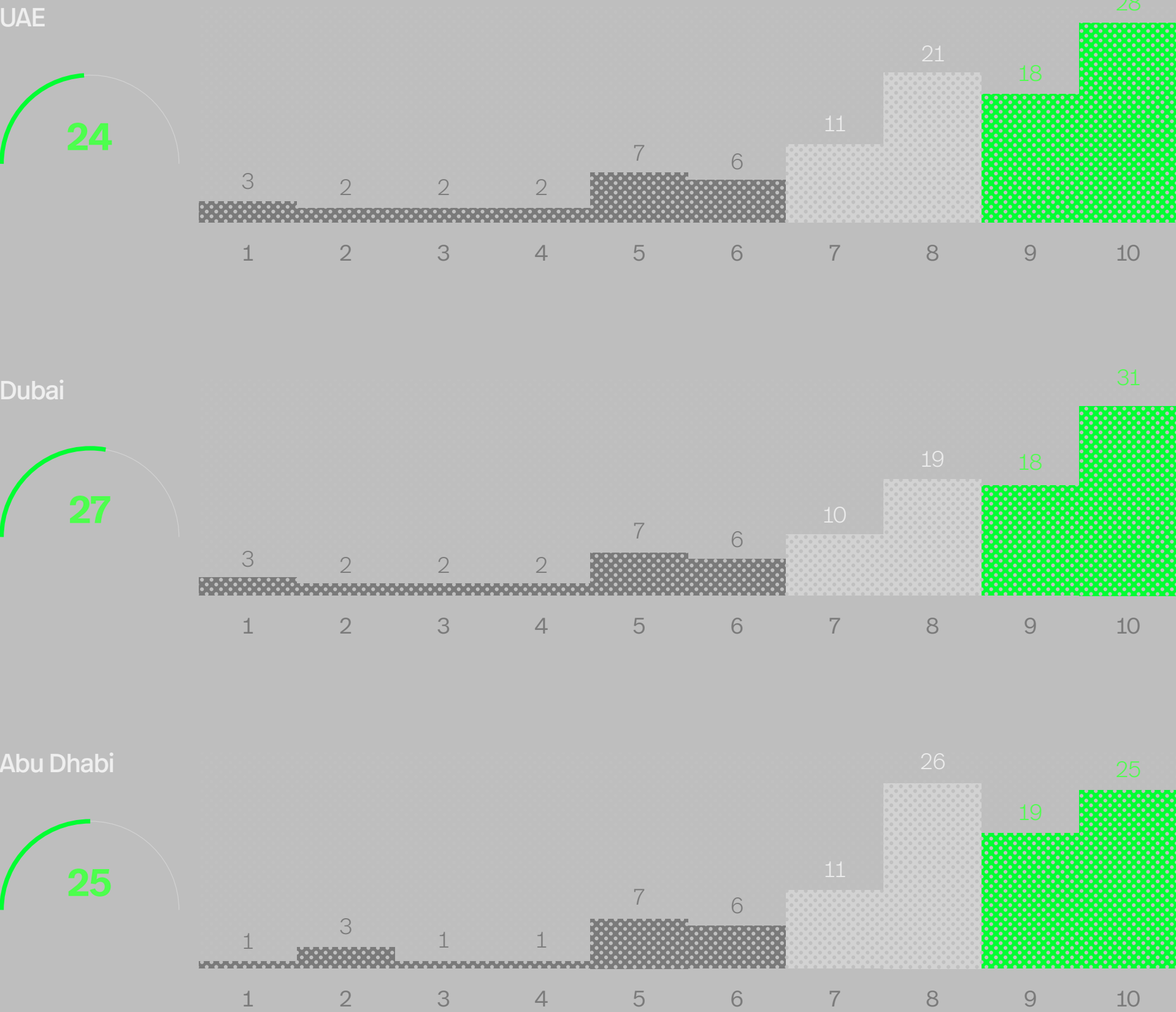
Word of mouth is often cited as the primary reason why parents and teachers choose a school, but how can you measure how positively a school is talked about? The answer is the Net Promoter Score (NPS), which is a measure of how likely it is a school will be recommended. Here, teachers are asked how highly they would recommend their school to peers, on a rating up to 10. Teachers that rate their school a 9 or a 10 are considered promoters. Teachers that rate their school up to 6 are considered Detractors. Teachers giving a score of 7 or 8 are considered passive.

To determine the NPS score, the percentage of detractors is subtracted from the percentage of promoters. The final score can be positive or negative. A negative NPS means a school would find it much more difficult to recruit any good teacher doing his or her due diligence.

With increasing competition globally for teaching talent, the UAE as a whole needs a positive NPS to be able to continue [to be able] to attract the brightest talent to the Emirates.

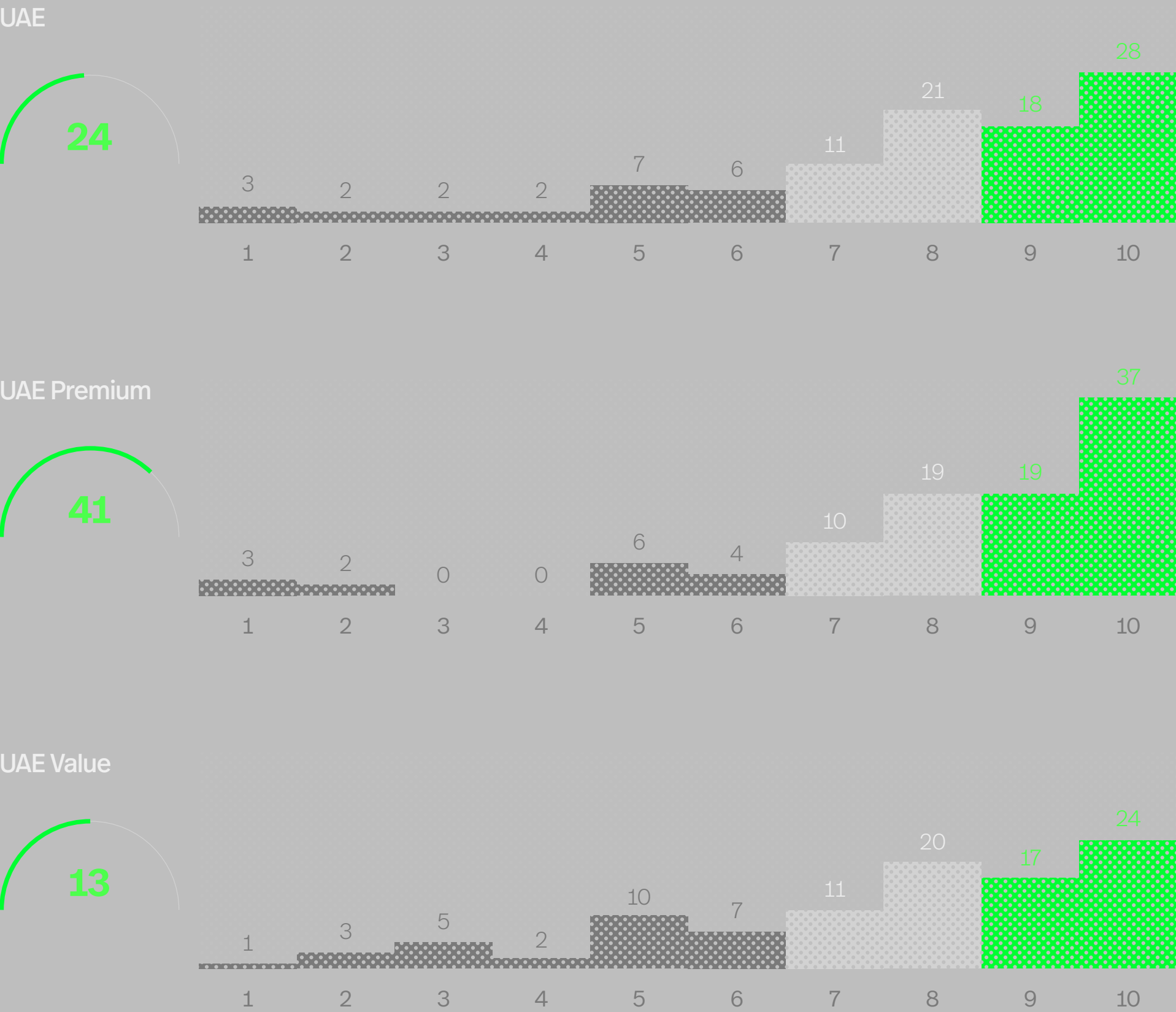
In general terms, for a goods or service, any Net Promoter Score that is positive is considered “good”, +50 is “Excellent,” and +70 would be considered “World class”.

Net Promoter Score: UAE vs Dubai vs Abu Dhabi



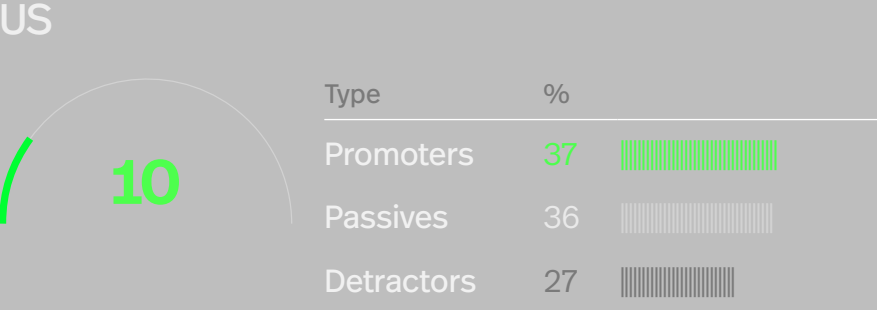
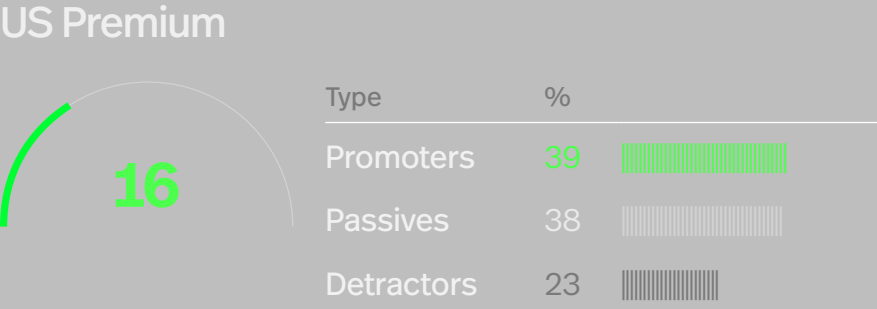
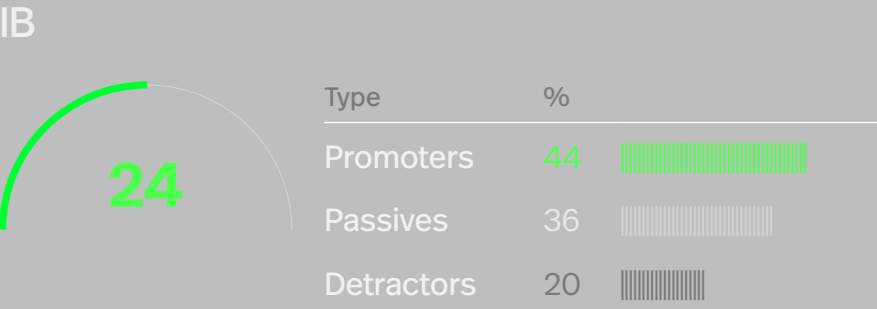
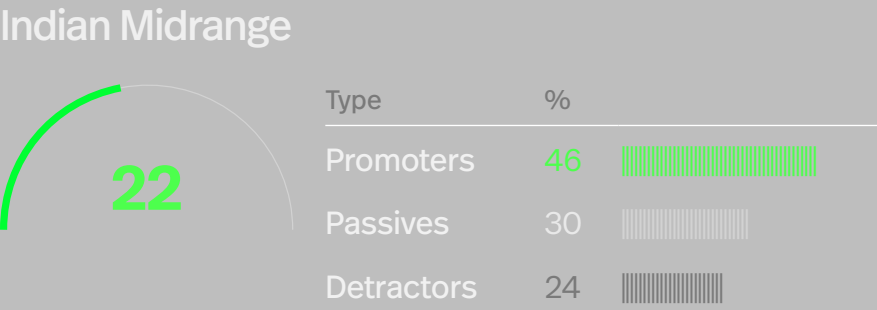
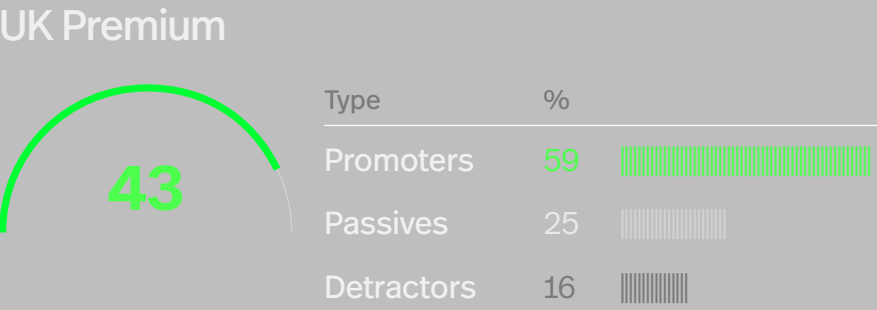
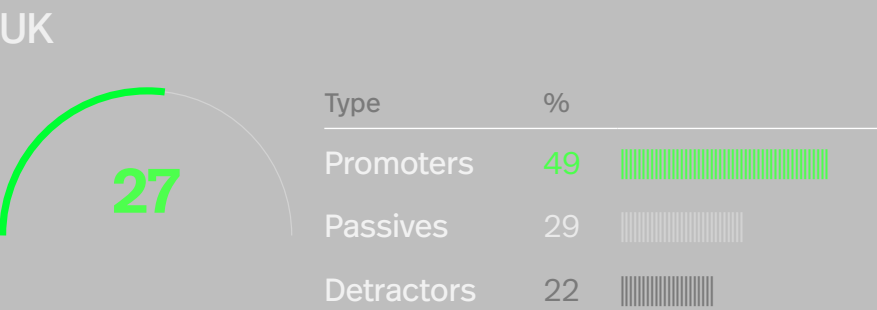
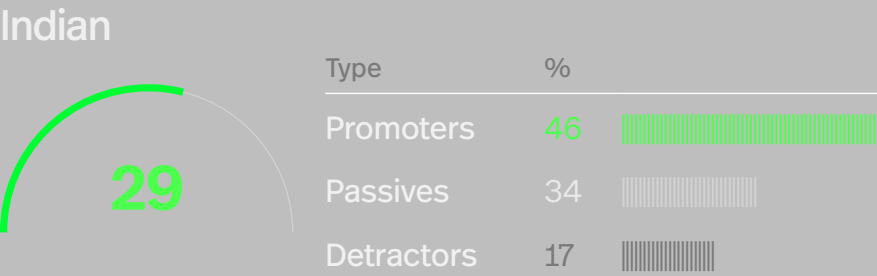
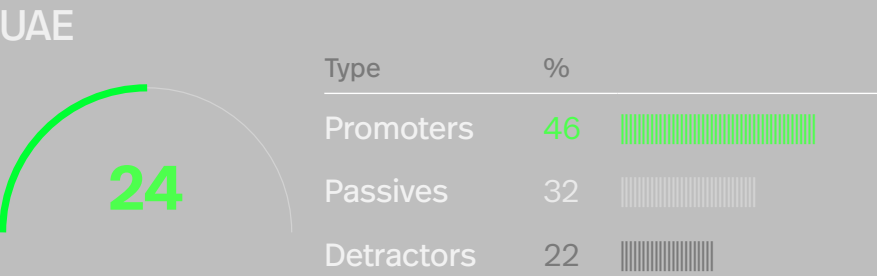
UAE schools, in general, have a fairly strong Net Promoter Score, which means the country should be able to attract teachers globally through word of mouth. In the 2020 survey we will include Singapore and Hong Kong, which will allow us to compare across other territories competing for the same talent. Dubai currently scores marginally higher than Abu Dhabi or the Northern Emirates. Note Abu Dhabi has less detractors than Dubai, but also more passives.

Net Promoter Score: UAE Premium vs Value



Perhaps no surprise, but teachers in premium fee schools are considerably more likely to recommend their school to their peers than those in value schools. With the high percentage of 10s, when they do, they are also likely to do so more effusively: The top schools in the UAE have brand advocates as opposed to just brand supporters. This will make recruitment and attracting real talent to these schools considerably easier.

Net Promoter Score: UAE by Curriculum



US curriculum schools in the UAE are the least likely to be able to attract teachers via word of mouth, with the lowest NPS of all curricula (+10). Surprisingly, Indian curriculum schools have the best NPS (+29) before segmentation. Teachers in Indian schools are, in general, very loyal and truly believe in their school’s brand. Interestingly however, mid-range Indian schools perform more poorly than Indian curriculum value schools. The segment that has the highest NPS of all however is the UK premium sector, which has a NPS of 43, over four times that of US curriculum schools.

The differences in the curricula ...

By and large schools across curricula can be seen to be focusing, and achieving, in the same areas. However, there are some interesting differences.

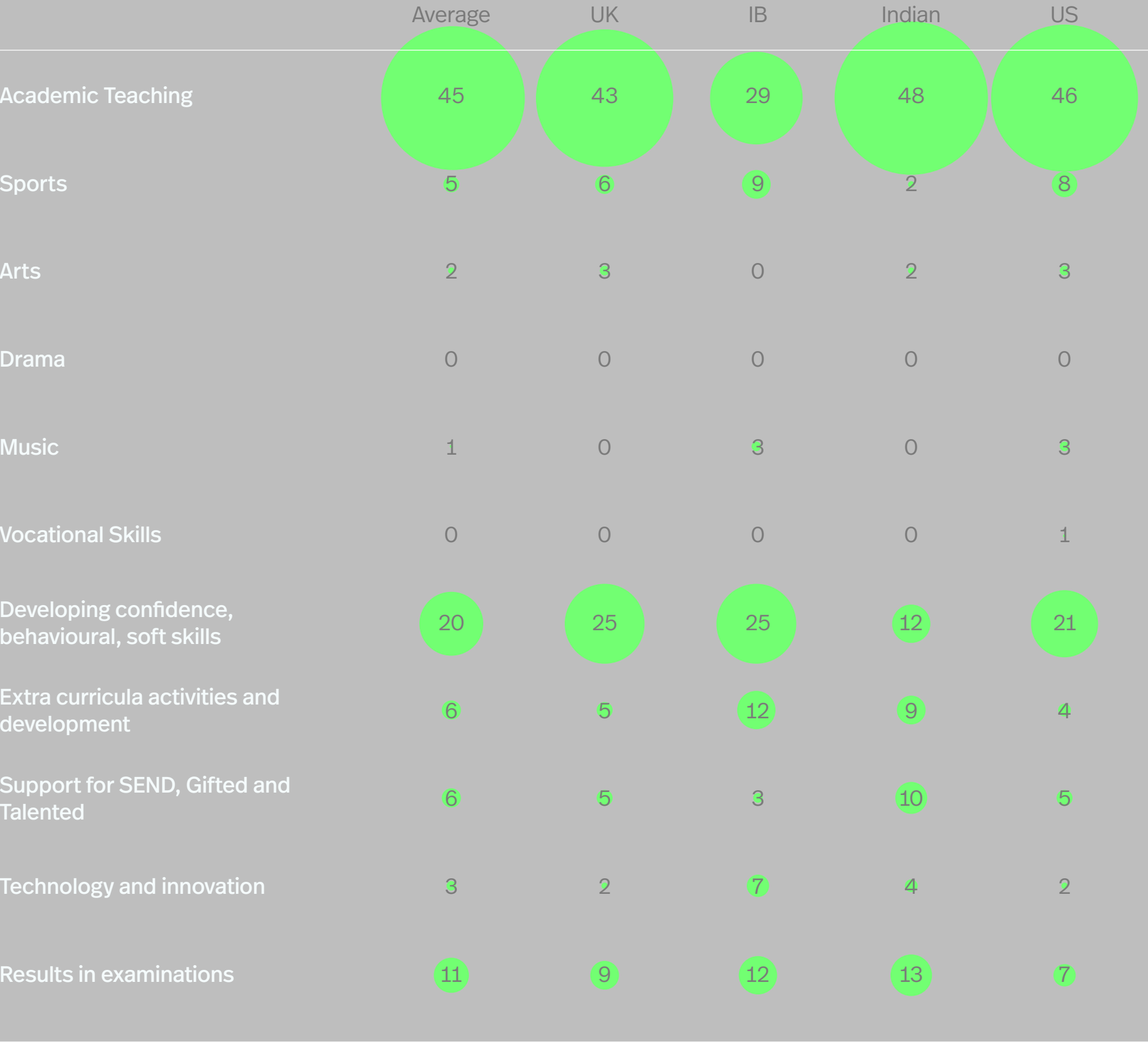
IB stands out with a significantly lower percentage of teachers quoting academic teaching as the one best thing the school does. One reason we believe this may be is that the IB, pre-Diploma, defines itself less on its curriculum and what is taught, and more on child development and self exploration at the centre of a non-prescriptive 'framework'.

As a result, developing behavioural or softer skills are ranked more highly than in other curricula (save the UK), as are non-academic pursuits such as sport, technology or music (although, oddly, not the Arts).

Another curriculum that stands out, for almost the opposite reason, is the Indian curriculum. Teachers do not believe the curriculum performs well in terms of its ability to develop confidence, and the softer, behavioural based skills of its students. This should be a source for concern for the architects of the CBSE, given educators, West and East, are placing considerably more importance on these softer skills in light of the increasingly 'unknowable' state of tomorrow's workplace.

Finally, we note that 'results in examinations' seems to be less important to US curriculum schools than any other, perhaps the result of the fact the High School Diploma is less of a gateway to university, than, for example, the IB Diploma or GCE A Level.

What, above all else, do you think your school does best?



The IB and Indian curricula stand at two opposite poles in terms of academic teaching and the development of behavioural and softer skills. Perhaps because it sits across price points, the UK curriculum fairs less well than the IB in items such as extra curricula activities, or technology and innovation. Surprisingly we think, Indian teachers are more likely to believe that their school supports SEND, and the Gifted and Talented, than their peers.

Money, happiness and being in the middle ...

While money talks, and the more you pay the more a school offers, throughout this analysis we see that mid-range fee schools do not perform or behave as they should.

We believe this is for three reasons. The first is that there can be a mismatch between facilities and staffing. If a mid-priced school has premium style facilities, it will likely be harder on staffing to find the margin it needs.

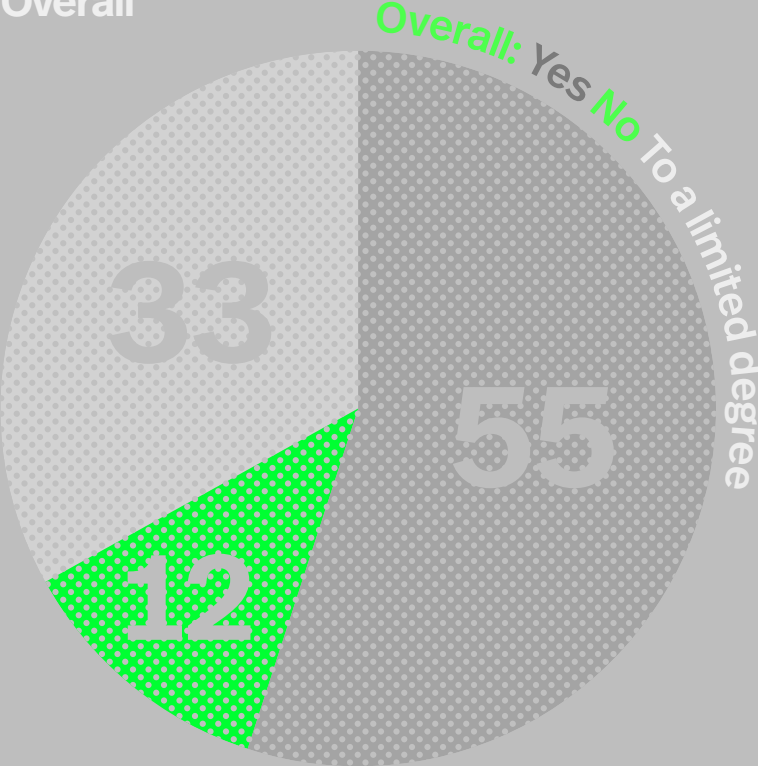
The second reason is that the value proposition of the mid-market is less well understood. Teachers in value schools, where the fee is low, have lower expectations to match, and these are 'more' easily met as a result. Teachers in premium fee schools have higher expectations, but these are largely met through the greater and higher quality resources offered. Mid-range fees sit, often uncomfortably, in the middle with more resource than value-based schools, but seemingly not at the level of resources teachers or parents want or expect.

The final reason value schools seem to do better than mid-range fee schools in terms of delivered resources is expectation placed ON teachers themselves, who are expected to deliver more by both parents and the school itself than those in value fee schools.

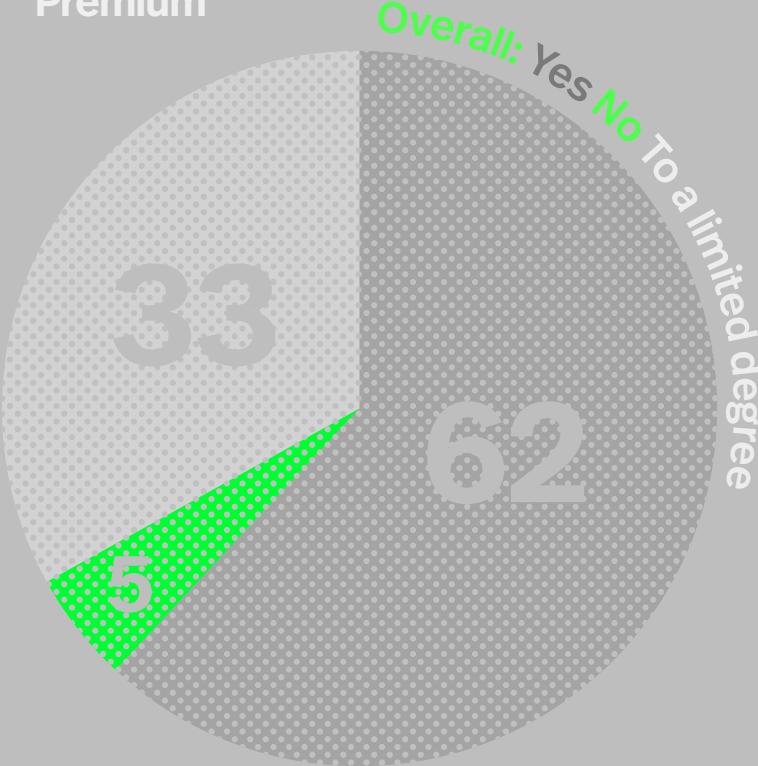
Given the move to mid-market, this should be an eye opener. While profit and pupils may lie in this direction, happiness and satisfaction, according to our survey at least, does not.

Do you feel your school has the resources to give each child individual attention?

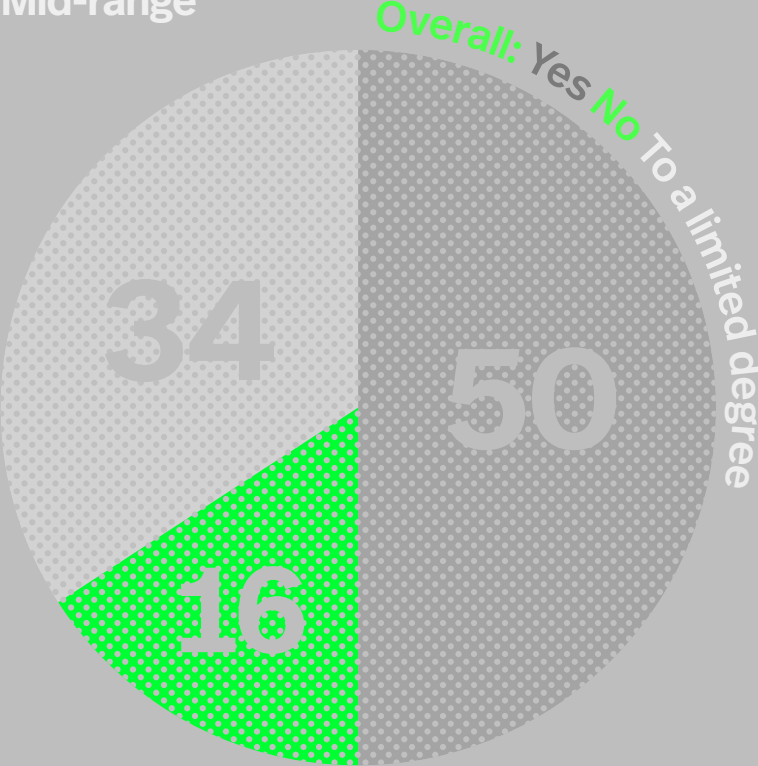
Overall



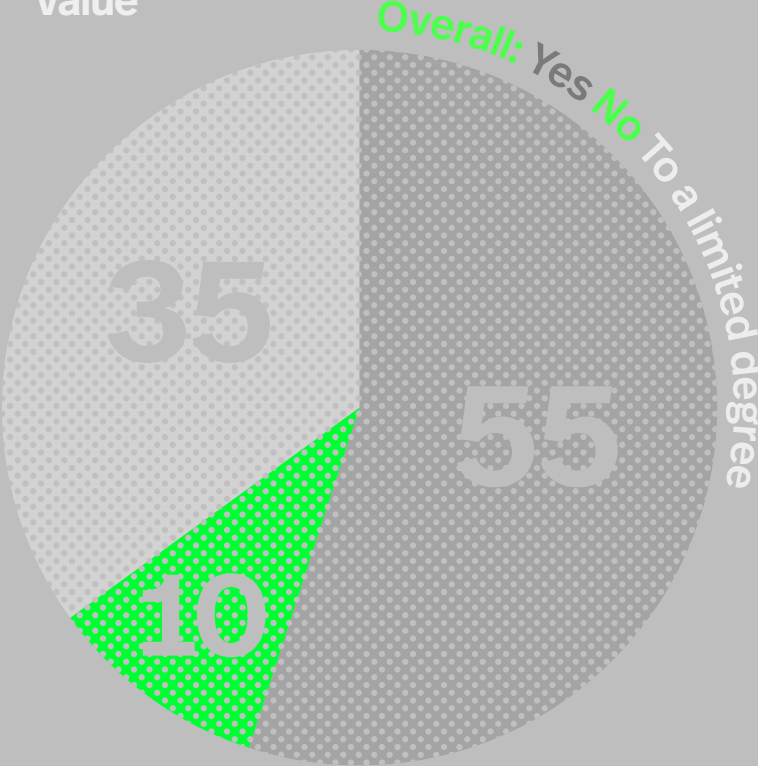
Premium



Mid-range



Value



Value schools tend to perform better than mid-range schools when it comes to the question of whether a school has sufficient resources to give individual attention to students. It is less of a surprise that premium fee schools perform the best here with 62% of teachers in premium fee schools thinking they have sufficient resouces to give children individual attention, compared to an average across schools of 55%.

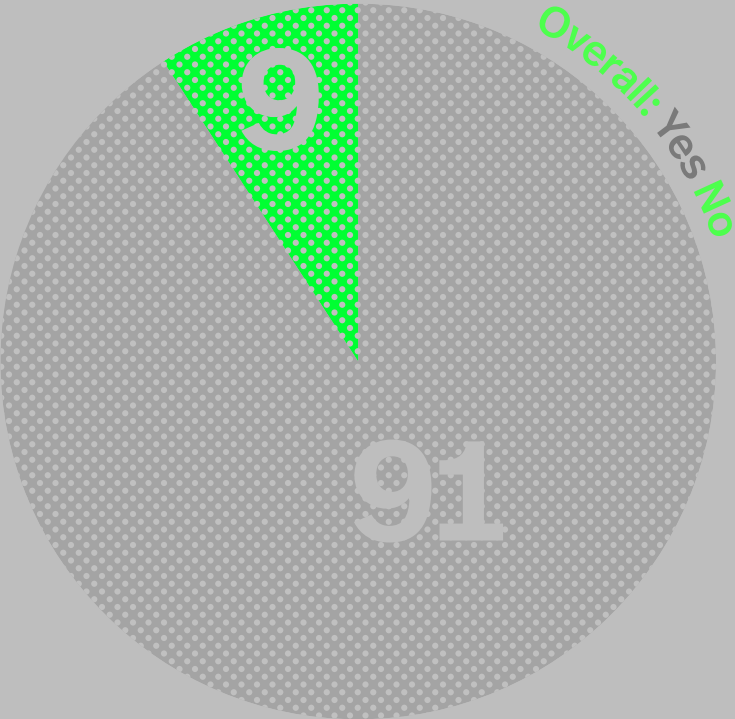
For how many years have you been a teacher?



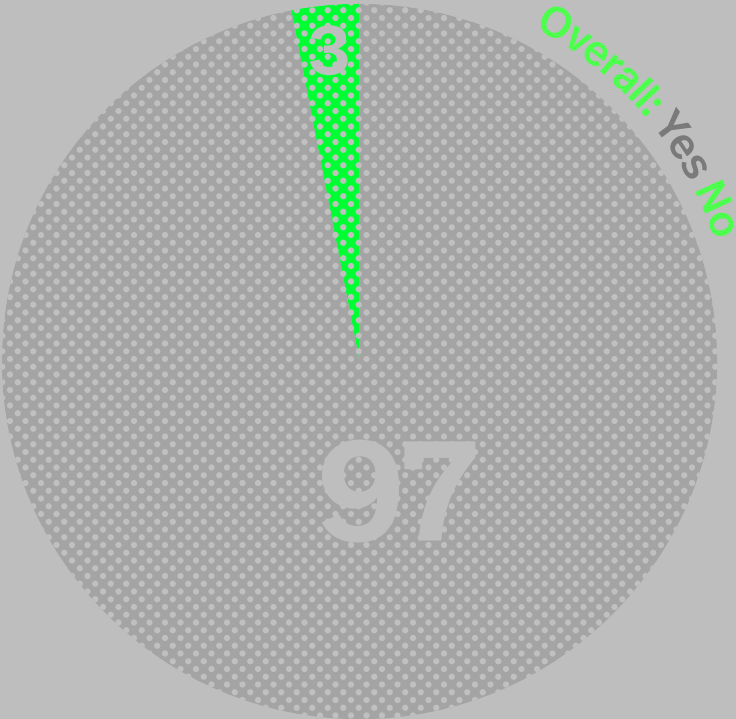
This chart performs more closely with expectations, with premium schools having more experienced teachers than mid-range schools, which in turn have more experienced teachers than value schools. However, even here the difference between premium- and mid-range schools is far bigger than mid- and value-fee schools.

Do you hold a formal teaching qualification (specialist teachers qualification)?

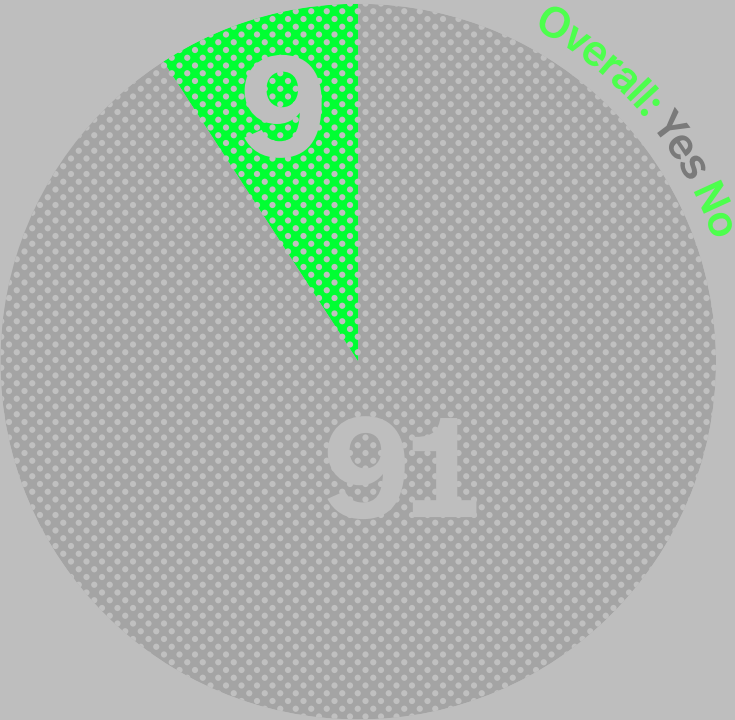
Overall



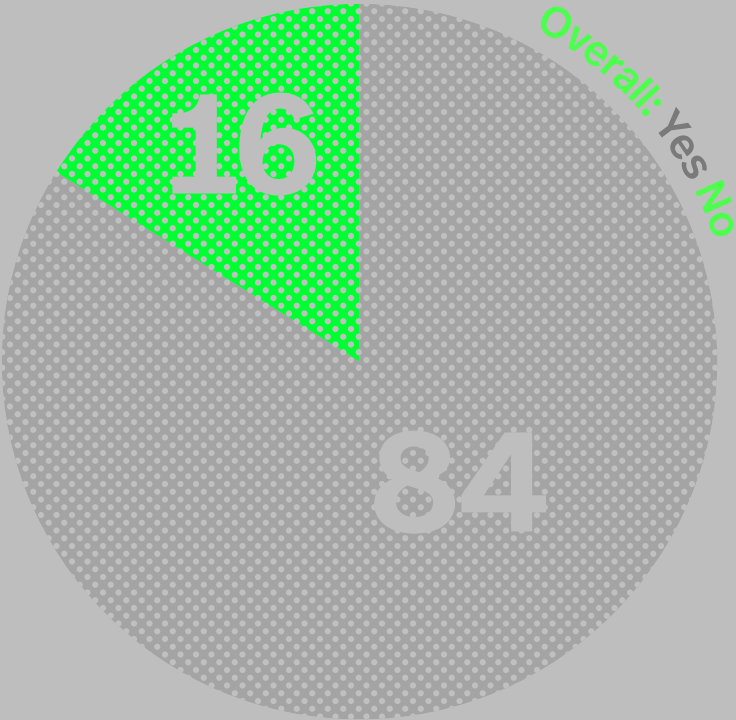
Premium



Mid-range

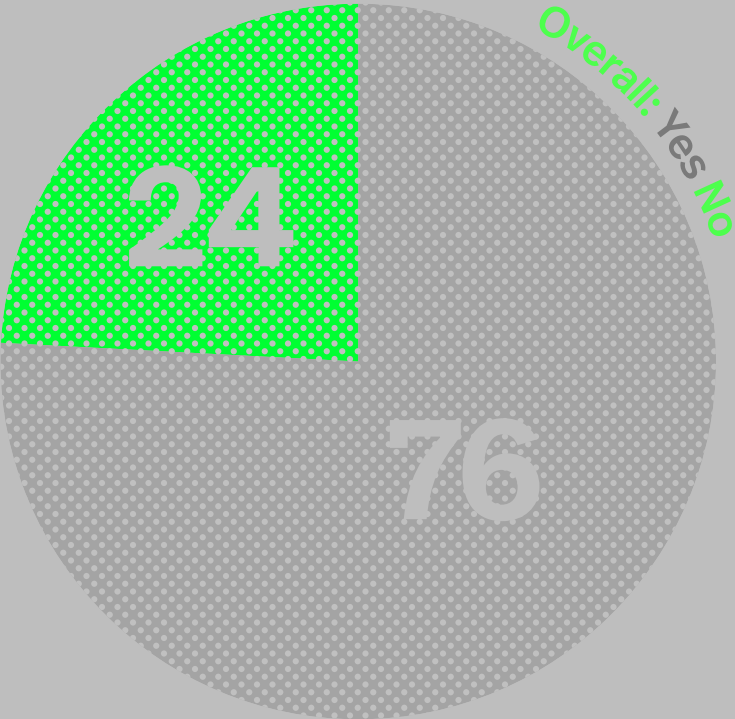


Value

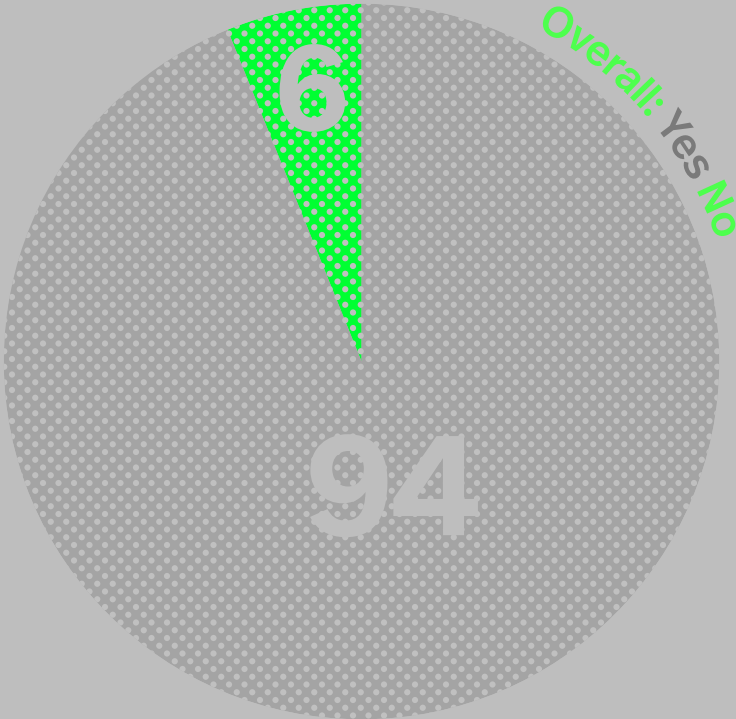


Did you complete two years post graduate training as a newly qualified teacher?

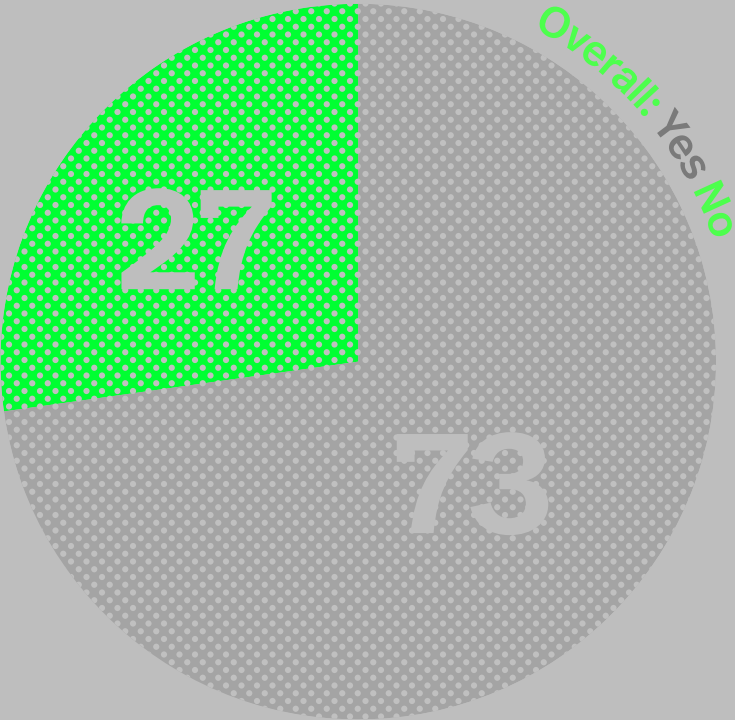
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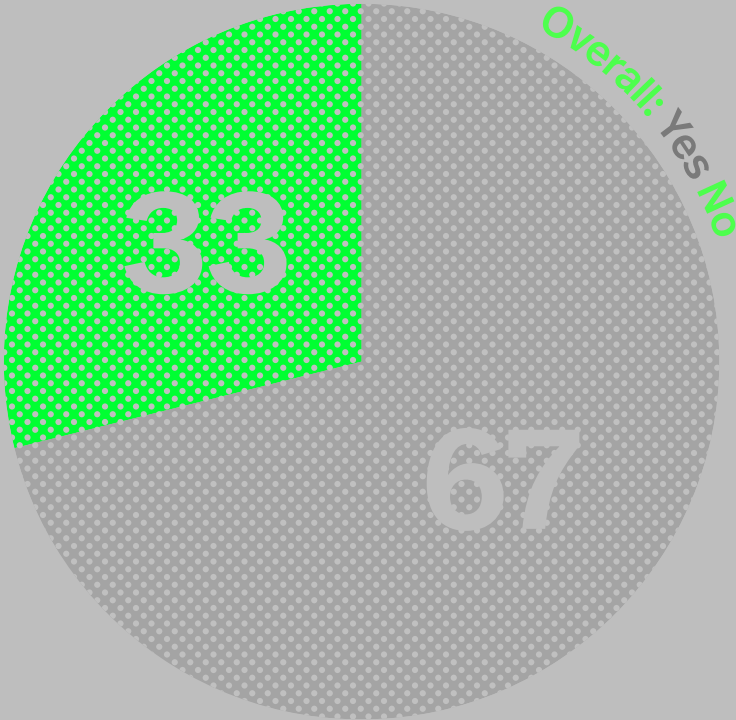
Premium



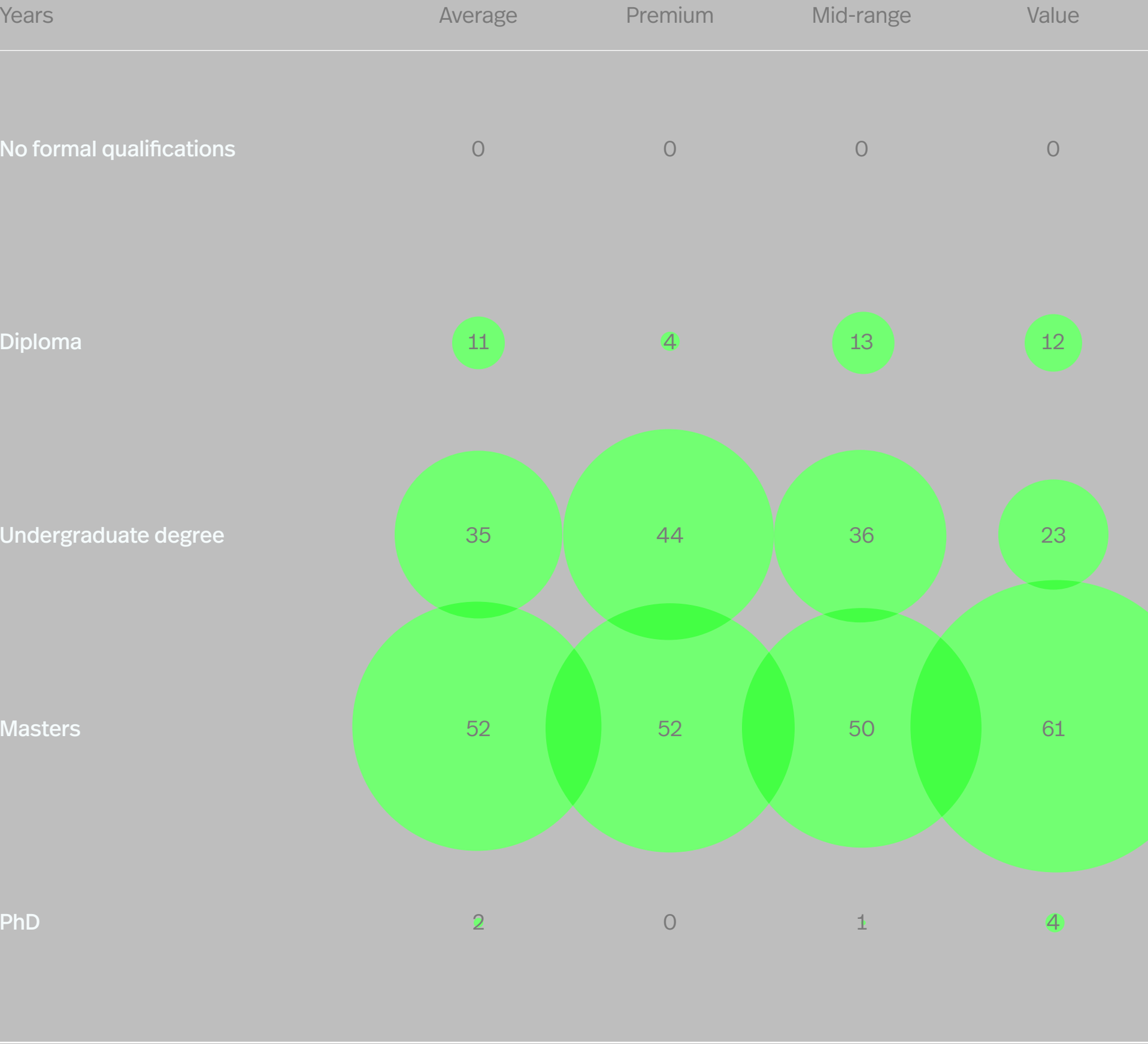
Mid-range



Value



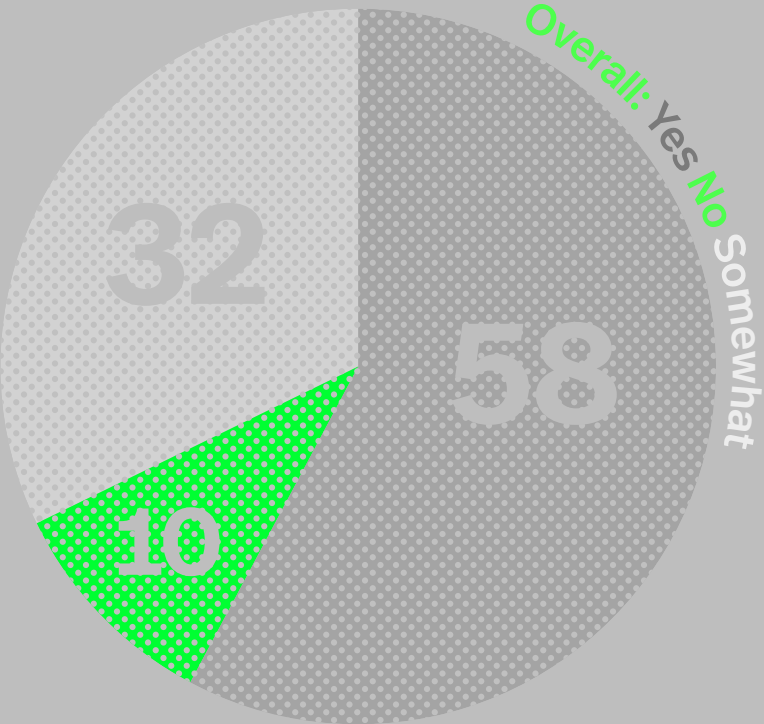
What is your highest qualification?



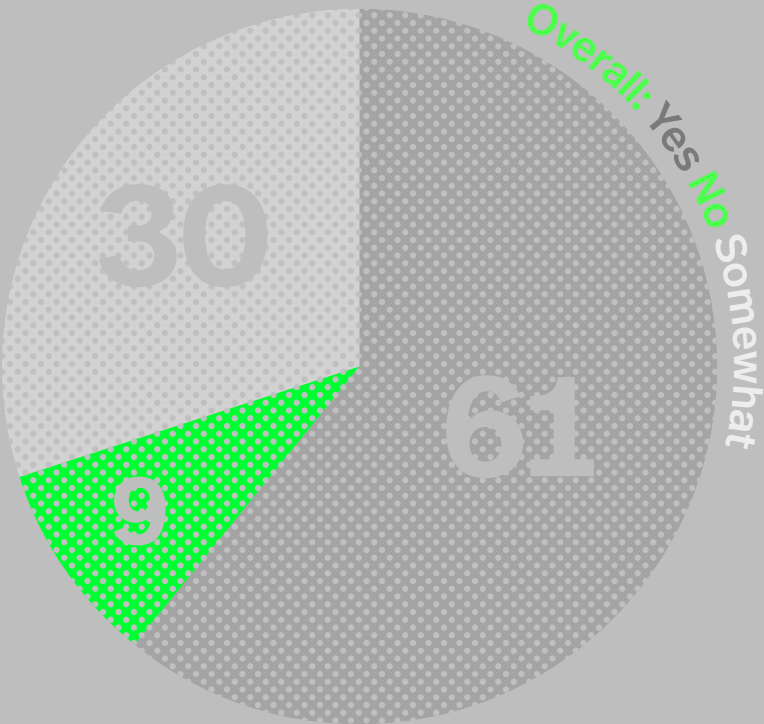
The more expensive the school, the better the qualifications of its staff. However, something very interesting happens with value fee range schools, with an oddly high percentage of staff having Masters and PHDs. Drill into the data and you find that this is correlated with the high percentage of Indian schools falling within the value fee range schools. Indian teachers are more likely than any other nationality to have higher level degrees.

Do you think your school values its teachers and their efforts?

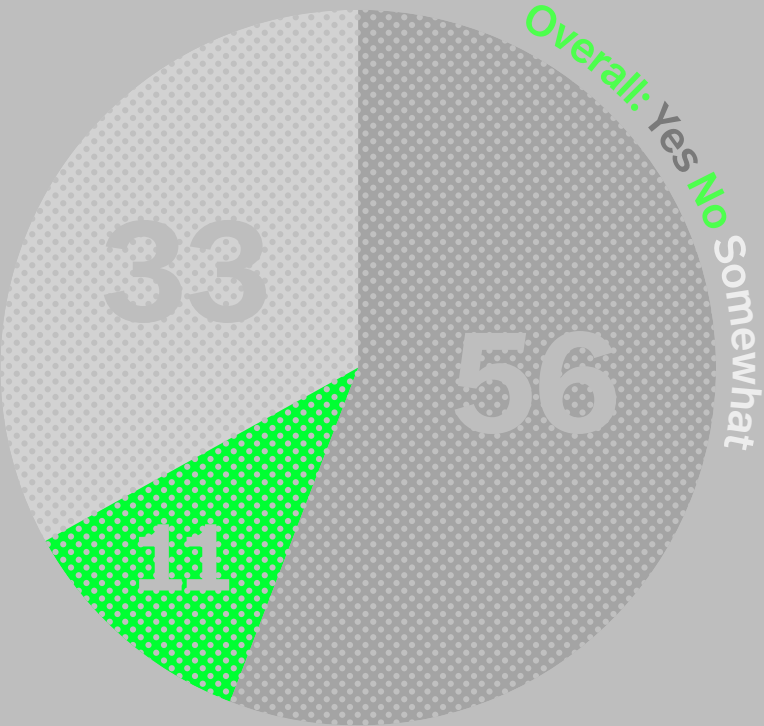
Overall



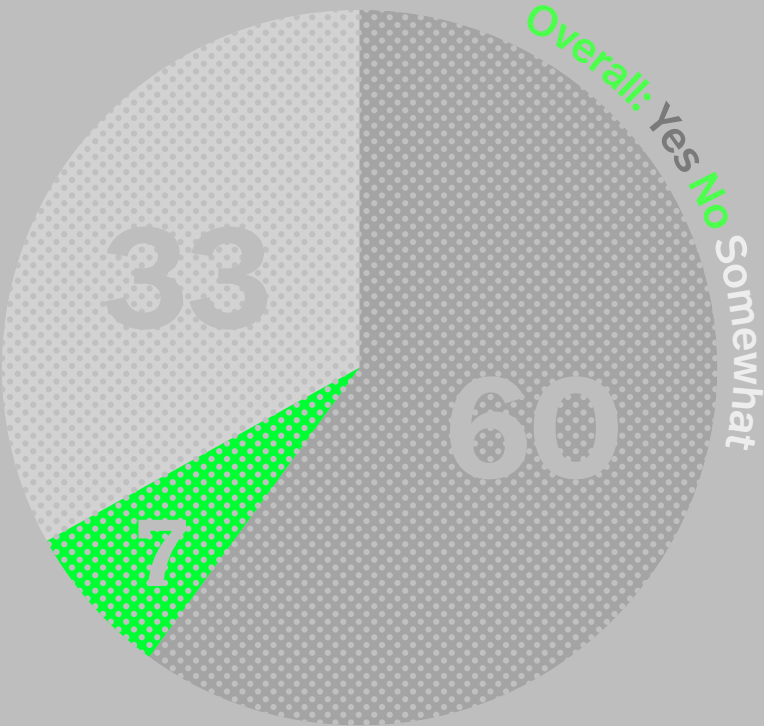
Premium



Mid-range



Value



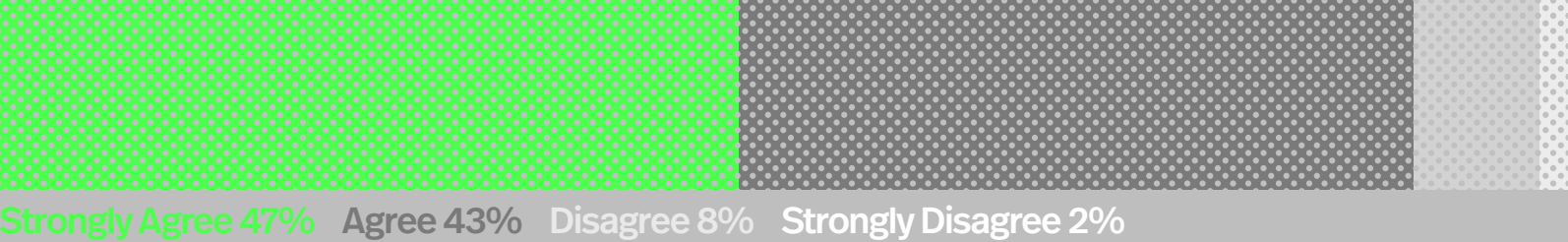
There are less teachers in value schools who think their school does not value their efforts than in premium- or mid-fee level schools. This, we argue, is correlated with the high percentage of Indian schools in the value sgment; Indian schools tend to have the highest teacher retention rates of all curricula in the UAE.

Your school give its teachers the resources—books, materials, technology, etc. – it need to teach effectively. Agree?

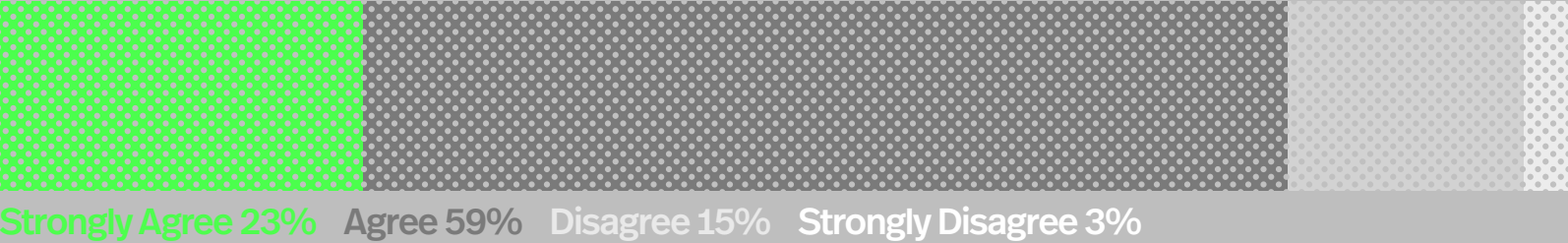
Overall



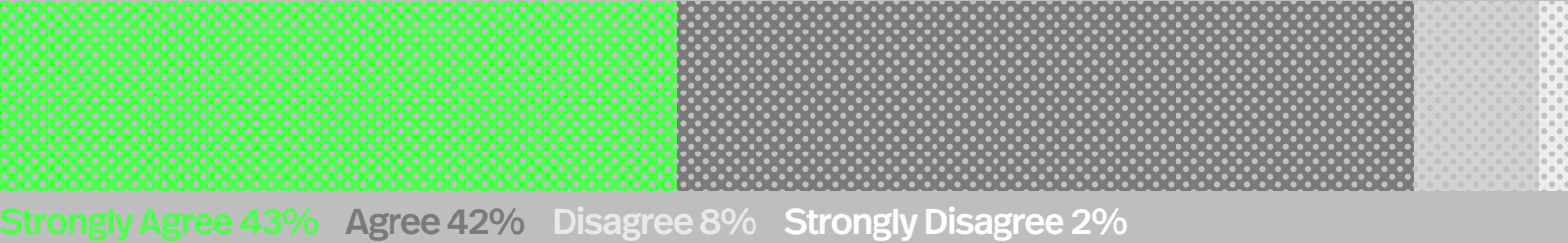
Premium schools



Mid-range schools



Value schools

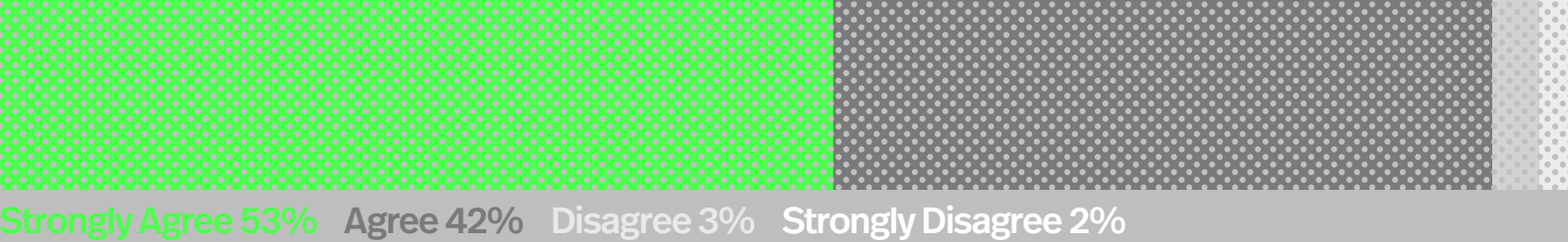


The facilities at my school are well maintained

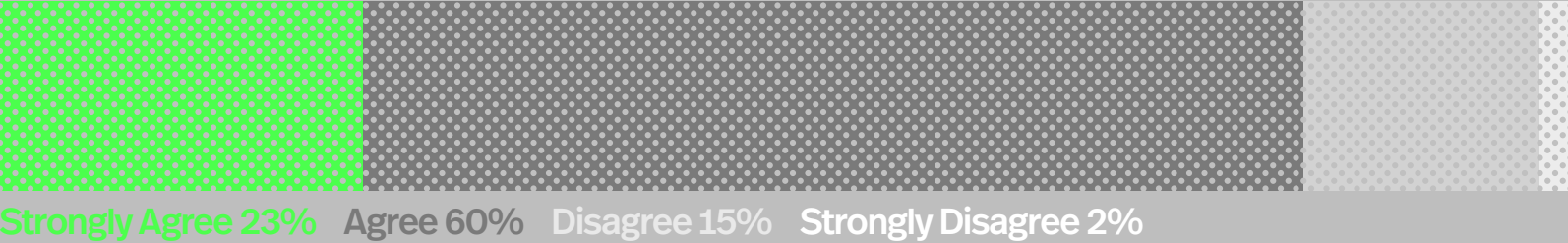
Overall



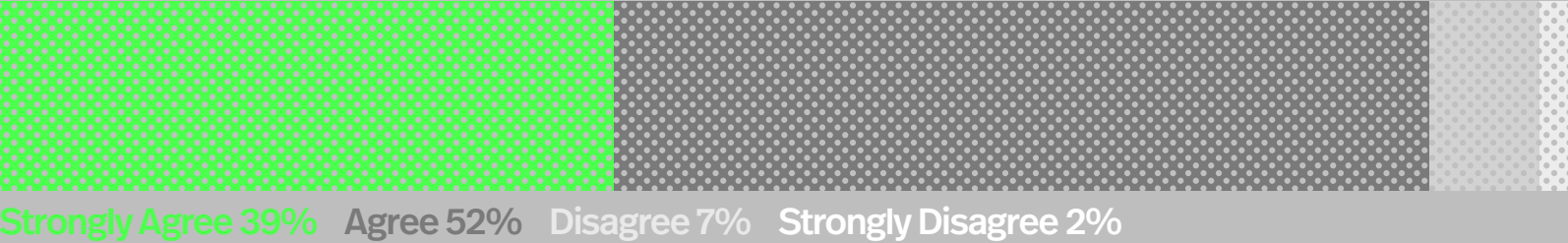
Premium schools



Mid-range schools



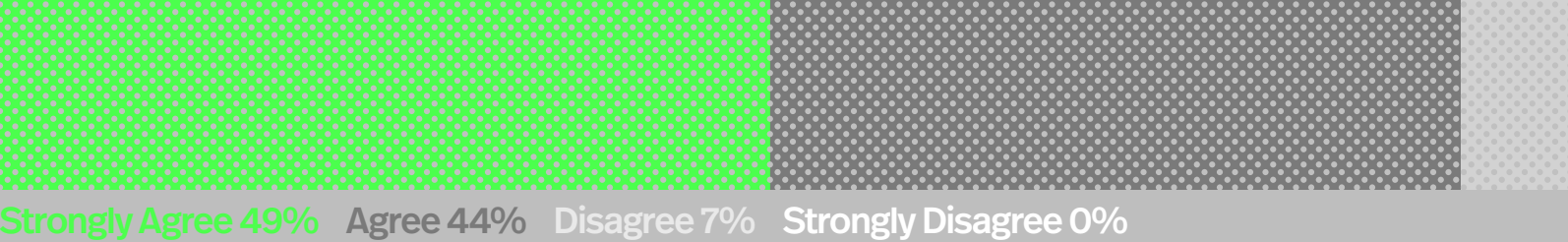
Value schools



The facilities provided at my school allow the school to deliver an effective education



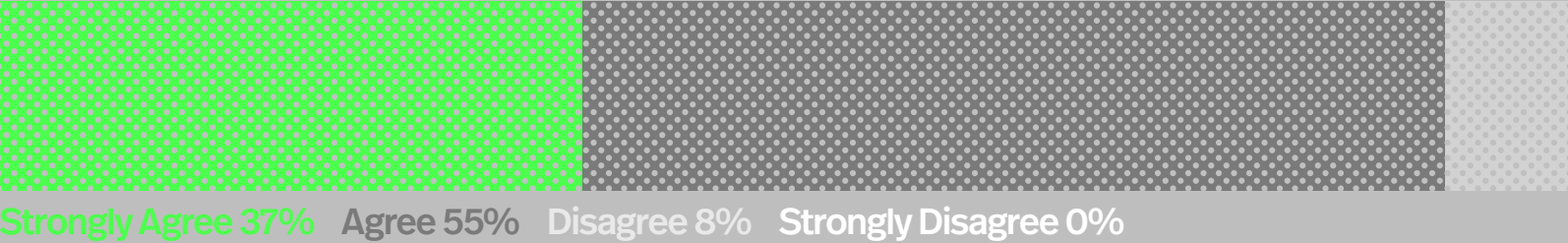
Premium schools



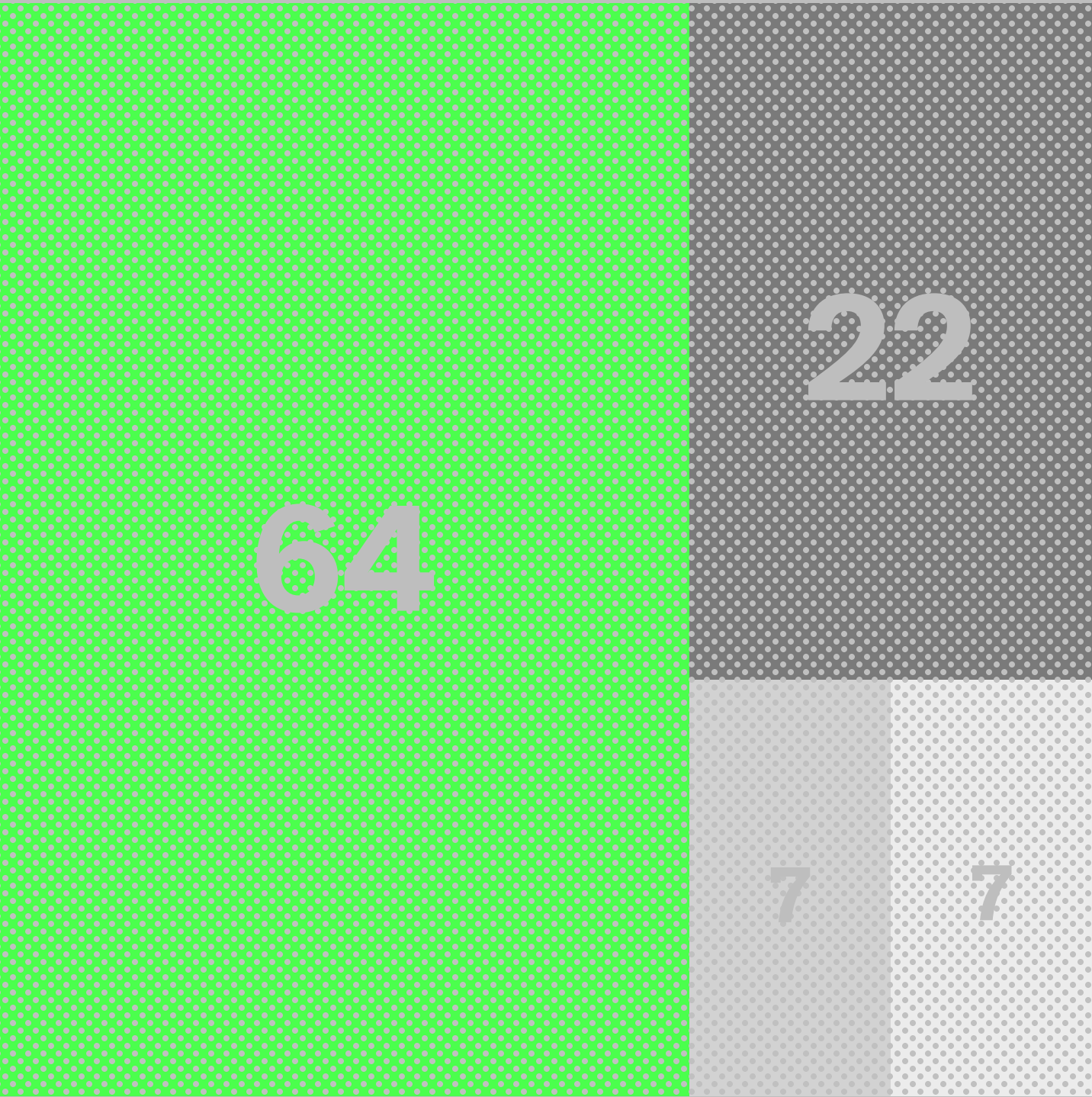
Mid-range schools



Value schools



Have you previously worked in government or private schools?



Private schools Government schools Both Neither. This is my first job

Women: underpaid, and overworked?

Females are (in percentage terms) less likely to promote their school, less likely to think their salary is fair, be less well paid, and to be less likely to be in management positions. If this survey is anything to go by, they also outnumber their male peers by between 4:1 to 5:1.

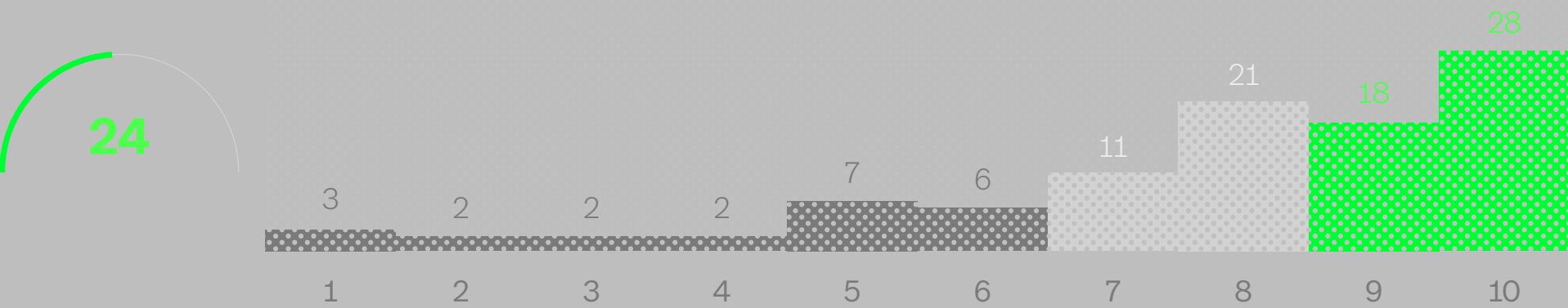
(This is a reflection of actual teacher recruitment. The KHDA's education landscape report for 2019/20 shows 16,852 female teachers in Dubai, to 3,900 male teachers).

The 'unfairness' can, to a degree, be explained. Male educators are paid more because they are in more senior positions. They are in more senior positions because they have more years of experience.

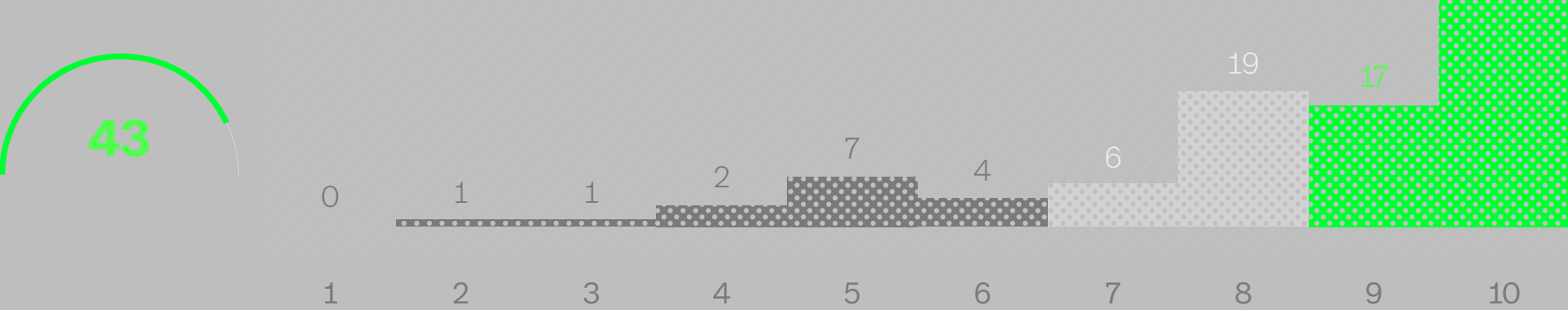
The key question then is perhaps not why females are not being recruited to senior positions - they are. It is why less male educators are being recruited for more entry-level or even senior teaching roles?

Advocacy and the Net Promoter Score: male vs female

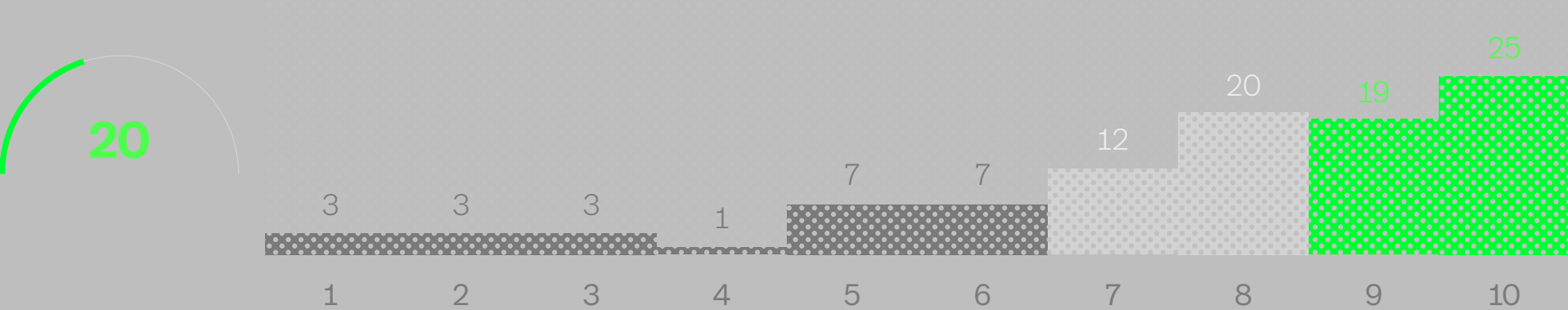
All teachers in UAE schools



Male teachers in UAE schools



Female teachers in UAE schools



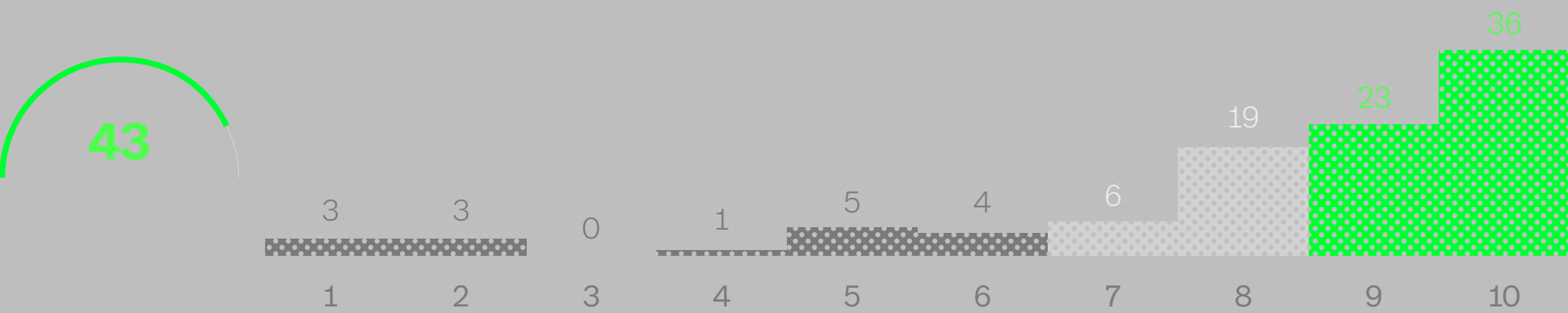
There may be less male educators, but when they do secure a job in the UAE they have almost double the Net Promoter Score than their female peers. In premium schools females score better but still have a lower NPS than male educators across UAE schools.

Male teachers in Premiums schools score a huge Net Promotor score - over triple the female average.

Male teachers in the UAE are huge advocates for the UAE education sector. This is a good thing. The question is, why are female more likely to be detractors than their male colleagues?

Net Promoter Score: male vs female UK Premium

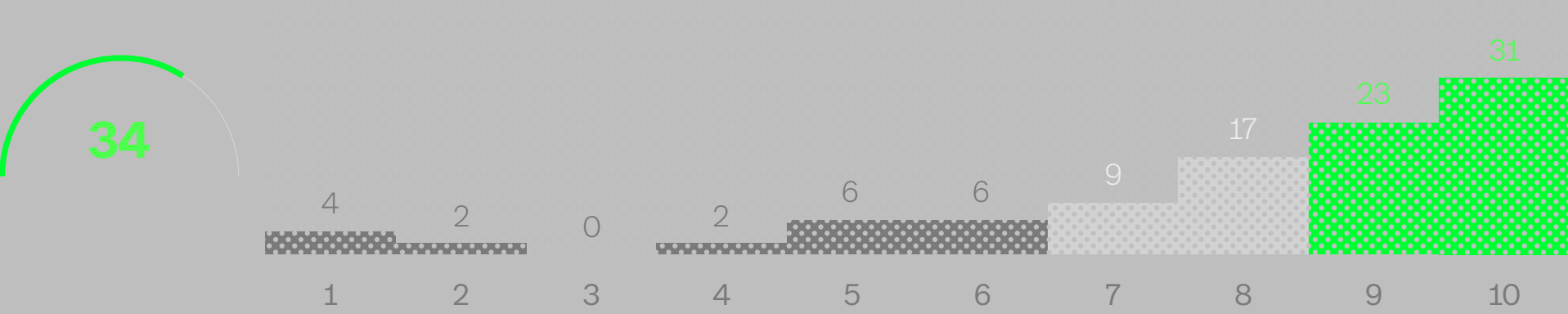
All teachers in UK Premium schools



Male teachers in UK Premium schools



Female teachers in UK Premium schools



Teacher Salaries: Male versus female



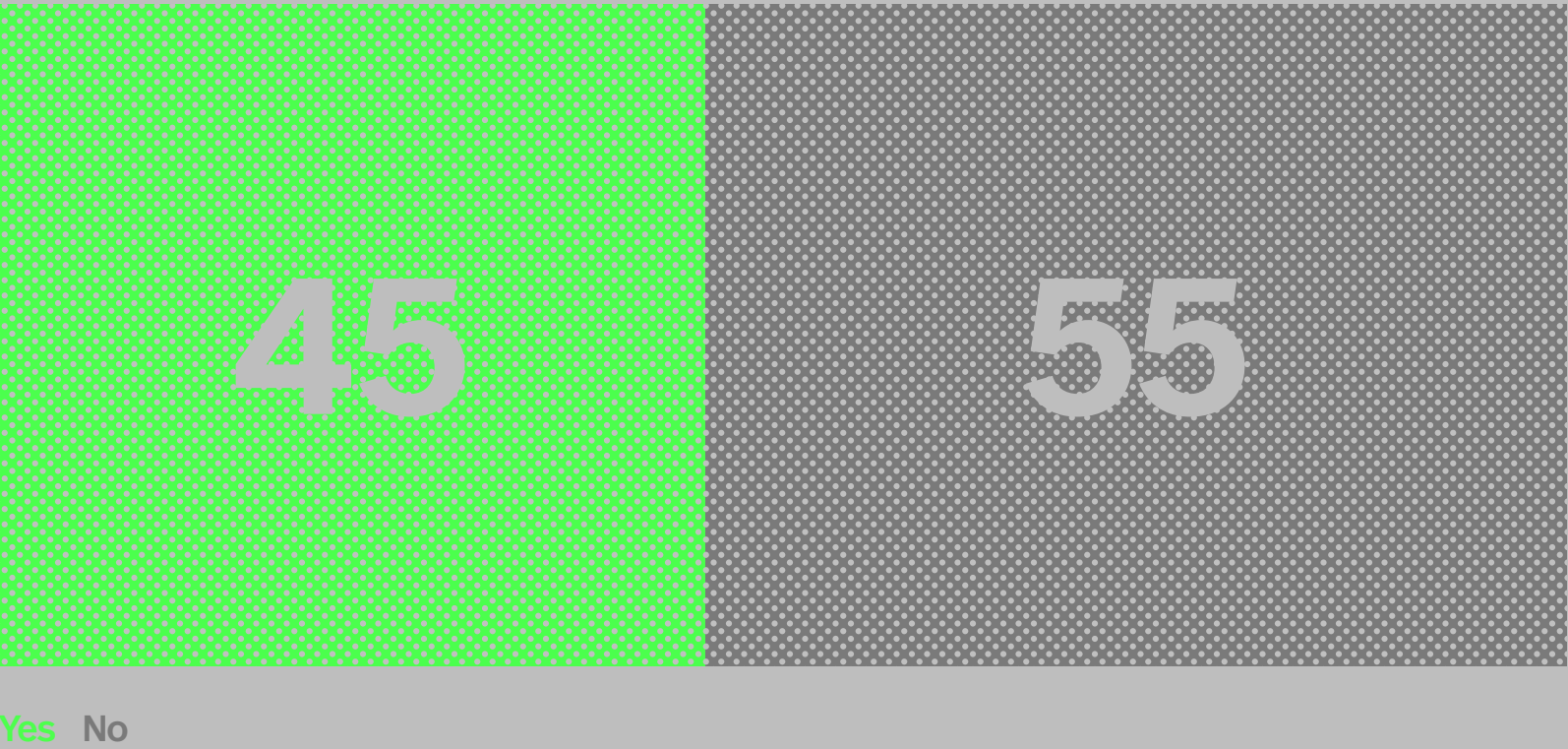
One reason for the disparity in Net Promoter Scores between male and female teachers is simply salary. Female teachers are not as well paid as their male counterparts - in general terms. This is in part because there are less male teachers, and more male managers - proportionally.

Perceptions of fairness: Male versus female

Male teachers in UAE schools



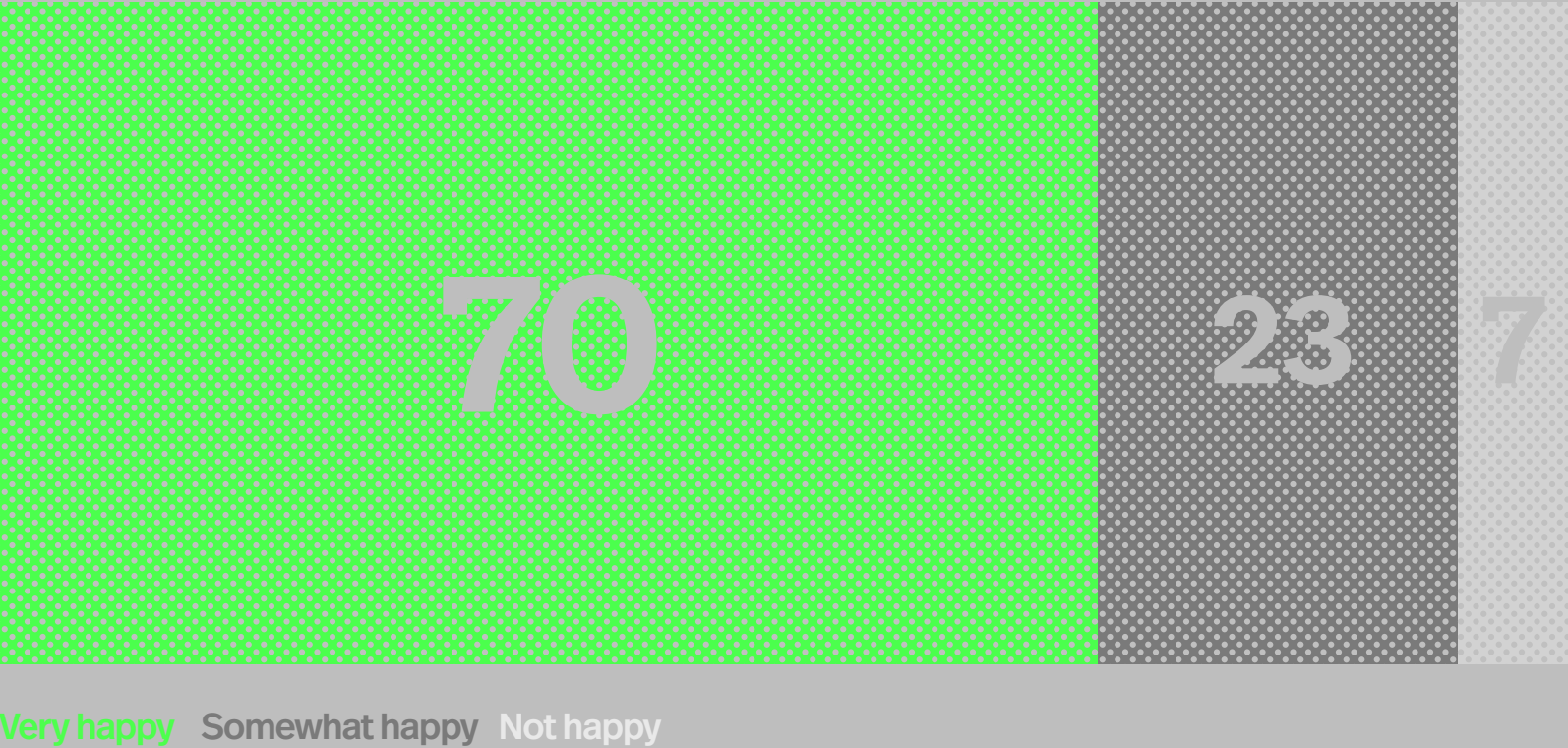
Female teachers in UAE schools



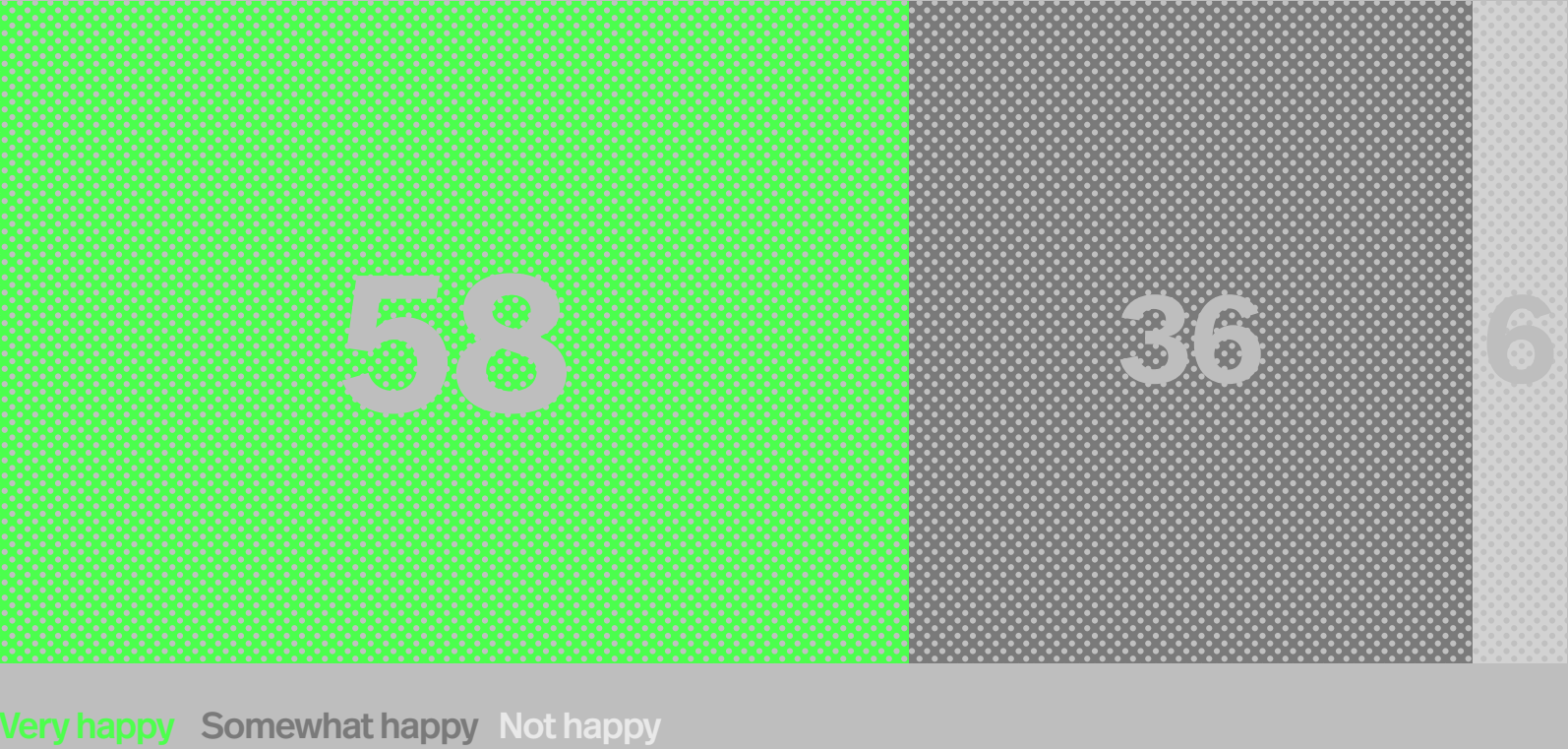
In percentage terms there are less female teachers in high earning positions, and this no doubt will be a contributor to the significant, 20 point difference between males and females when it comes to perceptions as to the fairness of their salary.

How happy are you in your current role? Male versus female

Male teachers in UAE schools

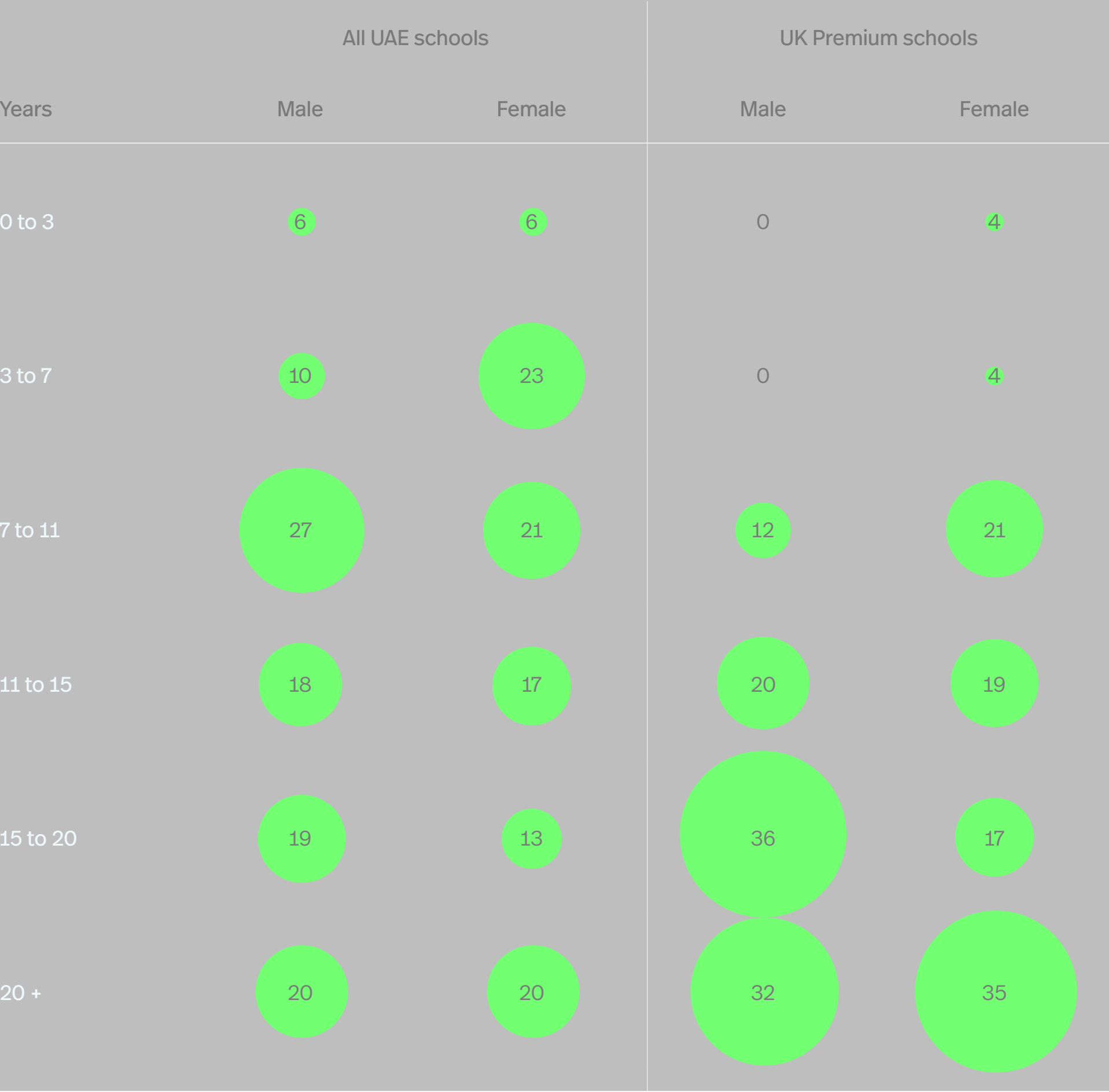


Female teachers in UAE schools



In general male educators are happier in their role than females. This is likely because they are more senior, and better paid.

How many years have you been a teacher? UK Premium Schools



Male educators are being recruited for more senior positions in the UAE, a fact clearly reflected in years of experience.

What is your current position?



Almost 6 in 10 female educators in the UAE define their primary role as a teacher. 3 in 10 male educators do. Over 5 in 10 male educators describe their role as managerial. 3 in 10 female educators do so.



63 Opinion

**THE TEACHER
RECRUITMENT
CRISIS ...
READ ALL
ABOUT IT**

Hysterical teacher recruitment headlines have become a go-to for editors chasing readers on a day when real stories are thin. They offer a guaranteed way to get eyeballs, as well a way to be seen to be discussing important national matters that threaten our future, with, ironically, little forward thinking or research usually put behind them.

The rise and rise of the international schools' sector has provided ammunition for the doomsday narratives, all of which repeat the same arguments, to such a degree that they have slowly become orthodoxy.

But how truthful are the new truths? Let's take a closer look.

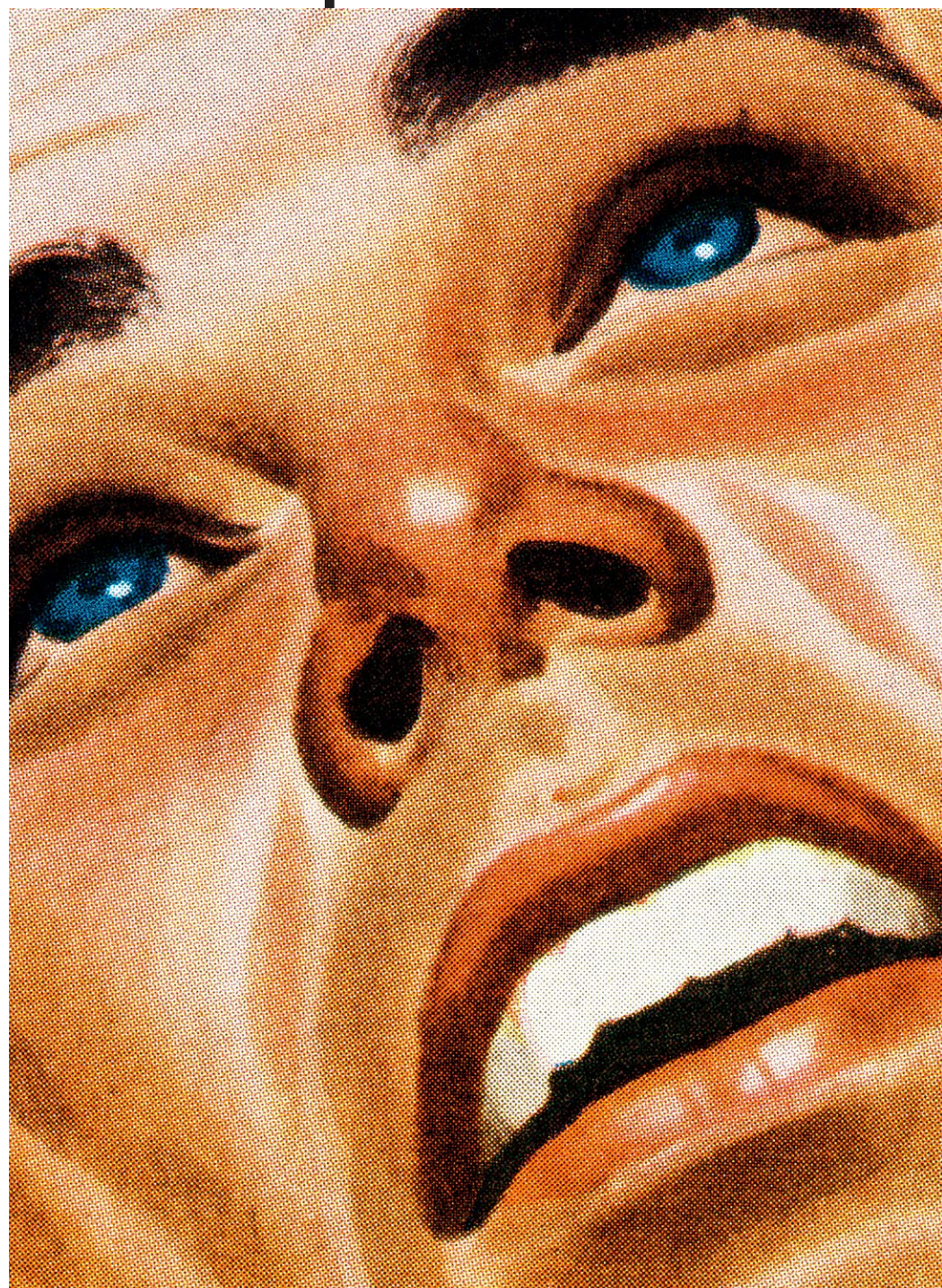
In the United Kingdom, the Department for Education released its 'Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy' in 2019, a year in which the government failed to meet its overall teacher recruitment target, with an overall shortfall of nearly 10% in initial teacher training.

The *Times Education Supplement (TES)* also reported that 9.9% of qualified teachers leave the profession each year, and 350,000 qualified teachers do not currently work in the state sector.

The Guardian has been a particularly popular home to teacher recruitment articles with headlines such as "*I will never return to teach in England*": the UK teachers finding refuge abroad. That story 'estimated' 15,000 teachers are snapped up overseas each year, driven away by stress.

Similarly, in another *The Guardian* story, a teacher told the paper she would rather "burn in hell before returning" (*The Guardian*, November, 2019).

A month before, *The Evening Standard* claimed that a UK Head teacher had travelled





“The UK, USA and Australia – three countries with similar narratives about teachers either leaving the profession altogether, leaving the country for pastures new or with graduates simply not entering the profession in the first place.”

to Australia “amid London’s staffing crisis”, seemingly dismissing his own country, and neighbouring countries for an 18-hour flight to find “the best teaching talent”.

I know some excellent Australian teachers but I’m not sure if the head teacher would have found exactly what he was looking for – not if its newspapers are anything to go by anyway. After all, in January, 2019, *News.com.au* ran a story titled “Australian teachers are ‘at the end of their tether’ and abandoning the profession”. Soon after, *The Brisbane Times* carried the headline “One in three Australian teachers leaves in first five years...” In April, 2019, it ran with a similar headline “Profession in crisis” and warned of an impending teacher shortage.

According to official statistics, in Australia, teaching degree applications fell by 8.8% between 2017 and 2018, and the number of offers fell by 11.4 percent. That’s according to Department of Education and Training.

Based on these articles, and these numbers, it would appear unlikely that the UK Head teacher managed to find any teachers left in Australia to recruit.

The US is facing its own teacher recruitment and retention challenge, according to the newspapers, as “Cash-strapped US schools facing teacher recruitment crisis, adopt four-day week” (*The Times*, June, 2019). *Business Insider* reported that a short-fall of 307,000 teaching jobs has been created since 2008 due to



“When it comes to recruiting teachers, a variety of other issues are often repeated in interviews with principals around the UAE. Teacher housing and teacher salaries are at the top of the list. So, have schools adapted to the new housing climate?”

increased student numbers, and 300,000 educators are needed “right now” (*Business Insider*, July 2019).

The UK, USA and Australia – three countries with similar narratives about teachers either leaving the profession altogether, leaving the country for pastures new or with graduates simply not entering the profession in the first place. These three countries make up 50% of the countries given an exemption for Teacher Licensing Standards 2, 3, and 4 in the UAE.

So what is the story in the UAE?

UAE headlines have done what they do best over the years: Confuse. In September, 2013, *The National* published a story titled “Expat teachers escape austerity-hit Europe for booming UAE”. In 2019, the Irish Minister for Education visited the UAE in an attempt to incentivise teachers to move back to Ireland, according to the *Irish Times* because “It is estimated that



upwards of 6,000 Irish teachers are based abroad, with significant numbers in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.”

Conversely, between 2013 and 2019, we heard that “Overworked teachers quit [the UAE] in droves” (*Gulf News*, May 2016) and “UAE, GCC need thousands of teachers in next five years” (*Khaleej Times*, March 2017) despite “Teacher turnover taking its toll on the quality of instruction” (*Khaleej Times*, April 2018) whilst “Rising competition for teachers’ leads to some UAE schools struggling to fill posts.” (*The National*, September, 2019)

All of these stories are headline grabbing. *Some* may actually reflect real issues.

According to the Ministry of Education there are currently nearly 51,000 international teaching staff working in private schools in the country. We know that there is always movement between Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and historically there has been

“The truth is the challenge in the UAE has moved on from the recruitment of good international teachers. It has become their retention, and in looking beyond the traditional structures of teacher training and professional learning.”

movement between public and private. As of today, there are 283 jobs advertised for mainly UK curriculum schools in the *Times Education Supplement* (TES) which is used for more premium recruitment. Nakuri Gulf is currently advertising over 700 teaching positions as of January, 2020.

So, are we experiencing a teacher recruitment crisis here in the UAE? Or, is there something else at play?

When it comes to recruiting teachers, a variety of other issues are often repeated in interviews with principals around the UAE. Teacher housing and teacher salaries are at the top of the list.

Let's focus on housing first as it represents the easiest issue to address.

Despite the popularity of Dubai's real estate sector as an asset class for investors, the decline of property prices since 2016 is now well-known, and well reported.

New residential property supply hit a peak in 2018 with 30,767 units completed, according to Data Finder. From 2019, and the years leading up through to 2023 there will be at least another 202,298 residential units; an average of 53,205 units per year, according to Data Finder. New supply has driven rental prices down, and tenancy agreements are now more favourable to the tenants, with free maintenance, better payment conditions, and in some cases, an additional month for free.

The majority of new housing supply is concentrated in the southeast and southwest communities in Dubai such as Mohammed Bin Rashid City, Jumeirah Village Circle, Dubai Land and Dubai South.

For context, within Dubai Marina, one of Dubai's prime real estate locations, the average asking price in Q1 of 2018 per sqft was AED 1,530 per sqft and in Q1 of 2019, it had reduced by 36.7% to AED 1,120 per sqft. Similar rental reductions have been observed across the city, and the data is available through Data Finder.

So, have schools adapted to the new housing climate? Have they used their purchasing power to get even better deals for those Australian, British and American teachers.

In theory, teacher costs within the UAE should have become less of a burden for schools, and teacher housing should have become

“According to official statistics, in Australia, teaching degree applications fell by 8.8% between 2017 and 2018, and the number of offers fell by 11.4 percent. That’s according to Department of Education and Training.”

much less of an issue. We know from *WhichSchoolAdvisor.com*'s Happiness Survey that rent as an issue has almost disappeared from the list of concerns for residents. However, apparently, shared housing is still a "major stumbling block for prospective UAE teachers" (*The National*, November, 2019).

The UAE has over 10 small-to-large school groups, with a range of 4-30 schools each. Whilst there are instances of teachers being offered shared housing, on the whole, it is well known that the main school groups, which have the lion's share of UAE schools, do not adopt this practice. Of course, in a private school sector as large as the UAE, there will always be some bad apples.

Within the same article, Roddy Hammond, founder of UK firm World Teachers Recruitment stated that "There is no shortage of candidates wanting to go (to the UAE) but global competition in Asia is rising."

Those that have been involved in international teacher recruitment for more than ten years will know that, in terms of talent willing to move, *international schools have never had it as good*. This doesn't mean to suggest there aren't challenges that schools have to navigate but let's not pretend that the pipeline of teachers moving overseas is dry. The fact is, it is quite the opposite.

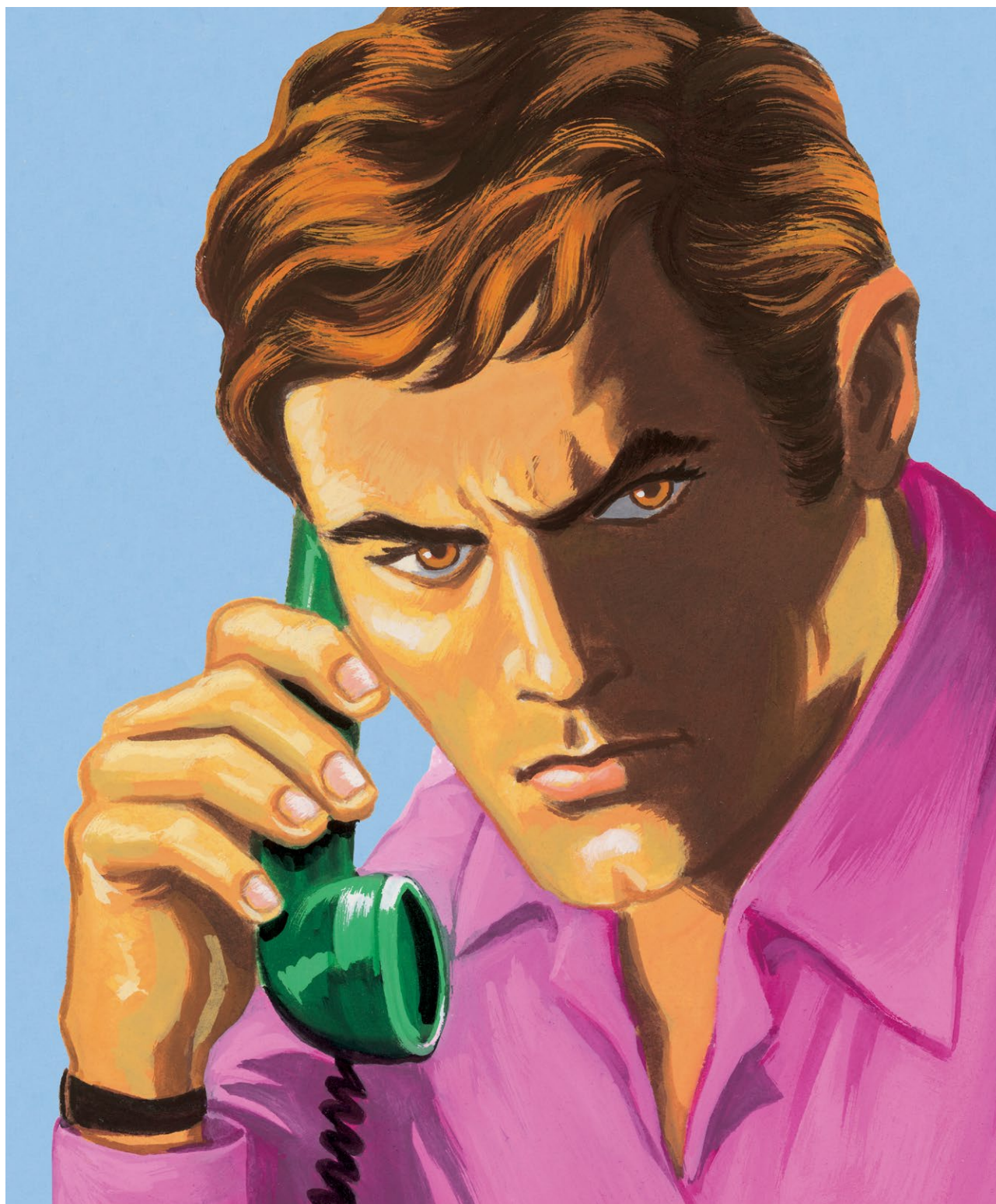
In 2010, such was the quality, perhaps 1 or 2 in every five teachers interviewed would have been considered for the positions they applied for. In 2019, the quality of teachers looking to work internationally has drastically improved, and most recruiters will argue that those numbers are now three-to-four out of five.

The truth is the challenge in the UAE has moved on from the recruitment of good international teachers. It has become their retention, and in looking beyond the traditional structures of teacher training and professional learning.

The UAE has a blossoming professional learning eco-system, and its teachers have largely driven this. However, transformational system-wide changes, and structural and entrepreneurial solutions need to be implemented to allow for teachers to be trained and recruited locally.

The COBIS Report highlighted that only a quarter of schools (27%) within their study had increased recruitment of local

"There are pockets of exceptional practice emerging within the UAE but more schools need to consider how they can provide a pathway for aspiring teachers. This will naturally create more roles for existing teachers who are motivated by supporting others."



staff, which is small, and even smaller when you count the UAE schools. Quite rightly, its study highlights that positive implications of developing teaching schools, and conversion courses for internationally trained teachers, and training of local staff.

According to Unicef, “Children and young people (0-24 year olds) in the Middle East and North Africa currently account for nearly half of the region’s population and have the potential to become agents of change, contributing to a more prosperous and stable future for themselves and their communities”. With such a huge and growing population, and with some of the international sector’s best and brightest schools, the Middle East has the potential to be a teacher training hub that produces talent that everyone can benefit from.

“The truth is the challenge in the UAE has moved on from the recruitment of good international teachers. It has become their retention, and in looking beyond traditional structures of teacher training and professional learning.”

There are pockets of exceptional practice emerging within the UAE but more schools need to consider how they can provide a pathway for aspiring teachers. This will naturally create more roles for existing teachers who are motivated by supporting others.

In the Teaching Landscape of the UAE Report (2017), nearly 70% of teachers in UK, IB and CBSE schools stated that their professional learning opportunities were good or better. Within US curriculum schools, only 42% made the same remark.

In *WhichSchoolAdvisor.com's* Teacher Survey, published in the Intelligence Report this month, 81% of teachers said that their professional learning had improved since moving to the UAE and 89% said that they thought their school valued professional learning.

So where are we headed?

The pacesetting schools in the region have already set off on a path of building their own talent pools.

Their commitment to building a local workforce will, ultimately, be rewarded with professional capital that others will need to go out and source further on down the line

Increased pressure may be applied to the private sector to contribute further in this regard, and for those truly committed, this will be welcomed. Some of the region's school groups are already supporting government education initiatives and this will continue.

The schools that can build their own teacher training pipelines will have developed multiple pathways to build their teaching talent, rather than limit themselves to one approach (recruitment). They will begin to change the narrative of teacher recruitment in the UAE, demonstrating true innovation within education can be driven by our existing talent pool.

Schools that do this will be able to side-step all but the most severe international teacher recruitment crisis.

That story may be more difficult to put a sexy headline on, but ultimately is going to become the one story really worth telling. ■

“The schools that can build their own teacher training pipelines will have developed multiple pathways to build their teaching talent, rather than limit themselves to one approach (recruitment). They will begin to change the narrative of teacher recruitment in the UAE ...”

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UAE Market Developments

According to data from ISC Research in its 2019 Global Opportunities Report, in June 2019, 5.6 million children were attending English-speaking international schools around the world. In 2000, there were fewer than a million. In the same time period, the number of international schools has increased from 2,584 to 10,937.

International schooling delivering a curriculum in the English language is proving to be a popular option for parents around the world. Selecting an international school means that their child can learn in English, generally follow a globally respected curriculum and work towards internationally recognised qualifications in preparation for university and careers. Families who expect, or wish, to live and work on the international circuit can provide their children with a head start at home, before even taking a step overseas.



The statistics

In Dubai there are now 208 international schools, Shanghai has 168 international schools, Abu Dhabi has 198 international schools, Beijing has 151 international schools and Doha has 144 international schools.

As the 2018-2019 academic year came to a close, 75 British independent school brands, a number of whom have established directly or franchised “sister schools” internationally (generally regarded as at the top end of the international schools market) dominated this sector of the market with a total of 44,000 students aged between three and 18.

Despite a slow-down in some markets – notably the UAE, and, following the recent political issues there, potentially Hong Kong—a number of countries are expected to see significant new international school development including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Malaysia, Vietnam and Japan. The ISC Report projects that Eastern Asia will almost double its number of international schools in the next 10 years and increase its student enrolment to 1,225,000.

UAE Economic projections

In the UAE, the economy was projected to grow by 2.3 percent in 2019, according to a Central Bank announcement in early December, trimming its forecast from September when it said the Arab world’s second-biggest economy would grow by 2.4 percent. The economy grew by 1.7 percent in 2018.

The central bank said the improved growth outlook for 2019 compared to 2018 was due to rising public and private spending at the federal and emirate levels, higher investment ahead of the Dubai Expo 2020 event and continued regional economic recovery.

The UAE Central Bank, however, also cited data from consultancy Reidin as showing a 6.9 percent drop in residential housing prices in Dubai in the third quarter of 2019 from a year earlier, and an annual 8.2 percent drop in Abu Dhabi home prices during the same period.

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Emirates NBD Purchasing Index latest (January 2020)

The most recent Emirates NBD Purchasing Managers' Index for the GCC (published early January 2020) notes a general softening of markets including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and across the GCC. In the UAE, the headline index was fractionally lower in December at 50.2. Growth momentum appears to have slowed since August, with the Q4 average PMI reading at 50.5, the lowest since Quarter 3, 2009. While new export orders recovered in December after declining in November, both output and new work readings remained below the series average.

For the year as a whole, the average PMI reading was 54.1, still in growth territory but indicating a slower rate of non-oil sector growth than in the last two years. The employment index averaged just 50.1 in 2019, the lowest reading in nearly decade, effectively signalling no job growth in the UAE's private sector on average last year. Selling prices declined for the fifth consecutive year in 2019, and the extent of price discounting last year was the steepest on record, as firms competed for work. Firms remain very optimistic about the coming 12 months though, as Expo 2020 is expected to boost output across most sectors. The impact of the most recent political fall-out between the US and Iran has not been factored in to calculations, although a possible rise in oil prices would have a positive impact on the UAE potentially. However, overall oil demand is slack - and has been hit hard by the coronavirus outbreak.

Increase in Business licences issued

Despite concerns about the ongoing health of the economy, State News agency WAM reported that a total of 32,256 business licences were issued in the UAE over the first eight months of 2019, signalling growing investor confidence in the country. The increase brought to 572,615 the total number of business permits in the country, a growth of 6 percent from 540,359 at the end of December 2018. Abu Dhabi and Dubai accounted for 70.6 percent of the total number of business licences issued across the country.

“Despite concerns about the ongoing health of the economy, State News agency WAM reported that a total of 32,256 business licences were issued in the UAE over the first eight months of 2019, signalling growing investor confidence in the country.”

The Sharjah Economic Development Department (SEDD) has released its report for the third quarter of 2019, showing that the total number of licences issued and renewed in the emirate reached 14,731, a growth of 4 percent. In terms of licences issued, the report revealed that there was a growth of 12 percent to 1,184, while renewed licences reached 13,547.

UAE improves its position in Global Knowledge Index

In the Education sector, the UAE continues to rise in the global ranking of knowledge-based societies, securing the 18th spot out of 136 countries in an index that measures various sectors. Results of the 2019 Global Knowledge Index were released in November 2019.

An initiative by Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation (MBRF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the index measured a total of 136 countries in different sectors. These include pre-university education, technical and vocational education and training, higher education, research development and innovation, information and communications technology, economy, and general enabling environment.

The UAE has moved from 2018's rank 19 out of 134 countries to 18 last year. Switzerland took the first place, followed by Finland, the US, and Singapore, respectively. Chad was in last place, Angola ranked 135th, and Mali 134th. The UAE retained its second place ranking in the economy category. Singapore was ranked first, Hong Kong was third, and Luxembourg was fourth. The UAE was ranked 12th in pre-university education; 13th in technical and vocational educational and training; and 15th in information and communications technology. In research, development and innovation, the country was in the 33rd spot.

Overall, the country also led regionally, in terms of measures for a knowledge-based society. However, on a less positive note, the UAE continues to receive a low ranking in the environment category, placing 133rd out of 136 countries. It also got a 132nd rank in the total CO2 emissions per capita section under the environment category.

“The UAE continues to rise in the global ranking of knowledge-based societies, securing the 18th spot out of 136 countries in an index that measures various sectors. Results of the 2019 Global Knowledge Index were released in November 2019.”

Shareholder changes at UAE's largest education group

Probably the biggest news from a corporate perspective in regard to the education market in the second half of 2019 was the exit at GEMS Education by a consortium led by Fajr Capital Limited, including Tactical Opportunities funds managed by Blackstone and Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company B.S.C., and the 30% buy in by a CVC Capital Partners Fund. Existing minority investor Khazanah Nasional Berhad, a sovereign wealth fund of Malaysia, which invested in January 2018, has retained its 3% stake in GEMS Education. GEMS simultaneously launched a refinancing programme and was rated B by Standard & Poor's Global Ratings, with a strong outlook bolstered by increasing capacity and GEMS' focus on affordable pricing.

Even if S&P feels that GEMS is marketing to the correct segment, they too are likely to be affected by the main concern in the Dubai education market – the over-supply of places in all categories of schools. Whilst the premium market is potentially the most affected, filling places at affordable new schools is also a challenge – in large part because the location of these schools does not match the requirements of families.

New report highlights residential developments and school locations in Dubai

The Knowledge Economy report, published by *Property Finder* and the *Education Intelligence Group* in mid- 2019, provides a detailed review of the location of homes versus schools, and Parental Buying Habits. Research conducted by Data Finder, a real estate insights and data platform under the Property Finder Group, discovered that some Dubai residents are spending up to 55 percent of their combined income on housing and education expenses as of 2019. The property sector has witnessed a 30 percent decrease since 2016 in asking prices for properties for both rent and sale according to Property Finder's listing data. Rental and sales prices for Dubai overall are expected to decrease further over the next 12 months.

“Research conducted by Data Finder, a real estate insights and data platform under the Property Finder Group, discovered that some Dubai residents are spending up to 55 percent of their combined income on housing and education expenses as of 2019.”

Meanwhile, the education sector has seen an influx of new schools enter the market, mainly in the premium segment, which has created a surplus of school seats. As residents of Dubai re-evaluate their housing and schooling options due to the plethora of new supply, developers and investors may need to rethink what it means to be part of Dubai's evolving community.

The Knowledge Economy Report presents a comprehensive account of Dubai's current residential stock including the average asking price for a property for sale as well as the average rental price for that property for both villa/townhouse communities and apartments. The report also includes detailed information for the pipeline of future supply including the project name (if available), master community, current completion status, number of units (if available) and the developer's information for residential developments under construction with completion dates between the years of 2019 and 2023.

Detailed review of decision factors for families choosing schools

For school operators and investors, the report includes a thorough account of the factors families consider when deciding which school to enroll their children in. Investors and school operators would be wise to recognise these factors that contribute to building Dubai's communities, as parents are more educated in their decision making and awareness of the sector.

Historically, there has been a mismatch between property developments, the curricula and the average annual tuition prices for nearby schools, leading to the nearby school often serving a host of children from various other communities, instead of it being a school fit for that particular community. The report serves to decrease the amount of schools and communities that diverge and also to highlight parental demands and affordability levels.

Research conducted with parents indicated that in 43% of cases, the school was chosen first, whilst for 28% of parents, home location is the priority. An overwhelming 64% of families with children already in school felt that fees are too high. Given that

“Research conducted with parents new to the UAE that in 43% of cases, the school was chosen before the location of their community, whilst for 28% of parents, the community and home was chosen first. An overwhelming 64% of families with children already in school felt that fees are too high.”

62% of families receive no financial support from their employers and the trend towards reducing benefits is ongoing, location and fee-price-point are inevitably key factors.

Report identifies disconnect between new residential areas and schools

The *Knowledge Economy Report* found that from 2019, and in the years leading up through to 2023, Dubai developers are expected to release at least another 202,298 residential units; an average of 53,205 units per year. While long-standing communities such as Downtown Dubai and Business Bay will see the addition of new supply, the majority of new supply is concentrated in the southeast and southwest communities in Dubai, such as Mohammed Bin Rashid City, Jumeirah Village Circle, Dubai Land and Dubai South. However, when considering locations of schools currently in Dubai, a clear disconnect between growing housing locations and schools is evident.

Expanding school supply parallels that of the residential sector, but not necessarily by location or school price-point. Considering the potential oversupply in both sectors, it is important to map how school supply matches, or mismatches, the supply of residential property. The writers' hypothesis is that based on the average asking prices for sales and average annual rental prices for all property types across the Emirate of Dubai, most current and incoming school supply is not priced in accordance with the income and affordability levels of the residents within the immediate and surrounding communities.

As Dubai's residential choices expand through many of the new developments being added to the market, the necessity to build community based schools for residents that include different types of schools with broader curriculum options is more prominent than ever before. For investors and school operators, the opportunities across Dubai are wide-ranging, but careful analysis of local parents' perceptions is critical in order to build the right type of school for the respective community. ■

“Expanding school supply parallels that of the growth in the residential sector, but not necessarily by location or school price-point. Considering the potential oversupply in both sectors, it is important to map how school supply matches, or mismatches, the supply of residential property.”

How are schools [and parents] responding to new market dynamics?

With nearly a month of 2020 already over, schools are gearing up for the start of the 'enrolment window'. It's that time of the year when the less usual marketing ideas often have no boundaries, and approval processes are ditched in favour of 'School Groupon' vouchers, and free helicopter rides.



oogle and Facebook must plan their summer celebrations around UAE education-related revenue which flows strongly from February through to June. This year they will toast another successful year of digital spending around SEO strategies of ever more convoluted word combinations as search terms.

Traditional advertising (outdoor, print), otherwise living on life support machines, also receives a boost of energy from schools who commit to, we would argue, often expensive and questionably effective forms of advertising, particularly in “The battle of the bill-boards”.

School buzzword bingo also takes place across Dubai’s radio stations with listeners hypnotised by student, principal and parent testimonies, usually centred around a school’s “holistic” approach to education.

In 2019, schools spent a reported \$12,470,145 on advertising on traditional media channels (print, outdoor, radio). In real terms, it was significantly more as *Google* and *Facebook* spending isn’t tracked. And although this seems like a large amount of money, *it’s actually a 27% decrease from 2018*, when UAE schools spent \$17,163,888, according to figures released by IPSOS.

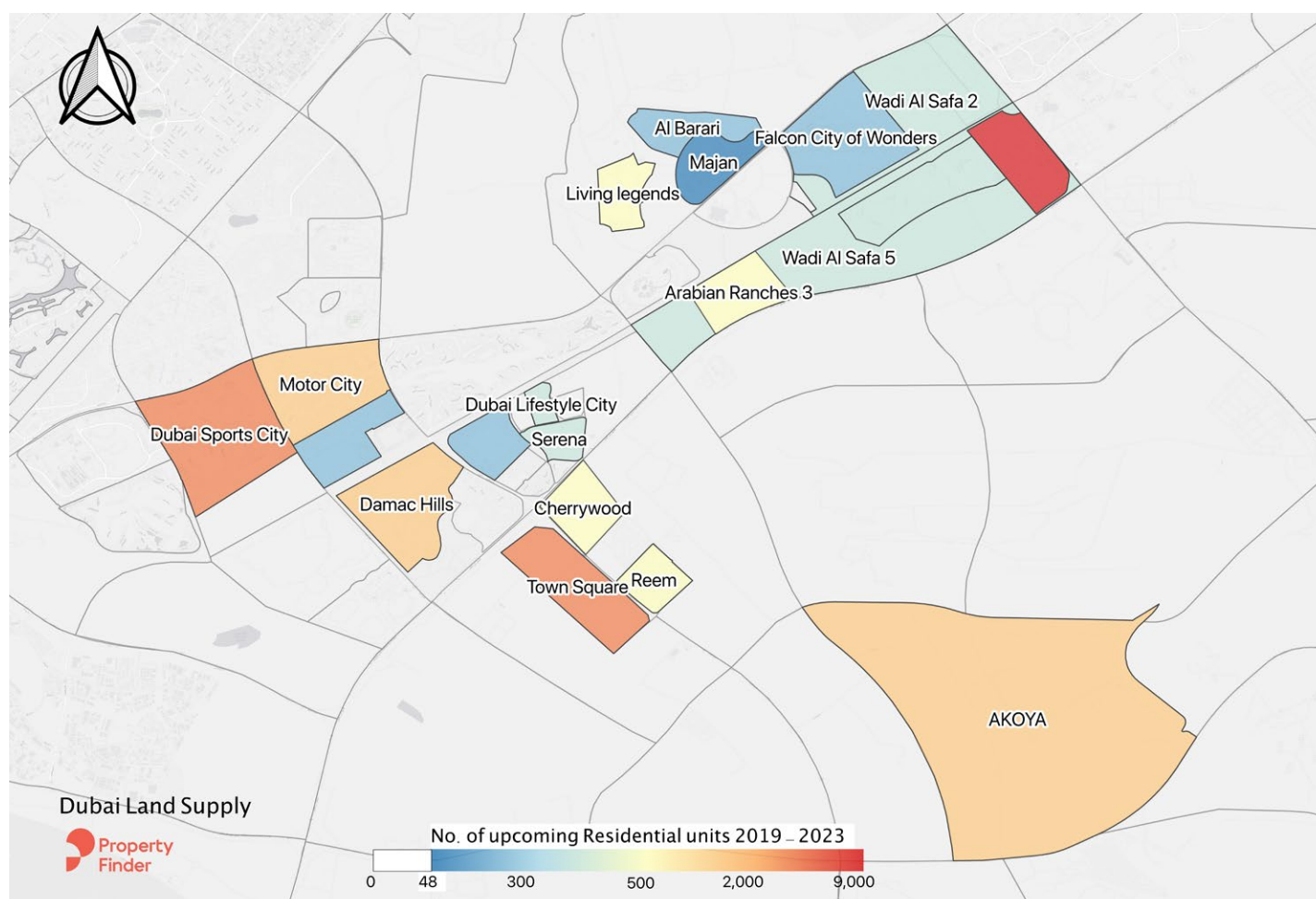
What is really going on and what is on the horizon for the next 12 months?

We know that ‘choice’ and competition are the new norm within the education sector. Parents have a choice of school brands, price points, and curricula on their doorstep, and virtually every community, and sub-community in Dubai has more than one high quality school close by.

It’s no secret that the wider market has been going through some turbulence. As mentioned in the UAE Market Development article, the Emirates National Bank Purchasing Manager’s Index (PMI) is often the barometer of how things are going in the UAE.

“It’s no secret that the wider market has been going through some turbulence. As already mentioned in our UAE Market Development article, the Emirates National Bank Purchasing Manager’s Index (PMI) is often the barometer of how things are going in the UAE.”

It measures the performance of companies in the non-oil sector and is derived from a survey of 400 companies, including manufacturing, services, construction and retail. A reading above 50 indicates growth of the non-oil private sector compared to the previous month; below 50 represents a contraction; while 50 indicates no change.



2019 offered glimmers of hope. The December 2019 PMI report highlighted that “For the year as a whole, the average PMI reading was 54.1” which still represents economic growth but it suggest a slower rate of non-oil sector growth in the last two years.

However, business sentiment improved towards the end of the year due to increased investment related to Expo 2020. Overall, slower growth (but still growth) and price discounting dominated 2019, and as a consequence, limited overall job creation in the private sector.

The good news for residents is that rental prices continue to fall, and more housing developments are on the way. Given the high expatriate population in Dubai, the dynamics of the property market are closely aligned to the education sector, as demographic shifts can often be seen in schools, albeit at a slower pace.

Property Finder data indicates that around 39,000 residential units were delivered in 2019, compared to 33,881 units delivered in 2018. Property prices have slid to a 7 year low with the average square foot hitting the AED 895 mark.

Rental prices in many communities around Dubai have decreased as new developments have forced property agents and landlords to incentivise tenants with more flexible payment terms and maintenance packages.

“The December 2019 PMI report highlighted that “For the year as a whole, the average PMI reading was 54.1” which still represents economic growth but it suggest a slower rate of non-oil sector growth in the last two years.”

Where is development concentrated?

The Dubailand area has seen a dramatic increase of residents within the past five years, notably in the Arabian Ranches 1 & 2, Motor City, Sustainable City, Mudon, Damac Hills, The Villa, Layan and Al Waha Community, Remraam, Townsquare and Mira. Zawaya in Motor City

is slated for hand over in Q1 of 2020. Belgravia Heights I & II in Jumeirah Village Circle is also due in Q1 2020. Amaranta 3 of the Villanova community will add 300 townhomes in Q4 2020.

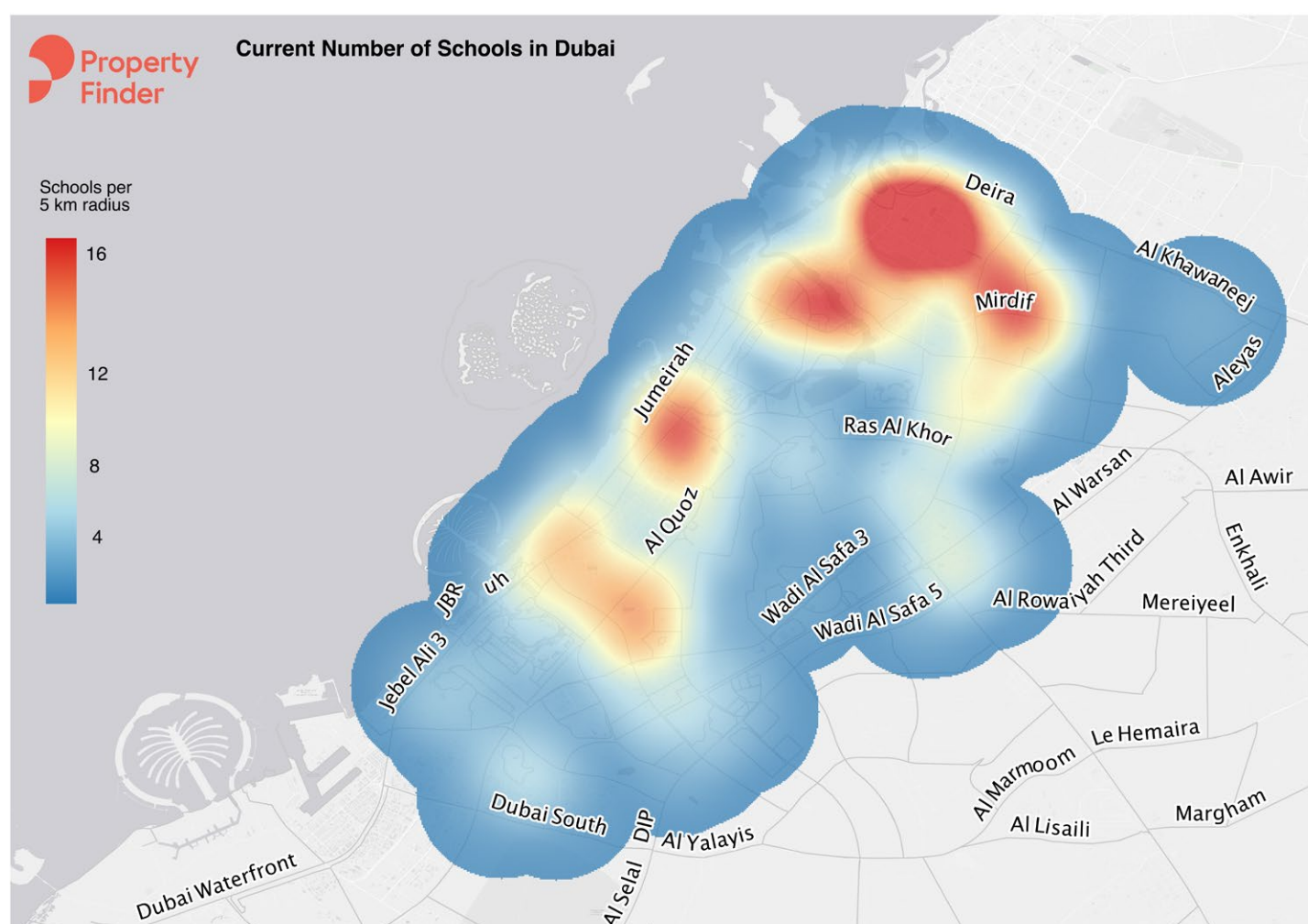
One of the most interesting announcements is phase one of Majid al Futtaim's Tilal Al Ghaf, located in Dubailand. This master community will add 800 villas and townhomes and is due in Q4 of 2020. The Royal Grammar School Guildford launch in 2021 will have the luxury of setting up in a community, and the challenge of being in Dubai's competition hotspot at the same time.

What market developments can we expect to see next?

Traditional loyalties are being tested in the new competitive climate and new ways of thinking are being adopted by schools who can see a different future on the horizon.

The development of Dubai's communities has not always been by design but the new norm has created opportunities to define what it means to be a resident of Dubai, and what it really means to be part of a larger community.

Real estate developers are warming to the idea of *placemaking*, one in particular being IMKAN in Abu Dhabi, and the



“The development of Dubai’s communities has not always been by design but the new norm has created opportunities to define what it means to be a resident of Dubai, and what it really means to be part of a larger community.”

Sustainable City in Dubai. Placemaking is not to be confused with master planning and it should be understood as *a tool that can transform a space into a community for residents who are looking for more than just a house with four walls*. Walkability is a key principle, and communities that were designed with this in mind have generated higher returns for real estate investors.

Schools are also part of this process, and it is clear that we are now at the point where we now need to define what it means to be “in Dubai” and “from Dubai”. These defining statements are a step towards building a bigger future of Dubai, and one that focuses on providing a stable environment for families to live and educate the future generations that will be in Dubai for the years to come.

How are parents responding to the new norm?

Property Finder and the *Education Intelligence Group* explored the education and residential sectors through focus groups with 20 participating parents from a variety of nationalities including Lebanese, British, Australian, Maltese, American, Turkish, Armenian, Indian, Emirati, Tunisian, South Korean, Austrian and Latvian. The participants were selected from a larger survey of over 3000 people. The average age range of the participants was between 31-44 years old.

The results revealed some of the parents’ genuine anxieties about raising children, and the stresses of choosing a school, as well as highlighting their positive opinions about Dubai as a whole, and the education and residential real estate sector.

The trigger topic to begin the conversation focused on “what Dubai is like as a society” and then explored what it meant to be part of a community here in the UAE. Overwhelmingly, nearly all of the participants described Dubai as “safe” and a “great place for young children to grow up”. The safety aspect was commonly referred to, and was in contrast to London, New York and Singapore that were not described in this way.

The participants highlighted the benefits of living in an international community but there was a recognition that their position within the society was tentative. Long-term residency, if it were

“The participants highlighted the benefits of living in an international community but there was a recognition that their position within the society was tentative. Long term residency would give them a layer of confidence that would enable them to plan for a longer future in Dubai.”

awarded, would give them a layer of confidence that would enable them to plan for a longer future in Dubai.

What factors are driving school choice?

When it came to choosing a school, parents were ambiguous about the process, and very cost sensitive. Nearly all of the participants felt that they had enough choices when it came to their child's education. None of the participants stated that they felt limited by what was available to them in terms of school options. Sophia, a British national living downtown visited several schools before making her choice for Foundation Stage 1. She was sceptical about most of the schools she visited and mentioned that the KHDA ratings "do not tell the full story" and that many schools looked "fancy" but lacked substance. She also confessed that she was uncertain about her future in Dubai and if costs continued to rise, she would return to work but was critical about the part-time opportunities available for highly skilled mums.

When asked, *none of the parents were motivated to potentially move to another school for reasons related to free transport, catering, uniforms or free extra-curricular activities.* The need to have qualified teachers, within a reasonable travel distance (20 minute drive), at a price they could afford (no more than 15% of annual income) were the deciding factors for most parents.

As the demographics of Dubai evolves, and communities adapt to new economic norms, schools across the UAE have the opportunity to redefine the nature of community, and parent-school relationships within this environment.

The UAE has never been known for its complacency, and at the heart of its DNA, is a relentless focus on moving forward – even it means breaking with a comfortable, even loved, status quo. Few, if any, schools in the UAE are so good they can ignore the changes happening around them and will need to embrace the UAE's attitude towards change. The most successful at doing so will be the benchmark schools of tomorrow. ■

"The UAE has never been known for its complacency, and at the heart of its DNA, is a relentless focus on moving forward – even it means breaking with a comfortable, even loved, status quo."

How can Dubai crack the affordable schooling model?

Affordability is a big factor in every sector of Dubai's economy, today. We have seen an influx of different types of housing, with budget and back-packer hotels, and discounts across the retail sector ... Schools are no different ...

Taher Gharib Director of Al Salam Community School



ffordable schools have seen a huge response from parents in Dubai in the past three years despite the ‘noise’ coming from new schools entering the premium segment. Clearly, parents are price sensitive in the current climate which means that tuition fees matters just as much, if not more than shiny facilities. At

the same time, the supply of school seats has increased which puts parents in the driving seat to get their first choice of school.

This is a healthy step forward for the market. Operators have not responded fast enough to address everyone’s needs but that is, partly, because it can take up to three years for a new school to be designed, and built after a new audience has been ‘discovered’.

To show this lag, 14 new schools opened in Dubai in September 2018 bringing more than 20,000 extra school seats to the market with an average price around AED 55,000. Student enrolments in these premium schools has grown very slowly. Yet, one of the schools, GEMS Founders Al Mizhar, was designed and built for parents who could afford between AED 23,000-30,000 each year. It opened with over one thousand students.

It is clearly an advantage for a school to be designed with affordability from the start. For us as a family however affordability has never been a strategy. For Al Salam, *it is part of our vision and moral imperative to provide all children access to a high quality, values based and inspiring education.* This type of education should not just be for the children of the rich.

Premium schools offering discounts are going to be behind the curve because they have designed into their basic model higher costs of materials, staffing ratios and backroom services. Many of them have shareholder expectations to meet too. They won’t be able to resist their own internal inflationary pressures for long.

“Most parents do not want ‘cheap’ schools. They want to see that their chosen school invest in great staff, in a modern and challenging curriculum, and in a good range of options/ electives and extra-curricular activities.”

We have avoided such pressures by containing the new Al Salam Community School within our family. This will enable us to stay true to what we as a family believe in, and to make decisions truly in the best interests of the children.

A new school can avoid the excesses – perhaps by adopting the simple discipline of designing with straight lines and avoiding expensive features and curves, perhaps by optimising the building layout to maximise shade, perhaps by simplifying security and movement – all designed to cut back on unnecessary building costs, reduce capital repayments and keep back-office functions efficient and cost-effective.

Most parents do not want ‘cheap’ schools. They want to see that their chosen school invests in great staff, in a modern and challenging curriculum, and in a good range of options/electives and extra-curricular activities. The affordable school needs to reassure parents that their children are not missing out.

They should take comfort from educational research, which shows categorically that fee level is not the main driver of quality worldwide. In fact, Dubai has been a pioneer in demonstrating that schools with lower fees can out-perform their more expensive peers in exams such as IGCSE and A-levels. Family schools like Al Salam, Al Diyafah, St Mary’s, Scholars, Ambassador and Al Mawakeb have long combined affordable fees and strong results. There are corporate schools such as Choueifat, GEMS Westminster and GEMS Winchester who have a similar history.

The new drive in Dubai is to design from the start for affordability. Operators begin with a discussion of ‘necessities’, ‘needs’ and ‘luxuries’. In our case, at Al Salam’s new site, at Al Salam Community School, our necessities are: academic strengths and the road to qualifications, children’s moral and cultural sensitivity, and our relationships with children and their parents. We never do anything that puts these elements at risk. It is an approach we have followed for more than 35 years. We now also have the opportunity to further diversify the range of qualifications where students talents, interests and achievements can be recognised. Here too, we expect nothing but commitment and excellence from the students.

“It is clearly an advantage for a school to be designed for affordability from the start. For us as a family, it has never been a strategy, but rather, part of our vision and moral imperative to provide all children access to a high quality, values based and inspiring education ...”

We add important ‘needs’ to the mix but never at exorbitant cost. *The first need is support for special needs* because it is fundamental to our staff and to my family that we serve all elements in our community. None are more important than those who are in greatest need. Every member of our school community gains from this expression of inclusivity, service and humanity. *A second need is our staff training* which we keep focused, practical and school-based because school is where we want our teachers to be, and to make the greatest difference. The third need is the extra-curricular programme which we keep strong because we know that *children want and need a broader education and the enrichment for wider development.*

It is the luxuries that we unashamedly lose. Our swimming pool on our new site is competition size, not Olympic size and we do not have a decked out auditorium separate to our indoor multi-purpose hall. Our entrance is welcoming, airy and functional; it does not have to resemble a palace. Our classrooms and labs are just as numerous and just as large as schools that charge twice our fees but we have planned carefully so we could cut back on the office space and some of the extra staff required. We do not feel that we need lots of people to welcome our community to the school *if the one or two people who we have do a brilliant job!*

We also make the most of our parents and community. We invite parents in so they can contribute, teach and learn alongside us.

You see, I don’t think the Dubai market really needs to crack the affordable school model. *The model is already alive and well, safe in the hands of a number of families and operators who have served the Dubai community for years,* and who are now capable of expanding their provision to new areas of the city.

Perhaps it is in our nature as parents to worry when we don’t spend as much on our children as some other families. But secretly, we all know it is not how much you spend but how much you love your children, and what examples you set them for life.

This is the kind of school that we try to be. In my mind, it is the best type of school for your child to be in. ■

“Our classrooms and labs are just as numerous and just as large as schools that charge twice our fees but we have planned carefully so we could cut back on the office space and some of the extra staff required.”

89 School news



Despite the warnings about over-supply of school places, five new schools were expected to open in Dubai in September 2019, and three more are expected for the start of the 2020-21 academic year, creating an **additional 13,000 places. These new openings bring a total of **41 new schools** that have opened in the emirate in the past three years.**



Dubai school openings in 2019 and beyond

For 2019, established names, including Al Salam Community School, the Secondary campus for Apple International School, and Ambassador International Academy (sister to the Ambassador Schools in Dubai and Sharjah), were among those that opened at the start of the academic year. The Secondary section of the Arcadia School will open in the early part of 2020, transferring Year 7 students from the existing Primary School. The fifth school – Al Ghaf Primary – was expected to open in time for 2019-20 but has not done so.

The opening of three further schools in September 2020 is expected to include Cedars School in Al Waarq'a and Jumeirah Village Circle (JVC) – both expected to be in the affordable category, and Citizens School which is expected to be mid-range. In a slightly confusing move, Regent International School in Dubai (part of the Fortes Group) having converted to a Primary only school on the opening of its Sunmarke through-school in nearby Jumeirah Village Triangle, has announced that it is re-opening the Secondary section at Regent for September 2020. Given that lack of space and facilities was originally seen to be

GEMS Sharjah success with GEMS Cambridge International launch

One of the most successful launches of 2019-20 was the revamped Our Own Boys School in Sharjah, which has metamorphosed into the GEMS Cambridge International Private School. Offering the UK curriculum from pre-KG to Grade 5 in its first year, the school opened with 840 students. With fees ranging from AED 20,000 in pre-KG to AED 30,000 for Grade 12 upon opening, this may not be one of the most affordable schools, but it certainly is not premium-pricing. Another Sharjah-based school – Pace British School – joins its sister schools, Gulf Asian English School and Pace International School. It opened offering discounted fees of AED 14,000 in FS2 to AED 19,000 in Year 6, compared with approved fees of AED 24,000 to AED 32,000. Not only in Dubai is the competition for students apparently getting hotter...

a reason for the closure of the Secondary section at Regent, we wonder what justifies reopening it now – aside from convenience for existing parents and an additional revenue stream.

Further ahead comes the announcement of the launch of the Royal Grammar School Guilford in Dubai in time for the 2021-22 academic year. We do not expect to see affordable or mid-range fees here. With its reputation as one of the most academically successful schools in the UK, fees are expected to be premium. Whether there is really enough appetite for another academically successful UK-linked school in the current economic climate remains to be seen.

Harrow to launch on-line A Levels in the UAE

Alongside RGS Guilford in Dubai, another well-known UK public school is seeking to make an entrance in the UAE. UAE parents will soon be able to send their children to a top English private school without having to leave home, with Harrow – attended by many famous pupils, including Sir Winston Churchill and actor Benedict Cumberbatch—setting up a virtual sixth form which will teach A-levels online to students anywhere in the world from September 2020. The school will initially focus on science and

New SABIS school for Sharjah in 2021

Looking further ahead, Developer Arada has announced a partnership with Sabis to open a new K-12 international school in Sharjah. With a capacity of 4,000 pupils and preparing students for success in both American- and British-based external exams, the International School of Choueifat (ISC) will be based at Arada's 24 million square foot megaproject, Aljada. Construction is due to start in January 2020 with the school expected to open in September 2021.

Taaleem will open Raha International Khalifa City in 2020

Obtaining information about new schools in Abu Dhabi is rather more of a challenge, since ADEK prefers schools to wait until they are ready for opening before allowing them to publicise their existence. The only major and highly publicised announcement so far is the opening of the second branch of Taaleem-owned, and ADEK Outstanding-rated Raha International School in Khalifa City, which is scheduled for opening in September 2020.



maths subjects, with education firm Pearson providing the technology. This is the latest attempt to use online technology to sell UK education overseas—with the school's brand being used to attract pupils who want to be taught through the internet.

The school is expected to appeal to affluent families in Russia, China, Nigeria, the Gulf and Hong Kong, who want A-levels from a prestigious private school teaching in English. The online platform has already been tested, and is being used by more than 75,000 pupils learning online in the United States.

The A-level subjects—Chemistry, Physics, Maths, Further Maths and Economics—will be taught through video-conferencing, with classes of up to 15 pupils per teacher. There will also be one-to-one teaching and extra-curricular projects, creating a “full-school experience”. Harrow will charge £15,000 per year—substantially above the fees charged for Sixth Form students by the vast majority of UK curriculum schools in the UAE – with the income to be shared between Pearson and Harrow, with the school saying money from online courses will be used to support bursaries for disadvantaged pupils – though they do not state whether these burseries will be offered outside the UK.

Launch of Charter Schools in Abu Dhabi

In a significant first step towards public private partnership in the education sector, ADEK announced that operators have been selected to run the first phase of new Charter Schools which will offer American-based curriculums to kindergarten and elementary levels pupils.

Following a tender, bidding and evaluation process, ADEK said it has chosen Aldar Education, Bloom Education and Taaleem. ADEK introduced the Charter Schools project in 2019, aiming to provide a third education model in Abu Dhabi, through the exchange of expertise between the public and private sectors. In 2018, ADEK inaugurated Al Rayana School in Al Falah area as a pilot for the Charter Schools project, which has now expanded to 12 Charter Schools, nine of which are based in Abu Dhabi city and three in Al Ain city.

Dubai to launch Dubai Schools Education project in private/public partnership

In a not dissimilar direction, the Dubai government, through the General Secretariat of the Executive Council of Dubai (TEC) is also set to open new schools in Dubai aimed at providing Emirati students with access to high quality international education with a focus on Arabic literacy, Islamic Studies and local culture through the Dubai Schools education project ('Dubai Schools'). TEC has invited private sector K-12 operators to operate and manage a number of schools which are expected to open from the academic year 2020-21 under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP). In an interesting twist, TEC has also requested that school operators with buildings not less than 10 years old, with 'high quality infrastructure' and good condition may wish to consider leasing the buildings for the Dubai Schools Project – perhaps an opportunity for providers who are finding the heat of the current market too much...

School disputes hit the headlines

Three disputes that caused consternation have evidently been resolved. However, future investors should ensure that they avoid the pitfalls. At the Oxford School, a disagreement between the Emirati sponsor and Indian investor resulted not only in legal action, but with the appearance of security guards onsite – disconcerting for parents and students also.

Delhi Private School Ajman (DPS Ajman) has been ordered to change its name, despite it having the permission to use the brand from original owner, Delhi Public School Society (DPS Society), a non-profit, private educational organisation established in 1949 in India.

Ironically, the case in the UAE was brought by the DPS Schools in Dubai and Sharjah, which no longer have permission from DPS Society, but have been operating the schools in the UAE for the last 15 years. In 2000, DPS Society gave a franchisee license to DPS Sharjah and in 2002 to DPS Dubai. Those agreements “expired” in 2017, DPS Society had said in March last year. However the Dubai and Sharjah schools had been registered by the local owner as a limited liability company, with the trademark authority of UAE. DPS Ras Al Khaimah has since been registered by the same owner with the Ras Al Khaimah authorities.

And in September 2019, GEMS Education announced that it had withdrawn from Our Own High School in Fujairah after a dispute with the landlord arose over the terms of renewal of their long-term lease leaving teachers without pay. Parents of pupils enrolled in Our Own High School in Fujairah said they were concerned standards would slip now that GEMS Education had withdrawn from the school over a dispute with the property’s landlord. According to GEMS, the professional licence of the school was unilaterally, and without GEMS’ knowledge or consent, transferred into the name of the landlord in March 2018. As a result of these actions it was no longer possible for GEMS to continue to operate the school. Parents’ main concern is maintaining CBSE accreditation. Approximately 3,000 students attend the school.

School closures

In October, it was reported that the Pakistan Community Welfare School in Mussafah, Abu Dhabi, was on the verge of closure due to lack of funds, putting the future of some 450 under-privileged students at stake. The school faced a deficit of AED 1.1m, with running costs of AED 2.2 million but revenue of only half this amount. Shortly before the summer break, in June 2019, it was announced that the only remaining Canadian curriculum school in Dubai was closing – Ontario International Canadian School in Mirdif opened in 2014, whilst British Columbia Canadian School in Dubai Investment Park closed in 2018 after only a year in operation.

Upturn in student enrolments for Spring term reported

On a happier note, there does seem to be some positive news as term 2 starts, at least for Taaleem in Dubai and Aldar Academies in Abu Dhabi. According to *The National*, the numbers of students enrolling at some private schools across the Emirates for the start of the January term have risen by almost a quarter. Schools said the bulk of the new intake consisted of children from families arriving in the country for the first time.

A number of private schools in the UAE said demand for places remained strong, with reputation an important factor in decision-making. Alan Williamson, chief executive of Taaleem, which runs 10 schools in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, said pupil enrolment had risen sharply. “Taaleem is currently looking at a 20 percent year-on-year increase in new enrolments for January.”

Discounts for siblings attending the same school have been one tactic employed by schools, along with significant tuition fee reductions for early enrolment. “We have seen a huge uptake in admissions across Aldar Academies in 2019,” according to a spokesperson for Aldar Education. Enrolments for January are said to have soared this year, with an “an eight-fold increase in new enrolments for term 2 compared to January 2018”. The vast majority of students are joining the schools from overseas [or] outside of Abu Dhabi and demand has been very high, leading to the addition of extra classes in some academies to accommodate this.” ■



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95 International news



**Continued growth
in English-speaking
international schools**

According to ISC Research, the number of English-speaking international schools across the world has grown by a fifth in the last four years to more than 10,000 schools. And the number of teachers in those schools has increased by more than a quarter – from 396,300 in 2015 to 506,900 in 2019 – which is more than the number of full-time teaching posts in England.

The 2019 Global Opportunities Report also shows that pupil numbers in international schools have increased from 4.3 million in 2015 to 5.4 million, with demand for places particularly high in Asia. In the year 2000, there were just 969,000 children learning in English-speaking international schools. The number of international schools has increased more than fourfold in that time from 2,584 to 10,937, says the report. In 2015 there were 8,489. In the four years from January 2015 to 2019, East Asia has experienced an average annual student enrolment growth rate of 7.4 percent, increasing from 452,400 students to 600,900. South-East Asia has seen a 5.7 percent average growth rate, from 394,100 students in 2015 to 492,300 this year. And enrolment in Western Asia (the Middle East including Egypt) has grown from 1,334,100 in 2015 to 1,597,200 today.

China leads the field in terms of numbers of international schools.

China leads the international field with 884 schools, India with 708, UAE with 664. A growing number of countries in South East Asia have seen dramatic growth in international schools in recent years too. Malaysia now has 283 international schools, Thailand has 216 and Vietnam has 126.

In China, where international schools for expatriate children are separated from those that Chinese nationals may attend, it is the international schools for local Chinese children that have experienced most growth. 66 percent of the 359,300 children in China who attend the 884 international schools are Chinese nationals. By 2024, the number of international schools in China is expected to increase to 1110.

“In 2015 there were 8,489. In the four years from January 2015 to 2019, East Asia has experienced an average annual student enrolment growth rate of 7.4 percent, increasing from 452,400 students to 600,900.”

GULF, MIDDLE EAST AND INDIA

India now ranks second in the number of international schools it hosts, behind China. Local students vastly outnumber expats with 63.4% of privately educated children at international schools being Indian, whilst 5.2% come from the US and 1.8% are South Korean nationals. Middle class Indian parents are largely opting for imported curricula, for reasons ranging from giving their children an opportunity to attend Ivy League or

Oxbridge colleges to social prestige. The number of international schools has more than doubled in the past 7 years with parents paying \$1.2bn in fees. In 2012, there were 313 international schools with 152,000 students; today there are 708 international schools and 303,000 students who attend them. Historically fee levels have been too high for many families, but some schools are now reworking their fees. The average annual fee in India is USD 3,293 p.a. compared with USD 15,726 in China, USD 8,073 in the UAE, and USD 6,395 in Malaysia. These compare with a global average of USD 9,242. In India, 18.8% of annual fees are between USD 10,000-14,000 whilst 6% of families pay more than USD 10,000.

Clyde & Co has advised Orbital Education on its joint venture agreement with United Development Co. (UDC) for the founding and operation of United School International, a British-style international school on the Pearl development in Doha (Qatar). With an opening planned for 2021, the school will be the first to be built on the Pearl with a capacity of 2,500 students. Orbital Education is the owner and operator of a growing group of international British schools across four continents with schools in Hungary, Slovenia, Spain, Russia, China and Ecuador.



“Middle class Indian parents are largely opting for imported curricula, for reasons ranging from giving their children an opportunity to attend Ivy League or Oxbridge colleges to social prestige. The number of international schools has more than doubled in the past 7 years with parents paying \$1.2bn in fees.”



ASIA

The major focus for development of and investment in private education remains in Asia.

In Singapore Private education provider Nexus International School (Singapore) is seeking to issue an amortising bond guaranteed by Credit Guarantee and Investment Facility (CGIF), a trust fund of the Asian Development Bank. If the bond is issued, part of the proceeds will go into repaying a loan that was used to develop Nexus's new campus at 1 Aljunied Walk, which will open its doors in January.

One of Singapore's largest international schools could be up for sale, with its private-equity owner exploring options including a potential sale. Southern Capital Group Pte, a Singapore-based buyout firm, is working with an adviser for a strategic review of Canadian International School which could lead to a sale of the business for at least \$500 million. Catering to students from age 2 to 18, Canadian International School, like its peers in Singapore, competes for applicants from expatriate and local families.

“One of Singapore’s largest international schools could be up for sale, with its private-equity owner exploring options including a potential sale. Southern Capital Group Pte is working with an adviser for a strategic review of Canadian International School.”



“In Hong Kong Invictus is set to open a secondary school in 2020 and also planning to open a middle and high school in September 2020 in Chai Wan. The group is also planning the opening of an all through school in Cambodia in 2020, its fifth school in SEA.”

NLCS Singapore is now CPE registered and admissions are now open for the 2020-21 academic year.

Invictus opened its second campus in Singapore, in Sentosa, in August 2019 for Grades 1-2.

In Hong Kong Invictus is set to open a secondary school in 2020 and also planning to open a middle and high school in September 2020 in Chai Wan. The Invictus group is also planning the opening of an all through school in Cambodia in 2020, its fifth school in SEA.

Chatsworth's Orchard campus and ISS Paterson campus will both close in 2020 as leases for both sites have not been renewed by government.

In Malaysia Asia Pacific Schools in Selangor, Malaysia have joined the ISP Group.

In China Nord Anglia Education (NAE) has announced that its

four new bilingual schools in mainland China opened in September 2019. The bilingual schools are Nord Anglia School Beijing, Fangshan; Nord Anglia School Foshan; Nord Anglia School Nantong; and Nord Anglia School Shenzhen. Between them, the schools will educate more than 7,200 students in total. This brings the NAE group of schools to 66 schools in 29 countries, with more than 64,000 students and more than 13,000 teachers and support staff globally.

In June 2019, Cranleigh School's partnership in China with the Cogdel Education Group was formally agreed at the Department for International Trade. The Cogdel Group, based in Chengdu, currently operates five international high schools across China. The Cranleigh family of schools currently includes senior co-educational boarding school Cranleigh School, and co-ed boarding and day school Cranleigh Preparatory School, both in Surrey; along with Cranleigh Abu Dhabi, for 3-18 year-olds in the UAE. Together Cranleigh and Cogdel will form a company called Cranleigh China, which will act as franchise provider for Cranleigh China branded schools. These schools will adopt a similar ethos to Cranleigh, with particular emphasis on academic excellence, the creative curriculum and provision of an innovative co-curricular programme. Cranleigh China schools will focus on the final three years of education, A Levels and Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), with a view to helping pupils to achieve UK and US university entrance. The first Cranleigh China School is planned to open in 2020.

Central London-based Westminster School is also planning a major overseas expansion by way of six new schools in China. It will set up these schools by 2028 via a collaboration with local partners. The first school will be set up in Chengdu, capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province. It will also be the first branch of the British independent school away from its London site. Construction at the Chengdu site began in early April 2019 and the school is expected to start its first autumn semester in 2020, offering bilingual education to about 2,000 Chinese and foreign students. The programmes will span a wide range starting from nursery and kindergarten to the pre-university level, taking in students aged 1 to 18.

"In June 2019, Cranleigh School's partnership in China with the Cogdel Education Group was formally agreed at the Department for International Trade. The Cogdel Group, based in Chengdu, currently operates five international high schools across China."

UNITED KINGDOM

Government pledges to strengthen OFSTED

With the pre-occupation on Europe, and Brexit, it is probably fair to say the Education news has not necessarily been on the front page in recent months. However, the announcement as part of the General Election campaign at the end of November saw the Conservatives promising to strengthen England's education watchdog Ofsted. Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced plans for longer inspections and an extra £10m funding for Ofsted. There will also be trials of "no-notice inspections", where schools could be visited without any prior warning.

The Conservatives have set out a clear dividing line in their policy on schools—calling for a bigger role for Ofsted with an extra day added to inspections of secondary and large primary schools to focus on behaviour, bullying and extra-curricular activities, such as sport.

The idea behind "no-notice" inspections had been to reveal the day-to-day reality of schools, rather than giving staff a few hours to prepare. The National Association of Head Teachers, rejected the idea of no-notice inspections as making "absolutely no sense". "No-notice inspections will do more harm than good—they will result in more wasted time for inspectors, whilst arrangements are frantically put in place to meet their needs." Mr Johnson is also expected to confirm plans to end the exemption, introduced by Conservative education ministers, that saw "outstanding" schools not having to face regular inspections.



"The Conservatives have set out a clear dividing line in their policy on schools—calling for a bigger role for Ofsted with an extra day added to inspections of secondary and large primary schools to focus on behaviour, bullying and extra-curricular activities, such as sport."

Also under new government plans, starting salaries for teachers in England could rise by up to £6,000.

The Department for Education has said that the move would make new teachers' salaries—set to rise to £30,000 by 2022-23—"among the most competitive" in the graduate labour market. The minimum salary for teachers in England and Wales, excluding London, is currently £23,720, according to the government's Get Into Teaching website. The minimum for inner London is £29,664. The proposal is among the latest education announcements by the government.

A multi-billion pound cash boost was promised for schools in England over the next three years, while UK Chancellor Sajid Javid also pledged to invest an extra £400m into further education for 16 to 19-year-olds. Teacher training targets have been missed for six years in a row, and no plans to address the issue of retaining experienced teachers have been announced.

"A multi-billion pound cash boost was promised for schools in England over the next three years, while UK Chancellor Sajid Javid also pledged to invest an extra £400m into further education for 16 to 19-year-olds."

Concerns about level of student failures in GCSE results

In a further significant probe into the standards of education being achieved by UK students, analysis of 2018's results in England by the exams regulator Ofqual for the BBC showed that 561,180 16-year-olds sat GCSEs, but 70,730—12.6%—didn't get a single good pass at grade 4 or above. A further 23,210—4.1%—got at least one grade 4 or above pass, but not in Maths or English.

Failing GCSE English by just one grade can have serious consequences, according to research by the Centre for Vocational Education Research at the London School of Economics. It can mean that doors to other post-16 courses are often shut, teenagers lose confidence and this can ultimately lead to adults being trapped at or below the minimum wage, or struggling to get work at all—simply from failing one crucial GCSE. More young people are doing well, going on to university, but that does not help those whose school record means they struggle to progress onto any qualification at Level 3, the equivalent of A-level.



AQA fined over exam rule breaches

Exam board AQA is to pay more than £1.1m in fines and compensation for a string of rule breaches, errors and failings in GCSEs and A-levels that regulators said could seriously undermine public confidence in the qualifications system.

Ofqual, which oversees school exams in England, said it had levied the largest ever fine on AQA (the UK's largest exam board, awarding more than 3m certificates each year), after identifying that 50,000 appeals for exam papers to be reviewed or re-marked, spread between 2016 and 2018, were carried out by AQA staff who had already marked the same papers.

The regulator also imposed a further fine and reprimand for cases involving faulty exam design. In 2018 more than 100 students initially received lower French A-level grades, and a question used in practice papers was repeated in the GCSE English literature exam the same year.

In the most significant case, Ofqual found that AQA had overlooked internal warnings in 2016 and 2017 and failed to alert the regulator that re-marks were sometimes carried out by the same people who conducted the initial marking.

AQA will pay a £350,000 fine and give compensation worth £755,000 to the exam centres where the reviews or re-marks originated, as well as paying Ofqual's costs for its investigation.

“Exam board AQA is to pay more than £1.1m in fines and compensation for a string of rule breaches, errors and failings in GCSEs and A-levels that regulators said could seriously undermine public confidence in the qualifications system.”

Ofqual said there was no evidence that students or schools had been affected, but warned: “These were serious breaches of conditions that are integral to the effectiveness and purpose of the system of reviewing marking and moderation. The failures therefore have the potential to seriously undermine public confidence in the review of marking, moderation and appeals system, and the qualifications system more generally.”

49% of 18 year olds accepted for university places with lower grades than advertised entry requirements

UCAS, the university admissions service, found that 49% of 18-year-olds in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, who sat at least three A-levels, were accepted with lower grades than the advertised entry requirements. Nearly half of young people were given a place at university in 2019 with A-level grades lower than the advertised entry requirements. Disadvantaged students were more likely to take up places with lower grades. In its end-of-cycle report for 2019, UCAS says that 60% of applicants from the fifth most disadvantaged backgrounds were accepted on to courses with A-level grades below the advertised requirements.

The UCAS report also found that applicants should not be deterred from applying to courses with challenging entry requirements, noting that “Universities and colleges frequently accept applicants who perform below their entry requirements. Encouragingly, this is most often experienced by disadvantaged applicants.”

A record 541,240 students were accepted onto undergraduate courses in 2019; the number of places being offered through Clearing continued to rise—in 2019, over 34,000 18-year-olds (14% of all placed applicants) secured a place this way, the highest number on record; nearly three in four (73.6%) of the UK’s 18-year-olds who were accepted onto a course, got a place at their first-choice university. UCAS says around one in six (17%) of the most disadvantaged students said they had received a contextual offer.

“The UCAS report also found that applicants should not be deterred from applying to courses with challenging entry requirements, noting that “University and colleges frequently accept applicants who perform below entry requirements.”



Cambridge University expects highest ever proportion of new students from state schools for 2019-20 academic year

Cambridge University, which has faced accusations of being socially exclusive, advised that the proportion of state school pupils starting at the University of Cambridge in autumn 2019 was expected to be the highest for decades—rising to 68%. The university said one in four new students are from “disadvantaged backgrounds”. The official admission figures for 2019-20 will not be published until later this year, but the university says the proportion of state school students among its UK intake is the highest in records going back to the 1980s. In 2018, about 65% of students starting at Cambridge were from state schools; five years ago, there were 62% of students from state schools.

About 7% of pupils in England are in private schools—but that figure rises to more than 15% by sixth form. Leading universities have been under pressure to ensure fair access to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This movement has seen Cambridge’s intake, in terms of state-educated pupils, becoming more similar to other Russell Group universities. 

“Leading universities have been under pressure to ensure fair access to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.”

106 Higher Education



**KHDA launches
Private University
inspection
process in Dubai**

Probably the most significant news about the Higher Education sector in the UAE is the recent involvement by the KHDA in respect of establishing standards for international universities operating in Dubai. At last, parents and students can look at their university options knowing that there is a regulatory process in place to ensure the quality of education being delivered by international university branches operating in the emirate.

Not only is this a positive for potential and existing students, but also for the universities concerned who now have an independent inspection process. Any issues of reputation are being addressed through the introduction of a quality rating from the KHDA (the Dubai Schools' Regulator, widely reputed for the tough school inspection process introduced 11 years ago which has undoubtedly raised standards in the international schools under its purview).

The classification system is based on QS star rating and was brought in as the sector requires a “strong and transparent assessment methodology” that enables institutions to highlight strengths, according to the government. Six universities were not included.

Dr. Abdulla Al Karam, Director-General of KHDA, said the system will “allow institutions to show their strengths and provide the public with helpful, relevant data to inform higher education decision making”. “This classification system will bring direct benefits to students, families, and employers”; it also provides students and parents with the information they need to make decisions about the future.

First inspection results revealed – UK universities at the top of rankings

UK universities claimed the top three international institution places in Dubai as the KHDA revealed the results of its first

“The classification system is based on QS star rating and was brought in as the sector requires a “strong and transparent assessment methodology” that enables institutions to highlight strengths, according to the government. Six universities were not included.”

branch campus classification ratings. Among the 17 branch campuses of international universities across the emirate, the University of Manchester Worldwide, London Business School and Heriot-Watt University were awarded the top rating in the one-to-five star plus system. However, no institution was rated five-star plus in the inaugural ratings.

“In a diverse and complex city with residents from over 160 countries... this classification system will bring direct benefits to students, families, and employers about the landscape of universities reviewed by Dubai,” said Warren Fox, KHDA chief of higher education.

According to official statistics, enrolment at Dubai’s international branch campuses has more than doubled over the past 11 years, increasing from 12,000 students in 2008 to more than 30,000 students in 2019. Dubai is home to 30 international campuses – the highest concentration of any place in the world – Fox added, and universities “may directly assist in the growth of an educated workforce”.

“The University Quality Assurance International Board provides quality oversight through a regulatory manual and releases results on a regular basis,” he explained. The rating system looks at key areas of university provision including teaching, employability, academic programs, research results, and internationalisation.

Mr. Fox explained, “This strengthens the Dubai hub as more [can be] known about university programmes and the institutions that offer them in a QS-like framework that is familiar around the world.”

The QS framework focuses on criteria such as teaching, employability, research, and internationalisation. Other factors taken into consideration include the strength of education programmes, attention to well-being and inclusiveness.

According to UNESCO statistics, there has been an increase in international students to the tune of 59 percent from 2011 to 2016. The majority of these students come from the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent, though recent agreements with China could transform campus diversity.

The KHDA now operates the two sector-specific ‘free zones’ (which give businesses legal benefits): the Academic City and

“This strengthens the Dubai hub as more [can be] known about university programmes and the institutions that offer them in a QS-like framework that is familiar around the world.”

Warren Fox,
KHDA chief of
higher education

Knowledge Park. Dr. Abdulla believes that the rapid growth of the sector is down to the culture of Dubai, and its open economic policies have attracted institutions keen to take advantage of the commercial, geographic and demographic potential, particularly due to the overwhelming percentage of resident expatriate families who aspire to a Western-style education.

Study in the UAE programme updated

An updated development plan which is part of a new ‘Study in the UAE’ programme, originating from the central government in Abu Dhabi, has been launched with the aim of attracting both universities and students. Part of the 2021 Vision project, ‘Study in UAE’ hopes to encourage more global students to choose the nation for a full study programme, rather than a study abroad period or short-term work on branch campuses. According to Dr. Abdulla, “KHDA will work with the Department of Tourism strongly to brand ‘Study in Dubai’ – because we realise the universities in Dubai are strong academically. We’ll be focusing on going to markets like China, Russia and Africa with these universities, to present what Dubai has to offer.”

Following the launch of a national strategy for advanced skills in mid-2019, education is a priority sector for the country. The policies enacted will ensure it is sustainable, diverse and in line with the requirements of future development plans as part of a comprehensive system to build future skills in key development areas. The UAE has previously announced its aim of creating an education sector at the forefront of global rankings, and to that end, Dh10.3 billion—one-sixth of the annual budget for 2019—was allocated for university education programmes.

Quality of university education in the UAE improving

There is evidence that the investment being made is already paying off in terms of quality of education. Two UAE universities, Khalifa University and UAE University, now rank in Asia’s top 50 universities for the first time, according to the Times Higher

Official rankings revealed

none +

University of Manchester
Worldwide, London
Business School, Heriot-
Watt University

S.P. Jain School of
Global Management,
Amity University Dubai,
Manipal University, Hult
International Business
School, City University of
London, Birla Institute of
Technology and Science
Pilani (Bits Pilani),
University of Bradford,
Middlesex University
Dubai

SAE Institute, University
of Exeter, Murdoch
University, Dubai

ESMOD French Fashion
Institute, Islamic Azad
University

Shaheed Zulfikar Ali
Bhutto Institute of
Science and Technology

Education (THE) Asia University Rankings 2019. The University of Sharjah and the American University of Sharjah (AUS) are the only other institutions that made the list.

Research, business-facing programmes and international accreditation are among the reasons the UAE is emerging as an attractive destination for students considering higher education qualifications. In addition, recent visa reforms mean that students with family in the UAE may now be given a two-year residency visa to look for a job after they graduate, as opposed to an average of six months earlier. Outstanding students and researchers will also now be able to remain in the country for up to 10 years.

Cutting-edge research in hot topics such as artificial intelligence and block-chain is encouraging students to consider studying at local universities—as the institutions continue to climb global rankings. Over 3,200 graduate students applied to the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) within the first week of its launch in October 2019. The MBZUAI is the first graduate-level, research-based artificial intelligence (AI) university in the world. The 3,200 applicants included 1,681 potential students who were in the last step of their application process and 234 who had already completed it. The majority of applications were received from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Egypt, India and China. Although only one example, this does suggest that if the UAE can get the quality and subject range of university education right, and ensure that opportunities to research and work are available in addition to study, tertiary education in the UAE is an area for significant potential.

“Research, business-facing programmes and international accreditation are among the reasons the UAE is emerging as an attractive destination for students ...”

Traditional university destinations are losing ground

Although the world's leading study destination, the US share of the international student market has declined from 28% in 2001 to 22% in 2018. A new analysis by NAFSA, The Association of International Educators, puts the cost of two consecutive years of declines in foreign student commencements in the US at US\$5.5 billion, with a corresponding loss of 40,000 US jobs. The

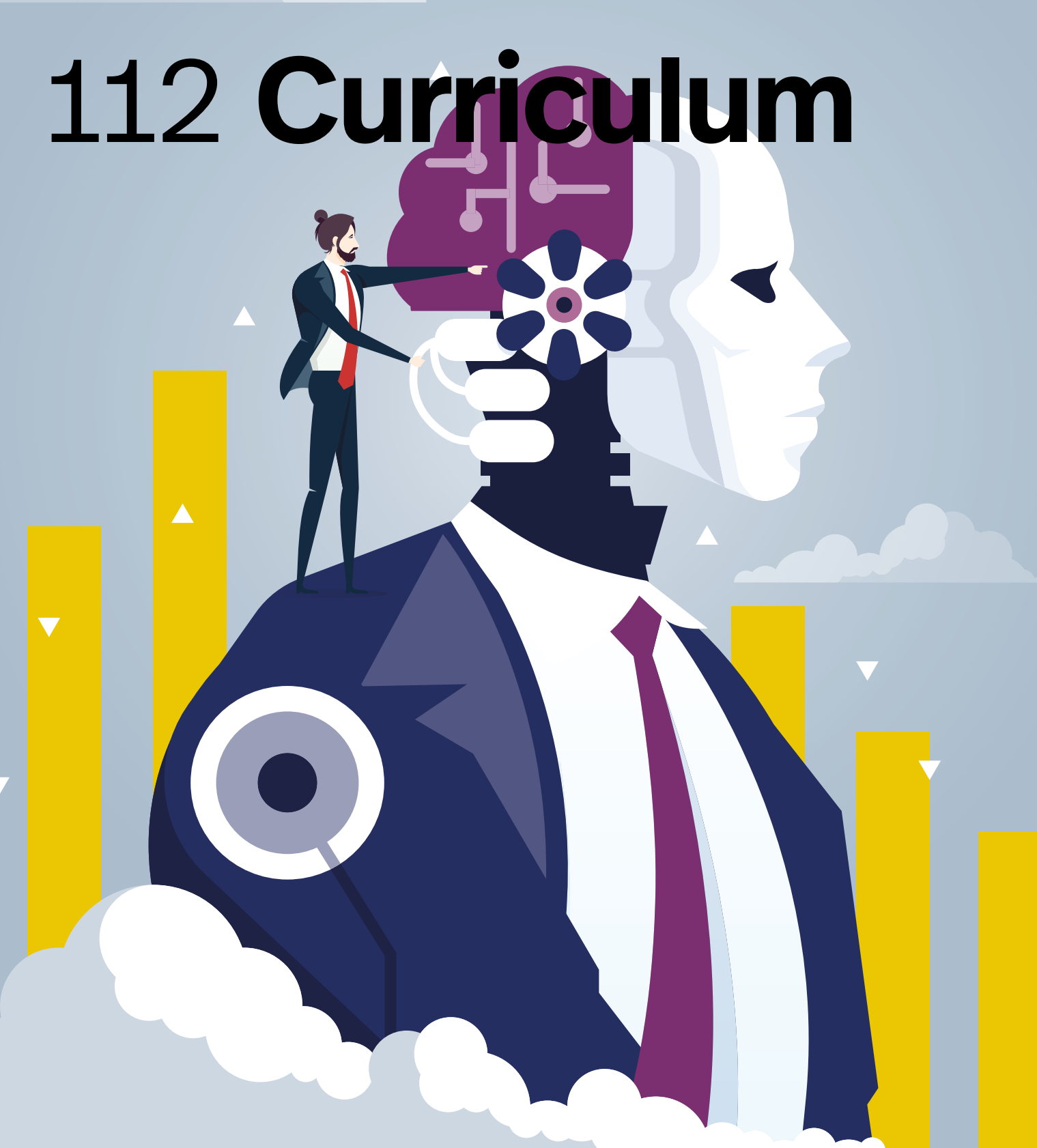
UK (the second most popular destination) has also lost ground, driven by increased fees for international students and potential concerns around the UK's decision to leave the European Union with its possible political and economic instability. A fall in UK University QS rankings over recent years is also a potential issue for overseas students. Though 2019's QS rankings show that the UK has four of the top ten universities in the world, many, including Cambridge, have tumbled in international league tables since 2016.

According to NAFSA, after the US, the UK, Germany and China are the most popular destinations, each with a share of the international student market of around 10%. France, Australia, Canada (each approx. 7%) and Russia (6%) also feature on the list. The NAFSA report highlights particularly the post-study work opportunities available to international students in countries such as Australia, Canada, and China which has seen their share of the international student market grow significantly as a result.

If the UAE can get this right, there is clearly a very substantial economic opportunity. ■

“Cutting-edge research in hot topics such as artificial intelligence and block-chain is encouraging students to consider studying at local universities—as the institutions continue to climb global rankings.”

112 Curriculum



With the constant call for students to be fit for the demands of the new economies, whatever they may be, there is an ongoing demand for school curricula to be fit for purpose. Whilst much of the focus is on technology (particularly AI) and IT, students also need to develop critical thinking and learning skills rather than knowledge per se. This article provides a round-up of latest in curricula developments, both within the UAE and in countries where changes will almost certainly impact schools and students in the UAE.

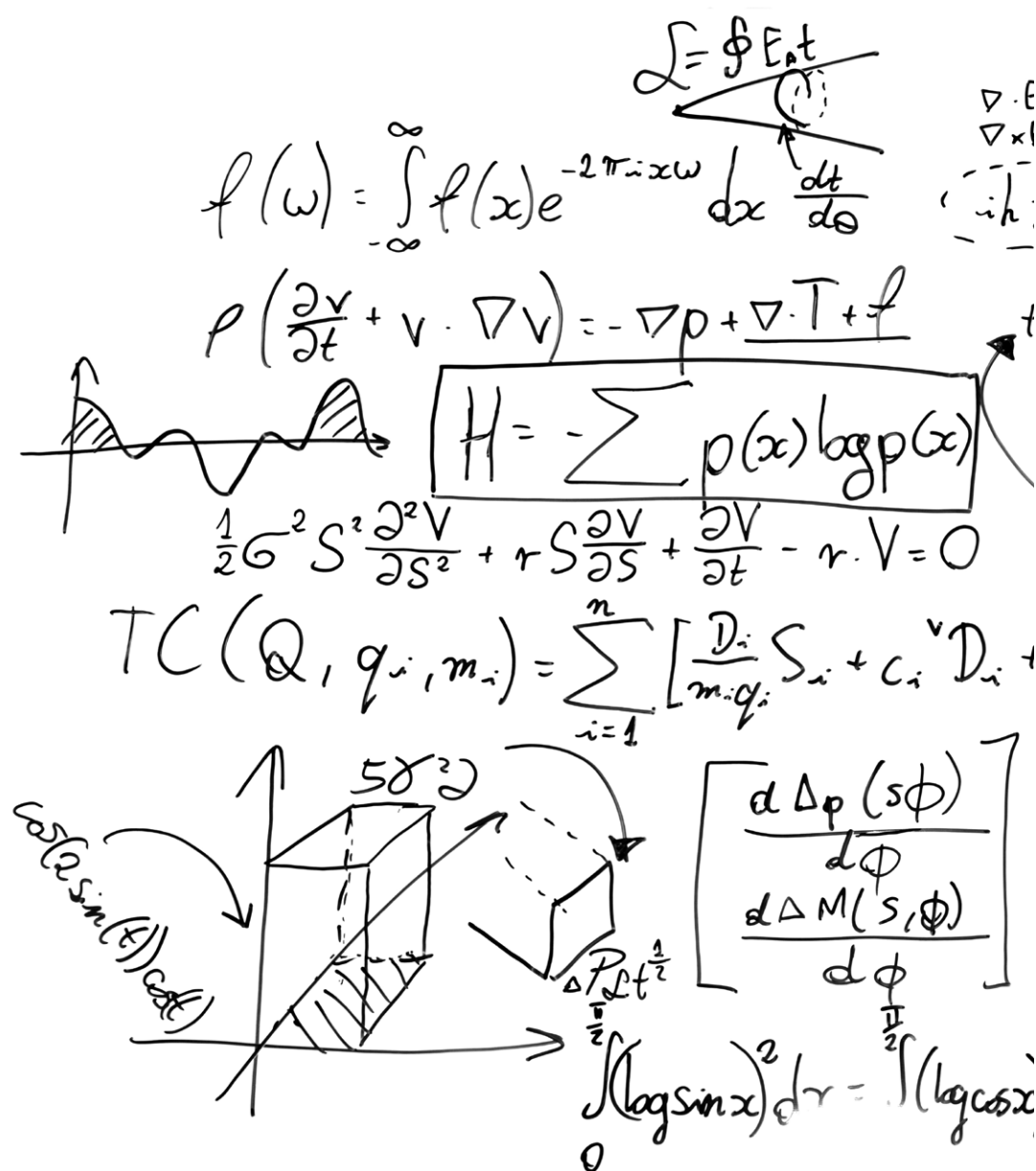
Artificial Intelligence – an ever-growing focus on AI in education.

The UAE was among the first nations to see an opportunity in AI for its economy. In 2017, the government rolled out an AI strategy, under the UAE 2031 banner, outlining plans to use technology to make governance more efficient and naming eight sectors it aims to transform, including space, renewable energy, water and education.

The UAE's first space launch and upcoming Mars missions has also seen a growth in interest in 2019 and added impetus to the demand for more technologically focused curricula in UAE schools.

In November 2018, The World Bank released an insightful report on education in the Middle East and North Africa. Despite large investments in education, young people in the region are not yet building the skills needed to compete in the labour market. Years of schooling are not equating to actual learning, where young people have inquisitive minds and the skills to be more productive. Young people are feeling this mismatch too, with, according to the report, only 38 percent of young professionals in MENA believing their education has prepared them for the workplace.

The report goes on to suggest, however, that the goal should not be to catch up with other education systems. Rather, it should be to leverage new technologies – and promote critical thinking, creativity and digital skills – to make a spring into the future. The region is responding to the mismatch, with governments, educational institutions and organisations increasingly promoting digital skills. It is another reason why the UAE has embraced the potential of artificial intelligence, including the appointment of the world's first AI government minister for Artificial intelligence, Omar Al Olama.



“The UAE’s first space launch and upcoming Mars missions has also seen a growth in interest in 2019 and added impetus to the demand for more technology focused curricula in UAE schools ...”



ADEK calls on school leavers to embrace STEM careers

In September 2019, ADEK sent out a press release to the UAE media in which the Regulator urged that school leavers in the emirate of Abu Dhabi should pursue careers in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), in order to align with labour market needs, stressing that these fields of study are in focus as the emirate works to meet the Abu Dhabi Vision 2030.

ADEK announced that “New academic programmes will [therefore] be announced at the 30 institutions of undergraduate and graduate education at the start of the 2019-2020 academic year, including space, energy, renewable energy, artificial intelligence and medicine.” Abu Dhabi currently has 30 institutions of further education, including 11 federal institutions, 10 Abu Dhabi Government-funded institutions and nine private ones. Between them, the institutions offer a total of 300 different academic programmes. While a variety of academic courses are available, including many in the fields of business, management and arts, education officials are stressing the need for more graduates who have studied Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.

“Abu Dhabi currently has 30 institutions of further education, including 11 federal institutions, 10 Abu Dhabi Government-funded institutions and nine private ones. Between them, the institutions offer a total of 300 different academic programmes.”

Microsoft supports the development of STEAM skills across the region

Across the Middle East and Africa, Microsoft is working with schools and colleges offering tools that encourage creativity and STEAM learning to create dynamic, 21st century learning environments. Educators are provided with the digital tools to create inclusive classrooms and personalised learning whilst use of technology supports their administrative workload so that teachers have more time to teach.

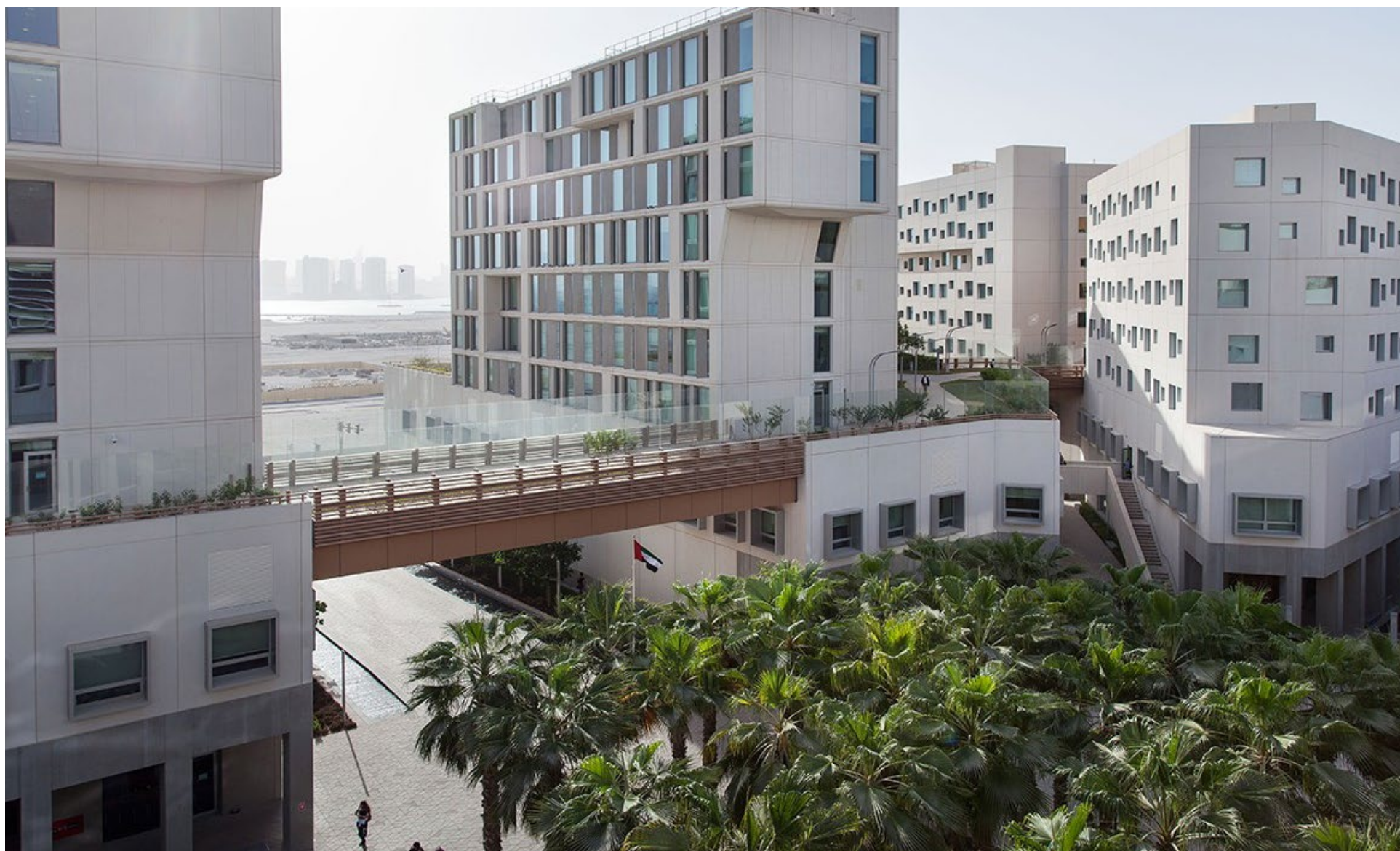
However, clearly the focus cannot be solely on AI or Technology. A Microsoft study showed that students' ability to focus has decreased from approximately 12 secs at a time in the year 2000 to 8 secs in 2013 and is trending downhill due to an excess of screen time. For children to learn, mental focus and resilience is critical. Once again, experts are stressing that while it is important to manage access and time spent on screens, it is critical to train mental focus, selective and sustained attention at the brain level.

Launch of Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence

The UAE is rolling out its biggest effort yet to develop a workforce versed in artificial intelligence, as the rapidly-advancing technology transforms economies worldwide. The Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI), a new graduate-level AI research institution in Abu Dhabi, is accepting applications for its first masters and PhD programmes this month, with classes scheduled to begin in September 2020.

As the first university to have a singular focus on AI, the institution aims to attract students from around the world to advance the technology and propel the UAE's economic diversification efforts. The Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence is an open invitation from Abu Dhabi to the world to unleash AI's full potential. To compete with more than a hundred graduate degree programmes in AI – mainly in North America, China and the UK – MBZUAI is offering full scholarships,

“A Microsoft study showed that students' ability to focus has decreased from approximately 12 secs at a time in the year 2000 to 8 secs in 2013 and is trending downhill due to an excess of screen time.”



monthly stipends, health insurance and accommodation to all students.

MBZUAI is named after Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, who believes in the transformative power of knowledge and scientific thinking.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning, a subset of AI, are gaining leaps forward in mimicking human thinking – creating the building blocks for automatic systems that can be improved through experience and data. As the technology evolves, applications for autonomous vehicles, robotics, data mining and precision medicine, among others, are taking off and creating lucrative opportunities.

AI is expected to add 14 percent to the world's gross domestic product by 2030, equivalent to \$15.7 trillion (Dh57.7tn), according to business consultancy PwC. Experts estimate that AI's contribution to the UAE economy will match the global increase of 14 percent – the largest GDP share in the Middle East – in the same time frame. The country ranks 19th worldwide on the government AI readiness index, first in the region, according to Oxford Insights.

“MBZUAI is named after Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, who believes in the transformative power of knowledge and scientific thinking.”



“400 students in Grade 7 played an online game—with interactive quizzes—which took them to an alternate world of superheroes and super villains.”

One Million Arab Coders initiative and growth of gamification in schools

The One Million Arab Coders initiative is helping young Arabs develop their digital skills in areas like AI, robotics, cognitive and biological sciences, and programming. In Abu Dhabi, Aldar Academies has introduced gamification in classrooms to promote learning, problem-solving and goal-setting. Teachers are using Minecraft to create more engaging lessons on land formations, and are linking to 3D printers to create physical models of the globe for learners to study. In doing so, they're combining the traditional subject of Geography with new modern subjects like Design Technology.

UAE schools are also using interactive online games to teach moral education. A recent trial across six both private and public schools, has shown how gamification can enhance the way students learn important universal values. The Moral Education Programme (MEP)—launched by the Education Affairs Office of the Crown Prince Court, Abu Dhabi, in 2017 aims to promote moral values among UAE students. Some 400 students in Grade 7 played an online game—with interactive quizzes—which took them to an alternate world of superheroes and super villains. Through this game, they learned about topics ranging from making good decisions and responding to harmful situations to first aid, crime, trade, travel, communications and globalisation.

Standardisation of Arabic, Islamic and Social Studies across all UAE schools

In an effort to ensure that Arabic, Islamic and Social Studies are delivered effectively at all UAE schools, Hussain Al Hammadi, UAE Minister of Education, announced in October that the teaching of Arabic, Islamic and Social Studies will soon be standardised across private schools across the UAE in a bid to ensure that children grasp the required language and literacy skills.

The standardisation will ensure that only licensed teachers deliver lessons, and that they focus on teaching students reading, writing, speech, communication and analytical skills. The Minister stated that “The Emirati School Model that we’ve implemented at public schools already incorporates these standards. We will now extend these requirements to the teaching of these subjects at private schools as well.” A key area of focus is the teaching of ‘global competency’, a set of skills that will allow children to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. The learning of languages was highlighted as an integral component of being globally competent and competitive.

The Emirati School Model of teaching, first introduced in public schools by the UAE Ministry of Education in 2017, makes widespread use of devices in the classroom making the five-hours-per-week of language learning more exciting for students. Moreover, many lessons are linked with concepts in other subjects, making the teaching more relevant to real life.



“The Emirati School Model that we’ve implemented at public schools already incorporates these standards. We will now extend these requirements to the teaching of these subjects at private schools as well.”



Chinese and Japanese to be added to UAE school curricula

In July 2019, the UAE Ministry of Education announced that a Chinese language programme would be officially launched in UAE schools starting in September 2019. In a report entitled ‘Chinese Language Programme: Current Status and Future Plan,’ the ministry noted the “historic peak” in relations between the UAE and China, adding that there is a growing interest among “Emirati people to understand the Chinese language and culture.” Hussain Al Hammadi, the UAE Minister of Education, and the Confucius Institute’s Deputy Chief Executive, Ma Jianfei, signed an MoU to introduce the Chinese language in UAE education curricula, during the state visit of Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

According to the ministry report, two reports—the ‘National Chinese Language Curriculum Framework,’ which focuses on the student learning outcomes, and the ‘National Chinese Curriculum Syllabus,’ which focuses on the details and scope of the content—were prepared to support the implementation of the Chinese language curriculum for the 2019-2020 academic year. The ministry explained that the ‘National Chinese Language Curriculum Framework’ adopts a level-based approach to Chinese language learning, noting that the programme will begin

New Science Centre opens in Dubai

In November 2019, a new science centre for children opened at Children’s City in Dubai. A branch of the German children’s initiative Forscherwelt, or Researcher’s World, opened in partnership with Dubai Municipality. An estimated 5,000 children, aged seven to 11, are expected to visit the centre on a monthly basis to learn about science from hands-on experiments.

Simone Bagel-Trah, the chair of the Supervisory Board of Henkel, the German chemicals company that created Forscherwelt explained that “with Forscherwelt, children have the opportunity to find out what it means to be a scientist, to work like a researcher.” The new facility was built following the success of a two-year trial programme at Children’s City. The initiative is part of federal government plans to develop Dubai as a centre for research and innovation.

for students in grades 7 to 12 in 60 schools during the first phase of the project. The ministry will recruit 150 Chinese language teachers for the programme.

And hot on the heels of this announcement, in August 2019, the Japanese ambassador to the UAE, Akihiko Nakajima, said talks are underway to enable Japanese language courses to be taught in UAE schools within the next year as part of efforts to boost links between the countries.

In 2018, The National reported that increasing number of Emiratis were pursuing higher studies in Japan encouraged by a love of anime and rapidly advancing technology alongside traditional culture. The Japan International Co-operation Centre said that since 2013, the number of Emirati students studying in Japan for degree and non-degree programmes increased by 62 percent from 102 students in 2013 to 166 students in 2018. More than 4,000 Japanese people live in the UAE with around 3,000 residing in Dubai and more than 1,000 in Abu Dhabi and other emirates.

Pearson announces decision to phase out print books

There is a certain irony to an announcement by the Pearson Group in July 2019 that the world's largest education publisher has taken the first step towards phasing out print books by making all its learning resources "digital first". Pearson said students would only be able to rent physical textbooks from now on, and they would be updated much less frequently. The British firm hopes the move will make more students buy its e-textbooks which are updated continually. Over half of annual revenues come from digital sales. The company currently makes 20% of its revenues from US courseware, but has been struggling as students increasingly opt to rent second-hand print textbooks to save money. To counter this, Pearson will stop revising print books every three years, a model that has dominated the industry for 40 years. It means that this year the firm will only update 100 of its 1,500 titles in print—down from 500 in 2019.

IB DG calls for tuition fee reductions at IB schools in the UAE to aid expansion

Finally, calls for a reduction in fees at International Baccalaureate schools in the UAE. Speaking on the side-lines of the IB Global Conference, being held for the first time in the Middle East, IB director-general Dr. Siva Kumari noted that the tuition fees charged by private schools in the UAE are "very high", unlike elsewhere in the world. "It will be really good to see more IB schools start here at a lower price point. The IB shouldn't be available just for a certain price point," she said, noting that the high fee "is a pattern seen among private schools" and the IB hopes the situation will improve as demand rises. "As of now, there are 48 IB World Schools in the UAE. Eventually, more schools will come along. It is just the nature of growth in the private sector. If there is demand, there will be more schools coming up and, hopefully, at lower price points". Perhaps in an effort to support the growth of the IB curriculum, the IBO in August 2019, scrapped its USD 172 candidate registration fee.

Impact of Social Media on reading and writing skills

A major 2018 study carried out by University College London (UCL), based on data from 11,000 children born in the year 2000, found time spent on social media could have a negative impact on reading and writing skills. The research suggested a tendency to use shortened words such as ‘nite’, ‘u’ and @ while conversing online could affect literacy levels. The most recent Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, which assesses the reading skills of fourth graders across the world every five years, found the UAE lagging behind much of the world. The 2017 study found the UAE ranked 40 out of 50 cities and countries on the international league table.

This concern is further underlined by the research in the KHDA’s 2019 Dubai School Inspection Report which found that only 14 percent of schools were “effectively developing reading across the curriculum.” This fixation with social media could hamper literacy levels among students who are increasingly glued to their phones rather than burying their noses in books. Teachers have warned that the dominant role of technology in young lives is proving a distraction and that they face a tough challenge as reading was typically “not part of the life” of children away from the classroom. Reading is important for children as it promotes brain development and imagination, increases their knowledge, expands their library, improves their memory and develops their analytical thinking abilities.



“This fixation with social media could hamper literacy levels among students who are increasingly glued to their phones rather than burying their noses in books.”

UAE Survey shows need for education and qualifications to be more closely matched to the workplace

A survey of more than 450 UAE graduates and 216 students conducted by Oliv—a Dubai-based technology firm that runs a youth employment platform, and Noon.com, the UAE-based e-commerce platform—found that higher marks does not increase the likelihood of landing a job. Research revealed that a higher percentage of graduates who achieved lower results in university exams had secured positions than those who were at the top of the class. More than half of those polled had already gained employment ahead of graduation.

Major employers such as Google and Apple have recently dropped the requirement of a college degree for applicants. The results were indicative of employers acknowledging that academic achievement was only part of the equation when it came to hiring the right talent. The survey suggested that while grades are an indicator of success at university, the working world is a very different environment and requires effective relationship management, communications skills, decision-making abilities and many other skills not reflected in university grades. The survey also found that 70 percent of graduates polled had completed some form of work experience, of which only 27 percent was unpaid. This is a marked improvement on 2018, when the survey found that four out of ten internships or work placements were unpaid.

The survey also found that students are optimistic about securing employment after graduating, with 43 percent of respondents saying they were confident they would get a job in the UAE. A quarter of students said they would be willing to wait for a year to find a role in the country and some 63 percent of the respondents said they wished to work for multinational corporations while only 11 percent wanted to work in the government sector.



“Launched in 2013, Dubai-based Oliv set out to tackle a huge problem—a 30% youth unemployment rate in the MENA region. Oliv helps university students and graduates launch their careers.”

Increasing number of Dubai schools are seeking internship opportunities

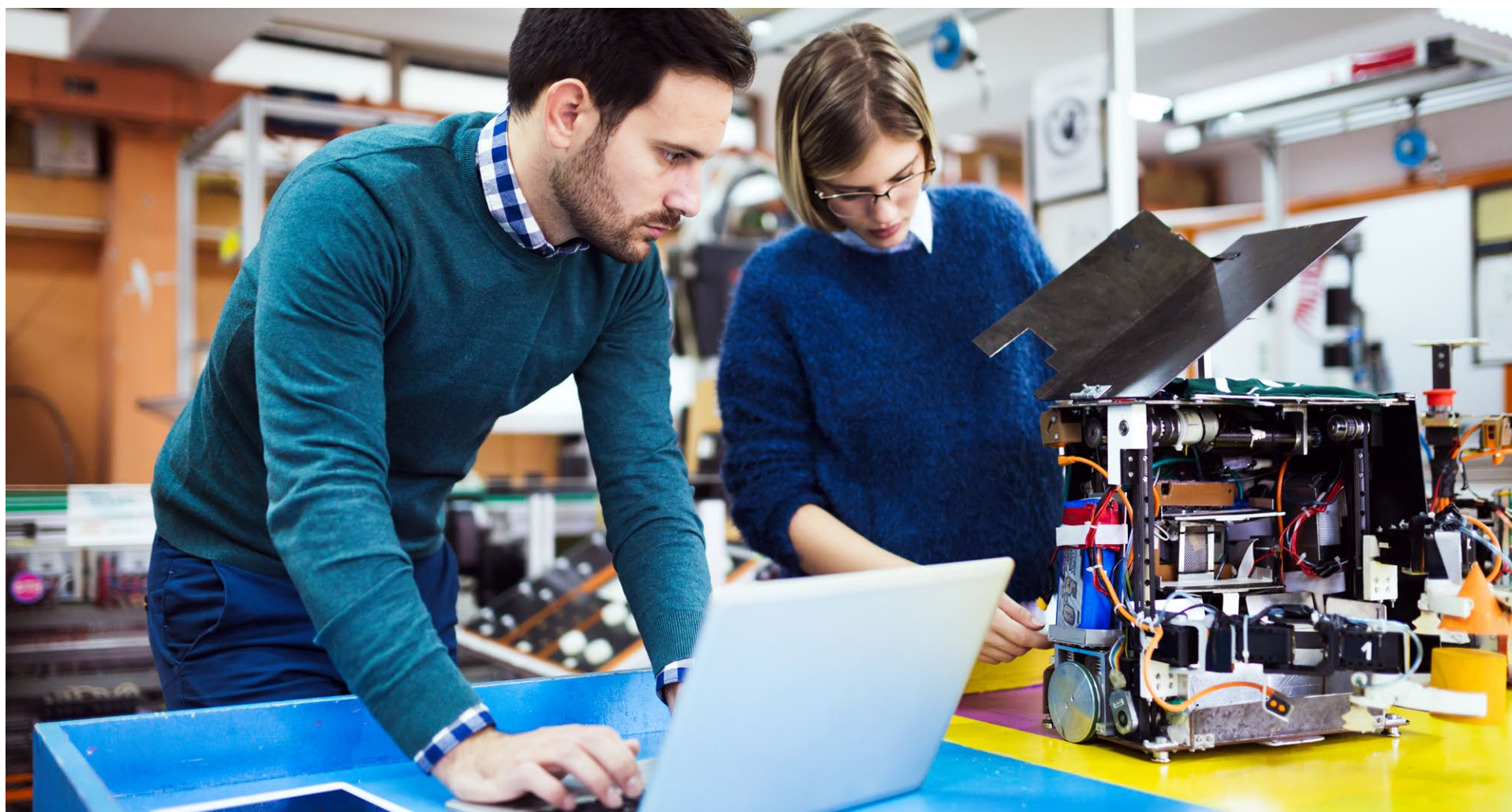
Encouraged by the Rahhal programme launched by the KHDA, increasing numbers of schools are seeking partnerships whereby they can ensure that students are able to benefit from internships at companies or high education establishments or may develop their sports schools through coaching and competing during school time. Pioneered by the Indian High School as a testbed for the programme, at least 9 further schools are now participating.

Thousands of students in five GEMS schools will have the opportunity to gain experience in different industries—including robotics, space science and sustainability – with access to university-level courses, workplaces for advanced learning and work experience, and will have access to services designed to enhance their learning experience.

GEMS Education, said its new programme offers a “personalised pathway” for students, starting with 14-year-olds, to mix normal school programmes with either undergraduate work with universities or industry-based qualifications. According to the needs of the students and their levels of interest, GEMS students could spend one to three days a week at university or at work. Among the centres introduced were Artificial Intelligence and Robotics at GEMS Dubai American Academy; Digital Industries and Sustainability at GEMS FirstPoint School-The Villa; Aviation and Space at GEMS International School-Al Khail; Performance and Theatre Technologies at GEMS Wellington Academy-Silicon Oasis; and Entrepreneurship and Youth Start-up at GEMS World Academy-Dubai. So far, five partners have been announced including: noon.ae, Siemens, RIT Dubai, Al Tamimi & Co, and the American University in Dubai.



“Thousands of students in five GEMS schools will have the opportunity to gain experience in different industries—including robotics, space science and sustainability – with access to university-level courses, workplaces for advanced learning and work experience, and will have access to services designed to enhance their learning experience.”



Technical education – new Technical (T Level) qualifications – equivalent to A Levels to be introduced this year.

An early start to a more vocational approach to education was introduced in the UK through the BTEC qualification, which has been taken up to a limited degree by UK curriculum schools in the UAE – generally with a focus on Business Studies, Tourism and a limited number of Arts and Sports-related courses. More than one school has considered offering Engineering, but costs have been prohibitive.

The latest curriculum development for UK curriculum schools is the introduction of T Level courses – a technical equivalent to A Levels – due to commence in 2020, with the expectation that the new qualification will be rolled out internationally.

The courses, which last two years, have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses so that the content meets the needs of industry and prepares students for work. The UK Government intends that T Levels will become one of the main choices for students after GCSE alongside apprenticeships for students who wish to learn a specific occupation ‘on the job’ and A levels for students who wish to continue academic education.

“T Levels will be based on the same standards as apprenticeships, designed by employers and approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. More than 200 businesses – including Fujitsu and Skanska – have been involved in the design of the courses.”

T Levels will be based on the same standards as apprenticeships, designed by employers and approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. More than 200 businesses – including Fujitsu and Skanska – have been involved in the design of the courses. Groups of employers will define the skills and requirements for each T Level course by participating in T Level panels. This is designed to ensure that students taking T Levels will develop the technical knowledge and skills required by employers in that industry.

T Levels will offer students a mixture of classroom learning and ‘on-the-job’ experience during an industry placement of at least 315 hours (approximately 45 days). The total time for a T Level is expected to be around 1,800 hours over the 2 years, including the industry placement. This is a significant increase on most technical education courses currently on offer.

T Level courses will be composed of compulsory elements—a technical qualification, which will include core theory, concepts and skills for an industry area, specialist skills and knowledge for an occupation or career, an industry placement with an employer, and a minimum standard in maths and English if students have not already achieved them.

Students who complete their T Level will receive an overall grade of pass, merit, distinction or distinction*. They will receive a nationally recognised certificate which will show an overall grade for the T Level, shown as pass, merit, distinction or distinction*, a separate grade for the core component, using A* to E, a separate grade for each occupational specialism, shown as pass, merit or distinction and confirmation that the student has met the minimum requirements for maths and English qualifications, completed the industry placement, and met any additional mandatory requirements.

A student’s overall T Level grade will be worked out from the grades they achieved on the core component and the occupational specialism(s). Students who do not pass all elements of their T Level will get a T Level statement of achievement which will show the elements they have completed. T Levels will provide several progression options to students including skilled employment, an apprenticeship or higher education.

“T Levels will offer students a mixture of classroom learning and ‘on-the-job’ experience during an industry placement of at least 315 hours (approximately 45 days). The total time for a T Level is expected to be around 1,800 hours over the 2 years, including the industry placement.”

UCAS tariff points will be allocated to the overall T Level grade. Students must achieve at least an overall pass grade to receive UCAS points. A Distinction* (A* on the core and distinction in the occupational specialism) will be equivalent to AAA* at A Level and receive 168 UCAS points; a Distinction will be equivalent to AAA and receive 144 UCAS points, a Merit will be equivalent to BBB and receive 120 UCAS points, a Pass (C or above on the core) will be equivalent to CCC and receive 96 UCAS points, and a Pass (with D or E on the core) will be equivalent to DDD and receive 72 UCAS points.

They will provide the knowledge and experience needed to open the door into skilled employment, further study or a higher apprenticeship.

The first T Levels to be introduced in September 2020 are Design, surveying and planning (construction), Digital production, design and development, and Education. In September 2021 further subjects will be added including Building services engineering, Digital business services, Digital support and services, Health, Healthcare science, Onsite construction and Science. In September 2022, Accountancy, Design and development, Financial, Human resources, Legal, Maintenance, installation and repair, Management and administration, and Manufacturing, processing and control will be added.

The final set of subjects, bringing the total to 25, will be introduced in September 2023 and include Agriculture, land management and production, Animal care and management, Catering, Craft and design, Cultural heritage and visitor attractions, Hair, beauty and aesthetics and Media, broadcast and production. Further subjects will potentially be added as industry and business feedback identifies the requirement.

At this stage, it is not clear when T Levels will be introduced internationally, and for the UAE, there will inevitably be some limitations, based on student demand and the practical aspects related to the 45 day industry placement. However, UK curriculum schools in the UAE fully anticipate that this additional option for students will become available.

Further information can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/introduction-of-t-levels/introduction-of-t-levels.

“At this stage, it is not clear when T Levels will be introduced internationally, and for the UAE, there will inevitably be some limitations, based on student demand and the practical aspects related to the 45 day industry placement.”

Russell Group Universities overhaul facilitating subjects list.

In a further significant change in regard to access to the UK's top tier universities in May 2019, the Russell Group – universities, which includes Cambridge, Oxford, Bristol, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Imperial and Kings Colleges, and the London School of Economics, announced that they were abandoning their very restricted list of “facilitating” subjects that they recommended students study to gain a place at one of their 24 universities: these were very much the traditional academic subjects of Mathematics and Further Mathematics, English (Literature), Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Geography, History and Languages (Classical and Modern).

However, this focus on the more traditional subjects inevitably inhibited the decision-making of students wanting to pursue subjects that mattered to them, and increasingly to industry and commerce. Subjects in the Arts, Sport and broader cultural subjects – those that are now increasingly more valued by companies like Google and other technology companies as integral to the creative mind-set driving the new economy – were either unavailable or not deemed “challenging” and “suitable” for more academic students with Russell Group ambitions.

Their latest decision means that subjects such as Accounting, Applied Science, Dance, Drama, Economics, Environmental Studies, Information and communication technology (ICT), Law, Music technology, Performing Arts, Photography, Physical education, Politics, Psychology, Sociology, Sports science, and Travel and Tourism are now just as “valuable” and “important” if they support the subject that the student is seeking to follow at university.



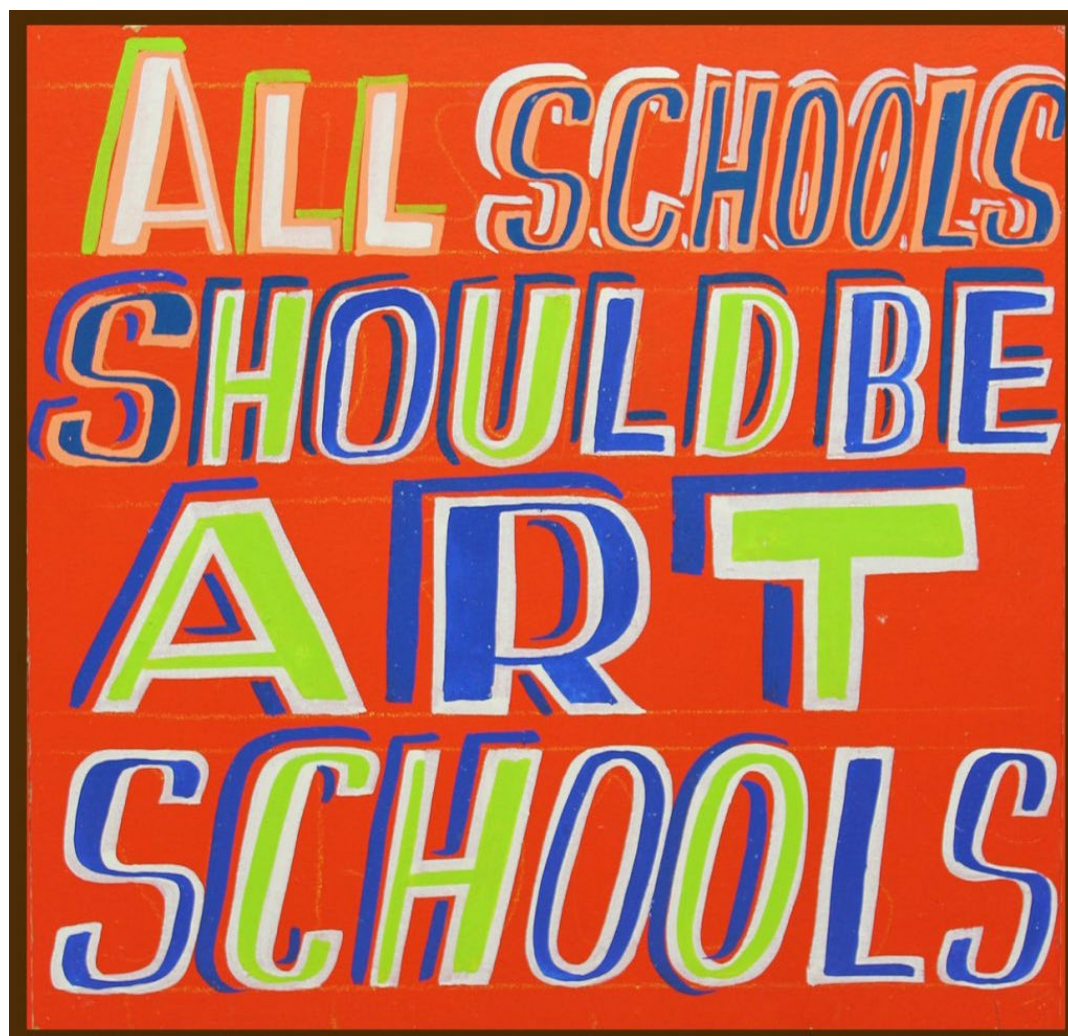
“This focus on the more traditional subjects inevitably inhibited the decision-making of students wanting to pursue subjects that mattered to them, and increasingly to industry and commerce.”

Educators raise further concern about the decline in Arts subjects in schools

Whilst the Russell Group universities may have recognised the value of the broader range of subjects, it seems that there is still concern about the decline of the Arts in schools. According to an interview in October 2019, the Head of the Arts Council, Sir Nicholas Serota stated that the Arts decline in schools was ‘short-sighted and morally wrong’. The Durham Commission on Creativity and Education has set out a number of recommendations after 18 months of evidence gathering and research, with a long-term vision to promote creativity in education and to make it a priority.

Sir Nicholas, who is chair of the commission, said he was “deeply concerned” about the reduced status of the arts since the introduction of the Ebacc (English baccalaureate). “We have a schools system which is very much directed to examinations and what we want is to see schools open themselves up to a more creative approach to teaching ... to give young people the sense of confidence that they have when they know how to solve problems, rather than simply learn how it’s been done before,” he said.

He went on to question whether children were being equipped for a life where technology will increasingly drive change, where few can expect lifelong jobs and in which creativity can “drive major innovation in all areas of life”. The Commission has made a range of recommendations in its report, including better recognition and evaluation of teaching for creativity in schools, a recognition of this teaching in the Ofsted inspection process, as well as inclusion of the arts as standard in the curriculum to key stage 3. It is calling on a range of organisations, including the Department for Education, Ofsted and Arts Council England, to help deliver its vision.



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Sir Nicholas's comments came after Andreas Schleicher, who leads PISA at the OECD, told a UK Government inquiry that he believed young people could benefit more from the skills gained through creativity than test-based learning. Mr. Schleicher was giving evidence to the Education Select Committee as part of an ongoing inquiry into the fourth industrial revolution – the influence of technologies such as robotics and artificial intelligence on society. Mr. Schleicher, who is widely regarded as one of the world's leading educational thinkers, said: "I would say, in the fourth industrial revolution, arts may become more important than maths."

"We talk about 'soft skills' often as social and emotional skills, and hard skills as about science and maths, but it might be the opposite," he said, suggesting that science and maths may become 'softer' in future when the need for them decreases due to technology, and the 'hard skills' will be "your curiosity, your leadership, your persistence and your resilience". Mr. Schleicher said that too narrow a curriculum could also make young people less prepared for the demands of the future. "The modern world doesn't reward you for what you know, but for what you can do with what you know."

And Education charity the Edge Foundation has warned the decline of arts subjects in schools is not only impacting the creative industries, but is also having a damaging effect on sectors such as science and medicine. Experts are claiming that some science students lack the "tactile general knowledge" that can be gained from creative learning, despite achieving high exam grades. The charity has published a report claiming the narrow academic is "not fit for purpose to tackle a 21st-century economy".

Roger Kneebone, a professor of surgical education at Imperial College London, warned the loss of creative skills among medical and science students had become a concern among his scientific colleagues. "We have students who have very high exam grades, but lack the tactile general knowledge – they struggle even to perform chemistry experiments. An example is of a surgeon needing some dexterity and skill in sewing or stitching. It can be traced back to the sweeping out of creative subjects from the curriculum. It is an important and an increasingly urgent issue."

Concern about Arts provision in Indian curriculum schools

It is not just in the UK that concerns about the drift away from the Arts are being expressed. Jogiraj Sikidar, founder and director of Malhaar Centre for Performing Arts in Dubai, said a generation risks alienation with classical Indian music and dance unless children are taught them in school. Indian performing arts should be a compulsory subject across Indian schools in the UAE, according to Mr. Sikidar. So far, two Indian schools in Dubai have already made the subject mandatory and more are expected to follow. Whilst Mr. Sikidar's focus is on the potential loss of Indian culture and identity, in addition to the cultural value, he noted too that the performing arts help children use the brain's "creative half", build confidence and communication skills, potentially increase their university admission prospects and even improve behaviour by teaching them anger management. Mr. Sikidar stated that "with the way the world is moving, how Artificial Intelligence is taking over, these qualities will be most important when children grow up. Performing arts are no less important than, say, maths and science."

CBSE curriculum changes announced

It seems to that the discussion, debate and curriculum changes taking place in the UK, with their inevitable impact on UK curriculum schools internationally, are also being reflected in Indian schools with calls for changes to the CBSE curriculum which also appear to have been heard to some extent. The examination board, organised in its current form since 1952, is offered by more than 20,300 schools around the

world, with nearly 3 million students attempting its Grade 10 and Grade 12 exams each year. In 2018, about 16,000 students appeared for the board exams from the UAE alone.

The long-standing curriculum has come under fire, with critics saying that it has remained static and failed to prepare today's children for the demands of the future workforce. The curriculum's focus on rote learning and memorisation, its allegedly dated examination methods and a failure to update topics and themes are the main areas of concern. School leaders in CBSE curriculum schools in the UAE have also expressed concern about the need to update the curriculum, noting that the last major overhaul was 25 years ago and as a result, students are not being taught to think critically, or being equipped with life skills.

What changes have been made so far have been limited with the addition of a handful of critical thinking questions, but much of the curriculum still focuses on rote learning, and therefore lacks the skills required to flourish in the fast changing careers that are developing – driven in large part by Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, research, and safe Internet use. However, it seems more radical changes are on the way.



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The introduction of two levels of question papers for Mathematics at Grade 10—Basic and Standard –and the move towards internal assessments in Grades 9 and 10 are to be more comprehensive to include multiple assessments including quizzes, exit cards, and oral tests have been welcomed. New skill-based subjects such as Artificial Intelligence, Information Technology, Early Childhood care and Nutrition, Banking and Insurance, Health Care, Fashion Studies, have been added to the curriculum. The Board now offers 17 skill subjects at Secondary and 42 skill subjects at Senior Secondary level.

Other key areas under consideration are the strengthening of questions making them more application-based and case study oriented to develop critical thinking and analytical skills of students and thereby moving them away from rote learning. Increasing the challenge in subjects by offering them at a higher level, will aid higher-performing students who wish to pursue these at university and by offering a choice of subjects from Grade 9 rather than at Grade 11, students will have the opportunity to focus on the subjects that matter to them over a much longer period.

The announcement in November 2019 that the Human Resource Development ministry would review how pupils are evaluated and remove school examinations from 2021, with students' progress being reviewed through assessment, has been welcomed by Indian curriculum schools in the UAE, though many feel that the change does not go far enough and a complete overhaul in the approach to education is needed. The move is in line with a general global shift away from traditional testing with Singapore banning exams for primary pupils in 2019, while children in Finland do not have to sit exams until they turn 18.

In another move to revamp the education system, the Indian government's national education policy committee called for a new model wherein pupils would study five years at the foundation stage, three years at pre-primary school, three years at preparatory stage, three years of middle school, and four years of secondary school. Currently, pupils at Indian schools spend two years in kindergarten, five years in primary school, three years in middle school, and four years in secondary school.

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The future face of education in the UAE

Meanwhile, Dr. Abdulla Al Karam, set out his view on the future face of education in the UAE during a presentation at GITEX in October. In the classrooms of the future, students will no longer have to sit down for exams. Instead, they will be busy working together to solve the problems of the world. “In the future, classrooms will be replaced by open, collaborative spaces that bring students of different ages and abilities together. This will encourage students to work together on solving real-world problems from a very young age, allowing schools to completely move away from tests and exams.” He explained that there will also be more ‘teachers’ powered by artificial intelligence (AI). “Automation and artificial intelligence are changing every aspect of our life and, over the coming years, AI teachers will transform the classrooms that we see today.”

Dr. Abdulla reassured teachers that they need not worry about the advent of AI in education “because a machine will never replace the heart of a teacher”. What AI will do is usher in “a renaissance in education and teaching methods”. Whilst Artificial Intelligence might take away administrative work from teachers, it cannot provide the connections that only teachers can make. “Technology may undergo a revolution but teaching will have a renaissance. It will bring teaching back to what it used to be about—making connections heart-first,” Al Karam said. ■



“In the future, classrooms will be replaced by open, collaborative spaces that bring students of different ages and abilities together. This will encourage students to work together on solving real-world problems from a very young age.”

133 School improvement

Since the first ELG Newsletter was published in early May 2019, there has been raft of announcements in relation to school improvement in the UAE.

Dubai Private Schools rank 19th globally in PISA tests as overall UAE results disappoint

The PISA results for 2019 proved disappointing for the UAE, with the country falling from 47th to 50th place in maths, despite increasing its score in the subject (significant gains were made in scoring 435, a rise of 7.5 points since 2015). In reading, the UAE improved its ranking by two places, to 46th, scoring 432 points (a drop of 1.8) and in science it fell back from 46th to 49th (scoring 434 and sliding by 3.1).

The latest cycle of PISA included 800,000 students from 79 countries. More than 19,000 15-year-olds across the UAE sat the exams, one of the highest figures of the 79 countries and territories included in the rankings. The total population of 15-year-olds in the UAE, at the time of the tests, was 59,275, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, indicating that almost a third took part. “Some 49 percent of the schools made progress in reading skills and 47 percent in science skills. The schools achieved a progress of 62 percent in mathematics.”

The UAE government had said that it aims to be among the top 20 countries for PISA scores by 2021, when the next cycle of the assessments will take place. To meet the target, there will have to be rapid progress, with the OECD report categorising the UAE’s overall trajectory as “stable” in all three subjects over the last decade. “In mathematics, we are seeing the continuation of a positive trend; here the UAE is broadly on track for achieving its ambitious performance targets,” said Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills at the OECD. “In reading and science, outcomes have remained flat and the UAE needs to reinforce its efforts.”

The difference between the most and least able students has also widened, the PISA report said, leading its authors to express concern about a widening equality gulf in UAE schools. While the top-performing pupils have improved their scores significantly since the UAE began participating in the rankings in 2009, there has been a drop of a similar scale among the least able.

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Of the 79 countries and territories that took part in the assessments, the UAE also had the second largest gap in reading abilities between the genders, with UAE girls outperforming boys by 57 points on the scoring matrix used by PISA. Across the OECD, the average gap was 30 points. Teenage girls are significantly outperforming boys in UAE schools—with global education rankings revealing the country has one of the widest gender gaps in the world.

A high number of UAE students who were educated in their non-native language could also help explain the lack of progress in reading. According to the PISA report, more than 40 percent of the UAE students assessed did not speak the language they are taught in at home, one of the highest rates in the world.

In general, the highest scorers by curriculum were students attending International Baccalaureate schools, followed by students at UK curriculum schools, then students at Indian curriculum schools, and schools offering a US-based curriculum.

However, Dubai private schools ranked 19th out of the 79 countries in the PISA standardised tests, putting them inside the top 20 and on course to meet 2021 UAE National Agenda targets. Students at private schools in Dubai are performing above the international – and UAE – average in mathematics, science and reading. The latest results showed that students scored 501, 500, and 501 for mathematics, science and reading respectively, well above the OECD average of 489, 489 and 487.

Since Dubai private schools first participated in PISA in 2009, students' scores for mathematics, science and reading have increased by 27, 14 and 22 points respectively. PISA results also showed significant progress by Emirati students at Dubai private schools. In mathematics, Emirati students improved 36 points between 2009 and 2018 – equivalent to one year's extra schooling, KHDA said. In Science, they improved by 27 points, and by 19 points in reading over the same period.

The UAE outperformed Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which took part in PISA for the first time, across all three subjects. But all Middle East countries performed below the OECD average in all three subjects.

“In general, the highest scorers by curriculum were students attending International Baccalaureate schools, followed by students at UK curriculum schools, then students at Indian curriculum schools, and schools offering a US-based curriculum.”

KHDA inspection results 2018-19 international schools

With two reports issued – an abridged first version in April, followed by the full reports in June—our first newsletter was not able to cover the detail. A reminder that 18 schools moved up in terms of their rating and just 6 moved down. Four schools made it to an Outstanding rating (Dubai English Speaking School and

Kings School Al Barsha for the first time, whilst JESS Arabian Ranches and Horizon English School returned to the top level). Five schools moved up from Good to Very Good – Kings School Nad Al Sheba, Raffles International School, Ranches Primary School, Regent International School and sister school, Sunmarke.

Six schools advanced from Acceptable to Good – including Al Ittihad School, Amled School, Bilva Indian School, Dove Green Private School, Sharjah American International School and Swiss International Scientific School. And remarkably, seven schools who were inspected for the first time in 2018-19 were rated Good – Clarion School, GEMS Al Barsha National School for Girls, GEMS Founders School Al Barsha, GEMS Heritage Indian School, International School of Creative Science, Kent College and The Arcadia School.

Three schools advanced from Weak to Acceptable including Crescent English School, Dubai Arabian American School and H. H. Shaikh Rashid Al Maktoum Pakistani School-Dubai. Four schools inspected for the first time achieved an Acceptable rating including American School of Creative Science, Next Generation School, Oaktree Primary School and Smart Vision School. Five schools were rated Weak.



“Four schools made it to an Outstanding rating (Dubai English Speaking School and Kings School Al Barsha for the first time, whilst JESS Arabian Ranches and Horizon English School returned to the top level).”

2019-20 Indian Curriculum KHDA inspections results announced

As we were finalising this newsletter, the KHDA surprised us with the announcement, in two stages, of the Indian and Pakistani inspection results for 2019-20. 10 schools received a rating of 'Very Good' or better, four more than last year. This year's round of Dubai School Inspections saw 32 of 34 Indian curriculum schools receiving visits from the school inspectors. A little over 79,000 students are enrolled in Indian curriculum schools in the Emirate. GEMS Modern Academy retained its 'Outstanding' rating for the ninth year, whilst Ambassador School, GEMS New Millennium School, and both JSS International, and sister school JSS Private School, were rated Very Good for first time.

A total of 8 schools are now rated Very Good, 11 are rated Good and 10 achieved the Acceptable rating. Only one school remains rated Weak.

Changes to KHDA inspection routines from October 2019

Aside from the outcomes of the inspections themselves, the other key announcement – made in September – was the change to the inspection regime in Dubai which came into effect in October. The main elements to the changes are a shorter notice period in advance of the inspections taking place and the introduction of a one day "review visit" instead of a standard inspection for schools rated Outstanding or Very Good. The remaining schools will continue to host the DSIB inspection team for a minimum of three days – and potentially longer where felt necessary. Meanwhile, the notice period has been reduced from three weeks to five days. Key areas of focus for the inspections during the 2019-20 cycle are expected to be the National Agenda, Moral Education, UAE social studies, innovation, inclusion and reading.



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KHDA rolls out 2019-20 Wellbeing Census

Wellbeing of students is no longer optional but a right that schools must uphold and “a human right” for pupils, teachers and parents, according to Dr Abdulla Al Karam as the latest ‘Dubai Student Wellbeing Census’ got underway at the beginning of November.

Wellbeing at school, including health and safety, is a key focus area in the annual KHDA school inspections. The confidential census, now in its third year, also shows how well students are keeping emotionally, psychologically and socially.

Dr Abdulla also said “as students go through life, exam results will be less important, but wellbeing will become more and more important”, noting that students spend 17 percent of their time at school and wellbeing was not only the school’s responsibility. “Parents have to work together with schools, and schools have to work together with parents. These conversations help us improve each other’s wellbeing.”

The 2018-19 census suggested 81 percent of students are happy, while the survey said 43 percent of teachers and other adults “are just getting by”. Some 100,000 students and 20,000 school staff

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were expected to participate in the survey which ran from 5th November to 5th December.

Dr. Abdulla's comments were also reflected in those made by Sir Anthony Seldon, a British educationalist, historian and author, who joined GEMS Education as an advisor in November, and who called for a reassessment of what is valued in the development of young people. Sir Anthony believes far more importance should be placed on encouraging values that would lead to well-being and happiness later in life, rather than training pupils to pass tests. His concerns echo the findings of a report published last year by Towards Global Learning Goals, an Abu Dhabi education network, which also criticised an over-reliance on exams and said that many schools were failing to equip children with the relevant skills.

Results of two shocking surveys reveal high incidence of bullying

Two recent surveys during anti-bullying week in the UAE have highlighted concerns about the incidence of bullying among UAE students. More than half of parents believe bullying is their greatest worry. A campaign by *Cartoon Network Middle East*, with sessions and workshops for more than 1,000 pupils aged five to 12, was put in place as an example of what can be done to counteract a bullying culture.

At least 85 percent of UAE schoolchildren had been bullied, mostly online, according to the 'Cartoon Network MENA Survey 2019' which also showed that only half of UAE parents were aware that their child had been bullied previously.

Cartoon Network Middle East conducted the survey through 'Opinion Matters' among 700 UAE-based parents of children aged six to 12 years, to study the impact of bullying for a duration of one month in 2019. The survey targeted all seven emirates and yielded some surprising results, including that bullying is least likely to happen inside school – most bullying is psychological and happens online – and girls are just as likely as boys to be bullies or victims. Psychological bullying is most common (15 percent), followed by verbal bullying and physical bullying (both 13 percent).

"At least 85 percent of UAE schoolchildren had been bullied, mostly online, according to the 'Cartoon Network MENA Survey 2019' which also showed that only half of UAE parents were aware that their child had been bullied previously."

Despite the high reported rate of bullying in the UAE, the survey figures are similar to average worldwide trends, according to UAE-based child psychologist Dr Haneen Jarrar, who participated in the campaign.

Concurrently, the Ministry of Education revealed that a quarter of all school pupils in the UAE have been bullied. To combat this, the ministry has launched a child protection unit to monitor and respond to cases of bullying and abuse. The unit aims to help pupils at all schools across the country by receiving reports of bullying from parents or teachers through a hotline, assessing the situation and then taking preventive measures to intervene and protect the child.

A group of child protection officers has been trained to work within the unit and receive calls from children or families seeking help in cases of bullying. They are responsible for taking necessary protection measures on behalf of the children. Dr Amna Al Shamsi, assistant undersecretary of the activities sector at the Ministry of Education said that, though the UAE has fewer instances of bullying than the international average (of one in three pupils), there was no reason to be complacent. Surveys carried out by the ministry revealed that verbal bullying was the most common in the UAE.

The new unit is the latest in the ministry's efforts to clampdown on abusive behaviour among pupils. Last year, it launched an annual National Bullying Prevention Week, during which it trains teachers and consultants on how to deal with bullying and visits schools to raise awareness.

Experts said in-school bullying can impact on academic performance, sleep patterns and cause psychosomatic symptoms, such as stomach aches and headaches. A 2018 poll of more than 64,000 Dubai pupils by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority found that 11 percent of children—more than 6,000—did not feel safe in school.

Another poll by Axis Communications on UAE school safety found 92 percent of parents were satisfied with existing school security measures, but 52 percent said bullying was their greatest concern.

“A 2018 poll of more than 64,000 Dubai pupils by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority found that 11 percent of children—more than 6,000—did not feel safe in school.”

Abu Dhabi Inspection results – 2018-19 and beyond.

The transfer to the Abu Dhabi Government's TAMM portal of ADEK's School Finder application, and the association with it of the Irtiqaa Inspection reports, led to something of a delay in the publication of the ADEK inspection reports for 2018-19 (until September 2019). As far as we have been able to establish, there has been no formal announcement of the results; however, we can inform you that a total of 92 inspections took place. Among the schools rated Outstanding, Brighton College Abu Dhabi joined its sister school in Al Ain in achieving the top rating, as did Cranleigh Abu Dhabi and the British School of Al Khubairat, bringing to 7 the total number of schools to have achieved the highest rating in the 2018-19 academic year.

Five schools improved from Good to Very Good, including Abu Dhabi International School and its branch, as well as Al Basma British School, Emirates Private National School Al Ain, and Horizon Private School (branch). A further 9 schools improved their rating from Acceptable to Good, including the branch of Abu Dhabi Indian School, Ajyal International School, Al Khalil International School, Global Indian International School, Horizon Private School, Mohammed Bin Khalid Al Nahyan Generations School, Summit International School, United School of Al Yahar and United School of Baniyas.

Hot on the heels of the announcement of the Indian curriculum inspection results for 2019-20 in Dubai, Aldar Academies announced that Al Yasmina Academy and the Pearl Academy have both been rated Outstanding as part of the 2019-20 inspection round. In so doing, they join Aldar's Al Muna Academy in achieving the top rating, and bring to 9 (with Brighton College Al Ain and Abu Dhabi, Cranleigh Abu Dhabi, Merryland International School, Raha International School and The British School of Al Khubairat) the Outstanding rated schools in Abu Dhabi Emirate. Aldar's Al Bateen Academy has also improved its rating to Very Good in the latest inspection following its surprising downgrade from Outstanding to Good two years ago.

“Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Ruler of Sharjah, issued a directive to the Sharjah Private Education Authority that class sizes at private schools in Sharjah should be capped at 25 pupils and that teachers should not take more than 24 lessons per week.”



Sharjah to introduce healthy schools programme

Whilst schools in Sharjah will now be subject to inspections more closely resembling those of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, they will also be expected to meet international health and safety standards, which will be evaluated and rated, effectively adding a well-being focus to the process.

According to an announcement made in October. The first phase of the three-year 'Healthy Schools' programme, comes under the 'Health Promoting Schools' initiative of the World Health Organisation (WHO). The programme will be voluntary at its outset but may become mandatory in the future. School representatives will continue to attend workshops to learn about the project and how to implement the standards which cover nutrition, mental health, physical activity, security and safety, emergency and crisis response, prevention of infectious diseases and their spread, and environmental sustainability.

The schools will be evaluated and classified as Gold, Silver and Bronze, depending on how well they meet the standards. The programme, launched by the Health Promotion Department, will be carried out at 227 public and private schools and 26 public nurseries across the Emirate of Sharjah and is targeting around 185,000 students.

"According to an announcement made in October, the first phase of the three-year 'Healthy Schools' programme, comes under the 'Health Promoting Schools' initiative of the World Health Organisation (WHO)."



“One key focus for the inspection process, whereby Sharjah schools will be assessed and evaluated – will be a collaborative approach – deemed a review, rather than inspection – as SPEA wants to be seen to be helping schools.”

Major changes underway for private education in Sharjah, with Sharjah Private Education Authority set up and to implement the common inspection framework

In September 2019, Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Ruler of Sharjah, as part of efforts to improve education standards in the emirate, issued a directive to the Sharjah Private Education Authority that class sizes at private schools in Sharjah should be capped at 25 pupils and that teachers should not take more than 24 lessons per week. The announcement was reported to have won the support of some school leaders in the emirate, although concerns were raised by others about the potential costs involved.

We were also very encouraged to learn of the establishment of the Sharjah Private Education Authority. In the establishment of the SPEA, Sharjah has taken control of the development of its private schools from the federal authority. Given only 30%

of Emiratis in Sharjah go to the emirate's public schools, the decision to set up its own private school regulator effectively gives the emirate back control of the education of its citizens. We believe that the decision is going to have a profound long-term effect on both expats and Emiratis.

We understand that there will be three different strands aimed at achieving school improvement. Firstly, SPEA is working with the ACER to focus on improvement, utilising ACER's core offering of a tool based on research and evidence that identifies effective and proven practices for schools to follow. Initially SPEA has been working with ACER at a strategic level. SPEA is also actively recruiting improvement advisors of its own. The third component for SPEA is a portal which will support the inspection process. The portal is in its testing phase at the moment, with 10 schools currently using it.

One key focus for the inspection process, whereby Sharjah schools will be assessed and evaluated—will be a collaborative approach – deemed a review, rather than inspection – as SPEA wants to be seen to be helping schools. The regulator is employing the same companies that Dubai and Abu Dhabi have been using, but we understand that reviewers have been briefed that the Sharjah approach will be a collaborative one, and that they should provide a learning opportunity for schools.

The UAE Ministry of Education had completed inspections of the first 80 schools for Sharjah, leaving SPEA with another 120 plus schools to do. These reports will form the baseline for all schools and will not be published. The Sharjah authority is looking at a three-year inspection cycle. From the second cycle of inspections which can be expected to take place in the 2023-24 academic year, it is expected that the reports will be published. It may also be that schools which were assessed as 'Weak' during the last Ministry of Education inspection process in 2017-18 may be subject to earlier inspection. One final area that SPEA is looking at is if and how to incorporate value added metrics, the gain a child makes in terms of actual achievement over initial projections, into its review process. This is something that we would like to see across the emirates for all inspections. ■

One key focus for the inspection process, whereby Sharjah schools will be assessed and evaluated—will be a collaborative approach – deemed a review, rather than inspection – as SPEA wants to be seen to be helping schools.



**Scammers are
still attempting to
attract teachers
to the UAE with up
front visa payments
on the back of their
dream job offer.**

In 2015, UAE weekly newspaper XPRESS broke the story of Howard International School which had duped teachers, with a fake web site, an email offering a lucrative job offer, and up front visa payment requirements. The Howard International site, and others like it, have since been closed or blocked, but other fake schools with very real looking web sites always rise in their place. It is much easier to close down a web site, than it is to close down the scam itself ...

WhichSchoolAdvisor.com has been contacted multiple times in the past five years by teachers wanting to confirm the veracity of an offer – and/or existence of a school—that seems to be offering all they could wish for. Our advice—If a school, or its agent, reaches out to you to offer you a job, at a salary that seems too good to be true, the chances are it is too good to be true.

The tried and tested scam involves contact from a school offering a teaching or admin position—usually with a great salary. It provides links to a web site that, superficially, looks very real with photos of students, mission statements, curriculum details—by and large everything you would expect to find on a web site representing a school.

Applicants are given a telephone number to call, as well as an email address. Call or email and you will get through to someone who will be very convincing, and who will assure you the job is real and yours for the taking.

Despite the scam being outed several times, it continues—and worse, has been improved upon. Previous scammers have taken images from genuine schools and added them, plus all the usual content, to a website for the imaginary school with a made up name. In the latest version, one recent potential victim, who fortunately decided to make sure that the offer was genuine, was contacted apparently by a real (MoE) school in the UAE, but one of a few which did not have an official website. Anyone doing due diligence, looking at TAMM's listing of UAE schools, would have had confirmed that the school was a fully operational school in Abu Dhabi.

Dig deeper however and the email address of the school, the website to back up the email, and even the voice behind the telephone number the potential victim was sent, had nothing

Despite the scam being outed several times, it continues—and worse, improved upon. Previous scammers have taken images from genuine schools and added them, plus all the usual content, to a website for the imaginary school with a made up name.

to do with the real school. In this recent case, the fake school website was a clone of that of another real school in Abu Dhabi—complete with the identical pictures of its students. When the potential victim contacted the visa company she was told she would need to pay for Resident/Work permit papers, which were “USD 1,800 that is for single applicant, OR if you are coming with your family, you are advised to make only the payment of USD 3,050 which is the fees for Family Resident/Work Permit.

Precise instructions were professionally delivered—“You are to send the processing fee by Al Ansari, Cash Express Money, Moneygram or Western union Transfer in the name of our Accountant Cashier for immediate confirmation as to avoid further delay as time is limited ... As soon as you make payment scan to us a copy of the payment slip together with all processing requirements for confirmation purpose and for immediate commencement of your traveling papers process.

“NOTE: We have a mandate to procure your papers within a stipulated time and this is in line with our procurement policy. Make sure you submit all requirements for easy processing as we have a mandate from your sponsor / employer to complete the process within (12) Twelve working days and do not keep appointments more than 6 working days after first contact.”

Fortunately, our potential victim did not wire the money, but instead contacted *WhichSchoolAdvisor.com* who did a check on the TAMM web site, and found discrepancies in the school’s telephone number (not only was the number different, the fake web site listed a mobile number), its email address, and the fact that pictures on the site shows girls – though the advertisement was for a boys school.

Our potential victim’s tale is a clear warning to other teachers. Scammers actively look for job seekers—and will trawl through the likes of *LinkedIn.com*, searching for possible victims to lure with offers that are difficult to ignore.

Schools meanwhile need to be aware of what might be happening in their name. Dwight College in Dubai is not the only school recently to have issued a disclaimer after learning that fake job offers had been made by an entity claiming to be its representative. ■

“Our potential victim’s tale is a clear warning to other teachers. Scammers actively look for job seekers—and will trawl through the likes of LinkedIn.com, searching for possible victims to lure with offers that are difficult to ignore.”

148 Awards

Dubai College wins International School of the Year award.

Dubai College won the coveted International School of the Year Award at the Independent Schools Awards ceremony in London in October 2019. The awards are run by Independent School Parent magazine and open to both independent schools from across the UK and international schools who are members of the Council of British International Schools (COBIS).

The school was praised by judges for establishing the Dubai College Foundation as a registered charity in England and Wales in order to:

Provide scholarships and bursaries to enable children from all backgrounds to attend Dubai College with the ultimate intention to generate sufficient funds so that education can be offered without the need to charge fees.

Assist with the development of the school so that it can continue to maintain the outstanding performance whilst keeping school fees as low as possible.

Be able to provide assistance to those parents who are suffering hardship and unable to meet the fees.

Promote fundraising and volunteering opportunities at Dubai College with a view to advancing the education of pupils at schools in developing countries.

“Having a registered charity in England and Wales has enabled the school to establish an arm in International Humanitarian City. As a consequence, the Dubai College charity committee is now able to fundraise and build a school for a remote community in Nepal in partnership with United World Schools.”



ISC Awards 2020 – winners revealed

The International School Awards, hosted by ISC Research with the support of International School Leader Magazine took place on Monday 20th January. The following schools from the UAE were shortlisted:

- Initiative to Support Students' Pathways to Continued/ University Education—Raha International School, Abu Dhabi;
- Community Initiative—Winchester School (Jebel Ali), Dubai and British International School Abu Dhabi.
- Initiative to Support Inclusion—GEMS Jumeirah Primary School, Dubai.
- Teaching and Learning Initiative—Horizon English School, Dubai and GEMS Wellington International School, Dubai.
- Environmental Initiative—American School of Dubai.
- Initiative to Support School Wellbeing and Safeguarding—Dubai College.

The International School Awards, hosted by ISC Research with the support of International School Leader Magazine took place on Monday 20th January. At the Awards Ceremony in London, three Awards went to UAE contenders.

At the Awards Ceremony in London, three Awards went to UAE contenders.

According to the organisers, Raha International School, UAE was presented with the award for the best initiative to support students' pathways to higher education for a night school programme accessible for all secondary students and their parents, which provides information and resources on universities and their application procedures from over 40 countries.

The British International School Abu Dhabi, UAE received the community award for a collaboration between students and Abu Dhabi University to redesign a local superblock with sustainable and community benefits.

Dubai College, UAE won the school wellbeing and safeguarding award "for a research-led initiative which drew on best practice and expert advice to create a programme of positive psychology interventions for its students."

The annual GESS Education Awards 2020 will take place on Wednesday 26th February at The H Hotel Dubai.

The Awards, now in their seventh year, are designed to highlight and reward the quality and diversity of educational products, resources, services and people as well as the best educational establishments and the most dedicated members of the teaching profession. The Awards aim to encourage the raising of educational services and product standards throughout the industry and aim to be recognised throughout the sector as the accolade of excellence. The Awards categories for Teachers, Schools and Educational Professionals include:

- A Lifetime Achievement Award—presented to an individual working in the education sector whose work deserves to be honoured for their contribution to education above and beyond their own academic interests.
- Best use of digital learning in the Classroom—The award recognises and rewards a digital learning initiative in the classroom that demonstrates an innovative, strategic and

"The Awards aim to encourage the raising of educational services and product standards throughout the industry and aim to be recognised throughout the sector as the accolade of excellence."

far-reaching use of digital education in support of the goals of that institution.

- **Best use of STEAM learning in the Classroom**—This award aims to recognise and reward a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) initiative in the classroom that demonstrates an innovative, strategic and far-reaching use of STEAM in support of the goals of that institution.
- **Ambassador for the Environment**—The award seeks to recognise and reward those institutions or individuals that can demonstrate a positive impact, either within their school or community, of their sustainable initiatives either by increasing environmental awareness or by positively contributing to a more sustainable/environmental approach.
- **Community Award for Citizenship**—This award will be presented to an educational establishment or individual who can demonstrate real value to the community it/they serve through the most imaginative attempt to aid the wider community socially, culturally or economically.
- **Innovation in Education Award**—Presented to a member of the teaching profession or an educational professional working in schools or colleges or other educational establishments, nominated by themselves or their peers for outstanding innovation or creativity in teaching.
- **Best Initiative for Inclusion and Wellbeing**—This award seeks to recognise and reward those institutions or individuals that can demonstrate a positive impact either within their school or community of their inclusion and wellbeing initiatives either by increasing the physical, mental, and/or social wellbeing of their students and/or staff or by positively contributing to a more inclusive approach in education.
- **Outstanding Contribution in Education Award**—Presented to a member of the teaching profession or an educational professional working in schools or colleges or other educational establishments, nominated by themselves or their peers for outstanding contribution to education above and beyond their day to day job role.

“The award for the 2019/20 academic year will be for 254 teachers working across eight centres for People of Determination, Autism and Early Intervention under the Ministry of Community Development.”

Award for Best Teacher working with People of Determination

In October 2019, Hessa Essa Buhumaid, Minister of Community Development, announced the launch of a 'Best Teacher Award' at an event to celebrate October 5th's World Teachers' Day in Dubai. The award for the 2019/20 academic year will be for 254 teachers working across eight centres for People of Determination, Autism and Early Intervention under the Ministry of Community Development. These centres provide educational and rehabilitation services to enhance the empowerment and inclusion of People of Determination.



Best Teacher in the Gulf revealed

Also just in time to celebrate World Teacher's Day, an Arabic teacher from Fujairah with 20 years of experience has been named the best in the Gulf region. Laila Al Yammahi, who teaches at Murbah Secondary School for Girls, won the Mohamed bin Zayed Award for Best GCC Teacher in the second year of the award presentation. The winner of the prize, established to encourage innovation and excellence in education, is chosen following an extensive judging process that includes interviews and a classroom visit. Previously, award winners and finalists have been sent on overseas training courses. Laila received prize money of AED 1 million.

The initiative was set up in 2017 to recognise the importance of teachers in society. Winners are selected on the basis of five criteria: outstanding performance, creativity and innovation, developing sustainable learning methods, positive citizenship and communal and professional leadership.

Hussain Al Hammadi, the Minister of Education, said the initiative honoured teachers, who are "key players in shaping future generations". ■

"Winners are selected on the basis of five criteria: outstanding performance, creativity and innovation, developing sustainable learning methods, positive citizenship and communal and professional leadership."

153 Events

The following conferences and exhibitions are expected to take place this year.

3rd February

Global Education Expo Al Ain

Al Ain Rotana Hotel

3rd February

Global Education Expo Abu Dhabi

Crowne Plaza, Abu Dhabi

6th–8th February

Schools and Childcare Show

Dubai World Trade Centre

7th February

Global Education Expo Dubai

Crowne Plaza, Dubai

16th–17th February

ICTEL 2020

Flora, Grand Hotel, Dubai

25th–27th February

GESS Exhibition

The H Hotel, Dubai

28th–29th February

UK Boarding School Exhibition Dubai

Grosvenor House, Dubai

3rd–5th March

British Schools in the Middle East Conference

Crowne Plaza Yas Island Abu Dhabi

6th–7th March

Global Education Fair Dubai

Crowne Plaza Dubai

8th March

Global Education Fair Abu Dhabi

Sheraton Abu Dhabi Hotel and Resort

13th–14th March

The School and Nursery Show Dubai

Madinat Jumeirah

13th–14th March

British Boarding Schools Show

Sheraton Hotel, Mall of the Emirates

16th–18th April

GETEX Dubai

Dubai International Conference and Exhibition Centre

25th March

Smart Education Summit

Dusit Thani Hotel, Dubai

5th–8th June

Harvard MUN Dubai

Grand Hyatt Hotel, Dubai

22nd–26th June

International Conference on Ed. & New Dev.

Arabian Courtyard

14th–15th September

Bett Middle East

ADNEC, Abu Dhabi

6th–7th October

Middle East School Leadership Conference

Le Meridien Airport Dubai

5th–8th November

Arab Youth International MUN Conference

Venue TBC

18th December

World Arabic Language Day Conference

Venue TBC

1st–5th August 2021

WGCTC World Conference

Dubai World Trade Centre

Tale of Two Cities: Dubai & Hong Kong



Mark S. Steed is the Principal and CEO of Kellett School, the British School in Hong Kong; and previously ran schools in Devon, Hertfordshire and JESS, Dubai. He tweets [@independenthead](https://twitter.com/independenthead).

Education

Education is hard-wired into Asia's DNA. The vast majority of parents in Hong Kong are hugely ambitious for their children and hungry for success.

Education is seen as the passport to success, wealth and happiness. Money is hard-earned in Hong Kong. Parents in Hong Kong see it as their responsibility to

pay for extensive outside school activities and extra tuition and make sacrifices to do so. This is in stark contrast to Dubai where the post-oil boom high-end living and tax-free sunshine create an envious lifestyle where for most parents an international school education is much-resented cost centre rather than an investment and opportunity.



Innovation

Conversely, Dubai's DNA is rich in Innovation and embracing rapid change. Dubai is a Smart city in the vanguard of innovation. No city in the world moves faster to take on and implement new ideas. It is such a forward-looking city because it both had the wealth to execute change and benefited from not being tied down by having a long history. There were no rules, it was a blank canvas on which its rulers over the past fifty years have executed an exciting vision for the city. If the annual GESS trade fair is anything to go by, I suspect that Expo 2020 will be jaw-dropping.

Despite the fact that the Greater Bay Area manufactures huge amounts of day-to-day technology that is used around the world, Hong Kong itself is quite a conservative city. It is a Capitalist city

“Hong Kong secondary students ranked fourth in PISA tests in reading and maths – dropping two places since 2015. They remained in ninth place for competency in science.” (*South China Morning Post* 03/12/2019). No one is concerned. No one is interested. There's more to education in Hong Kong than PISA rankings.



of bankers and businesspeople for whom the status quo works just fine. There's a recognition that HK has to move with the times, but all are happy to allow others to be the early adopters who take the risks and make the mistakes. The education system reflects this. Hong Kong has some of the highest performing schools in the world, as the plethora of 45 points and school IBDP averages over 40 testify. There is little incentive to change when you are top of the tree.

Regulation

Perhaps the greatest difference for schools in the two cities is the totally contrasting roles played by the regulators: The KHDA and the Hong Kong Education Bureau are polar opposites. In Dubai, the annual DSIB inspection rating is everything – it is the focus of the year. Despite Dubai's innovative context, the sadness is that creeping regulation and curriculum demands means that schools have little scope to do anything other than toe the line, lest they be down-graded.

In total contrast, international schools in Hong Kong have the freedom to set their own curriculum and to be whatever they

“UAE students still not performing well on international tests” (The Gulf News 07/05/2018). The UAE came 45th in Maths and Science and 46th in Reading but “UAE remains committed to entering top 20 by next round of assessments, in 2021” (The National 03/12/2019). The Vision 2021 commitment is noble, but it is unrealistic. The UAE cannot compete with the Tiger nations of South East Asia. Closing the gap is beyond the scope of any KHDA or MoE initiative: it is cultural.

want to be so long as parents are prepared to sign up and pay the fees. International schools survive, thrive or fail according to market forces—the system sounds Darwinian but it works. Schools are granted licences to provide a certain type of education and have to make a submission to renew their licence – typically every five years. Other than that paper exercise, there is no inspection regime. Indeed, the regulator is more concerned with health issues and pupil safety than academic performance.

Resolution?

Dubai and Hong Kong have much to learn from each other. Hong Kong needs to be less risk adverse and more open to innovation. At present, it does not have sufficiently agile systems in place at a

Governmental level to be able to embrace innovation and rapid change. Indeed, it is in danger of being eclipsed in the region by its near neighbour, Shenzhen, which is a smart city looking to challenge Dubai for its title.

Dubai should have the confidence to recognise that it is truly world class at innovation. It should abandon its Vision 2021 aim of marching up the PISA tables and, instead, encourage schools to innovate, take risks and deliver excellence in whatever way they see fit. Indeed KHDA would do well to adopt the more deregulated approach taken by the Hong Kong Education Bureau towards international schools and allow competition to drive up standards and fulfil their potential to be some of the best schools in the world in the mid twenty-first century. ▣



“[Hong Kong] is in danger of being eclipsed in the region by its near neighbour, Shenzhen, which is a smart city looking to challenge Dubai for its title.”

Masthead

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Lyn joined Which Media very early in its development in late 2013 and has previously headed up both sales and consultancy for WhichSchoolAdvisor.com. Lyn has now taken on a senior editorial role on the site, bringing to Which Media's analysis over a decade of hands on experience in the school sector.

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Taher Gharib

The Director of Al Salam schools, including the new Al Salam Community School which opened this academic year, Taher Gharib, writes this month on the shift towards affordability in the UAE school sector.

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Craig has decades of experience as an Art Director and UX specialist for digital and print, and has built some of the region's most used sites. The Intelligence Report has Craig to thank for the conceptual thinking behind its design, and the design itself.

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