

**SECONDARY AND INTERMEDIATE FEMALE ISLAMIC STUDIES
TEACHERS IN JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA: UNDERSTANDING THEIR
TEACHING**

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**In The Name of God the Most Gracious the Most
Merciful**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate how intermediate and secondary female Islamic studies teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, make sense of their teaching. The overarching aim was to produce a descriptive and interpretive account of *what is it like to be an IS teacher teaching in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia today*. The key questions that frame this study are: 1) How do female Saudi Arabian Islamic studies teachers teach in the classroom? 2) How do female Saudi Arabian Islamic studies teachers make sense of their teaching practices? 3) What is essential however implicit to the experience of being a female Islamic studies teacher in Saudi Arabia today? The study is positioned within a qualitative interpretive tradition, drawing on phenomenology as a guiding conceptual paradigm. The data for this study were collected by means of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations conducted with 24 teachers in six different schools in the city of Jeddah. The analysis of the data began at the individual level, capturing the patterns that emerged for each teacher. A cross analysis was then conducted to elicit key emergent themes for the whole group. However, even where the analysis was carried out primarily at the group level, themes are still illustrated with examples taken from the talk of individual teachers. While the data indicated similarities in substance in the ways in which teachers made sense of their teaching, there were differences in the manifestations of the themes, which are also reported in this study. The themes that emerged from this investigation suggest that the teachers talked about their teaching by referring most essentially to *maintaining discipline, teaching as persuasion* and *dealing with dissonance*. The findings suggest that the participating Islamic studies teachers both described and used a set of distinctive pedagogical devices to maintain discipline and to persuade students regarding 9and by means of) pre-planned and well-crafted messages. In both their talk and their practice, the teachers reported a transition from understanding their teaching as a process of transmission of sacred knowledge to understanding it as a process of persuasion. The findings also show that, at the surroundings level, the teachers struggled to deal with issues of dissonance between their commitment to their values and religious beliefs and their required role as teachers teaching under institutional pressures. The research outlines the tension and paradox between the two roles, describing how the teachers maintain this balance in their teaching from the perspective of the teachers themselves.

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Chapter 1: Setting the Context, Purpose and Disposition

1.1 Genesis of Study: A Personal Trajectory

In keeping with my understanding that researchers inevitably influence the form and content of their research, as well as that the fact of a researcher's inherent subjectivity is beyond debate, I felt it necessary to provide a personal exposé of *the story behind the story* of this research and of my choice of topic. As with virtually all Saudis living in Saudi Arabia, my exposure to and interaction with Islamic studies (IS) teachers began at an early age and continued throughout my years of schooling. In school, I was what is often referred to colloquially in English as a *goody two-shoes*, a student who was eager to please her teachers and who maintained an 'A' average in all her subjects. I also participated eagerly in many extracurricular activities and took part dutifully in annual regional competitions in Quranic memorization, in which I was encouraged by my IS teachers. As a child, I did not dare challenge or question the knowledge I acquired from these female teachers, perhaps because my peers and I were constantly being told or given the impression that what we were learning was the 'truth' and that with our limited knowledge of Islam we could not challenge the interpretations or *fatwas* of the *Ulama* (Scholars). As I matured in age and knowledge, however, I could no longer accept the notion of the 'ultimate truth' perpetuated in school and decided to pursue my own answers to the questions that baffled me. In the search for my own truths, I parted ways with my IS teachers for many years.

My re-engagement with the Saudi religious-educational establishment began early in the new millennium, when I encountered certain disturbing attitudes both inside and

outside the system. One trigger event came in the form of a lecture I attended in which the director of an education department stated that IS was the most popular subject for Saudi women teachers and that in this field, ‘All you have to do...is memorize the information and then it’s easy to teach’ – since all that’s really involved is ‘regurgitating memorized content’. Outside the Saudi system, the 9/11 tragedy sparked diatribes in the international media concerning our national IS curriculum, and I was troubled by such phrases as ‘religiously obsessed’ and ‘the perfect explosive cocktail’ that were being used in reference to my people and society.

Although I had initially distanced myself from the socio-religious scene in Jeddah, in which attending religious lectures is a common practice, I was tempted to enter the scene again – this time neither as an obedient student nor as a confrontational teenager, but as a responsive researcher genuinely interested in understanding the worldview of the *other*. As such, I set out to consider the possibility that between the two reductionist views of IS teachers as robots and as obsessed fundamentalists, there might lie a story of the phenomenon of *teaching*, i.e., a narrative that was worth uncovering and examining in the context of education research.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to journey beyond mechanically deterministic causal explanations and to explore some of the infinite number of possibilities, variations and voices involved in the lived experiences of Saudi IS teachers. From this purpose emerged the study’s fundamental question: *What is it like to be an Islamic studies teacher in Saudi Arabia Today?*

1.2 Overview of the Study

In pursuit of an answer to the above question, 24 intermediate and secondary female IS teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia were selected for investigation and analysis. The aim was to increase our understanding of how these IS teachers make sense of their teaching and experience. The study is positioned within the qualitative interpretive tradition and draws on phenomenology as its guiding conceptual paradigm. The data for the study were collected by means of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations conducted with the 24 teachers in six schools in Jeddah. The research questions, which guided the inquiry, are as follows:

1. How do female Saudi Arabian Islamic studies (IS) teachers actually teach in the classroom?
2. How do Saudi Arabian Islamic studies (IS) teachers make sense of their teaching practices?
3. What is essential to or implicit in the experience of being an Islamic studies (IS) teacher in Saudi Arabia today?

The present chapter introduces the study and provides its background and rationale. The second chapter presents a review of the theoretical literature on teaching and teachers that informed the inquiry and that contributed to the development of the research questions. This literature consisted primarily of Western studies on teachers and teaching that focused on teacher identity and beliefs, teaching as a moral craft and the nature of the subject in teaching. Chapter three provides a review of available literature on Islamic religious education (IRE), primarily from Muslim countries (i.e., Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Southeast Asia), as well as selected more general research on Muslim schools in

the West. Since the study is situated at the border between several disciplines, a synthesis of different types of knowledge was required, and these three chapters collectively demonstrate the manner in which the study sought to integrate modes of understanding from a variety of approaches to the study of religion and to the study of teaching. A detailed discussion of the research questions of this study will be offered in chapter 4.

Chapter four sets out the conceptual and methodological approach used in the study. It begins by delineating the research questions of this study in light of the literature reviewed. It also introduces phenomenology as the broad conceptual paradigm underpinning the study as a whole. It then sets out to explain the qualitative nature of the study its design and research strategy. The chapter also discusses the pilot study and explicates the methodological decisions taken with regard to issues such as access, sampling, site selection and data collection methods. Chapter five presents the stages of data analysis and highlights the principles and steps taken to analyse the qualitative data in both interviews and observations. Chapters six and seven present the findings of the study. Chapter six attempts to describe and explain what IS teachers do in the classroom and how they understand their teaching. The former issue is addressed by means of a detailed analysis of two themes: ‘maintaining discipline’ and ‘teaching as persuasion’. The different and idiosyncratic manifestations under each of these central themes are described in detail through the use of examples from the interviews and observations, with vignettes presented where appropriate. Chapter seven defines the theme of ‘dealing with dissonance’, which appeared repeatedly in the data, as the underpinning factor influencing much of the teachers’ teaching. It begins by explaining what IS teachers mean by ‘dissonance’ in this particular context and how it is manifested in their teaching. Finally, chapter eight discusses the study’s general conclusions and examines some of their

implications, as well as some opportunities for future research.

1.3 Interdisciplinary Character of the Study

It is important to note here at the outset that this study may well be unique in studying IS from the perspective of female IS teachers in Saudi Arabia and in being carried out by a researcher who has both Western training and native access and insight into the linguistic and cultural world within which the study's 'subject' is situated. The distinctiveness of this study brought with it both excitement and frustration for the researcher, the latter due in particular to the paucity of work in this area and therefore of methodological precedent and of relevant findings for comparison. Moreover, the study is also unique in its attempt to combine insights from Western literature on teaching, teacher identity and the nature of the subject matter with those from literature on IRE, and the researcher was therefore required to develop her own approach to such integration. Much of the extant research on IRE, as will be explained in this chapter and in chapter 3 with more detail, does not examine teaching or classroom experience from the vantage point of teachers. Studies that do address teacher-side perspectives are primarily in the context of Western literature on teaching, particularly in North America, England and the Netherlands such as studies of teacher identity, beliefs and of the nature of subject matter (Ball & Goodson, 1985; Beijaard, 1995; Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; Bullough, 2001; Calderhead, 1996; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 1994, 1996, 1999, 2000 ; Gee, 2000; Grossman, 1993; Goodson, 1992; Kompf, Bond, Dworet & Boak, 1996; Nias, 1989a; 1989b, 1996; Pajares 1992) Additionally, research in the areas of IRE and of teacher identity alike has been invested with a diversity of terminology and semantics, so the researcher was required to select from and clarify different usages and meanings in

addition to explicating the particular meaning of these terms with respect to the present study.

My review of studies also showed that those in the area of Islamic religious education (IRE) – both in Saudi Arabia and in other Muslim countries – are themselves diverse, falling into at least the following five broad categories: prescriptive, theoretical, historical, content- oriented, modern Muslim education and global politics. Although studies in education may have both prescriptive and descriptive aims, offering prescriptions is not the intention of the present work. Rather, the objective is to increase our understanding of the lived experiences of IS teachers within the framework of the Saudi Arabian school system through an analysis of their teaching. Additionally, to date, most of the writings in the field of IRE have focused on philosophy, theory or history (Al Attas, 1980; Halstead, 2004; Sardar, 1991; Panjwani, 2004; UI Islam, 2003; Wan Daud, 1998). Few scholars have attempted to write about the concrete experiences, identities and current challenges of IS teachers (see Tamuri, 2007). Even scholars who have attempted to write about IS teachers, moreover, often resort to writing about the *ideal* and *desired* role of an IS teacher (see Alavi, 2008; Halstead, 1995) – or, as explained by Starrett and Duoamato (2007), about ‘wish- images’ concerning IRE and teaching.

Over the last several years, there appears to have been an increase in the discourse on Islam as a religion, along with its scriptures, underlying assumptions and practices (Douglas & Shiek, 2004). At the very least, this indicates that IRE has become an object of study, particularly in the context of growing interest in the juxtaposition of Islam and the West. This fact has led to a growth in the literature on contemporary Muslim education. These studies as will be shown in chapter 3, are often concerned with the teaching of Islam in non-formal settings such as mosques and Quranic *Madrasas*. Studies on the teaching of IRE in contemporary public or private schools have tended to focus on the content and/or

textbooks of IRE rather than on the teachers, in addition to focusing on implications for both national and global politics. All in all, these studies show that modern or contemporary IRE is an evolving institution that is inevitably and strongly influenced by forces of globalisation, religious reform, nationalism and mass public education (Berglund, 2010; Eikleman & Anderson 1999; Hefner & Zaman, 2007; Keiko & Adelkhah, 2011). One reason for the increase in interest in this area is the concern that ('faulty' or 'misguided') education may be connected to violent extremism. This master narrative, which links school textbooks to hatred and fanaticism, has been the topic of investigation of much research in this area (Hefner, 2009; Hefner & Zaman, 2007).

Although very different in aims and approach from the study undertaken here, the studies mentioned above are nonetheless of relevance in that they provide an indication of where the present work is located in relation to other studies conducted in this broad area. Moreover, the studies reviewed provide a historical and contemporary global context for the area under study in the present dissertation.

1.4 Clarifying Terminology

The term 'Islamic education' has been used to denote four different types of educational activities: 1) education for Muslims in their Islamic faith, sometimes referred to as *Islamic studies*; or *Islamic religious education* (IRE); 2) education for Muslims in general, including both religious and secular disciplines; 3) education about Islam for non-Muslims; and 4) education in the spirit and philosophy of Islam (Douglas & Sheik, 2004). The research undertaken in this work concerns the first of these areas, i.e., the education of Muslims in their Islamic faith. I have chosen to use the terms Islamic studies (IS) and Islamic religious education IRE (the teaching of Islamic religious education in school as

part of the formal education curriculum) rather than Islamic education since the later has been applied to various types of Muslim education and is a broad term that has been used mainly in the discourse surrounding the philosophy, aims and principles of education in Islam (see Al-Attas, 1980).

As used in this study, the term *Islamic studies* is context specific to Saudi Arabia. The IS teachers I worked with often used the Arabic equivalent of this term, *Dirasāt Islāmiya*, to denote their specialization. In particular, IS is meant to refer to all confessional subjects that are offered as part of the official curriculum. These subjects include the following: *Tawheed* (Islamic Monotheism), *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence), *Hadith* (authoritative anecdotes from the life of the Prophet Mohammed, Peace Be Upon Him) and *Tafseer* (Quranic interpretation).

The term Islamic religious education (IRE) is used herein to denote religious education more broadly in the Muslim world, and when referring to the religious education system more generally in any given country, including Saudi Arabia. Hence the term contains the added the signifier ‘Islamic’ to differentiate it from the (western) term ‘religious education’, which is used primarily to refer to non-confessional religious education. IRE is used when describing the literature on religious education in Muslim schools and countries in general, whereas IS refers specifically to the teaching of the four religion subjects in Saudi Arabian schools and in describing the teachers of these subjects.

1.5 Education in Saudi Arabia: A Story of Preservation and Change

The story of education in Saudi Arabia is characterized by a strong desire to preserve tradition while contending with efforts to modernize the nation’s education system. In this section I provide a brief history of the development of education in the

Kingdom while highlighting on both themes of *preservation* and *change*.

Saudi Arabia is a Muslim Arab monarchy that was established in 1932. Known officially as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the modern nation came into existence when Abdul-Aziz Al Saud united the two parts of the state: the Hijaz, the former Ottoman province containing the two Holy cities Makkah and Medina and Najd, which stretched eastward across the peninsula to the Persian Gulf (Al Sadan, 2000). Since its inception, education in Saudi Arabia was at its core religious. The early history of education began with a few *kuttab*s (schools teaching IS, reading and writing) attended by a small portion of the population who sought to gain knowledge of the Quran and Hadith (Prophet's Sayings) (ibid.). IRE in Saudi Arabia is perhaps seen as the barometer of preservation and change and the standard by which to judge the legitimacy of the Al Saud ruling family. This is clearly explained by Prokop (2003):

The evolution of education in Saudi Arabia, the structure of the education apparatus, and the content of teachings in the Saudi schools, in Saudi financed schools abroad and in books widely distributed throughout the world, have been circumscribed by the concern to *preserve* the religious foundation of the regime. Islam continues to be the main legitimating source for the Al Saud family. (p. 77)

Modern¹ education in the form of formal schooling was the exception prior to the establishment of the KSA. The Hijaz region had a rudimentary school system introduced by the Turks and a few private schools sponsored by individual benefactors such as the *Al Falah* Schools. These schools stressed IRE in addition to some modern subjects such as history, geography and mathematics (Al- Issa, 2009; Tibawi, 1979).

Before the discovery of oil, the country was very poor in resources and its main source of income was the annual pilgrimage to Makkah and Medinah by Muslims from all

¹ Free and compulsory schooling. What is here called 'modern' is elsewhere often called 'Western'. As Saudi Arabia has never been colonized, modern education was not introduced by a colonial (Western) power and thus has not been regarded as a foreign intrusion by the masses.

over the world. Yet an attempt was made to create a new school system. This move was immediately opposed by the *Wahhabi Ulama*, who questioned the need and legitimacy to modify the traditional system of education (Tibawi, 1979). The influence of the *Ulama* in the educational, social and political sphere remains strong to this day (Prokop, 2003), yet several attempts have been made to reduce and/or limit their power through initiating reforms in religious teaching. These efforts were met with strong resistance and have had notable repercussions for both the relationship between the *Ulama* and the government (i.e., the ruling family), as will be explained in subsequent sections.

With the discovery of oil later in the 1930s, a great change came to the Saudi education system in the form of a ‘quantitative expansion policy’. In 1953 the Ministry of Education was established and was entrusted the responsibility of building the infrastructure of a national education system (Abd-el Wassie, 1970). Due to the lack of qualified personnel, most of the early schools were staffed with teachers from neighbouring Arab countries, particularly Egypt and Syria. Unlike Saudi Arabia – which was never colonized – neighbouring Arab countries had an established system of modern schooling due to periods of colonization. Although attempts were made to modernize the education system, it is crucial to keep in mind that unlike other Arab countries, Saudi Arabia did not seek to relegate the traditional system to an inferior position. There was, on the contrary, a studied effort to cast the new system in an Islamic mould. According to Tibawi (1979), ‘the traditional system with its spirit, methods and even curriculum survived in the modern Saudi system as nowhere else in the Arab world’ (p.180). This strong emphasis on Islam provided a perfect platform for the members of the Muslim Brotherhood who were fleeing from Egypt and Syria in fear of the condemnation of the Arab Nationalist Movement pronounced by Egyptian President Jamal abd Al Nasser. Many Muslim Brotherhood members sought asylum in Saudi Arabia, and since the Saudi

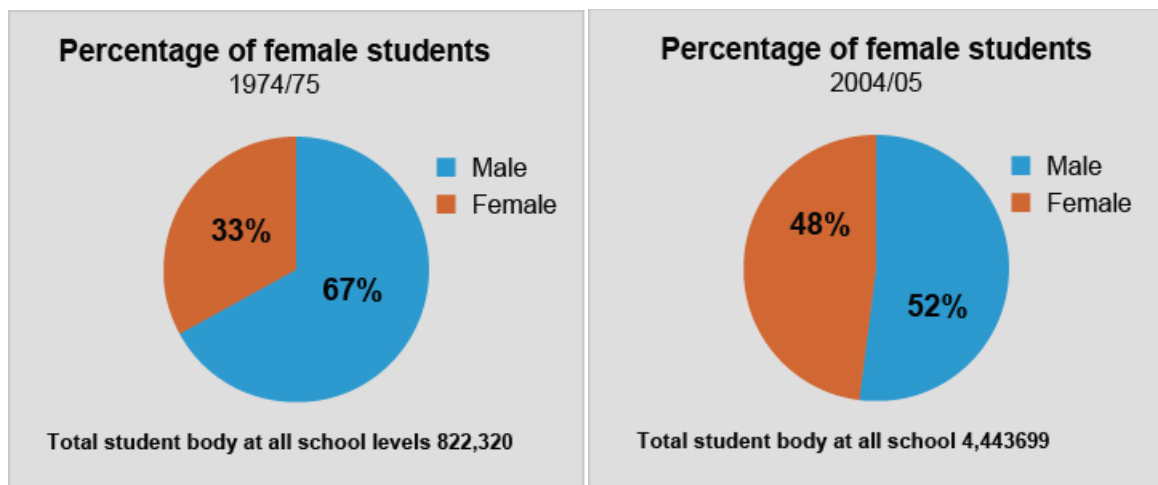
public service system was in its infancy, they obtained positions as teachers in schools, as professors in universities and as officers in the Saudi Ministry of Education, where they designed curricula and assisted in writing IS textbooks together with the Saudi *Ulama* (Algar, 2002; Rouleau, 2002)

At this time, education in Saudi Arabia developed at a staggering pace, with the Ministry driven to urgency partly by the fact that the majority of the population were still nomadic.² The resulting programme of expansion led to the opening of an average of one hundred schools per year, with advances in terms of infrastructure, textbook development and teacher training that were so rapid that researchers decades later found it difficult to evaluate their effects (Abd-el Wassie, 1970; Al- Issa, 2009).

Nonetheless, over the past 40 years Saudi Arabia has certainly succeeded in building an educational infrastructure that has led to an increase in school and university enrolment for both males and females, in reducing gender disparities and illiteracy rates (Maroun, Samman, Moujaes & Abouchakra, 2008; Munajjed, 2009). According to the latest UNESCO projections (2008), Saudi Arabia is moving rapidly toward achieving universal primary education (UNESCO, “Education for All ” Global Monitoring Report, 2008). Today, Saudi Arabia's nationwide public education system comprises more than five million students (male and female) distributed in more than 30,000 schools in different parts of the Kingdom (Ministry of Education, Statistical Reports for Years 2006-2007).

² In 1926 King Abdul Aziz implemented a de-tribalisation policy and a project for the settlement of the Bedouins. Different tribes were given agricultural land and provided with materials to build houses, schools and mosques (Tiwabi, 1979; Al- Hathloul & Edadan, 1993).

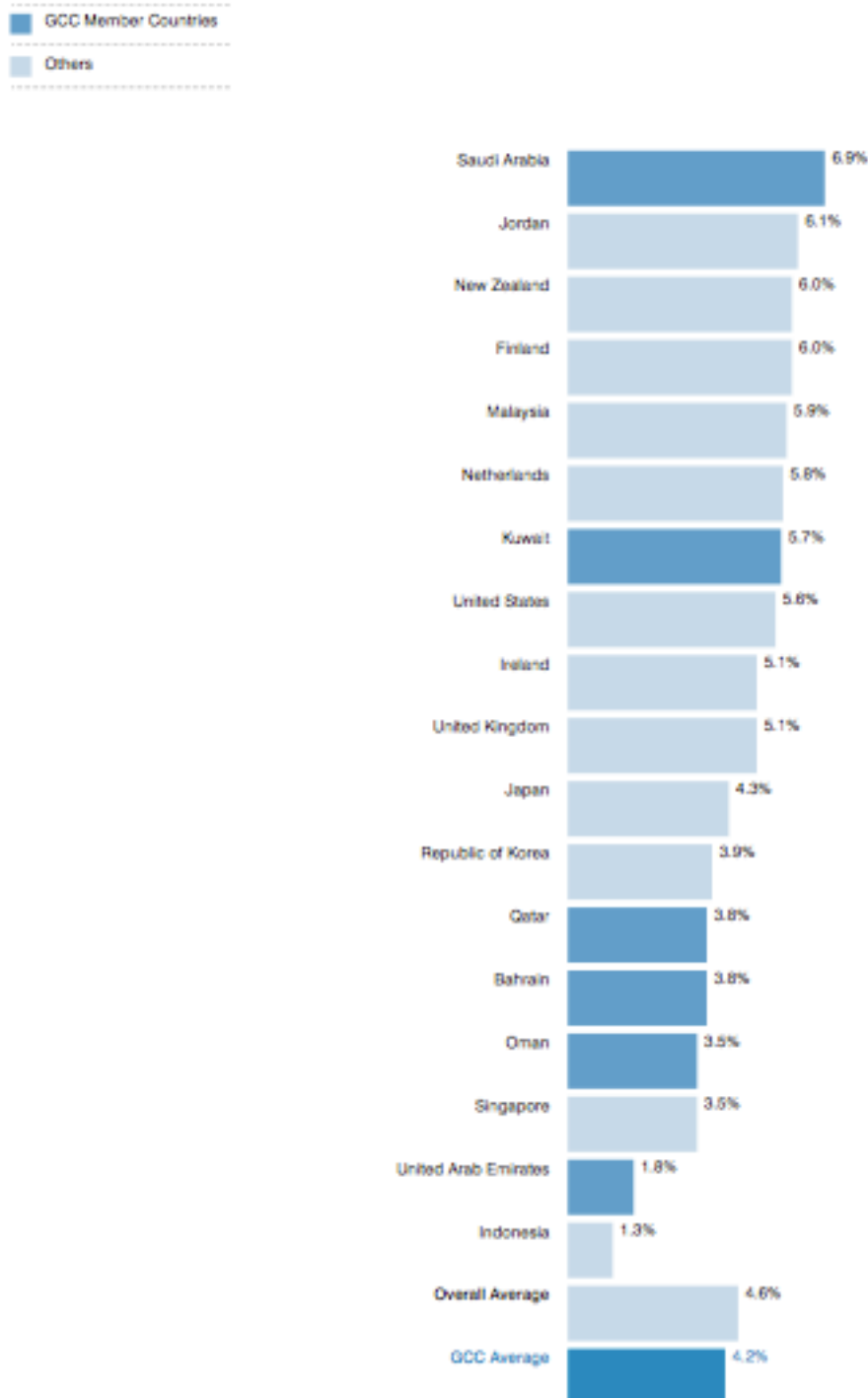
Figure 1. Percentage of female students at all levels in Saudi Arabia in the years 1974-1975 and 2004-2005



Source: SAMA, 2008, Ministry of Education, p. 374

Most importantly in the area of female education, the Saudi government has made considerable efforts to promote gender equality, and to ensure girls' equal access to basic education (Al Mumajjed, 2009). Statistics indicate that a considerable increase occurred in the number of female students at all school levels over a period of 30 years. The percentage of female students at all school levels increased from 33 percent in 1974–75 to 48 percent in 2004–05 (see figure 1). Since the 1980s, government expenditure on education for the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC), on average, to that of many developed countries when taken as a percentage of their respective GDPs (see Figure 2).

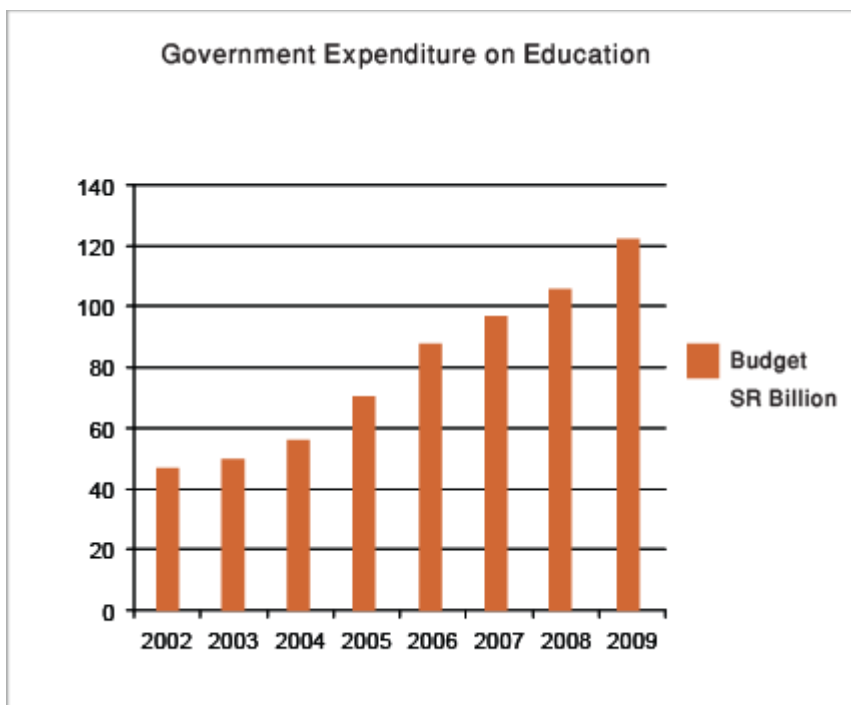
Figure 2. Average expenditure on Public education as share of GDP for selected nations worldwide, 1980-2005



Source: World Development Indicators (WDI), 2007, Booz & Company Ideation Centre Analysis

In Saudi Arabia, government expenditure on education increased fairly steadily across most of the preceding decade (see Figure 3). However, recent reports indicate that the country's expenditure has still not translated into the desired outcomes (see UNESCO, "Education for All" Global Monitoring Report, 2007; UNDP, Arab Human Development Report series 2002-05; Executive summary of the Ministry of Education ten year plan in Saudi Arabia, 2004-2014). Indeed, the focus on horizontal infrastructure development may have left little room for attention to quality. For example, out of 125 countries Saudi Arabia ranked 97th in 2004, in terms of the Education Development Index (EDI) in the recent UNESCO report ("Education for All" Global Monitoring Report, 2007). For example, the average gross enrolment ratio (GER) for tertiary education in the Gulf states in 2004 was 23 percent compared with 57 percent, 87 percent and 98 percent for Canada, Finland and the republic of Korea respectively (UNESCO "Education for All" Global Monitoring Report, 2007).

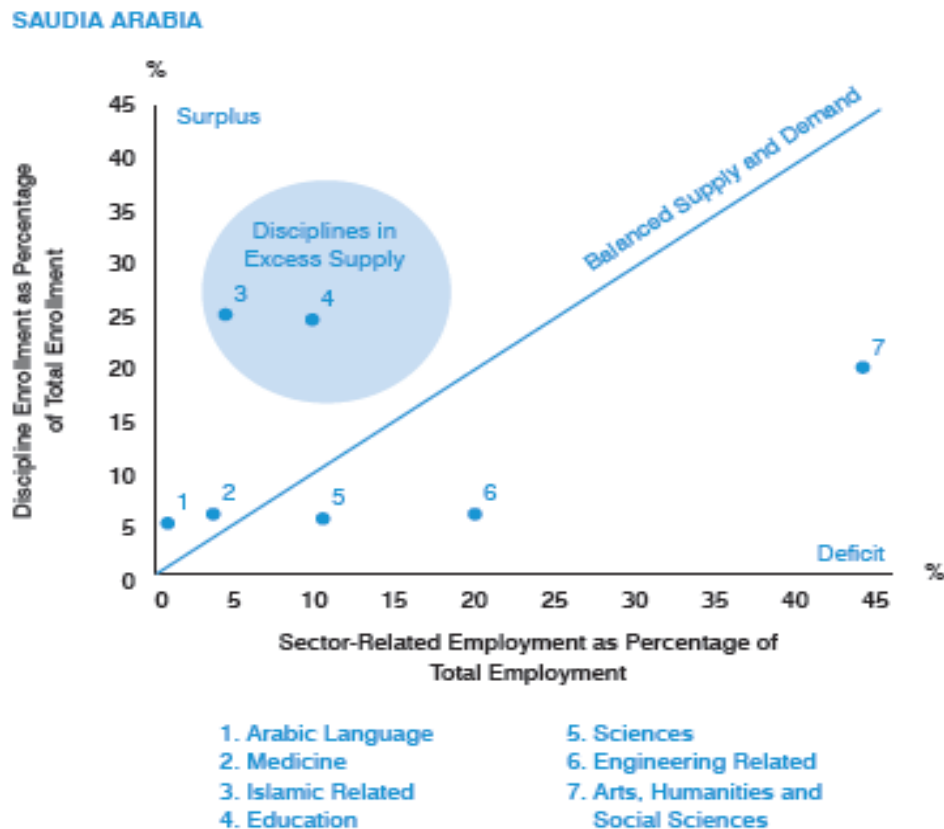
Figure 3. Saudi government expenditure on education by calendar year, 2002-2009



Source: Saudi Ministry of Education, Statistical Report (1426-27); Al Rajhi Report, p. 7; Arab News, 23/12/2008

Also, the Saudi government's expenditure on education reform was expected to create a generation of skilled nationals who would ultimately replace the vast expatriate labour force in the country (Maroun, Samman, Moujaes & Abouchakra, 2008). However, the number of expatriates has continued to grow, with the foreign workforce recently estimated at around 55% (Saudi Arabia Ministry of Economy and Planning, Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) 43rd Annual Report, 2007). Thus, education spending did not alleviate one of the most important challenges now facing the Kingdom – namely, the problem of unemployment for Saudis. Unemployment estimates for 2007 have hovered around 15 per cent, but some consider this figure too conservative (ibid.). Indeed, the trend of Saudi unemployment seems to be on the rise and is relatively high in comparison with developed economies. One contributing factor to employment is the abundance of certain specializations that are not aligned with current labour force demands. For example, Figure 4 below shows that Islamic-related subjects and education are among the specializations most in surplus, a fact that has left many IS teachers without employment.

Figure 4. Supply and demand for sector- related employment by discipline



Source: Saudi Arabia Central Department of Statistics; The World Bank

Public education in Saudi Arabia is free for all and is segregated by gender. These two features have shaped the Saudi System since its infancy, and hence any transformation in these two cornerstones is highly unlikely (Al Saif, 2003). There are four stages in the Saudi education system: primary, intermediate, secondary and university-level education. Saudi schools are open five days a week, from Saturday to Wednesday, and are closed on Thursdays and Fridays. Hours vary from school to school but are typically 8 am to 2 pm with a break for lunch and another devoted to noon prayer (Ministry of Education, 2011). Another cornerstone of the Saudi education system is its imperative standardization of all curricula, which is controlled by the Ministry of Education. This standardization is manifested or effected primarily in the form of uniform syllabi and school textbooks.

Textbooks are developed, written and published by the Ministry of Education and are issued free to all pupils each year. The normal procedure is that the ministry prescribes one textbook for each school year. Teachers are required to adhere to the textbooks closely, and this adherence is often checked by ministry evaluators (Al Sadan, 2000), and while the teacher's concern is to teach what is in the book and explain its contents, the student's concern is to learn what the book offers to pass examinations (ibid.). The one textbook approach has been criticized by proponents of education reform, yet the system remains unchanged:

One consequence of this one book system is of course that school textbooks become the sole reference for teacher as for pupil; Therefore, adherence to a single textbook is strongly criticized for its tendency to ignore differences in pupil needs and pupil abilities (Al Sadan, 2000, p.148).

Today, Saudi Arabia is engaging in perhaps the most serious, salient effort at reforming the education system to date, and for many important reasons. The primary impetus for education reform in Saudi Arabia is twofold. First, education reform is driven by demographic pressure and economic difficulties (Executive summary of the Ministry of Education 10 year plan, 2004-2014). Second, buffeted by the fallout from the tragedy of September 11, 2001, IRE reform has been a concern for Saudi education reformers and defenders alike. According to Prokop (2003), 'The country has become increasingly aware of the need to change the education system to ensure the economic survival of the country, and is emphasizing qualitative improvement' (p. 88). Indeed, the Saudi Education system is at the centre of a national debate. As early as 1990, in a petition to the rulers, many prominent businessmen recently demanded a review of the country's educational policy, stating as follows: 'we believe that our country's educational system is in need of comprehensive and fundamental reform to enable it to graduate faithful generations that

are qualified to contribute positively and effectively in building the present and the future of the country, and to face the challenges of the age, enabling us to catch up with caravan of nations that have vastly surpassed us in every field' (Empty reforms-Saudi Arabia's new basic laws', *Human Rights Watch* ,May 1992.) . More recently, the Sixth National Meeting for Intellectual Dialogue held in Jouf in 2006 under the title 'Education: Current Situation and Means of Development' included among its major recommendations that the Kingdom needs to review its education system and that a comprehensive strategy needs to be founded on new economic social and political developments as well as on local and international variables (al Munajed , 2009, p. 18).

It was also in 2006 that King Abdullah initiated the largest reform project in the area of k-12 education to date, known as *Tawtir* (Development). The project, which has cost about 12 billion Saudi Riyals (3.2 billion dollars), focused initially on developing cutting edge pilot schools (e-schools) in fifty secondary schools in 13 provinces across the kingdom. Although the project is intended to be comprehensive, its priorities are in the areas of the use of technology in education and improving education in science and mathematics, a stance that was inspired largely by the fact that Saudi Arabia ranked poorly in the recent TIMSS (2007). Humanities, including IS subjects, have not been altered (Al Issa, 2009).

In the face of the relentless desire to reform the education system, there remains in the background a strong trend to maintain and preserve – even to resist change – particularly with regard to IRE. In order to obtain the acquiescence and approval of the *Ulama* for state policies, the government has made concessions to the religious authorities in the fields of culture, curriculum development and control over the education apparatus. The *Ulama*, who have objected to curriculum change, women's participation in the

employment market and the presence of expatriates in the Kingdom, continue to be a major obstacle in the path to education reform (Al Saif, 2003; Prokop, 2003, 2005; Starrett & Duoamato, 2007). Resistance to curriculum change should not be regarded as necessarily negative as Prokop (2003) explains that:

It may provide a starting point for a dialogue among various stake-holders that will be important not only in respect of curriculum development but also for the emergence and involvement of a more active civil society. The debate, if allowed to take place openly and with the participation of the population, may also trigger a more far-reaching discussion about national identity, the political future of the country and the relationships between the government, the ulama and the people. (p. 89)

With the advent of the Arab revolutions in the spring of 2011, liberal Saudi reformers began to hope that resulting reforms would be spread to the Kingdom. They called for the creation of a constitutional monarchy and an elected parliament and for the curtailment of the royal family's power (Allam, A. 'King Abdullah disappoints reformists' *Financial Times*, March 18 2011). As a response, in an unexpected speech that disappointed reformers, King Abdullah – once himself identified as a 'cautious liberal reformer'³ – resorted to strengthening the religious establishment as a buttress against the growth of the civil state hoped for by reformers. King Abdullah strengthen the religious establishment of the *Ulama* by issuing the following reforms: 1) establishment of bureaus for the General Presidency for Religious Research and *Ifta* in the Kingdom, with the creation of 300 jobs for this purpose and the allocation of 200 million SR to cover the needs of these branches; 2) preparation of a study to establish a Saudi *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence) complex; 3) allocation of 500 million SR for the renovation of mosques; 4) allocation of 200 million SR to support Quran Memorization Associations and schools; 5) allocation of 300 million SR to support the Ministry of Islamic Affairs Bureau of Guidance; 6) allocation of 200 million SR for the completion of regional headquarters for the

³ See Christopher Dickey, "The Monarch Who Declared His Own Revolution," *Newsweek*, March 21, 2009, "A Promise of Reform in Saudi Arabia," *The New York Times*, February 26, 2009

Commission of the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (CPVPV) (Allam, A. 'King Abdullah disappoints reformists' *Financial Times*, March 18 2011).

Although the empirical work presented in this study was conducted before the Arab revolutions began, their occurrence and the governmental response have a bearing on and reveal much about the context of Saudi education. In particular, the decision to strengthen the religious establishment, the power of which the King once sought to restrain, illustrates clearly the thin line by which the Saudi government operates – torn between a desire to reform and a desire to preserve, particularly when reform appears to threaten the perceived legitimacy of the rulers. King Abdullah's pronouncements demonstrate clearly that the authority of the monarchy derives from the support of the religious establishment, the *Ulama*, and not from the people (Al Qassim, 2011). As will become clear in the empirical chapters of this study (6 and 7), the tensions between the opinions of the *Ulama* and the opinions proliferated in the social media have an impact on classrooms and particularly on IS teachers, who have traditionally been assigned primary responsibility for 'transmitting' Islam to younger generations. Studying the teaching of IS teachers in classrooms then becomes all the more intriguing as these developments unfold, since the teachers find themselves increasingly at the intersection of contradictory trends.

1.6 Subject and Context Rationale

The rationale contextualizes and situates the study within the wider social, religious and political debates occurring in the larger context of the country, tracing the literature and debates surrounding relevant areas. The significance of the study is highlighted through the answers provided to three important questions of context: Why Islamic

studies? Why Saudi women teachers? and Why now? The chapter will conclude by highlighting the birth of an unprecedented ‘context of change’ that is sweeping the Saudi nation as a whole, with emphasis on the evolution of religious discourse.

1.6.1 Why Islamic Studies?

As a political unit, Saudi Arabia’s origins lie within the Wahhabi⁴ movement that gained the allegiance of the powerful Al Saud royal family. This political/religious alliance is not only the basis of the present Saudi Arabian state, it also shapes the social, cultural and political norms of the nation. In a country like Saudi Arabia, which professes a commitment to the institutionalisation of religion in all its various systems and in which the role of religion has been institutionalised even in the most basic and intimate of personal affairs,⁵ IRE takes on monumental importance, as it embodies the foundation upon which the education policy and the Kingdom itself was founded. The educational objectives of the country promote a spirit of loyalty to the ‘one Islam’ propagated in the Wahhabi ideology. According to Duoamto (2003), ‘the Saudi curriculum is designed to homogenize the population and instil loyalty to the state’ (p. 154). The emphasis on this *one Islam* is clear in the national philosophy enshrined in Saudi Arabia’s constitution: ‘The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic state with Islam as its religion; God’s Book and the *Sunnah* [ways and practices] of His Prophet, peace be upon him, are its constitution, Arabic is its language’ (International Constitutional Law Document,

⁴ This ideology grew out of the teachings of the eighteenth century scholar Mohamed Ibn Abdl Wahab. In theory, the Wasabi’s believe that acceptance of God’s law means following the *Quran* and *Sunna* of the Prophet in one’s daily affairs, adhering only to interpretations of the early jurists of the first three centuries of Islam and avoiding later or reformist interpretations.

⁵ Nevo (1998) has described Saudi Arabia as ‘the most theocratic state in the contemporary Sunni Muslim world. By definition, a non-Muslim cannot be a Saudi Citizen’ (p. 35).

2005). With regard to the education sector, the primary objective is ‘to safeguard Islamic values by duly observing, disseminating and confirming Allah’s Shariáh (God’s Divine Law)’ (Ministry of Education, 2011). This emphasis on IRE in Saudi education may also be justified by the presence of the holy cities of Makkah and Medina. In this regard, it must be recalled that the Saudi state, governed by the Al Saud family, was established on the principle of protecting Islam and hence the Kings’ official title is *Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques*. According to Al Bawardi (1988):

Saudi Arabia follows an Islamic philosophy of education and the principles and goals of its education system are founded in Islam. The primary purpose of education in Saudi Arabia is to develop good citizens, capable of contributing to social progress, believing deeply in God and accepting faithfully the Islamic concepts of universal and ideal civilization that bring spiritual matters together in perfect harmony. (p. 35)

The importance of IRE is emphasized throughout all levels of the school system. IRE in formal public Education can be divided into three types: 1) IS subjects, which constitute a major portion of the educational curriculum at all stages; 2) additional religious education in Quranic memorization (Tahfez) schools;⁶ 3) religious education taught in religious institutes and Islamic universities beyond the k-12 levels. The Wahhabis’ maintain a Salafi ideology of knowledge, from a school that prevailed in the Middle Ages of Islamic Civilization and that specifies that the best knowledge to be acquired is that associated with the religious sciences and that worldly/secular sciences are to be ranked second or third according to their direct relevance to Muslims’ lives (Al Issa, 2009). This perspective is captured succinctly by Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bin Baz, former Mufti of Saudi Arabia:

The virtues of seeking knowledge are well known to all, and the noblest things sought by Muslims are religious sciences. Knowledge encompasses

⁶ A recent statistical report published by the Saudi Ministry of Education (2005-2006) indicates that there are 1764 Tahfez schools that cater to 207,857 students.

many things, but what Muslim scholars consider as true knowledge are the sciences of religion. This is also the same knowledge described in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger. (Bin Baz, 1993)

The same sentiment can be perceived in the following excerpt from a twelfth grade *Tahweed* textbook, which states that scholars of secular subjects do not deserve to be called scholars, but rather are considered ignorant in many respects. Those who deserve the honour of being called scholars are the true worshippers of Allah:

...secular scholars, with their experience, understanding and knowledge of inventions and industries, do not deserve to be called scholars at all, because their knowledge does not exceed the living world. Thus, their knowledge is incomplete. This title is best given and deserved by the people who know and fear Allah. (Tahweed 12th grade page 77)

Prior to the attacks of September 11, 2001, Saudi education reformers had long focused not so much on the content of the IRE curriculum, but on its monopoly over the students' time and on the general curriculum's dearth of useful information for success in a globalized economy (Al Issa, 2009). Since 1985, indeed, IRE has occupied the lion's share of the Saudi curriculum. Until recently, 30 percent of the students' total classroom hours was dedicated to teaching IS subjects in elementary school, whereas 24 percent of class time was committed to teaching these subjects at the intermediate and secondary levels (Prokop, 2005). For the purpose of grade promotions, IS subjects were given more weight than secular subjects. In the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, which saw severe outcries from media pundits and from the U.S. Government to reform IRE, the time allocated to Islamic Studies was reduced to 14 % of the student's total classroom hours beginning in the 2006-2007 school year (Zia, 2010). In practice, however, IRE still occupies a great deal more of a student's time since the emphasis on Islam is not limited to the parts of the school day that are explicitly devoted to religious subjects but pervades the teaching of all subjects at all academic levels. Science and humanities subjects are couched in layers of the national Islamic ideology. History classes, for instance, emphasize such

elements as the history of Islamic civilization and the life of the prophet, and Arabic literature classes are heavily weighted toward religious literature, religious figures and religious themes (Prokop, 2003).

The narrative surrounding IRE in Saudi Arabia is complex. IRE has been under constant attack from domestic liberal reformers and international stakeholders alike. The curriculum's key defenders are its authors – Saudi Arabia's official and state-funded clergy, the *Ulama*. The male *Ulama* represent the peak of the Saudi social pyramid and constitute a powerful political lobby in Saudi Arabia (Ibn Sunaytan, 2004). At the same time, the *Ulama* and the ruling family cannot afford to ignore the fact that radical jihadists can be and have been seen as the product of Saudi public schools and hence of the texts written by the state clerics themselves (Al Qassim, 2011).

The discourse of current research on IRE in Saudi Arabia focuses on reforming the 'official curriculum' and school textbooks in response to fierce attacks alleging that the Saudi national curriculum promotes hostility against non-Muslims (Al- Qassim, 2011; Doumato, 2003; Prokop, 2003; 2005; Stalinsky, 2003). Such allegations have been met with an aggressive response, most notably from the Imam at the Holy Mosque of Makkah, Sheik Saud Al Shuraim, who publically declared that any change in the curriculum material would be regarded as an act of 'high treason' (Prokop, 2005). Saudi IS textbooks have also been criticized for promoting a Sunni version of Islam that condemns religious practices such as those of Sufi Mysticism and of the Shia, who are portrayed as polytheists (Al Qassim, 2011). Domestic reformers have also noted that the textbooks are dependent on memorization and focus on relating what is forbidden or permitted without engaging with the realities that impact students' lives (Issa, 2009). In addition, the textbooks have been criticized for presenting women as inferior; for example, a chapter on women's rights

in a high school textbook entitled 'Islamic culture' says: 'women are weak by nature, if left unsupervised they become corrupt and corrupting' ("Saudi Textbooks Present Women as Inferior" Al-Hayat News Paper (London), March 27, 2010, By Badriya Al Bishr)

Sheikh Salman Al-Odeh, a relatively liberal senior Saudi cleric, has spoken in favour of curriculum reform in general, but he stressed that this reform should be in response to internal needs rather than foreign dictates. He argued that religious studies should be taught in an atmosphere of dialogue with emphasis on moral values and stressed the values of tolerance and the rejection of violence and *takfeer* (accusations of heresy). He also cautioned against letting the matter of curriculum reform cause a schism or polarization in Saudi society ("Senior Saudi Cleric: Yes to Curricula Reform, No to Social Schism and Foreign Pressure" The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) April 17, 2010). The content of the revised textbooks that began to appear in the years following the September 11, 2001 attacks confirmed that the establishment *Ulama* were willing to accommodate the regime when necessary (Al-Fahad, 2004), which after all has accommodated them repeatedly in the past. For example, all past *Tawheed* textbooks attribute authorship to the Saudi Ministry of Education rather than to any specific individual. However, the revised version of the tenth grade *Tawheed* book that emerged at this time is attributed to Shiek Saleh Al Fawzan, a member of the Council of Senior Scholars and of the committee of Islamic Research and Fatwa. Sheikh Al Fawzan's name printed in bold across the title page is meant to send a message: the establishment *Ulama* are not only on board with curricular changes, they stand behind the regime and are active participants in the process (Starrett & Doaumato, 2007).

The Ministry of Education and other government officials have continued to call for toning down the anti-non-Muslim rhetoric in the curriculum and have made efforts to

retrain teachers to foster tolerance and open-mindedness among the Saudi youth (Prokop, 2005). Nonetheless, the depth or extent of the reforms has been questioned, for example by columnist Abdullah Al Sa'doun, who noted that 'our curricula are not just in need of an omission here and there. They are in need of a comprehensive reassessment' ("Our Curricula Are Not [Just] in Need of an Omission Here or an Addition There" Al Riyadh, April, 6 2010).

Within the sub-field of IS textbook content analysis, scholarly interest in IRE has focused on the question of how dealing with the 'other' – namely, non-Muslims – is portrayed in these official texts. Three examples are noteworthy here. The first is Al Sakran's (2006) study presented at the Second National Dialogue Forum: "Religious Education Curriculum: Where is the Fault? A Reading into the *Fikh* of Dealing with the Other, with Reality and with Modern Civilization'. Al Sakran's critique of the curriculum focuses on the view that it presents contradictory messages to the student. He explains through a detailed content analysis that the curriculum has failed in providing a coherent and realistic view with respect to many contemporary issues in Islam. Thus, contradiction is the predominant theme in his analysis. For example, he notes that the curriculum in many instances addresses in detail Islamic ethics in dealing with others (Muslims and non-Muslims), but uses contradictory language that is infused with racist, questionable and aggressive explanations that evoke hatred against both Muslims who sin and non-Muslims. He also notes that the textbooks often dramatize and exaggerate corruption and sin, particularly with regard to the media and modernisation. Here are some of the passages that he cites as examples:

...it should be noted that infidel countries support [religious] innovators in the dissemination of their innovations. (Tawheed textbook, 12th grade, p. 130)

Visual, auditory and written media are now often used as tools of division and destruction. (Tawheed textbook, 9th grade, p. 13)

The second example is a study by Al Saif (2003) where he focuses on the subject of *Tawheed* (Monotheism) and presents a content analysis of the following: 1) grades 1-12 *Tawheed* textbooks in their treatment of the People of the Book, or *Ahl Al Kitab* , as the Quran dubs Jews and Christians and 2) internal memoranda to *Tawheed* teachers from the Ministry of Education regarding the purpose and methods of teaching *Tawheed*. In addition, he presents the results of a survey of given to one-hundred undergraduate Saudi students in both KSA and the United States regarding their attitudes toward *Tawheed* classes. In his analysis of the textbooks, Al Saif concludes that negative mention of the people of the book ‘become starker and more polished’ (p. 28). The author’s analysis suggests that positive references of *Ahl Al Kitab* are alarmingly missing. As the author notes, ‘Not only does negative become more negative, the school textbook authors are creating a one-sided and unrealistic monolithic image of both *Ahl Al Kitab* and Muslims alike. This disillusionment places the victims or students in a false land where everything is simply dubbed a unity with diversity being easily brushed aside’ (p. 28). In his analysis of the memoranda, he notes that ‘*Tawheed* is not seen as a subject like other subjects; the goal is not memorization, knowledge and education only but, more importantly, it is to evoke a religious emotion in the souls of the student’ (p.6). He further explains that *Tawheed* teachers are granted *carte blanche* in perusing the most effective means and methods required to embed the ideology of the *Tawheed* textbook in the minds of their students. He then contradicts himself by stating that the memoranda stipulate specific prescriptive methods to implement when teaching *Tawheed*. These include a *Tamheed* or prelude, in which the IS teachers are encouraged to perform *Tashweek* (motivation),

Tahrith (implanting) and *Tafaaul* (interaction with students) and *Ard*, which simply means ‘display’. Numerous strategies are presented for *Ard*, such as linking verses from the Quran, using narratives and drawing connections with daily events. In addition, the Ministry prescribes *Tatbeeq* (practice), in which teachers are encouraged to assign homework and review lessons. Al Saif concludes this section by sharing an extract from a memorandum that epitomizes the role of the IS teacher: ‘he or she is not a teacher but a builder of the student’s religious beliefs’ (*Tawheed* Memorandum, pp. 6-7).

In his analysis of the survey data, Al Saif finds that *Tawheed* was regarded as the least favourite IS subject by all Saudi students surveyed, both those residing in KSA and those in the United States. The reasons behind this answer included a distaste for repetition and/or memorization and the view that the subject was a waste of time. With specific reference to the People of the Book, when asked to comment about Judaism the U.S. group was found to have a clearer image of Judaism and a more accommodating stance while the KSA group mixed up religion with its practitioners and revealed animosity in certain responses.

The third and most recent example is Doumato’s (2007) work entitled *Saudi Arabia: From Wahhabi Roots to Contemporary Revisionism*. Doumato reviews certain IS textbooks and puts forth the following themes: 1) school textbooks proclaim the message that there is only one Islam for all, that this religion should not be questioned and that philosophy and logic often lead to schism; 2) this one Islam proclaimed in the textbooks is under siege from both insiders and outsiders; 3) loyalty versus enmity to the Wahhabi school of thought, a theme that is found to be unique to the Saudi IS textbooks (and to those used in Oman) as compared to those used in other Muslim countries (enmity in this regard ranges from Jews to non-Wahhabi Muslims to Western civilization in general); 4)

warnings against from imitating *kuffar* (infidels). Based on her findings, Doumato concludes that the Islam put forth in the textbooks surveyed is a tailored to serve the needs of the regime and of the *Ulama*.

The master narrative that permeates the three studies described above, as well as many others in the same vein (see Al- Qassim, 2011), is the premise that textbooks matter a great deal. The studies claim or imply that textbook representations of religion and of the world provoke hostile attitudes and even violent behaviour in students and that changing the content of these books can be a significant and effective means of overcoming exclusivity and curtailing violence. Whether the textbooks one reads in school encourage violence and exclusivity or not, and whether the contradictions within them breed confusion among students, as a critique of Saudi IRE, this perspective rests too heavily on a reading of the texts themselves. It is thus worthwhile to examine the living context of the classroom to see whether the perceived rigidity and the contradictions are mitigated or balanced through opportunities for discussion, particularly with the advent of mass media and technology. Closely connected to this question is the role of the teacher student relationship, another missing paradigm in the predominant trend of textbook oriented studies.

While I hope to contribute to this dialogue, my aim in this study is to move beyond these specific lenses and explanations. In this regard, I seek to broaden the scope of IRE research by steering away from the heated debate around the ‘official curriculum’ and by focusing instead on what is known as the ‘delivered curriculum’ (Eisner, 1992) – i.e., that which is actually taught in the classroom, taking account of teacher identity, beliefs, styles and teachers’ impact on the form and content of the curricular materials that students actually receive. Unlike much of the debate surrounding the Saudi IRE, moreover, the

present research is not evaluative. I do not seek to judge the effectiveness or impact of IRE or of the present curriculum, but rather to foster an understanding of the other's worldview and lived experiences, in this case that of Saudi female IS teachers and their students. This approach stems from my belief that studies of effectiveness should be grounded in or preceded by descriptive, exploratory studies that seek to first understand and explain current phenomena.

1.6.2 Why Saudi Women Teachers?

Women in Saudi Arabia are at the heart of current debates on religion and education. The influence of the *Ulama* on education and throughout the social sphere is felt particularly strongly with respect to women's education and their role in public life (Al Issa, 2009; El Sanabary, 1994). According to Arebi (1994), 'Women are and remain a matter of great concern to various forces in the Saudi society – almost an "obsession" of the entire society. Participating with unmatched fervour in the traffic of words about women are the *Ulama*, the state-sponsored...army of male speakers [who] have taken up the task of conceptualizing women's roles in society' (p.1). Indeed, women's education in Saudi Arabia is strictly controlled by the *Ulama* and is impacted by a prominent gender ideology or ideal image of the Muslim Saudi Arabian woman that is sustained by the state, by society and by the official clergy (Duoamato, 1992). Historically, the *Ulama* and conservative forces fought the establishment and expansion of women's education. As a compromise, women's education was introduced and developed in a manner that was deemed compatible with the country's religious position and Arab tradition (Tibawi, 1979), and the syllabus has been overloaded with Islamic and Arabic subjects.

Additionally, women's education was placed under the supervision of the General Presidency of Girls' Education (GPGE), which was controlled by the *Ulama*. The influence of the *Ulama* on female education is captured admirably by Al Issa (2009):

When the *Ulama* were given the responsibility to oversee women's education by the state, this provided them with an incentive to control all forms of female education. The General Presidency of Girls Education was established, teacher training centres, colleges and universities were all subjected to their influence. Hence, a whole system of girl's education was established which operated under the philosophy of separating girl's schools and colleges from any interaction with the outside world for fear of gender mixing. High walls were built around the schools, gates were secured with guards, special rules for women's dress were enforced for students and teachers alike,⁷ and CCTV was installed in all women's universities to allow male instructors to teach university courses. (p. 83)

In 2002, the GPGE was merged with the Ministry of Education after an incident in a girls' school in Mecca in which 15 girls died in a fire due to the interference of members of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (the Saudi religious police) with the rescue efforts because the girls were not wearing the obligatory *Abaya* (black cloak and scarf) ('Saudi Arabia: Religious Police Role in School Fire Criticized' *Human Rights Watch*, 15 March 2002). This incident not only caused public outcry about the role of the religious police, it also contributed to a general reduction in the control of male *Ulama* over women's education (Hamdan, 2005; Prokop, 2003).

Limiting the scope of the study to Saudi women teachers was a scholarly, analytical and methodological imperative for several reasons. First, in terms of scholarly work, little has been done on recording women's lives in Saudi Arabia. Notable exceptions include the studies of Arebi (1994) and Yamani (2000) and the work of Suraya Al Torki, a Saudi anthropologist who has conducted research on women's development and employment in Saudi Arabia (1992), on the ideology and behaviour of privileged Saudi

⁷ Students and teachers in both public and private schools are forbidden to wear pants on school premises. The dress code specifies long skirts with shirts that cover the elbows.

women (1986) and on family organization and women's power in Saudi urban society (1977). As for scholarly work that brings together the categories of 'women' and 'religion', most have been historical treatments in the form of rudimentary accounts of women's religious contributions in support of their husbands', brothers' or fathers' efforts to promote the Wahhabi doctrine (i.e., Al-Jassir, 1980 and Al-Harbi, 1999) and some recent studies about the female preacher movement in Saudi Arabia (i.e. Al Saud, 2011; Zahid, 2010).

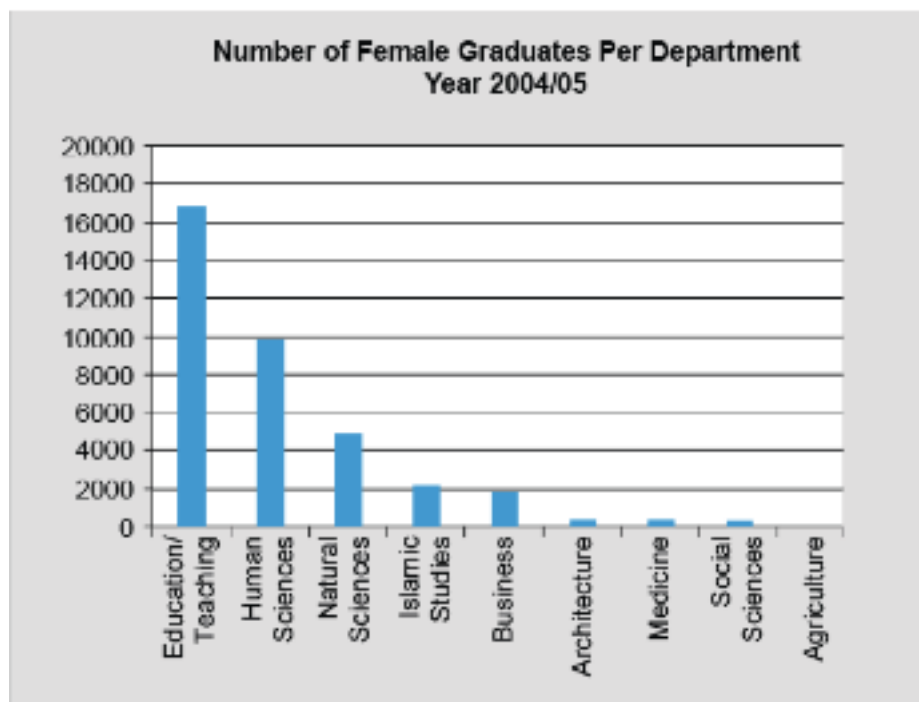
Second, in this climate of heightened morals, Saudi women's activities remain concealed and accessible only to womankind, particularly in the education sector, which enforces a strict gender divide. Women in Saudi culture are regarded as *oura*, a term used to designate something extremely private, including private body parts (see Arebi, 1994). Women are also regarded as objects of family honour, and hence protecting them from the public eye is not limited to physical concealment or veiling but includes shielding the disclosure of their identities and voices as well. Having said this, it must also be noted that the methodological decision to limit my category to women was also due to the fact that male IS teachers would have been very difficult to access for a female researcher, particularly since this study is phenomenological in nature and therefore required in-person interviews and intimate access to the worldviews and classrooms of the teachers under study.

Third, in a traditional, patriarchal society in which women are the main caregivers and are entrusted with the raising and social and religious upbringing of children, the role of the IS teachers carries special importance, as it is socially appropriated to ensure the student's adherence to religion and her maintenance of a pious image. Hence, the salience of the teacher's role lies in the fact that they are seen as role models to these students in

terms of their religious adherence and social conduct.

In addition to the reasons addressed above, this study is significant in that it presents itself at a time when Saudi Arabia is implementing a ‘Saudiazation’ policy in an effort to reduce unemployment, a social and economic ill that is currently felt most strongly in the education sector. In line with this policy, foreign teachers, who were imported from neighbouring Arab countries in large numbers in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly from Egypt and Syria, are now being replaced by Saudi teachers. Moreover, as Figure 5 below illustrates based on data from 2004-2005, Saudi women have a particularly high concentration of degrees in education and teaching, human sciences, natural sciences and Islamic studies.

Figure 5. Number of Saudi female higher education graduates by specialization for the academic year 2004-2005



Source: Al Hamad, M., Zaidi, M., Al Otiebi, B. and Al Mutwalli, N., *Al Talim fe Al Malaka Al Arabiya Al Soudiya: Rouyat al Hadir wa Istishraf Al Mutakbal*, 4th ed, Al Rush Libarry, Beirut, Lebanon 2007

Hence, there exists today a generation of female Saudi teachers working or ready to work in the education system. These women, I believe, are key players in the development of education in Saudi Arabia today; however, they lack voice and socio-political presence. Additionally, research regarding Saudi Arabia and its education system has often put the blame for the failure of the system on these teachers. For instance, a recent report commission by the government sought to highlight the claim that ‘girls’ education suffers from a shortage of well-qualified teachers’ (AlMunajjed, 2009). While teachers generally complain of an increased assessment of their performance from the Ministry and their lack of ‘autonomy’ (Al Saddam, 2003) the report continuous to call for more assessment and monitoring. The following excerpt is an example:

Experts confirm that Saudi teachers lack frequent assessment and monitoring of the quality of their teaching performance during the school year. Another common complaint among experts in the field and among members of the teaching body itself is that the system should extend beyond traditional methods of teaching because it is not providing teachers with adequate teaching and training programmes. This lack of training is reflected in the inability to communicate and interact with students, encourage team work, and develop the personality of students while promoting the value of understanding and tolerance. (AlMunajjed, 2009, p. 14)

In the light of this high stakes context, in which rapid change is demanded and planned in an ivory tower by researchers, western think tanks and strategy companies, a *missing paradigm* comes to light which is the voice and experience of the individual teachers. Through this study I aspire to contribute to on-going debates on education in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the area of IRE, by bringing to the foreground perspectives on how the teachers themselves understand their teaching. According to Kirk and Winthrop (2008), both in North America and in other western contexts, there is a wealth of literature that addresses individual teachers’ experiences, identities, biographies,

narratives and voices (see e.g., Casey 1993; Clandinin & Connelly 2000, 2003; Goodson, 1992). Literature of this kind has greatly informed teacher education programmes, especially in more progressive institutions, and is recognized for its importance in the area of teacher professional development (Kirk & Winthrop, 2008). However, in Saudi Arabia, simply put, no one has endeavoured to ask teachers for such input – perhaps because no one has considered their experiences to be a valuable subject of study, since the teacher is still regarded as an implementer of reform policy who may occasionally require ‘retraining’ rather than as an active stakeholder in the reform process. The present research seeks therefore to record the various experiences, perceptions and narratives of IS teachers. It contests generalisations that minimize the importance of understanding the intricacies of the classroom in the context of change and reform and stresses the fact that their teaching is a product of a diverse and complex array of social, religious and ideological conditions that demand scholarly attention in a non-reductionist approach.

1.6.3 Why Now?

The field of political psychology takes the view that political systems routinely shape the identities, memories, stereotypes, beliefs, language, emotions and actions of citizens. Seen from this perspective, the people of Saudi Arabia have historically been habituated to a system within which change is rare. This conditioning helps to explain the fact that most Saudi’s choose to remain within the realm of the familiar, which in turn buttresses and perpetuates a ubiquitous belief in *accurate knowledge* and *indisputable truths* (Taba & Til, 1945). Saudi society thus exemplifies the claim of Taba and Til (1945) that ‘Homogenous cultures are largely conservative: change comes slowly and the core of

the culture is preserved intact' (p. 62). In the wake of the attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, many of the perpetuated 'truths' have been challenged and education reform in the Arab and Muslim world has emerged as a subject of great debate. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the country is currently experiencing a metamorphosis due to the unprecedentedly vibrant and complex tapestry of social, religious and political debates occurring in the larger context of the country. As Al Rasheed (2007) put it, 'more than any other time, Saudi society is polarized over religious interpretation and political aspirations. Without ignoring the impact of rapid social and economic change, the polarization is primarily a product of a widening gap between professed symbols and reality. The ongoing debate, together with the increased violence, simply indicates that Saudi Arabia is undergoing a transformation' (p. 13). This transformation has led women to become more vocal about their role in society, a fact that was particularly evident in the 2004 National Dialogue Forum, at which women debated many issues regarding women's education in the kingdom, such as the introduction of physical education, which was previously banned (Prokop, 2005).

Furthermore, due to increasingly widespread literacy and mass media, ordinary Muslims have become increasingly familiar with religious concepts and interpretation. This new knowledge has led to a modern phenomenon in the Muslim world known as the 'objectification of religion', in which issues that were once practiced unreflectively are constantly being debated among the masses (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1996). In my pilot study experience, I observed that these debates, once regarded as exogenous to the Saudi classroom, have become increasingly salient among students and teachers (Jamjoom, 2010). Moreover, since both the form and content of IS are regulated by the national curriculum, a study of IS is, in part, a study of how Islamic religious education is interpreted and formulated at the interface between the individual teacher and the Saudi

Arabian curriculum and policies.

1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to present the story of IRE in Saudi Arabia with a view to discerning the gaps, issues and disputes that pertain to this area of study. Although the issues related to IRE are numerous and complex, this study is concerned primarily with understanding teachers and their teaching from their own point of view. The review of the literature presented here and in Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrates that IS teachers are a missing paradigm in the understanding of IRE. Predominately, IS teachers have been viewed as pawns operating within a formal and tightly structured curriculum, and the emphasis on the curriculum and textbooks has overshadowed other areas of research that might have been more concerned with the teacher. In the following chapter I attempt to review the literature – predominantly western in tradition – that has contributed to the multifaceted ways of understanding teachers and their teaching, in an attempt to highlight those areas that are most relevant to my research questions.

Ch. 2 Understanding Teachers and *their* Teaching

2.1. Introduction

In the past few decades, the idea of understanding teachers and their teaching has received considerable attention from the educational research community (Bussis, Chitaden, & Amarel, 1976; Day, Pope & Denicolo, 1990; Elbaz, 1983; Halkes and Olsen, 1984; Kompf & Denicolo, 2003; Nias, 1989a; Olson, 1992; Sugrue & Day, 2002). Sarasson (1993), Brown and McIntyre (1993) and others remind us that researchers must make a conscious effort to see matters from the point of view of the people under study and that teachers are people, not mere research objects. It is from work such as this that the present study draws its approach to the study of IS teachers. After all, this study is essentially about making sense of teaching from the perspective of the teachers themselves. We have seen in the previous chapter how the focus of educational research in Saudi Arabia too frequently emphasizes diagnosing teacher failings and prescribing improvements. Some of the problems with such research undoubtedly derive from the tendency to treat the IS teachers and their work in isolation from their identity as teachers and from the substance of what they teach, namely the subject of instruction. In this study, the subject is considered as something that is closely intertwined with the teachers' own faith and therefore with her practise of teaching. Moreover, the fact that Saudi IS teachers work in a tightly structured educational setting and curriculum often overshadows the role of their beliefs and self-identity as conceptual tools in light of which their teaching should be understood. The evaluative type of research discussed in the preceding chapter and more directly in chapter 3 may be useful in generating insights relevant to the professional

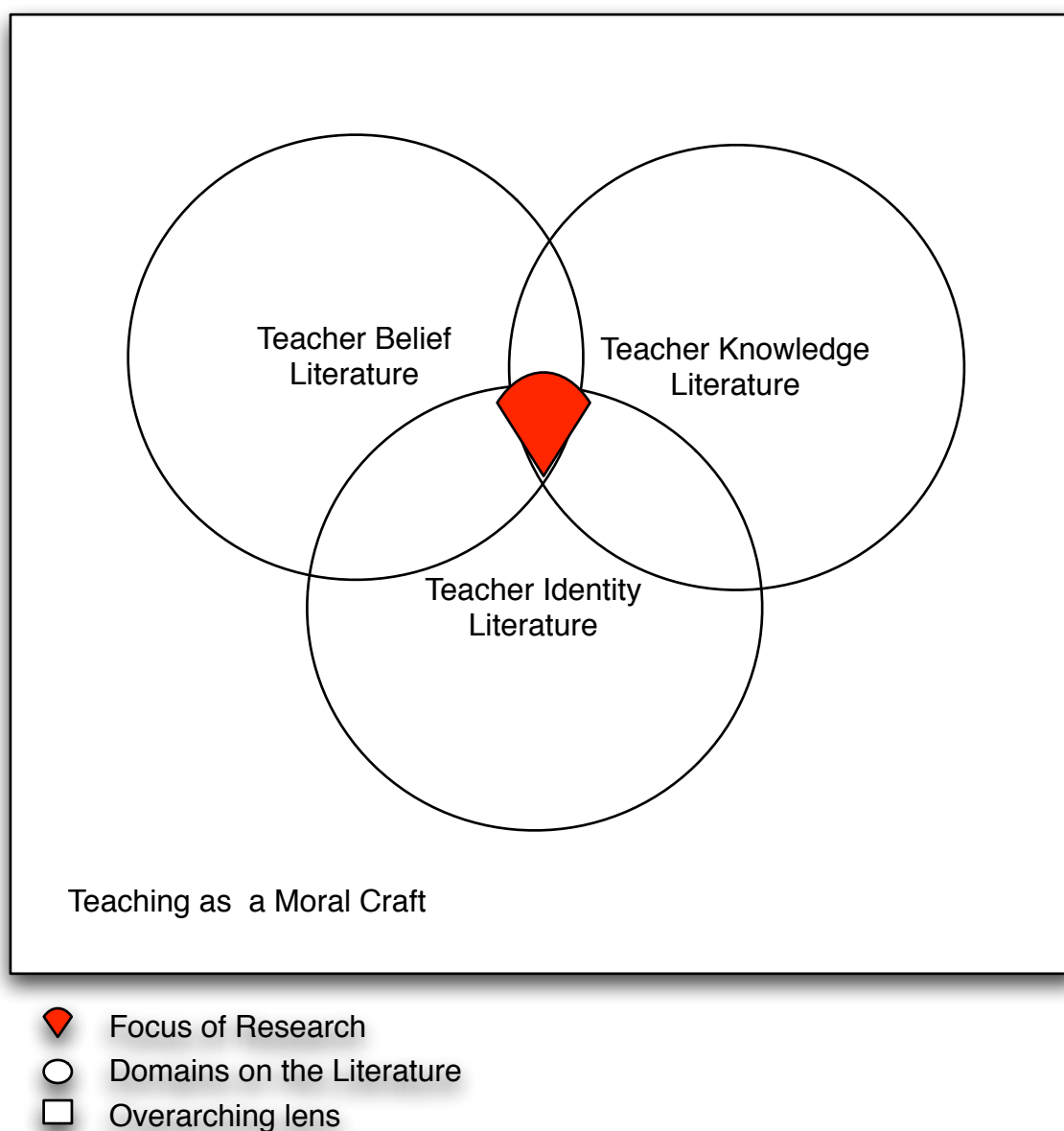
education of teachers, in which regard it is important to ask what teaching methods and approaches can be expected to work ‘best’ overall. Nonetheless, it is widely recognised in educational research today that diverse perspectives are needed in order to obtain an adequate understanding of teaching (Brown & McIntyre, 1993). Accordingly, the perspective that I adopt in this study toward research on teaching is one that I believe to be especially valuable in a context in which little is known about the IS teachers, about how they make sense of the things they do in the classroom and how they achieve the goals that they value.

The research described in this study is part of a widespread movement in recent years to focus on ‘teacher thinking’ and on the personal dimensions of teaching. For this chapter then, I consulted a selected body of research on teachers and teaching – namely, a variety of studies that are concerned with what Clandinin and Connelly (1987) refer to as ‘studies of the personal’ in teaching – ‘the what, why and wherefore of individual pedagogical action’ (p. 129). This body of literature encompasses such topics as ‘teacher thinking research’ (Calderhead, 1984), ‘teacher theories and beliefs’ (Clark & Peterson, 1986), ‘teacher professional identity’ (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; Bullough, 1997; Connelly & Clandinin 1999; Knowles, 1992) and ‘teacher knowledge’ (Elbaz, 1981; Lampert, 1985; Shulman, 1986). In the early years of the ‘teacher thinking’ research paradigm the central focus was on teachers’ external behaviours such as teacher planning before lessons and teachers’ interactive teaching in classrooms (Clark & Peterson, 1986). After that the interest shifted from being focused on external behaviour to a common desire to understand what goes on in teachers’ heads while they teach. Gradually the discourse then shifted with a focus on the teachers’ knowledge base (Clandinin & Connelly, 2003). While the researchers involved in this paradigm employ a ‘bewildering array of terms’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987, p. 488), as

their methods stem from a variety of different backgrounds, they share a common interest in the personal aspects of teaching and a common desire to ‘get inside teachers’ heads [in order] to describe their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs’ (Clark & Peterson, 1986, p.4-5). They also share a common concern with the ways in which knowledge is actively acquired and used by teachers (Calderhead, 1987b) and, in many cases (such as Brown & McIntyre, 1993), with understanding teaching from the teachers’ point of view.

It is crucial to note, however, that this chapter does not attempt to offer an exhaustive review of any of the areas of study mentioned above. A number of comprehensive reviews are available in the literature and were consulted in this review, among them those of Clark and Peterson (1986), Carter (1990), Tom and Valli (1986), Grimmett and MacKinnon (1992), Fang (1996), Clandinin and Connelly (1987), Fentemacher (1994) and Pajares (1992). What this chapter attempts to do is to highlight areas in previous studies of teaching that are of relevance to my research questions (see Chapter 4 section 4.2) and to the studies of IRE that will be examined in detail in the following chapter. Hence, what distinguish the present review from these others are its aim, focus and the fact that the selection of literature is context driven. The literature to be reviewed here and the research undertaken are therefore distinctive, but not unique or without precedent. First, the study of the work of teachers here rests on two important assumptions: 1) that teaching is essentially a moral enterprise in which teachers are moral agents in society; and 2) that an adequate understanding of the phenomenon requires an understanding of the ‘personal’ dimensions of teaching, which include the teachers notions of themselves, i.e. *teacher identity*, *beliefs* and the perspectives that they offer about their own teaching, i.e. *teacher knowledge*. Figure 1 below thus shows the three separate but interrelated areas of research – all of which stem from the teacher thinking research paradigm – on which the present study principally builds.

Figure 6. Domains for literature review



The focus of this review lies at the intersection of the three domains identified in Figure 1: teacher belief, teacher knowledge and teacher identity. At the backdrop of these domains is the view of teaching as essentially a moral craft. I do not attempt to cover each domain exhaustively, but rather choose those areas within each domain that elucidate crucial knowledge for an examination of my research questions. Although I attempt to discuss each domain separately in this chapter they are highly interrelated, particularly

with regard to the distinction between what counts as *knowledge* and what counts as *belief* in teacher practice (Pajares, 1992).

To begin with, in section 2.2 I set out to explore conceptualizations of teaching as a moral craft as a consequence of the social milieu in which my study takes place. The teaching of IRE in the context of this study is *confessional*, and the IS subjects are seen as holy. Also, as will be shown in chapter 3 in more detail, the majority of Muslim scholars agree that the meaning of education in an Islamic sense is reflected in the processes of *Tarbiya* and *Ta'dib*. In Arabic, the word *tarbiyah* is derived from the root *raba-yarbu*, meaning to grow or increase and nurture. The teacher is also referred to as a *Murabi* – he who performs the moral act of *Tarbiya* and nurturing. The word *ta'dib*, in turn, means ‘refinement’ or ‘discipline’. A teacher is also called a *muaddib*, ‘one who refines or teaches manners’. Hence, teaching need not only be conceptualized as a professional craft (Brown & McIntyre, 1988; Calderhead, 1987b), or as a reflective craft (Zeichner & Liston 1996), but – more importantly as a craft of moral nurturing.⁸ Moreover, the emphasis on the moral dimensions of teaching means that there must be an equal emphasis on the teacher him/herself, in this case the *murabi* or *muaddib*, as teachers are the propagators of the moral message. In section 2.3 of this chapter I attempt, therefore, to review concepts that cover the ‘personal’ dimensions to the understanding of teaching – in particular those identified and noted in connection with Figure 1 above. Since the aim was not to cover each of these three domains exhaustively, three criteria were imposed for inclusion: 1) those areas that lie at the intersection of the three domains; 2) those that take into account the confessional context of the study and the moral lens applied to understanding teaching; and 3) those that take into account the research questions of the study. In what follows here, I address why these three domains were chosen and how are they relevant to the

⁸ The Saudi Ministry of Education is technically known as Wizarat Al Tarbiya Wa Ta'alim, i.e., as the Ministry of *Tarbiya* and Education. The order of these terms is no accident, as in official emphasis the moral aims of education (*tarbiya*) take precedence over the intellectual ones.

understanding of teaching from a teacher's point of view?

Regarding the domains of belief and identity, a significant volume of the research on teaching which stems from the teacher thinking paradigm suggests that the personal and professional identity of the teacher pervades all of a teacher's work (Acker, 1999; Biejaard, 1995; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Husu, 2002; Keltcherman, 1993; Nias, 1989a). Teachers exist as persons before they exist as teachers (Nias, 1989a). The personal values and beliefs that are incorporated into the person's substantial self or identity play an important role in the way in which he or she conceptualizes and carries out his or her work (ibid.). An investigation into the role of beliefs and identity in teaching is perhaps particularly important in a context in which teaching may be seen as the propagation of deeply held religious beliefs and ideals. Education in this context may be seen as a translation of social, moral and religious ideals into teaching. Therefore, I intentionally cover areas in these two domains that are of relevance to my study. In the *teacher belief* domain I examine 1) teaching beliefs 2) subject matter beliefs and 3) personal religious beliefs and in the *teacher identity* domain I consider themes of 1) the personal and professional identities of teachers 2) and defining teacher identity by 'otherization'.

The section dedicated to teacher knowledge, in turn, highlights works that are guided by the question: What do teachers know? (Fenstermacher, 1994). I briefly cover research programs that seek to understand what teachers know as a result of their teaching experience. Several kinds of knowledge are suggested in the literature and an examination of all types of knowledge is not feasible for the purpose of this study. Therefore I focus on domain-specific knowledge of the classroom and teaching. For this purpose I use Crater 's (1990) suggested categorization of the teacher knowledge research: 1) teacher information processing and decision making studies i.e., planning and interactive teaching 2) teacher practical knowledge, including knowledge of the classroom; and 3) pedagogical content

knowledge, i.e., the ways teachers understand and represent their subject matter.

It is important to note however, that the literature on *teacher belief*, is a relatively old literature and therefore heavily influenced the early works in the *teacher thinking* paradigm. The discourse today employs *teacher knowledge* as the conceptual tool for understanding teaching (Clandinin & Connelly, 2003), and this coincided with the view of teacher as a *professional*. Most recent among the three domains however, is employing identity as an analytic tool to understand teaching. Since 2008, the academic literature on teacher identity has expanded rapidly (Cochran-Smith, Feiman- Nemser, McIntyre, & Demers, 2008). It is also crucial to mention herein that there is a general confusion in the literature, which centres on the distinction between *beliefs* and *knowledge*. Clandinin and Connelly (1987) attempted to clarify this confusion when they examined the origins, definitions and meanings of the personal constructs used in the analysis of teaching, they concluded however that the constructs were simply different words meaning the same thing. In what follows I attempt to discuss the theme of ‘teaching as a moral craft’, followed by an examination of the three domains chosen for understanding teaching in the context of this study. I also try to make relevant connection whenever possible with the literature on Islamic religious education, although a detailed treatment of the former will be presented in chapter 3.

2.2 Teaching as a Moral Craft

The craft of teaching has been conceptualized in a variety of ways. Each conceptualization emphasises a different aspect of the work of teachers. At the beginning of the ‘teacher thinking’ research paradigm in 1975, teachers were see as *decision makers*,

who are able at a particular moment to choose between alternatives. At the beginning of the 1980's the conception changed to that of a *sense-maker* and a professional with a wide knowledge base. In addition it can be said that the teacher in 2000 is seen as a component professional (Surgue & Day, 2002) and that teaching is viewed as a *professional craft* in which 'esoteric' and 'tacit' knowledge is transmitted from expert to novice. Teaching as a professional craft is based on the following assumptions: 1) teachers possess a body of specialized knowledge acquired through teaching and experience; 2) teaching is goal-oriented in relation to its clients; 3) the issues that teachers face are complex and hence they must resort to their expert knowledge to analyse situations; and 4) teaching is a skilful action that is adapted to the particularities of its context (Calderhead, 1996).

Another popular view of teaching which coincided with the professionalization of teachers is to conceptualise teaching as a *reflective practice* (Schön, 1983). The notions of 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' are central to Schön's conceptualization of what reflective professionals do. The former is sometimes described as 'thinking on our feet'. It involves looking to one's experiences, connecting with one's feelings and attending to one's theories in use. Schön explains that reflection in action takes place when practitioners are confronted with challenging situations for which they develop a way to manage the situation through reflecting on the context. The act of 'reflecting-on-action' allows professionals to reflect back on action after it has been accomplished. It enables them to spend time exploring why they acted as they did, what was happening in the group at the time and so on. In so doing, they develop sets of questions and ideas about their activities and practice (Schön, 1983).

Although the aforementioned conceptualisations of teaching have been predominant in directing the trends of research on teaching, it is crucial to note that both of these views tend to concentrate on cognitive aspects of teacher knowledge and, somewhat

less, on its affective dimensions (Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991). According to Elbaz (1992), the neglect of the moral dimension of teaching may be seen as having to do with considerations of the status of teaching as a profession. Talking about teaching in terms of ‘caring and relationships with students’, for example, seems to risk placing in question the professionalism of teaching (Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991). Elbaz (1992) also explains that: ‘researchers looking at teachers’ knowledge have said relatively little about the moral’ (p. 421). She argues nonetheless that research on teacher thinking/teacher knowledge has not neglected the moral side of teacher knowledge but rather has presented an integrative view of teaching, and hence addressed moral dimensions of teaching implicitly within the teachers’ narratives rather than attempting to explicitly carve out a separate conceptualization of teaching as a moral craft. In the same vein, Sockett and LePage (2002) note that the moral dimension of teaching is missing in studies of classrooms.

Since Shulman (1986) emphasized the importance of *pedagogical content knowledge*, a number of critics have expressed concern that such an emphasis ignores the moral enterprise inherent in teaching (Ball & Wilson, 1996). For example, Fenstermacher’s (1990) primary critiques in this regard is that the rhetoric of teacher professionalization is grounded in the ‘knowledge base of teaching’ rather than in its moral base. The emphasis of the rhetoric has been on skills, competence and types of knowledge that teachers hold. According to him, ‘these are not concepts that capture the essential meaning of teaching’ (p.132). Other scholars have warned from ignoring the appeal of teaching as a *calling* and expressed a dismay in the general failure teacher education institutions in capturing and building on notions of teaching as a *calling*, even though the research on teachers overwhelmingly points to the moral nature of teaching (see Goodland, Soder & Sirontik, 1990). It is as if the moral nature of teaching is ‘lost, forgotten about, or- to put the best possible light on the matter- simply taken for granted’ (Fenstermacher,

1990, p.132).

Several scholars in the area of teaching have attempted to deconstruct what it means for teaching to be a moral act. Noteworthy in this regard is Tom's (1984) work where he describes the various and complex aspects of the work of teachers which renders their craft a moral one. Tom explains how teaching is essentially a professional *and* moral endeavour and that these dimensions need not be separated in the practice of teaching or in teacher education programmes. A teacher must be aware of his or her moral responsibility. Teachers, according to Tom, see themselves as moral agents of society and as people who are responsible for transmitting social values. As he notes, 'teaching in reality... involves a subtle moral relationship between teacher and student and an attempt to bring important content to the awareness of a student' (p. 11). Tom states that teaching is a moral craft in at least two ways: on the one hand, the unequal power in the teacher-student relationship places and inherent moral obligation on the teacher and, on the other hand, the teacher, as curriculum planner, selects certain objectives over others, and this selective process reflects what the teacher conceptualizes as desirable ends, thus bringing morality again into play. The teachers' work according to him is value-laden in terms of their relationship with their students and their choice of content and objectives.

There are several different ways in which teaching serves as moral act. First, there is teaching morality through didactic instruction and this mode of teaching is usually heavily ideologically driven -as in the case of teaching IRE. Second, there is teaching *about* morality as in teaching about world religions, ethics or philosophy. Third, is teaching moral education through 'acting morally' and holding oneself up as a role model for students (Fentemacher,1990). Most of the literature which considers teaching to be a 'moral craft' emphasises the third dimension. This brings us to an important point, in that the literature on the moral dimensions of teaching predominantly emphasizes on the

teacher's relationship with his/her students. In the early 1990s educational writers such as Goodland, Soder, and Sirontek (1990), Lyons (1990) and Sockett (1993) acknowledged how the moral dimensions are inextricably linked with the daily activity of decision making in teaching and observed that the process of decision making is always rooted in the teacher's *interpersonal relationship* with their students. This is in line with Fenstermacher's (1990) observation on how teaching is inescapably moral, predominantly due to its interpersonal nature:

Nearly everything that a teacher does while in contact with students carries a moral weight [, and this includes e]very response to a question, every assignment handed out, every discussion on issues, every resolution of a dispute.... [In fact,] the moral character can be thought of as the *manner* of the teacher. (p. 134)

Given that the primary emphasis is on the interpersonal aspect of the moral, themes such as *care* (Noddings, 1992, 1997, 2001), *honesty* and *responsibility* (Clark, 1990) and *trust* (Sokette, 1990) appeared repeatedly in the literature. For example, Nodding's (1988, 2002, 2003) work has underscored the centrality of *care* in the teacher-student relationship, and she has been highly critical of other codes of conduct that promote rationality over care for others. As professionals, teachers are expected to uphold a duty of care for their students (Nias, 1981; Noddings, 1997; Mahony, 2009). It has been argued that caring teachers assist students academically, socially and emotionally (Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson, 1999; Goldstein, 1999; Moran, 2011; Noddings, 2001) and that caring teachers teach students how to care for others (Noddings, 1997). Elbaz (1992) identifies three aspects of the moral in teacher knowledge through an analysis of teacher narratives and stories: 1) a sense of hope; 2) attentiveness to particular students and their needs; and 3) caring for difference among students. Elbaz bases her findings on analysis of teacher's stories and draws heavily on the work of Ruddick (1989) on maternal thinking. Elbaz puts forth the notion that there are many areas of overlap between maternal thinking

and teacher thinking. She offers an example of what Arendt (1986, p. 174) refers to as ‘natality’ – the fact that children are new beings who have just come into existence in an old world – which gives rise to a sense of hopefulness in teachers and mothers alike: ‘It is only because the new generation is different from the old that we can harbor expectations that old problems may be solved’ (Elbaz, 1992, p.425).

Owens (2005) calls for considering and incorporating the development of ‘an ethic of care’ as fundamental pedagogical content knowledge to be included in pre-service teacher education. Noddings (2003), Hargreaves (1998) and Elbaz (1992) all argue that an ‘ethic of care’ is a moral orientation that is important to understand as a moral basis upon which individuals make their decisions about caring. In a recent study carried out in an Australian secondary school context, ten teachers who were identified as ‘caring’ were interviewed about their caring practices and about how they understood their ethic of care. The author identifies five ways in which the teachers thought about their teaching as caring: 1) making a difference in students’ lives; 2) working with the whole student emotionally and educationally; 3) setting boundaries for care while maintaining approachability; 4) enjoying one’s teaching and liking children; and 5) being concerned for both student wellbeing and content delivery, but holding the former to be more important (Moran, 2011). The results show that the caring teachers were not caring because of the subjects they taught, due to their years of teaching experience or simply because they were female – although the latter appeared to contribute; rather, caring teachers were caring because of deeply held *beliefs* that the role of the teacher implies care for students and that they can make a positive difference in their students’ lives.

The Seminar Series on *Changing Teacher Roles, Identities and Professionalism* (Gewirtz, Mahony, Cribb, & Hextall, 2007), includes a number of contributions in which the authors refer to various ways in which moral values lie at the heart of professional

pedagogical practice. Mahony (2009), who interviewed teachers as part of a project on professional standards, notes that teachers mostly reported a *confusion* about the moral issues and challenges that they face in their teaching, particularly since they are held responsible for the moral behaviour of their students. As the author explains, ‘This implies that there are restrictions on how they themselves behave in the process. “Do as I say, not as I do” is generally not regarded as a defensible position, not least because teachers’ fitness to teach is partly judged on the basis on their own behaviour’ (p. 985). Mahony extends his argument by showing how the ‘fashionable claim that values are relative and/or subjective’ (p. 983) is a key source of confusion for teachers.

Thus far, from the literature mentioned above, a sense of strong emphasis on the moral comes across. Yet what these studies lack is an exploration *of* and *between* teaching as a knowledge endeavor – a profession – and teaching as a moral enterprise. For this reason I find it particularly useful to highlight studies that set out to examine the relationship between teacher knowledge and the moral dimensions in teaching practice. Ball and Wilson (1996) offer just such an analysis. Their study examines two episodes of teaching – one from a third grade social science classroom and one from a third grade mathematics classroom. They argue and demonstrate convincingly that the same sites are equally useful to analyze both pedagogical content knowledge and moral aspects. The theme of *integrity* in teaching comes across strongly in their study, as explain how integrity in teaching is fundamentally rooted at the intersection between both the moral and the intellectual dimensions in teaching. By integrity in teaching, the teachers in the study mainly alluded to two issues: 1) intellectual honesty in the sense of being true to the mores and values of the subject that they teach and presenting it in an honest and authentic manner; and 2) classroom discourse, particularly responsiveness to and respect for students’ ideas and what they bring to the classroom. Ball and Wilson conclude their study

by citing the need for a new rhetoric in educational research that combines the moral and intellectual dimensions of teaching. They note the following:

How can we reshape the everyday language about practice to blend the moral with the intellectual? How can we represent the complicated and dynamic nature of pedagogical reasoning to reflect not only what teachers know and believe but also what they are committed to and think is right? Doing this means developing a more adequate language, a rhetoric of inquiry that honors knowing and caring and seeks ways to embrace and illuminate the connections among ideas and understandings, concerns and values, wishes and dreams. (p. 188)

As such, it follows that research on teaching may glean useful insights when it aims to examine the interconnections and relationship between the moral and the professional dimensions of teaching. This may be especially useful in a context where IRE teaching is considered both a moral obligation for the teacher and a school subject.

2.3 Studies of the ‘Personal’

Given that this study was undertaken within a confessional context, it was entirely appropriate for the participating teachers to share their religious beliefs and practices with their students. Thus, the role of the *personal* may be more salient in this study than in studies carried out in contexts in which the teachers are not encouraged to influence the students to adopt a particular doctrinal stance. Several notable studies have pointed to the fact that no understanding of the teacher is complete that does not take into account the centrality of the ‘personal,’ e.g. *beliefs, self-image, self-concept, identity, role identity and professional identity, teacher conceptions, personal knowledge and personal constructs* (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Levitt, 2001; Nias, 1989a; Pajares 1992; Simmons et. al., 1999). Educators have also come to the conclusion that teachers (pre-service, beginning and experienced teachers) hold implicit theories and have personal ways of

knowing about their subject, their students and their teaching roles and responsibilities, and that these implicit theories influence teaching practice (Ashton, 1990; Fang, 1996). In this chapter I take a similar the view in light of the fact that teaching is enacted by someone and that it matters who this teacher is as a person.

2.3.1 Teacher Beliefs

This section deals first with the meaning of the concept of *belief* in relationship to the teaching profession. A distinction between *beliefs* and *knowledge* will be illustrated through this definition. Next, is an attempt to highlight on three types of beliefs: 1) Teaching beliefs 2) Subject-specific beliefs 3) Personal religious beliefs.

2.3.1.1 Teacher beliefs: a definition

While the construct of ‘belief’ has been among the most popularly studied constructs in education in the past three decades, it is also one of the most difficult to define since a belief ‘does not lend itself to empirical investigations’ (Pajares, 1992, p. 308). Pajares (1992) called belief a ‘messy construct’ due to definitional problems, poor conceptualization and multiple understandings of its structure. It is not surprising, then, that many researchers have attempted to define the construct ‘beliefs’ in light of the context of their own research objectives and agendas. For instance, Brown and Cooney (1982) define beliefs as dispositions to actions and major determinants of behaviour – although the dispositions are time and context specific. Janesick (1977), Goodman (1988), and Tabachnick and Zieghner (1984), who opt for using the term *teacher perspectives*, define this construct as a set of reflective socially derived interpretations of experience that teachers hold about their work in terms of the goals they set, the purpose behind their

actions, the conceptions of children and curriculum in which they hold. Likewise, Porter and Freeman (1986) define educational beliefs as orientations to teaching that arise from personal experience and that are concerned primarily with the teachers' views on the role of schooling in society, their roles as teachers and their pedagogical approaches. Beliefs have been also described as filters through which all new information must pass and through which new experiences are interpreted (Kagan, 1992)

Other researchers have attempted to generate a definition of beliefs through offering features that distinguish this construct from knowledge (see Ableson, 1979; Nespor, 1987; Rockeach, 1968; Nisbet & Ross, 1980; Lewis, 1990). For example, Nespor (1987), drawing from Abelson (1979) identifies four features that characterize beliefs: existential presumptions, alternativity, affective and evaluative loading and episodic structure. Existential presumptions, as Nespor suggests, represent beliefs that are concerned with the existence or nonexistence of entities, such as beliefs regarding the existence of God, ESP, witches and so on. For instance, some teachers believe strongly in the notion of individual maturity or intelligence represented in the IQ scale, and therefore they consider such characteristics to be 'things beyond their control' (Nespor, 1987, p. 18). In relation to my study, I find that this feature is of paramount importance, particularly since my study is in the area of Islamic Studies, in which it is commonplace for teachers to hold ingrained beliefs with intangible meanings, *a priori*, about entities like fate, God, the meaning of life and the nature of Islamic knowledge and to consider these beliefs to represent 'indisputable truths' about things that lie beyond their control. Theoretically, the Islamic interpretation of knowledge (*Ilm*) acknowledges the presence of two types of knowledge: knowledge that *serves* people (secular knowledge) and knowledge that is *served by* people (revealed knowledge). The knowledge that serves people is that which improves the human condition, including all worldly sciences. The knowledge that is

served by people is that which helps the Muslim attain a stronger spiritual bond with God – i.e., revelation (Boyle, 2006).

Alternativity– as suggested by Abelson (1979) and elaborated by Nespor (1987) – focuses on the beliefs that teachers convey about their desire to create alternative worlds in their classroom. Nespor’s (1979) study illustrates how teachers envision an alternative teaching reality that they try tirelessly to exemplify in their classrooms. These alternative realities are often parallel to the teachers’ beliefs about teaching. Nespor (1979) further explains that even though some teachers in his study never achieve this ideal, the reverie of an alternative reality functions as a means for hope and shapes the teacher’s goals and tasks. The third feature is that belief – as a construct – relies heavily on *evaluative and affective* components. In the teaching domain, teachers typically evaluate concepts as ‘good’ or ‘bad’; these good and bad entities – or polarities – are surrounded by motivational and affective forces that stem from the teachers’ experiences and hence represent beliefs. The ‘good’ and ‘bad’ entities are crucial to this study for theoretical reasons, as they complement the epistemological nature of Islamic education, which – in contrast to certain Western perspectives, notably post-structuralism – deems that the knowledge that is of most worth, ‘good’ knowledge, is that which leads to some form of truth, wisdom and spirituality (Wan Daud, 1998). The fourth feature, known as *episodic structures*, asserts that beliefs are organized around personal experiences and often stem from images that teachers have about themselves as students. Both pre-service and in-service teachers bring with them personal beliefs in the form of images about good teaching from their memories as students (Dart, Bouton- Lewis, Brownlee & McCrindle, 1998; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992) Therefore, beliefs become notably difficult to change because they attain their subjective power from these episodic images (Clark, 1988; Chong, Wong & Lang, 2005; Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Kagan, 1992; Marso & Pigge,

1989, Mertz & McNeely, 1991; Simmons et al., 1999).

2.3.1.2 Teaching beliefs

There is a substantial body of research on the orientations and perspectives of teachers and student teachers and their subjective theories and beliefs about teaching (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). The literature on *teaching beliefs* generally correlates to two agendas: First, is the literature which deals with investigating pre-service teacher beliefs (see Mertz & Mcneely, 1991; Gerges, 2001), second the literature which addresses the relationship between belief and practice and how these influence student outcomes (see Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Stipek & Byler, 1997; Simmons et al., 1999).

Regarding the first research agenda on pre-service teacher beliefs, scholars in the field seem to agree on a relationship between teachers' beliefs and their past experiences (Calderhead, 1996). Sigel's (1985) definition, for example, refers to beliefs as *mental constructs of experience*. Research in this area suggests that pre-service teachers' *informal experiences* have a stronger influence on their teaching than *formal* ones. Zeichner (1980) referred to such informal and formal experiences as 'socialisation influences' and argued that teachers' experiences of having been taught at school had a stronger influence on them than their formal university training. This implies that even before they have chosen a career, pre-service teaching candidates' early experiences of teaching and interactions with teaching professionals have already shaped their views on teaching. Richardson (2003) identified three major sources of teachers' beliefs: personal experience, experience with schooling and instruction and experience with formal knowledge, including school subjects and pedagogical knowledge. He emphasized, however, that experience with

schooling and instruction was the most influential factor on teachers' beliefs since they had been students in formal schools themselves for many years. In addition, informal experiences in everyday life also shaped the teachers' teaching in various ways and to various degrees, either by refining and adjusting teaching or by changing their beliefs and knowledge altogether (Mansour, 2008). According to Kagan (1992), as teachers' experiences of the classroom and teaching grow over time, a 'highly personalized pedagogy' or belief system begins to take shape in their teaching. Thus, upon entering their teacher preparation program, preserve teachers already hold a set of pedagogical beliefs and certain views about the teaching profession (Whittebeck, 2000). For instance, Richards & Killen (1994) found that many pre-service teachers enter their programmes with high confidence in their ability to perform well as teachers. Other beliefs include perceptions of what good teaching looks like and what it takes to be an effective teacher. Joram & Gabriel (1998) report that maintaining student interest and control are seen as signs of good teaching. Others found that motivating students and being warm are seen as characteristics of good teachers (Collins Selinger & Prat, 2003; Holt-reynolds, 1992) and that a *teaching personality* is sometimes more important than cognitive and pedagogical skills and subject matter knowledge (Whittebeck, 2000).

Another discrete research agenda has emerged around the relationship between *belief* and *practice*. Research that has contributed to our understanding of this relationship has in recent years led to mixed results, with some studies supporting a consistency thesis between beliefs and practice – particularly studies in the area of PRB mentioned below – while others support an inconsistency thesis between beliefs and practice (Fang, 1996). Beliefs, of course, are not observable directly. In studies that address the relationship between beliefs and practice, it is assumed that classroom practice is expressive of beliefs. Tabachnik and Zeichner (1986) illustrate this relationship by offering an analogy in which

classroom practice is seen as a way of thinking about teaching in the same way that an artist thinks with his or her hands. A substantial number of studies support the notion that teachers possess theoretical beliefs that shape the nature of their instruction (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Wubbles, 1992). Taken together, this body of research supports the claim that teachers' thinking about their roles and beliefs influences their pedagogy.

Nonetheless, other research has supported an inconsistency thesis between beliefs and practice (Fang, 1996). The inconsistency thesis has pointed to the complexities of classroom life and the external and internal 'stressors' create constraints on teachers' ability to align their practice with their beliefs (Borg, 1990; Borg, Riding & Falzon, 1991; Maxion, 1996). This strand of the research suggests that contextual factors have a powerful influence on teaching beliefs (Kelly & Berthelsen, 1995). More specifically, research suggests that instructional decision making is influenced by factors such as the dictates or predilections of administrators and/or mentoring teachers, district evaluations, grouping policies (Sapon-Shevin, 1990), school climate and working conditions (Maxion, 1996) and time (Golez, 2004). The culture of a school, moreover, encompasses norms and values that are to some degree shared by the participants involved, which leads to a specific way of working (Nias, 1989a). It is in this context that Lampert (1985), in her study of teacher beliefs, portrayed the teacher as a 'dilemma manager', one who 'builds a working identity that is constructively ambiguous' (p. 190). Because teachers are asked to deal with contradictory choices in their workplace – such as promoting both equality and excellence and developing children's interests while covering a prescribed curriculum – they develop coping strategies to combat these pedagogical dilemmas. The result, according to Lampert and others, is an *identity crisis*, one that results in an inconsistency between deeply held teaching beliefs and classroom behavior.

While most of the studies on the relationship between beliefs and practice seem to

focus on whether they are consistent or not at a particular point in space and time, Tabachnik and Zeichner (1986) offered an examination of the consistency and contradictions in teacher beliefs that drew on a two-year longitudinal study of two beginning teachers in the United States. Interestingly, they found that beliefs and classroom practice moved toward consistency overtime, even when they were initially contradictory. Specifically, the authors found that one teacher sought to change her behaviors to bring them more closely in line with her beliefs, while the other teacher changed her espoused beliefs over time to be more expressive of her behaviors. Both teachers reduced the inconsistencies between their beliefs and practice, yet they did so using different strategies. This was partly a result of their different characteristics, identities and commitment to their profession, but it was also a function of differing school climates, which played a major role in allowing or deterring the teachers from putting their teaching beliefs into practice. As the authors state, ‘we discovered that in both cases the move to great consistency between belief and behavior was the result of a negotiated interactive process between individuals and organizational constraints and encouragements’ (p. 175).

2.3.1.3 Subject specific beliefs

In recent years, a substantial amount of research has been carried out that enquires into how teachers conceptualize their subject matter and how this relates to the way in which they experience their teaching. This particular area of the research lies at the intersection between knowledge and beliefs. While some researchers refer to this area as *content-specific beliefs* (Shelvson & Stern, 1981), others opt for placing it under the knowledge domain and refer to this area as *subject-matter conceptions* or teachers

knowledge *about* the subject (Grossman, Wilson & Shulman, 1989). An emerging line of research suggests that secondary school teachers belong to distinctive subject subcultures; these subcultures are characterized by differing beliefs, norms and practices (Grossman & Stodolsky 1995a; 1995b). Bullough (2001) argues that an analysis of the process of teaching shows that there is a special knowledge in each subject that belongs to instruction. Given the prevalent perception of IS as a holy subject in my research context, an investigation into the role of subject matter in teaching is highly relevant. Indeed, I take the view that one cannot understand teaching without understanding and/or taking into account how the nature of the subject itself and the teachers understanding of it and of its structures influence teaching (Ball & Bowe, 1992; Ball & Goodson, 1984; Ball & Lacey, 1984; Grossman, 1993; Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995a, 1995b).

Noteworthy here is the work of Grossman and Stodolsky (1995b), who took a comparative approach to the study of subject influence on teaching and who confirmed the existence of specific subject *subcultures*. Her work, in addition to being focused on PCK, stressed the importance of *subject matter knowledge* – both substantive and syntactic – in the understanding of teaching. Grossman argued that the nature of the parent discipline itself and its features as a school subject – in addition to teachers’ beliefs and orientations toward the subject matter – are an indispensable context for understanding teaching. She notes that ‘the parent disciplines from which many school subjects derive may exert an important, if often invisible, influence on secondary school curriculum and instruction’ (p. 6). For example, some parent disciplines form strong borders around their subject matter, while other disciplines blur the boundaries among subjects. Subjects such as English or social studies, for example, include a number of diverse disciplinary areas, resulting in a broader curricular scope with relatively less coherence than subjects such as math or chemistry (ibid.). Islamic Studies, for instance, can be grouped under disciplines with

broader scopes since it involves not only theological understanding but also moral, social, mathematical and sometimes scientific knowledge as well. The features of the parent discipline and school subject thus affect secondary school teachers, particularly because they receive a significant portion of their education within the discipline that they will later teach (ibid.). When they transition from graduate education to teaching, they also tend to be confined within their subject departments, which represent distinctive subject subcultures, values and norms (Ball & Lacey, 1984; Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995a; Little, 1993; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Siskin, 1991, 1994). For example, research has shown uniformity in course structures and a more sequential approach across high school departments of mathematics and has suggested that district curriculum guides and testing programs had greater influence on determining their course content than was found to be the case for social studies and English departments (Archbald & Porter, 1994; Paule, 1986; Protherough & Atkinson, 1992). These studies support the notion that distinct subject subcultures exist in high schools, which in turn influences teaching, and that curriculum coverage is more sequential in defined subjects and less sequential in subjects with a broader curricular scope.

Although subject matter teaching has been the focus of much secondary school-based research, few studies have shown the significance of subject matter in elementary teaching. In a study of particular relevance, Drake, Spillane & Hufferd-Ackles (2001) combined the study of *identity* and *subject matter*. They examined elementary teachers' identities through stories of teaching mathematics and of teaching literacy. The authors attempted to investigate both subject matter contexts through teacher stories. Interestingly, they found that teachers told distinct stories about mathematics and literacy, and they viewed the two as clearly separate contexts for teaching. However, the relationship between these contexts is complex and may change over time. The teachers in their study

also reported common themes in their literacy stories that were set in school and at home and referred repeatedly to their own early experiences with literacy at home. By contrast, the same teachers differed in their mathematics teaching stories and few of the teachers mentioned any setting other than the formal classroom in this regard.

Teachers' beliefs about the nature the subjects they teach constitute a critical element in their subject matter knowledge (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995a, 1995b). For example, Brickhouse (1990) found that teachers' beliefs about science not only influenced explicit lessons about the nature of science but also shaped an implicit curriculum concerning the nature of scientific knowledge. Grossman & Stodolsky (1995a), using survey responses, compared the conceptions of subject matter (defined, static and sequential) and their influence on teachers' curricular activities (coordination, coverage, consensus on content, standardization, course rotation etc.) across five subjects: English, social studies, science, math, and foreign languages. Grossman found that teachers differed in their perceptions of their subjects as defined, sequential or static. In turn, certain curricular activities seemed to differ depending on subject features. For example, in sequential subjects, teachers reported more coordination with colleagues and more pressure for coverage of content than in less sequential subjects. In the same vein, Lederman, Gess-Newsome and Latz (1994) investigated science teachers' subject matter and pedagogy knowledge structures as they proceeded through a teacher education program. They found that knowledge structures were highly susceptible to change as a consequence of the experience of teaching. The authors also found that although pedagogical knowledge exerted the most influence on teaching, the complexity of one's subject matter knowledge appeared to be a critical factor in determining whether the structure directly influenced classroom practice.

In this section, I have sought to explain briefly the research enterprise that highlights the importance of the subject matter as a context for understanding teaching. There are a

variety of factors related to *subject matter* that create different opportunities, constraints and needs for school teachers of various subjects, in particular for secondary school teachers. While the factors are many, the following were noted here: the nature of the discipline and school subject, the policy environment related to curriculum and assessment and the schools and departments to which teacher belong.

2.3.1.4 Personal Religious Beliefs (PRB)

Beliefs substructures, such as educational and teaching beliefs need to be understood in terms of their connections to more central belief systems *i.e. values, religious beliefs* (Rokeach, 1968; Lortie, 1975; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). A growing body of research also suggests that teachers' beliefs should be studied within a framework that recognizes the influence of culture (Barnes, 1973; Hamilton & Richardson, 1995; Olson, 1988). Educational beliefs are not context-free and therefore contextual factors must be taken into account when studying teacher practice (Fang, 1996; Pajares, 1992). Pajares notes in this regard that studying teacher beliefs in isolation from other contextual belief systems is 'ill-advised and unproductive' (p. 326).

Within the socially-constituted nature of culture, the personal religious beliefs (hereafter PRB) of individuals are likely to play an integral role in producing, filtering, prioritizing, interpreting and displaying information (Fysh & Lucas, 1998). Particularly where Islam is concerned, religion is a major element of the culture; thus, religious influences on the lives of contemporary IS teachers should be taken into account when forming insights into their teaching experiences, and their related teaching beliefs and practices. Studies on PRB and their influence on teaching have been mostly carried out in Western societies, with a few studies completed within Islamic cultures (see Mansour,

2008, 2009). The influence and role of PRB on teaching has been widely addressed in the context of science teaching and religion, particularly with regard to teaching about controversial topics such as evolution, cloning, abortion and genetic engineering. These controversial issues pose problems for many science teachers due to the potential conflict between the implications of these scientific concepts and the teachers' and/or others' religious affiliations and tenets. While this study is not about science teaching, the role and influence of PRB is most salient in this area of study, and hence an investigation into the concept of PRB in this regard is relevant to this study.

The majority of previous research has focused on the impact of PRB in tertiary level education on the acceptance or rejection of the concepts underpinning the teaching of science (Ayala 2000; Kukari, 2004). Fysh and Lucas (1998) studied the beliefs held by students, clergy and teachers in a Lutheran secondary school concerning the relationship between science and religion and found that specific religio-scientific frameworks could be linked to distinct differences in approach to the teaching of religious education. Mansour (2008) reported on a study that explores Egyptian science teachers' views on religion and science within the context of Islam. His study revealed that teachers' pedagogical beliefs regarding their roles, student's roles, teaching methods and the aims of science teaching were all strongly shaped by the teachers' PRB – particularly the ways through which these teachers understood the Qur'anic/Islamic attitude toward science and knowledge. Mansour (2008) notes the following: 'A teacher with religious beliefs or religious schemas is more likely to force a religious interpretation on experience than a teacher without such personal religious beliefs' (p. 37). Orion, Dayan and Dodick (2010) reported on a similar study of problems that religious Jewish science teachers in Israeli high schools had in coping with science subjects that conflicted with their religious beliefs. Although not as strongly as Mansour (2008, 2009), these authors also found that teachers

showed a preference towards *philosophical approaches* to teaching science that could help them to better integrate the domains of science and religion. These studies support the view that instead of changing their beliefs, teachers and student teachers tend to find comfort in and adapt aspects of their teaching to the beliefs that they formed early in their lives (Kagan, 1992).

2.3.2 Teacher Knowledge

Not all researchers agree that beliefs offer greater insight into teaching behavior than knowledge (Pajares, 1992). For example, Roehler, Duffy, Herrmman, Conley and Johnson (1988) argue that knowledge must take priority over affect, in the form of beliefs. According to them, knowledge structures focus on the cognitive dimensions of teaching and therefore get at the heart of the thought involved in practice. This section therefore addresses research that sought to understand teaching from a teachers' knowledge perspective and to address the question raised by Fenstermacher (1994) 'what teachers *know*' as a result of their experience. As explained earlier in the chapter, I begin by looking at studies that sought to understand *planning and decision making* before teaching, then look at studies that addressed interactive teaching through focusing on the construct of *personal practical knowledge*, I then address the pedagogical content knowledge or what teachers know about subject matter and how they represent it to students (Carter, 1990).

2.3.2.1 Pre-active planning

Teacher planning and decision making studies are generally framed in cognitive psychological models and/or within the information processing tradition. That is, they tend

to examine ‘operations inside the minds of the teacher’ (Carter, 1990, p. 297). Planning can be defined as a set of psychological processes in which teachers visualize the future (Clark & Peterson, 1986) – or simply according to the things that teachers do when they say they are planning. The latter definition is primarily used in phenomenological and descriptive studies (van Manen, 1991a). As Clark and Peterson (1986) point out, the types of planning include daily, weekly, long range, short range, termly, yearly curricular and unit planning. These types of planning are not considered for the purpose of this review; rather, I focus on planning that takes place prior to the actual lesson. Based on a recent literature review on teacher planning, McCutcheon and Milner (2002) note that teachers plan *actively*, but neither by writing objectives or detailed lesson plans. According to these authors, teachers *imagine* themselves acting out the plan. Teachers think of the details of the classroom situation, what they will ask, where they will stand and how they will organize students. Here again, we find that the notion of images of teaching offered by Elbaz (1983) rings true for the pre-active planning phase. In addition, research on planning suggests that teachers anticipate problems and/or pedagogical challenges that might interrupt the flow of their lessons, and they try to anticipate solutions for them (van Manen, 1991a). Van Manen (1991a), like McCutcheon and Milner (2002), calls this process ‘anticipatory reflection’ (p. 102). He explains that teachers focus on two things during anticipatory reflection: a) task oriented reflection and b) dealing with challenging pedagogical situations.

A number of syntheses of the research literature on teachers’ planning processes have noted that teachers’ planning is *situated* (Clark & Dunn 1991), *contextually sensitive* (Sardo-Brown 1990) and *routinized* and *activity-based* (Yinger 1979). Despite the ubiquity of the linear model of planning in many teacher education programmes (John, 2006), recent research on planning strongly promotes a ‘naturalistic’ or ‘organic’ model of

teacher planning based on the work of Stenhouse (1975) and Egan (1992, 1997). The complexity and the endemic uncertainty of the classroom means that researchers need to consider more naturally-emerging planning structures. John (2006) explains that *naturalistic planning* starts with activities rather than objectives. As he notes, ‘In this way, lesson plans are perceived to be responsive to children’s needs and the teacher can pursue goals that are emergent rather than pre-determined’ (p. 488).

Other research that has contributed to our understanding of planning includes studies that contrast expert and novice planning (Carter, 1990). Most importantly, these studies have suggested three key areas of difference. First, whereas experienced teachers engage in long-range planning, novice planning is more short-term. Second, novices describe their planning as time-consuming and detailed, whereas experts seem to have a general plan for their lessons and to reserve detailed decision-making for the lessons themselves. Third, novices have difficulty making predictions about student responses, while experts have rich experiences of teaching that allow them to predict the kinds of knowledge and preconceptions that students will bring to the classroom (John, 2006).

Most recently, in the area of planning, personality factors, learning styles and teacher identity have been found to influence teacher-planning approaches. Hence, the emphasis has shifted from expert-novice analysis to a more individualized approach to understanding planning (Carter, 1990; John, 2006). Whatever approach is taken, the evidence of research points to the fact that planning activities are highly personal, idiosyncratic and embedded in the subject and classroom context. Although much of the research has examined areas of planning and instruction separately, and this study is not about teacher planning *per se*, pre-active planning is considered holistically herein as part of the teaching process. This approach was determined after having found that teachers

naturally discussed their pre-active planning activities when asked about their teaching in the classroom (see chapter 6).

2.3.2.2 Practical Knowledge (PK)

Teachers' practical knowledge has been an object of study for several years (Calderhead, 1996; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Fenstermacher, 1994). Research on PK is primarily driven by the assumption that teachers know a great deal as a result of their training and experience (Fenstermacher, 1994) and that this type of knowledge is particularly important to understand as it provides student teachers with a realistically and complex picture of the cognitive aspects of teaching (Clark & Lampert, 1986). PK refers broadly to 'knowledge teachers have of classroom situations and practical dilemma's they face in carrying out purposeful action in these settings' (Carter, 1990, p. 299). In general, researchers in this area argue that teachers operate through a practical rationality that differs fundamentally from technical rationality (Schön, 1983), although the latter has long dominated the view of professional action in educational research. Technical rationality assumes that professionals apply objective ways of knowing to solving problems, while teachers as professionals make complicated decisions as they engage in a form of practical thinking (Carter, 1990). Technical rationality, according to proponents of PK, ignores the personal and practical intention of the teacher. The concept of PK has been important in the area of understanding teaching because it has popularized the notion that professional practice of a high intellectual quality need not depend on the application of theory or on logical thinking, but rather can be sustained on the basis of memories and images of previously experienced situations and through a form of interactive thinking that guides the action of teaching (Brown & McIntyre, 1993). Two major contributors to this category

of research are those of Clandinin and Connelly (1985, 1987, 1990) and Elbaz (1983).

Their work will be highlighted briefly in the following paragraphs.

Among the earliest contributors on the issue of practical knowledge, Clandinin and Connelly refer to this critical element in their work as *personal practical knowledge*. Also, as strong promoters of the narrative approach, the authors use narrative methods as a means to investigate the teachers' *personal practical knowledge*. They argue that teachers' talk about their professional lives and practice is often framed in the narrative form as they use metaphors, images and anecdotes to share accounts of their classroom experiences.

Clandinin (1992) describes this form of knowledge as follows:

We see personal practical knowledge as in the person's past experience, in the person's present mind and body and in the person's future plans and actions. It is knowledge that reflects the individual's prior knowledge and acknowledges the contextual nature of that teacher's knowledge. It is a kind of knowledge carved out of, and shaped by, situations; knowledge that is constructed and reconstructed as we live out our stories and retell and relive them through processes of reflection. (p. 125)

Based on elaborate longitudinal case studies of teachers, Clandinin and Connelly (1985, 1987, 1990) argue that teaching is not obtained from learning an objective set of skills but from a narrative construction of the teachers' experience of practical situations that yields a form of personal practical knowledge. Their work rests on the importance of idiosyncratic forms of expressions to understanding teaching. The result of such studies is not a body of codified knowledge about teaching – in fact, Clandinin and Connelly reject such a goal – but a series of situation-grounded insights (Carter, 1990) that bring into focus the importance of 'implicit theories' and the 'tacit knowledge' of teaching that are characterized as the personal values and beliefs that guide action.

Other research inspired largely by the work of Clandinin and Connelly has included that of Elbaz (1983). Elbaz followed a teacher named Sara for two years, not in an attempt to understand whether her teaching was instructionally effective but to grasp

Sara's own understanding of her working world. The aim of this research was to offer a conceptualization of the kind of knowledge that teachers hold and use, which Elbaz called 'practical knowledge'. Elbaz offered five content areas of practical knowledge: knowledge of self, milieu, subject matter, curriculum development and instruction. In Elbaz's work, Sara's self as *person* comes across prominently in the way in which she understands her work as teacher. To emphasize the personal nature of teaching, then, is also to emphasize notions of *identity* and *self* (see section 2.3.3). More recently, Keltchermans (2009), in his biographical research on elementary and secondary school teachers in Belgium, found that teachers develop a personal interpretive framework – 'a set of cognitions [or] mental repetitions that operate as a lens through which teachers look at their job' (p. 260). Kelchtermans identified five components that make up teachers' self-understanding: 1) *self-image* (which refers to how teachers typify themselves as teachers; 2) *self-esteem* (which refers to perception of job performance); 3) *job motivation* (which refers to motives or drives that make people choose to become a teacher, stay in teaching or give it up); 4) *task perception* (which encompasses deeply held beliefs about what constitutes good education, as well as one's moral duties); and 5) *future perspective* (which refers to how they see themselves as teachers in the future. Keltchermans (2009) calls this a *subjective educational theory*, with respect to which he refers specifically to

...the personal system of knowledge and beliefs about education that teachers use when performing their job. It thus encompasses their professional know how, the basis on which teachers ground their decisions for actions. Knowledge refers to more or less formal insights and understandings, as derived from teacher education or in-service training, professional reading, etc. Beliefs refer to more person-based, idiosyncratic convictions, built up through different career experiences. (p. 260)

Although there are often substantial differences among research programs that have focused on PK, they have generally followed a similar methodology of intensive case study analysis and stayed close to classroom practice and action. Others have also used

“narratives,” or “stories,” (e.g., Kubler LaBoskey, 1999) to access PK. According to Beattie (1996), *narratives* and *images* activated by practical teaching situations are crucial to understanding PK because it is difficult to communicate this way of knowing through the formal, propositional language traditionally used to report research findings. In summary, researchers have described teachers’ practical knowledge in the form of images and metaphors and have concurred that ‘implicit theories’ of teaching explain a great deal about the teachers’ work.

2.3.2.3 Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)

In 1986, Lee Shulman introduced a new perspective on understanding teacher knowledge. He argued that the teachers’ understanding and orientations toward their subject matter content and the relationship between such understanding and pedagogical instruction could be the ‘missing paradigm’ or the neglected domain in educational research at the time (Shulman, 1986; Fenstermacher, 1994). Shulman proposed three constructs for understanding teacher knowledge: 1) subject matter knowledge; 2) curricular knowledge; and 3) pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986). *Subject matter knowledge* includes both substantive and syntactic structures. The former represents the variety of ways in which the basic concepts of the discipline are organized and the latter represents the grammar of the discipline, how truth/falsehood is established under a given subject. *Curricular knowledge* refers to knowledge of alternative curricular material for a given topic or subject within a grade level (Shulman, 1986; Fang, 1996). Among these, *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK), or ‘subject knowledge for teaching’, has prompted considerable interest in educational research, and much work has sprung from this concept. The type of construct/model introduced by Shulman has more normative

dimensions than, for instance, narrative research on teacher identity. Thus, unlike the concept of *personal practical knowledge* introduced by Clandinin and Connelly (1985, 1987, 1990) and Elbaz (1983), which is descriptive in nature, *pedagogical content knowledge*, according to Fenstermacher (1994), is ‘rooted in a conception of what teachers should know and be able to do, with a concern for what categories and types of knowledge are required to achieve this state of competence’ (p. 14). Fenstermacher (1994), in his review of the teacher knowledge literature, explains that PCK addresses the question, ‘What knowledge is essential for teaching?’ while personal practical knowledge answers the question ‘What do teachers know?’. Regardless of future developments of this construct, PCK is important in the evolving understanding of teaching in that it promoted renewed vigor in the consideration of *subject-specific teaching areas*. Hence, research shifted from a focus on generalizations and/or theories about teaching that transcend subject matter to recognition of subject matter as a pivotal context for teaching, particularly for secondary school teachers (Grossman & Stodolsky 1995b; Shulman, 1986; Siskin, 1994; Stodolsky, 1988, 1993).

van Driel, Verloop and Vos (1998) explain that the concept of PCK refers to ‘teachers’ interpretations and transformations of subject-matter knowledge in the context of facilitating student learning’ (p. 673). PCK, then, incorporates an understanding of students’ common learning difficulties and preconceptions.

Elaborating on Shulman’s work, other scholars have extended the concept of PCK while generally agreeing on the two major components: transformation of subject matter knowledge and the understanding content related learning difficulties faced by students (see Cochran, et al., 1993; Grossman, 1990; Marks, 1990). PCK has also been studied extensively in the context of student teacher preparation in order to facilitate the

development of prospective teachers' PCK and to prevent new teachers from putting themselves in the position of reinventing the wheel (van Driel, Verloop & Vos, 1998)

The preceding discussion was not meant to be exhaustive since this study does attempt to investigate PCK of IS teachers *per se*. Nonetheless, the notion of PCK is important to mention herein due to the subject matter factor involved. An investigation into the IS teachers' teaching practice is will incorporate in one way or another aspects of the ways they transform their subject matter knowledge into a 'teachable knowledge' to their students in that particular context.

2.3.3 Teacher Identity

Although identity itself is still a poorly defined concept, the past decade has seen a steady rise in education research that employs identity as an analytic lens from which to understand teachers and their teaching (Clarke, 2010; Gee, 2000; Kompf, Bond, Dworet, & Boak, 1996; Meijer, 2011). Varghese, Morgan, Johnson and Johnson (2005) argue that 'in order to understand teaching and learning we need to understand teachers: the professional, cultural, political and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them' (p. 22). Identity is a particularly useful conceptual tool in investigating the relationship between teachers' sense of self and teaching in a rapidly changing educational and social environment (Samuel & Stephans, 2000). This section concentrates on teachers' knowledge of their professional identity, i.e., how they perceive themselves as teachers and on the factors that contribute to these perceptions. Beijard, Verloop, and Vermunt (2000) argue that teachers' perceptions of their own professional identity influence factors such as their self-efficacy, professional development, readiness to cope with educational change and willingness to implement innovations in their teaching

practice. From this perspective, I agree with the many researchers who claim that teachers' perceptions of their professional identity are an indispensable resource in attempting to understand how teachers think about their teaching. In what follows, I begin by illustrating the various definitions of and uses for the construct of *identity* in the educational research literature. Next, I discuss selected theoretical and empirical studies on teacher identity that represent some of the various perspectives in this regard. These studies are presented according to two thematic categories: 1) teacher identities: personal and professional; and 2) teacher identity and *otherization*. In addition, I draw attention to certain empirical studies of identity that are particularly relevant to the context of my study, such as works that have looked at religious education and teacher identities or that have been carried out in a Muslim and/or Middle Eastern context.

2.3.3.1 Teacher Identity: A Definition

In the literature on teaching and teacher education, the concepts of *identity* and *self* are typically used interchangeably (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006). Earlier writings on the *self* tended to view it as a singular, defined and stable essence (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). These initial views on the self were based on the premise that an individual was able to create a defining and subjective system of concepts that remained constant over time and that was linked closely to his or her social interactions (Cooley, 1902; Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Mead, 1934). More recently, however, researchers have taken the view that a person has multiple 'selves' and that these selves continue to undergo changes. Ball (1972) distinguished between *situated* and *substantive* identities. The former is a self that differs according to different situations and roles, while the latter represents the core perceptions and values of the self that are more constant and

thus difficult to change. From the perspective of multiple selves, the identity of a teacher can refer to ‘who or what someone is, the various meanings someone can attach to oneself or the meaning attributed to oneself by others’ (Beijaard, 1995, p. 282). Such an identity is also a construct that evolves over career stages (Ball & Goodson, 1984; Huberman, Grounauer, & Marti, 1993; Sikes, Measor, & Woods, 1985) and that can be shaped by the context in which one works – e.g., school environment and/or cultural and political contexts (Datnow et al., 2002; Sachs, 2000). Moreover, it is based both on experience in practice and on teachers’ personal backgrounds (Tickle, 2000).

In their *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*, Rogers and Scott (2008) summarize the characteristics of teacher identity in the literature as follows: 1) identity of the teacher is dependent upon and formed through multiple contexts; 2) teacher identity is formed in relationship with others and involves emotions; 3) teacher identity is shifting, unstable and multiple; and 4) teacher identity involves reconstruction of meaning through time and stories. What these meanings have in common is that identity is never a fixed attribute of a person; rather, it is relational and inter-subjective, and it can be characterized as an on-going process of interpreting oneself and one’s role in a given context (Beijard et al., 2004). Clarke (2010) explains that identity is a ‘work in progress, a project of personal formation through active participation in the living communities where practices and meanings are established’ (p. 146).

Identity as a conceptual tool has been used to investigate teacher knowledge (Aslup, 2006; Britzman, 1991, 1994; Clandinin and Connelly, 1999; Elbaz, 2002), to illustrate teacher ‘life-cycle’ research (e.g., Bloom, 1988) with an emphasis on how teacher develop their professional identity and to examine the relationship between teachers’ personal and professional lives (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Elbaz, 1983; Goodson, 1992; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Nias, 1989a). In other studies, the emphasis has

been placed on teachers' roles (see Goodson & Cole, 1994; Volkman & Aderson, 1998). Taken together, this literature demonstrates that knowledge of the self is a crucial element in the way in which teachers construe and construct the nature of their work (Kelchtermans & Vandenergh, 1994).

2.3.3.2 Teacher Identity: the personal and professional

Researchers who emphasize the personal dimension in teacher identity are particularly interested in how teachers' personal life experiences and/or their present roles interact with their professional lives (e.g., Elbaz, 1983; Goodson, 1992). Some argue that events and experiences in the personal lives of teachers are intimately linked to their professional roles (Acker, 1999; Ball & Goodson, 1985; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). Nias (1989a) described primary teachers' *selves* in the 1980s in England. Nias's main contribution lies in identifying how the personal and the professional interact in teachers' work. She argued that the former is crucial for understanding the latter. Nias observed the persistent self-referentialism of teachers in her study when attempting to make sense of their professional lives, concluding that teachers cannot but speak about themselves as persons. The majority of her teachers linked 'being a teacher' with 'being themselves', and, in reflecting on their personal commitments, connected role conceptions with ideologies. For example, teachers who saw themselves as devout religious believers noted that they had a desire to propagate deeply held religious ideals and often identified themselves with a belief in being 'called to teach'. Even the secular majority of teachers in Nias' study referred to social and humanitarian ideals that they subscribed to as individuals and described themselves as 'missionaries' who put the children before anything else. This perspective can again be linked to the moral dimension of teaching, and Forrester

(2005, p. 274) describes this phenomenon (caring) as ‘non- work’ in the teachers’ work, in that there is no economic advantage to caring about children or working toward one’s ideals. Nonetheless, the ethical, moral and humanistic dimension of teaching is a source of intrinsic motivation.

Of the other studies that I have surveyed in this area, Mead (2006) provided a more descriptive account of the experiences of African religious education trainees in England. The researcher used both interviews and observations to illustrate how the trainees’ perceptions of and value on education stemmed from their cultural and religious identities and affected their teaching styles. She illustrated how it was initially challenging for the trainees to teach a multi-faith syllabus that explored indigenous and other spiritualities given their strong Christian orientation to teaching. Mead claimed that the trainees were unable to engage in effective pedagogies given their Catholic, teacher-led backgrounds and their views on teacher identity. She explained that certain aspects of this teaching identity tended to be challenged by students and that the resulting instability in the classroom led to a change in the teaching orientations of the trainees and assisted them to become more comfortable with intercultural dialogue.

There are, then, unavoidable interrelationships between the professional and personal identities of the teacher, particularly since teaching requires significant personal investment. This genre of research follows a narrative, biographical and autobiographical tradition with a special focus on critical incidents and relevant others that are assumed or understood to shape the teachers’ work (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000). Huberman Grounauer and Marti (1993), for example, in a study of teacher tolerance, observed that teachers' tolerance toward their students increases when they have school age children themselves. This can be interpreted as an experience from private life that has a profound

influence on a teacher's professional life. Other examples in the literature include one's prior education experience as a student and seeing previous teachers as role models (Kagan, 1992). For example, Bruck (1978) described examples in which teachers did not wish to be authoritative in the classroom as a result of their own prior experiences as pupils.

Drawing on the work of Nias on elementary teachers, Sikes (1992) described three main influences on secondary school teachers' identities: 1) the subject they teach; 2) their relationship with their students; and 3) role conception. He argued that for secondary school teachers, the 'subject' that they teach has a strong influence on their perception of themselves as teachers, persons and professionals. Relationships with colleagues who teach the same subject and the status of the subject in the school are also of particular significance to their perceived identities. He also found that changes in the status of the subject in school have profound negative effects on teacher identity, this is particularly salient in his work with RE teachers. (see Sikes & Evrington, 2001). Second, fundamental to the development of teacher identity is their relationship with their students. Sikes found that teachers who have poor relationships with their students tend to see themselves as failing or inadequate teachers. Finally, teachers' role conceptions i.e. how teachers fashion a sense of self around the role of teacher (Bullough, 1992) within the institutions in which they work was fundamental to their identity development. Teachers' experiences of school and school culture enable or constrain the achievement of satisfaction commitment and motivation, which have profound effects on teacher identity (Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons, 2006). Like Sikes (1992), Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt (2000) found that most of the teachers in their study saw themselves as a combination of subject matter experts, didactical experts and pedagogical experts. However, both subject matter expertise and didactical expertise appeared to be most and equally present in the secondary

teachers' perceptions of their identities. Cooper and Olson (1996), Reynolds (1996) and Lasky (2005) also investigated the interrelations between the personal and professional in teacher identity. Their work, however, goes beyond that of Nias, Beijaard and Sikes through their emphasis on teachers' 'multiple selves'. They suggest that teacher identity is continually being shaped and reshaped through historical, cultural sociological and psychological influences. For example, Lasky (2005) identified two crucial influences on teacher identity: 1) early experiences of teaching; and 2) current school reform context. The importance of these works lies in their emphasis on the *tensions* that teachers experience between their personal world – e.g. knowledge of children – and the rational knowledge propagated in school cultures.

Research on teacher identity, then, would appear to suggest that although there are variations in teacher identities, there are also connecting notions that exist for all teachers. For primary teachers, research suggests that the personal and professional are closely connected, as they are a main sources of motivation, drive and commitment. For secondary teachers, the subject and its status are more closely related to identity. For both, external influences of policy, culture and personal experience (past and present) contribute to a constantly evolving identity (Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons, 2006). Much of the empirical research on teacher identity also suggests a 'plurality of roles' (Sachs, 2003; Stronach et al., 2002) in the work context, one that is characterized by a constant need to address tension and dilemmas of the job.

2.3.3.4 Teacher identity and 'otherization'

While the studies mentioned in the previous section concur on certain notions of teacher identity, they are limited by their lack of longitudinal, 'real time' data. This

limitation, however, is addressed in the work of Sikes and Everington (2001, 2003, and 2004) and of Clarke (2010). An examination of these longitudinal studies brings to the foreground the theme of ‘otherization’ or identifying one’s self as teacher by difference from the *other*. Teacher identity, as explained by Clarke (2010), relies on a chain of differences to be constituted as such: ‘who and what we are [emerges] in terms of who and what we are not’ (p.147). As strong promoters of the life history method in the study teacher identity, Sikes and Everington began their series of studies in 1997 with their entire RE PGCE cohort as their research sample. The study was carried out over a period of three years with the aim of investigating aspects of professional identity in RE pre-service teachers in England. In their first article, Sikes and Everington (2001) put forth two major claims: the first was that the RE teachers in the study tried consistently to distance themselves from the notion of ‘religious commitment’, identifying more strongly with the goals of RE in terms of building a multicultural and harmonious society. Even those who professed a religious commitment tried to distance themselves from the stereotypical image of the RE teacher by dressing casually and, in some cases, flamboyantly. The second theme that came across strongly in this study was that the RE teachers interviewed expressed a commitment to being *different*, to teaching the subject differently and perhaps even “better” than the method(s) by which they were taught as students.

In 2003 Sikes and Everington foregrounded the voices of female RE teachers and their struggle with what they called ‘desexualized identity.’ Being a female RE teacher in the United Kingdom simply meant that teachers had constantly to cope with being perceived by pupils and others as unattractive social personalities. The article illustrated ways in which women RE teachers used clothes, hairstyle and makeup as well as explicit reference to their social lives and values to challenge ascribed identities that had negative implications for their sense of self and pedagogy. Although the work of Sikes and

Everington provides a substantial contribution in the area of RE teacher identity, particularly in relation to their research participants' distancing themselves from negative images of teacher identity that they had construed from experience, the authors fall short on providing an explanation of how the aspects of identity that they chose to illustrate influenced the teachers' teaching styles and pedagogical practices in the classroom. The authors focused solely on particular aspects of identity – e.g., sexual identity, motivations, social role and expectations – without elucidating how these elements manifest in the classroom. This is probably due to Sikes and Everington's choice of the life history method for their series of studies, as a result of which a retrospective outlook obtained through interviews alone dominated their work.

As for research in the Arab and Muslim world, work on teacher identity is scarce. In fact, the terms and concepts on which this chapter focuses are somewhat foreign to the Arab and Muslim cultural contexts, as they derive from Western academic circles and endeavours. In the 2010 edition of the *World Yearbook of Education*, which was dedicated to education in the Arab world, one study by Clarke (2010) was presented that employed the concept of teacher identity in order to understand the world of pre-service teachers. This research is situated in a recently established English language teacher education programme in United Arab Emirates (UAE).⁹ The data were collected over a two-year period, with the first cohort being pre-service Emirati teachers who completed Bachelor's degrees in education that were specially designed for emirate women intending to teach English in UAE schools as part of an 'Emaratization' of a workforce that had been dominated by foreigners. The study illustrates how new Emirati English teachers had a particular tendency to describe their identities in terms constructed out of oppositions and

⁹ The UAE is a country similar to Saudi Arabia in many ways. First, it is a society that is rapidly changing due to country's recent development fueled by its oil revenues. Second, like Saudi Arabia, it has been described as 'schizophrenic' in its devotion to Arabic Islamic values alongside its desire to embrace modernity, economic growth and globalization (Findlow, 2005; Karmani, 2005).

through affirming their difference to the old generation of teachers, e.g. using terms like 'progressive' in contrast to 'traditional', 'student-centred' in contrast to 'teacher-centred'. According to Clarke (2010), pre-service teachers eagerly emphasized their 'otherization' and distinctiveness in the sense of being different from their old, government school teachers. He concluded that the community of practice that the UAE pre-service teachers established in this programme was characterized by a hegemonic 'progressive' teacher identity built on affirming difference from past practice (Clarke, 2010). What we learn from such studies is that teachers define themselves and their work not only in terms of their past and current identities and subjects but also in terms of the kind of teachers they hope to be (and not to be) in the changing political, social and personal circumstances of the postmodern world.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to illustrate the various ways in which educational research has attempted to understand teaching through highlighting on three major domains in the research: 1) teacher beliefs 2) teacher knowledge and 3) teacher identity. The central point of reference for this chapter, however, was the teachers, who they are as persons, what they believe as teachers, what kinds of knowledge they bring to the classroom and how this guides their practice. I have also tried to keep in mind the particularities of the context in which the present study was carried out. This chapter offered a de-contextualized review of the literature through its focus on what the literature offers about the ways in which teaching has been understood in the Western education literature. In the following chapter I offer a more contextualized review of the literature through a focus on IRE, its history and philosophy and a review of selected empirical research conducted in this area.

Chapter 3: Islamic Religious Education (IRE): A Review of the Literature

3.1. Introduction: Point of Departure

In assessing the literature on IRE, it should be borne in mind that IRE has to do with far more than pedagogy, as it relates also to broader issues of national politics, regional geopolitics, communal identity, perceptions of citizenship and relations of power (Zia, 2010). Additionally, debates on the role of IRE have become even more closely linked to policy issues since the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, as they are now broadly framed in the context of combating terrorism (see also Coulson, 2004; Hamzawy & Ottoway, 2006; Keiko & Abdelkhah, 2011). This is especially true in the case of *madrasa* education,¹⁰ which is widely perceived as characterized by a militant spirit (Hefner, 2009; Looney, 2003).

The point of departure of the present study is that ‘teaching’ and ‘teachers’ are, by and large, elements that are conspicuously absent from the literature on IRE. In fact, with the exception of Berglund (2010) and Heimbrock (2007), few studies have attempted to examine the *teaching* aspect of IRE. Rather, most have looked at the theoretical foundations of IRE or have examined Islamic pedagogy from the standpoint the institution of the *madrasa* in different Muslim countries and its implications with respect to national, global and identity politics in changing times – or have examined the textbooks used in IS

¹⁰ The Arabic word *madrasa* signifies general training and educational institutions, from elementary to tertiary. The identification of the *madrasa* today as an institution that is geared only toward teaching religious science applies to most south Asian countries. In Iran, as well as in Saudi Arabia and in many other Arab countries, a *madrasa* simply refers to a state school, while religious schools are known as *Kuttab* or *Maktab*.

rather than the use made of these and other materials by practitioners in the classroom. The few exceptions to the latter, moreover (e.g., Chagas, 2011; Botcher, 1993; Klambach, 2008; Mahmood, 2005), have focused on the teaching of IRE in informal settings such as mosques. Indeed, there is a general dearth of independent qualitative accounts of school life in the Arab region (Herrera & Torres, 2006). This is underrepresentation openly by Herrera and Torres (2006) when they note that ‘despite the centrality of formal education to Arab societies little is known empirically about the learning process, the cultural, political and social formation of individuals who pass through the education system, and the everyday life of schools’ (p.1). This is partly due to the challenges – particularly for non-Arab researchers – associated with gaining access to schools, which are considered part of the state security apparatus. As Herrera (2010) explain, ‘There are barriers to carrying out qualitative research in authoritarian regimes where control over information is regulated by the state’ (p.118), and this is particularly true where religious discourse is concerned in countries where this discourse is the medium that legitimizes political authority. To exacerbate the situation, local Universities and research centres which form the hubs of knowledge production in the Arab world function under authoritarian systems that heavily monitor knowledge production and therefore impede academic freedoms (Mazawi, 2005). This is also due to a culture of scholarship in the Arab world that favours and privileges theoretical and quantitative modes of research over qualitative ones (Herrera & Torres, 2006). Scholars and University professors derive prestige in their ability to engage in large-scale scientific research (ibid.). Such professional values will be clear in the coming sections of this chapter particularly where research from the Arab world is reviewed.

In the absence of substantial literature that related directly to the topic – or at least to the approach – of the present study, I decided instead to examine closely-connected

literature in a variety of related fields of knowledge, such as anthropology, theology, Islamic studies, women's studies and politics, in order to extract relevant insights that speak to the various aspects of my research. In this regard, too, I attempted to include as much literature as possible that derives from countries that bear religious and other similarities to Saudi Arabia. However, it must be noted that, within each Islamic country, IRE has been shaped by a multiplicity of forces that are unique to that nation, which include the structure of its education system, its history and its politics. Nonetheless, two positive factors helped to facilitate this review. First, regardless of the obvious diversity of traditions in the interpretation of Islam in various countries, most Muslims consider themselves, for a variety of reasons, to belong to a single *umma* – a term that designates the idea of a unified community in the Muslim world. According to Jonathan Berkey (2001), 'those [unifying] elements are various and diverse; they include...literary texts such as the Quran and the prophetic sayings, and practices such as prayer and preaching' (p. 8). Graham (1993) also describes this multifaceted cohesion in Islam succinctly:

It is a truism to say that there is no single entity called "Islam", only the various "Islams" of local contexts: to speak of Islamic society or civilization is to speak of myriad local or regional traditions of sharply differing forms and often rapidly changing historical circumstances. On the other hand, to speak of any particular Islamic society is also to speak of a shared tradition that is astonishingly recognizable across all of its regional divisions and historical eras. (p. 495)

Moreover, despite the fact that access to Saudi schools remains difficult for many researchers, Saudi Arabia has contributed since the 1980s to funding *Salafi Wahhabi*-inspired schools¹¹ throughout the Muslim world (Coulson, 2004; Hefner, 2009; Zaman,

¹¹ According to Coulson (2004) "The Saudis have built or subsidized Wahhabi schools in some 47 Muslim and non-Muslim nations around the world. These schools are among the most radical Islamist outposts in their host countries. As noted earlier, Saudi Arabia is thought to be the largest foreign source of funding for Pakistani madrasas"(p.10),

2002). Although their numbers may not grow in the near future, these institutions continue to exert an influence over many schools in South East Asian countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia; indeed, these Saudi-funded schools are likely to continue to influence Muslim educational circles [to a degree that is] disproportionate to their numbers in society (Hefner, 2009).

Thus, I began my vicarious secondary research – in the absence of detailed information regarding Saudi schools themselves – by examining studies that had looked at schools in countries where a form of Islam similar to that practiced in Saudi Arabia dominated the school system and the curricula therein, which included such countries as Pakistan and Iran (see Liervek, 2010). In addition, I reviewed literature on IRE in other Arab countries, such as Jordan, Egypt and Syria, which had historically influenced the form and shape of the Saudi Arabian religious curricula through (see section 1.5 in chapter 1). Thereafter, I examined literature from South East Asian countries that exhibit strong parallels to the development of IRE in the Middle East (Hefner, 2009).¹² Finally, I surveyed the growing body of literature about Muslim schools in Europe, an area that contributed useful insights about issues of teaching religion in a globalized and multicultural society.

All in all, the literature synthesized in this chapter is an amalgamation of historical, theoretical and contemporary research on IRE that offers findings both of specific and of general relevance to the present study. The main insights drawn from the literature will be presented under the following analytical themes: 1) the ‘ceaseless change’ that IRE has

¹² It should be noted, however, that, unlike Saudi Arabia, which does not separate secular education and IRE in the national education system, countries in South East Asia distinguish between secular and religious schooling. The secular system emerged from the Western tradition as introduced by the former colonial powers. The religious education system developed from the Islamic tradition of the thirteenth century. During the colonial era, the Islamic institutions were not supported by the colonial governments, and hence the system was isolated from the mainstream, contributing to the dichotomy between secular and religious education in most South East Asian countries (see Zakaria, 2003).

undergone and continues to undergo; 2) the fixation that is exhibited in most IRE studies on the textbook rather than on pedagogy, as well as the wide gap between the living narratives of students and teachers and the official ‘wish images’ represented by these textbooks; and 3) the extensive body of theoretical literature that describes IRE and its philosophical foundations, which is characterized by a general agreement on the aims of IRE, coupled with differences regarding pragmatic issues. After treating the literature according to these three themes, I conclude this chapter with a review of the few studies that have addressed the role and/or experience of IS teachers in formal and informal teaching settings. Although these studies are praxis-oriented, their focus is not primarily on ‘what teachers do and how they make sense of it’, but rather on how the interaction between teacher and student can be understood as a microcosm of the broader social and political context.

3.2 IRE: A Historical Overview of Significant Changes

In this section I explore some aspects of the historical evolution of IRE and trace in particular recent changes in its characteristics. I focus on the period from the early twentieth century to the present, during which time IRE has undergone major transformations in its form and shape that have reflected the waves of modernisation and nationalisation of Arab and Muslim states. In section 3.2.1 I begin, however, by assessing the social milieu in which IRE developed in its early days, i.e., prior to the nineteenth century. This historical background will help to highlight the scale of the changes now taking place in IRE. Thereafter, sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 will outline two important themes that changed the face of Muslim education from the late nineteenth century onwards. The

first is its transformation from an *informal* learning system to a *formal* schooling system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This transformation created a platform for the rise of a ‘functionalized’ Islam through the introduction of national mass public education and print media. The second theme is the more recent shift in the locus of religious authority, in that, with the emergence of print media and Internet Islam – through which the post-modern Muslim can find and choose religious guidance electronically (Eikleman & Anderson, 1997; 1999) – no single source holds the key to Islamic knowledge today. These aspects of nationalisation, modernisation and globalization have had repercussions on the development of IRE, as will be explained in the sections that follow.

3.2.1 IRE: Early Developments

Education in Islam dates back to the Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him), who’s first experience of divine revelation was a command by God to ‘Read! In the name of God who taught Man which he knew not’ (Quran,96:1). According to Tibawi (1979), ‘the message of the Quran insists on the high value of learning and associates it with wisdom; and men of learning are placed in a position second only to Prophets’ (p.24). Knowledge (*ilm*) plays a vital role in a Muslim’s path to God. In fact, according to Husain and Ashraf (1979), "Because God is the source of knowledge, by knowing more they [Muslims] felt they were drawing near to God" (p. 11). This idea is further validated in the Quran in verses such as the following: ‘He has taught you [heretofore] that which you knew not’ (Quran, 2:239); and ‘God will raise up (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and who have been granted knowledge’ (Quran, 58:11). Certain sayings of the Prophet Mohammed also acknowledge the search for knowledge as an obligation for

every Muslim and as forming a crucial form of worship and piety—‘seek knowledge even in China’; ‘seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave’; etc. Although this may seem as a validation for Islam’s exhortation to embrace knowledge, it is pertinent to observe ‘the inseparability of God and Knowledge’ (Hingledorf, 2003, p. 64) in the concept of Islamic education. Hence, like everything in the Islamic social order, education has from the beginning been seen as divinely ordained (Abdullah, 1982).

The learning and search for knowledge so ordained, however, were concerned with divine revelation, its understanding and its propagation through preaching and teaching. In fact, religious study has long been regarded in Islamic tradition as an act of worship, as it is concerned primarily with the study and transmission of the revealed word of God and of the sayings of His Prophet, as well as with the system of law to which the revelation pointed (Berkey, 2001). Thus, during the life and after the death of the Prophet (632 CE), literate believers were required to teach illiterates. These men were the first teachers, and accordingly the mosque became the first institution of learning in Islam. The association of the mosque with IRE has remained one of its major characteristics (Berkey, 1992, 1995, 2003, 2007; Keiko & Adelkhah, 2011; Makdisi, 1981; Tibawi, 1979). Whether mosques are viewed as institutions of learning, or simply as ‘venues of convenience’ (Berkey, 2007, p. 42), they played an important role in the organization of early Islamic studies.

During the Abbasid Caliphate (750 AD), however, separate institutions for learning were set up in order to preserve the sanctity of the Mosques for prayer and worship. Hilgeldorf (2003) notes in this regard that ‘it was decided that, in the interest of preserving the sanctity of the mosque worship atmosphere, the[se institutions] should constitute an entity that was removed in location from the mosque’ (p.66). On the other

hand, Al Makdisi (1981) argues that separate learning institutions were set up and supported by Muslim Caliphs in order to spread their ideologies against the threat of encroachment from rival dynasties. Muslim Caliphs, then, may have begun to construct schools and to appoint large numbers of scholars (*Ulama*) in order to broaden their power base. In this regard, Al Makdisi argues that ‘another motive, [though] undeclared, [for] establishing institutions of learning with endowed chairs of learned men [was] in order to gain through them the support of their followers’ (p. 40).

Irrespective of their exact origins or names (*madrassa, Hawza, maktab, kuttab*), places of teaching have long held a special status in Islamic societies (Keiko & Adelkhah, 2011). As the Arab Muslim civilization expanded, however, it came into contact with the Greek, Persian, Egyptian, Syrian and Indian cultures. It was through encounters with such other cultures that the earliest conflicting theological schools of thought came into being – schools that, in turn, gave rise to the concept of Islamic education (Halstead, 2004).

3.2.2 IRE: The Shift from the *Informal* to *Formal* and from *Religious* to *National*

Religious learning in Islam remained for some time an overridingly *informal* affair – not in the sense of being treated causally, but first and foremost in that it was rooted in the student’s love of and devotion to his teacher rather than in his enrolment in an educational institution (Anzar, 2003; Berkey, 1992; Eikleman, 2011; Makdasi, 1981; Tibawi, 1979; Zia, 2007). The traditional system, moreover, generally afforded the students a great deal of freedom. There were no recognized standards, no age restrictions and no time limits. Younger children were generally taught the Quran and the skills of

reading and writing in places known as *Kuttab*, often by a Shiehk who had memorized the Quran. The focus in these early years was on memorization of the Quran and on acquiring basic reading and writing skills (Anzar, 2003). Older students were taught in religious circles (*Halaqa*) and had to adjust themselves to lessons given by different scholars. Their syllabi focused on language, metaphysics, rhetoric and logic in addition to such religious sciences as the study of *Tafseer* and *Hadeeth*. Other schools focused more narrowly on religion (Anzar, 2003; Hingeldorf, 2003; Zia, 2007). Students' progress was not marked by a diploma but rather by a license to practice *ijaza* granted by one of his teachers (Berkey, 1992; Graham, 1993). In a paper entitled *Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation*, Harvard professor William A. Graham (1993) explains the *ijazah* system as follows:

The basic system of "the journey in search of knowledge" that developed early in *Hadith* scholarship, involved travelling to specific authorities (*shaykhs*), especially the oldest and most renowned of the day, to hear from their own mouths their *Hadiths* and to obtain their authorization or "permission" (*ijazah*) to transmit those in their names. (p. 511)

The Quran was taught by providing commentary and by explaining the rules of Islamic jurisprudence. An assistant would repeat each lesson to help students to grasp its intricacies. These assistants were usually those considered to be outstanding students who typically went on to teach learning circles of their own (Tibawi, 1979; Zia, 2007).¹³ Because of the voluminous amounts of information that had to be retained in relation to Quranic verses and chains of hadith, memorization was a valued learning tool. While some authors express a sense of pride in these feats of extraordinary memory and 'impeccable recitation' (Al-Makdisi, 1981), others note that the very act of memorization became a hindrance to understanding the text and its derivations (Eickelman, 1985).

¹³ For an erudite discussion of the development of educational institutions in Islam, see George Makdisi (1981)

With the colonization of the Arab region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, vast areas of the Arab world became exposed to European influence. Moaddel (2005) describes this encounter as ‘new’, ‘extensive’ and ‘multifaceted’. He explains that ‘Virtually all native intellectuals strove to conceptualize the nature of this encounter, its contribution to the agonizing backwardness of their homeland, or, alternatively its role in providing solutions to the problem of Muslim decline’ (p. 2). The Ottoman Empire at the time was fragmented into fourteen regional or national systems, and secular educational institutions were established and promoted to the point that they superseded the old established institutions of the *Kuttab* and religious *Madrasa* (Eikelman, 1985; Makdisi, 1981; Zia, 2007). As a result, as Tibawi (1979) states in his pioneering review of Islamic Education in the Arab States, the face of IRE was fundamentally altered:

...viewed from the vantage point of the present, IRE is a mere shadow of its past. Its modernization has in the end led to its complete transformation. The modern systems have not simply supplemented it as it was intended by the early modernists; they in fact supplanted it. (p. 1979)

It was also during the colonial period that the characterization of IRE as backward, rigid and inhospitable to change began to appear in the rhetoric of both ‘orientalist’ discourse and Muslim reformist thought. While the first group spoke in a tone of antagonism toward IRE, the second advocated the adoption of a ‘new approach’ to Islamic theology and to the understanding of Quranic exegesis and teaching. According to Michael C. Hudson, ‘Orientalist scholars have created a mythology about the “nature” of the Islamic mind and culture that predisposes the uncritical student against the possibility that Islam and progress (or development) are compatible’ (1980, p.1). At the other end, reformist Muslim scholars, neo-revivalist or Islamists at the time, such as Jamal al Din Al Afghani (1838-1897), Mohammed Abduh (1849-1904), Tahtawi (1801-1873) and Hasan

al Banna (1906–1949) also spoke disapprovingly about traditional *madrasa* education. These figures are regarded as some of the founders of Islamic Modernism, which is considered the first Muslim ideological response to the Western cultural challenge and which attempted to reconcile Islamic faith with modern Western values regarding nationalism, democracy, equality and progress. For example, Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt- the first and largest Islamic revivalist organization of the twentieth century- spoke in the voice of rationalizing modernism and called for modern-style social reforms and including mass education. His movement featured a ‘critical reexamination of the classical conceptions and methods of jurisprudence’ and a new approach to Islamic theology and Quranic exegesis (Moaddel, 2005, p.2). The premise was that Islam, as a world religion, was thoroughly capable of adapting itself to the changing conditions of any age (Moaddel, 2005). Indeed, to the Islamic Modernists, ‘what was good in European tradition was already enriched by the Islamic system and to a great extent borrowed from Islamic civilization; hence, it was not beneath their [Muslims’] dignity to resume part of their heritage’ (Tibawi, 1979, p.68).

In the consolidating phase of the post-colonial decades the rising of wave of Arab nationalism in the early twentieth century shifted educational thought from a religious to a national orientation (Moaddel, 2005). This movement flourished on the premise that people in the Arab region were bound together first and foremost by ethnic and linguistic rather than by religious ties. Arab nationalism centred on the dream of regaining the splendour of the glorious Arab past and on the task of overcoming imperialist domination (ibid.).

The introduction of secular education and the development of nations also transformed IRE, among other things forcing it to become a more formal system, one in

which the state serves as the main provider of religious and moral education. Some institutions that had focused on teaching religious subjects became integrated into the national school systems, serving as the basis for public education (Keiko & Adelkhah, 2011). Others – typically institutions that catered to the poor, who could not afford a western-style education – abandoned the pursuit of secular subjects and remained traditional in the sense of teaching only religious knowledge. Boyle (2004) and others have demonstrated that most institutions, by and large, adapted to the modernisation and nationalisation wave by borrowing from public education and by coexisting alongside formal educational institutions. Nonetheless, other scholars have maintained that ‘State based education caused a crisis of Islamic education as great as any experienced in the colonial era’ (Hefner, 2009, p.43)

The issue of presenting ‘Islam as school knowledge’ (Thobani, 2007) in both public and private schools has been increasingly perceived as a problematic category in Muslim education. For non-Muslims the issues revolved around the substance of IRE and as to whether it promoted a hostile worldview towards non-Muslims. For Muslims, the issue has been how best to *teach Islam* as a faith. While the debate around IRE is complex, two viewpoints have dominated the discourse on teaching Islam: 1) On the one hand, Islamists have demanded that Islam functions as an overarching epistemological framework in the school curriculum for all subjects, sometimes termed as ‘islamization’ (Husain & Ashraf, 1979) 2) on the other hand, the modernists and/or secularists who prefer to see it contained as a bounded subject alongside other disciplines (Thobani, 2007). The inclusion of Islam in the state school curriculum across Muslim countries reveals one way in which policymakers in the early 20th century sought to eliminate the bifurcation in Muslim education *i.e. traditional madrasa vs. modern schooling* which was created by imported modes of schooling during the colonial period (ibid.).

Crisis or otherwise, political change certainly did not leave educational institutions unaffected. Keiko and Adelhah (2011) describe the ‘contemporary madrasa’ – by which they refer to institutions that offer religious learning in addition to other complementary modern teaching – as follows:

Contemporary madrasa are educational institutions that are not disconnected from the transformation of society itself. So-called “Muslim” societies have undergone profound change in recent decades: their demographics have changed, they have become more urbanized, state centralization and bureaucratization have progressed.... [T]he impact of these transformations on madrasa is evident, and madrasa can no more escape them than can state school systems. (p. 5)

Starrett (1998), in his study on Egyptian Islamic Education, focuses on the pragmatics of pedagogy and characterizes this transformation by which Islam was packaged for instruction in schools as the ‘functionalization’ of Islam. In this regard, IRE needed to be systematized such that students could be examined on it. Hence, it was segmented into sub-topics and codified in textbooks. As Starrett explains, ‘...the modernization of Egypt has led to an exclusive focus on one form of Islam—teachable and “functionalized.”

This shift in the style and context of Islamic knowledge transmission is reiterated by Hefner (2009), who explains that the earlier norm of informality gave way to classrooms, fixed curricula, examinations and professional teachers. In this new institutionalised setting, the Islamic faith took on – to some extent, at least – the character of a ‘subject which must be explained and understood’ (Eikelman, 1992, p. 650).

3.2.3 IRE: A Shift in the Meaning of Religious Authority

In addition to the shift from *informal* education within religious institutions to *formal* education within state schools and/or contemporary madrasas – with its corresponding shift from *religious* to *national* orientation in the character of IRE – another crucial change has occurred with respect to the nature and construction of religious authority. Traditionally, the Muslim notion of authority has placed great stress on the notion of ‘connectedness’ – particularly, the importance of *personal* connectedness to those whose authority is already established in order to establish one’s own (see Graham, 1993). Thus, the solidity of the intellectual and religious reputation of the persons from whom one has learned has traditionally been crucial in establishing one’s legitimacy as a transmitter of Islamic knowledge (Al Saud, 2011). As Graham (1993) explains in his description of traditional Islamic authority, ‘one acquired scholarly credentials not by a diploma certifying a completed course of study, but by acquisition of a series of personal certifications of “permission” to transmit and to teach specific texts and knowledge learned at the feet of particular scholars’ (p. 512).

Two factors have contributed to a shift away from this traditional means of constructing authority vis-a-vis Islamic education: 1) the rise of print and later of electronic media and the dissemination of Islamic knowledge through such channels; and 2) the trend toward teacher ‘professionalization’ that has accompanied the overall modernisation, nationalisation and institutionalisation of the schooling systems. Both of these phenomena, as discussed below, have contributed to the much-discussed ‘objectification of religion’ in Muslim cultures in recent times as compared to the

traditional approach (see Eikleman & Piscatori, 1996)

Recent work has examined the impact of print media on Muslim societies in terms of how this technology may have altered constructions of religious authority. Scholars like Zaman (2007) have stressed the role of print and new technology media in allowing the *ulama* to reach wider audiences through new, effective and inexpensive media, while others see the adverse effect of print on the *Ulama*'s religious authority as more noteworthy. Eikleman and Piscatori (1996) describe this effect as part of their broader notion of the 'objectification of religion', arguing that 'religion has become a self-contained system that its believers can describe, characterize and distinguish from other belief systems' (p.38). According to these authors, this phenomenon has been triggered by migration, globalisation, mass public education, mass communication and the emergence of print and Internet media in the Islamic world. The changes brought on by different national modernisations have created circumstances in which an increasing number of Muslims have been afforded direct access to various writings on and interpretations of Islam. As the classics have become increasingly available to the public, the special claims of the *Ulama* as interpreters of religious texts have come under unprecedented scrutiny. Hence, the influence of religious *Ulama*, according to Eikleman and Piscatori and others, is gradually eroding as Muslims are increasingly inclined to interpret Islam themselves with the aid of various media. The critical question for this study, then, is not whether the authority of the *ulama* has increased or decreased but how that authority is constructed, argued, displayed and defended by IS teachers in this contemporary context.

The second reason for the shift in the meaning of religious authority is perhaps a direct result of the 'institutionalisation' and 'professionalization' of religious teaching. In social systems, one attains the status of 'authority' either through a position within an

institutionalised hierarchy (see Al Saud, 2011) or through informal, word-of-mouth channels that proliferate a ‘reputation’ based on one’s personal experiences, qualities, demonstrated abilities and so on (Graham, 1993; Klambach, 2008). For example, religious *ulama*, IS teachers and other members of institutionalised systems are *authorities* in the former sense, whereas Muslim preachers – who are often not members of an institution – are often seen as authorities on the basis of a reputation for personal characteristics such as religious knowledge, piety and oratory skills. With the shift from IRE in informal, mosque-centred circles and to formal, school system-centred ones, a shift from the latter to the former type or notion of authority occurred. Brenner (2007), for example, articulates clearly how the modernisation of the *madrasas* in Mali resulted in a wave of ‘professionalization’ of the teaching of Islam, and hence in a transformation in the role and status of IRE teachers. He explains how the roots of authority changed from an informal certification system that was regulated largely by parents who chose religious educators for their children based on their scholarly lineage, reputation and perceived piety to a system characterized by ‘professionalization’ and ‘depersonalisation’. This trend was exacerbated by the fact that teaching in *madrasa* became a salaried occupation. As Brenner explains, ‘these changes mean that teachers in madrasas lack the moral authority of classical religious teachers, and that religious schooling in madrasas is perceived as something profoundly different from what it is, or formerly was, in the classical system’ (p. 106).

In other words, in the context of the changing institutionalisation of IRE, teachers shifted from being assumed to be ‘authorities’ in their own right to being ‘in authority’ in the institutionalised sense – i.e., because the education system designated them as such – a shift that necessitated formal teaching qualifications. Hefner (2009) explains this process clearly when he notes that ‘the transmission of Islamic knowledge had been abstracted

from intimate teacher-student relationships, with their habits of dress, bearing and deference, and repositioned in classrooms and quick-read textbooks' (p. 33). In the following section, I attempt to deconstruct some of the debates associated with what Hefner calls 'quick-read textbooks' and to address the role of textbooks in contemporary IRE teaching.

3.3 The Fixation on Textbooks within IRE Research

Syllabi carefully laid out in IS textbooks are central to the teaching of IRE in many Arab and Muslim countries. In practice, the textbook is considered 'the major instrument in the teaching-learning process' (Musatafa & Cullingford, 2008, p. 87). In most Arab and Muslim countries, textbooks are written and published under the direct supervision of the national education ministry. Most often, both teachers and students are required to rely on textbooks for their teaching and learning (ibid.). Over the last several years in various Muslim and Western countries alike, scholars of Islam have shown a heightened interest in studying IRE in the modern public school and in analysing the curriculum as embodied in the official IS textbooks distributed by the ministries of education in various Muslim countries (see Alburashed, 2004; Al-Shammari, 2005; Anderson, 2007; Altan, 2007; Durrani, 2008; Limbert, 2007; Mehran, 2003, 2007; Mousapour & Alavi, 2004; Tronto & Eissa, 2007). One reason for the increase in this interest involves the fact that government-produced religious studies textbooks are easily accessible to researchers – even to Western and other non-native researchers – while access to religious schools, which are considered part of the national security apparatus under many regimes (as opposed to traditional *madrassa*, which are seen as independent) remains difficult.

Although there has been some excellent work of this kind dealing with both Islamic and general education, according to Herrera and Torres (2006) these studies have made limited use of classroom observation and other qualitative methods.

With respect to the content analysis studies of IS textbooks, there are two major genres. In the first genre, researchers have generally focused on the *pedagogical effectiveness* of IS textbooks. These studies are usually commissioned by governments and/or conducted by native researchers in each country. Much of the debate in and regarding these studies revolves around the question of whether one should see textbooks as materials that ‘de-skill’ teachers (Apple & Jungck, 1990; Shannon, 1987) or as materials that can ‘re-skill’ them by suggesting new activities and approaches in the classroom, hence developing the teachers’ teaching repertoires and pedagogical techniques (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994). Indeed, many studies in this first genre report a general sense of dissatisfaction with current IS textbooks, which have been described as too ‘unsophisticated’ (Al-Shammari, 2005; Alborasheed, 2004) to bring about desired improvement in IS teaching. Partly as a result of such criticisms, in Egypt, the Ministry of Education issued new, revised textbooks in 2003 that it claimed included more context appropriate knowledge about everyday life and less theoretical and/or theological knowledge about religion in order to address real world issues of direct relevance to students (Starrett, 1998). Likewise, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia commissioned a study by Al-Shammari (2005) that involved a content analysis of seventh grade *Tafseer* textbooks to analyse the types of questions available in the textbooks in the light of Bloom’s Taxonomy. Al- Shammari found that the textbooks questions only addressed the first two categories of *knowledge* and *comprehension* and failed to address higher order thinking skills *i.e. application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation*. Similarly, Alborasheed (2005) analyzed the extent to which current affairs were presented in

Bahraini IS textbooks. He concludes that textbooks did not address critical issues in current Muslim affairs such as women's work, globalization, sexual relations, suicide bombing and gender mixing. Alborasheed goes on to explain that connecting IS curriculum to real world issues is crucial in today's globalised world and that learning how to present these issues to students contributes to the professional development of the IS teacher. There is a strong conviction outlined in the former studies, and in many more studies conducted in the Arab context i.e. Nour Al- Deen's (2004) study on notions of sexual education in Islamic Studies textbooks in Bahrain that *better textbooks make better teachers and hence better teaching*.

The second genre of studies on IS textbooks consists of those that provide critical analyses of the messages presented in the textbooks. The extent of the influence of the textbooks on student attitudes has been debated (see e.g., Mustafa & Cullingford, 2008). Nonetheless, many studies of this type regard textbooks as 'important agents of socialization' (Mehran, 2003, p. 270) as well as repositories of officially sanctioned knowledge. Moreover, many of these studies claim or begin with the premise that official IS textbooks express what the ruling power wants the children to learn, as they reflect the ideology of the dominant group. Tronto and Eissa (2007), for example, reviewed nineteen Egyptian IS textbooks (two for each of grades 1-8 and one for each of grades 9-11) and concluded that IRE in Egypt 'plays an important role in the government's efforts to achieve national goals of political stability, economic development and social harmony' (p. 27). According to the authors, the textbooks represent 'the focal point of contest' (p. 50) in the government's struggle to win the hearts and minds of the populace from the influence of Islamist groups in Egypt.

Similarly, in a study on Iranian IS textbooks, Mehran (2007) argues that changing

the curricular content of the educational system has been among the major innovations of the post-revolutionary period in Iran. In an effort to Islamize and politicize the content of education, an ideologically approved curriculum was introduced that emphasizes the Qur'an, Islamic doctrines, and the Constitution. In this case, a strong Shiit curriculum was designed to support a Shiit state, in which young Iranians are socialized as pious and politicized citizens. The Ministry of Education changed the curricular content by rewriting the textbooks with the stated aim of 'purifying' these materials by 'clearing them of the misguidance and decadence of the despotic former regime' (p.54).

However, attempts to purify or to control the form of Islam in a country's education system have not been unproblematic. Indeed studies by Tronto and Eissa (2007) and Mehran (2007) both argue that the fact that the religious apparatus is seen as an adjunct to the state contributed to a sense of disparagement and distrust among the views of students and teachers alike. Indeed, although religious knowledge today is packed in curricular modules and disseminated through mass education, studies on IRE in Egypt (see Starrett, 1998), Saudi Arabia (see Starrett & Doumato, 2007; Al Saif, 2003) and Jordan (see Adley, 2010) have demonstrated the paradox that the more governments attempt to present a utilitarian approach in their textbooks and to create a 'regime friendly' knowledge of Islam, the more diversity of religious opinion proliferates in society. In this regard, textbooks are seen as presenting the 'official wish images' of their respective regimes. Also, the message of the textbook is seen as presenting an idealized image of life within the nation state (Anderson, 2007). According to Doumato and Starrett (2007), this creates a significant disjunct between image and reality. In the same vein, Wedeen (1999), in her ethnographic study of official religious discourse in Syria entitled *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*, puts forth the notion that the extent to which textbook writers themselves 'believe' any of their content is open

to question. Another study by Limbert (2007), which included a content analysis of Omani IS textbooks and interviews with students, reported that students view the messages voiced in the textbooks with suspicion and that religious studies teachers are often not considered authoritative sources with respect to religious knowledge (see also Ghabra, 2007, on Kuwaiti religious education).

Although the literature on political socialization points to the family, peer group, mass media and school as the most significant childhood socialization agents (Mehran, 1989; 2003; 2007), and the aforementioned studies make no claims regarding the power of textbooks to affect student behaviour, the studies nonetheless agree that the textbooks speak in an aura of authority since they are written by and/or sanctioned by authority figures. In this regard, Meharn (1989) notes that 'Textbooks, as primary means of formal instruction, are of special importance as official transmitters of acceptable social and political values' (p. 36). Given the cynicism and distrust reported by studies that interviewed the users of these textbooks, however, one can say that there is a gap between the textual narratives and the experiences of text readers.

There are in addition to the former studies, a few works that have in addition to the primary aim of conducting critical textbook content analysis examined the living context of IS classrooms through observations. For example, Adley (2004), in her study of an adolescent girls' school in rural Jordan, found that opportunities for classroom discussion surface in the rigidity and in the contradictions exhibited in the content and discourse of the IS textbooks. Specifically, Adley observed that high school girls have been able to use the scripted lessons as opportunities to discuss gender segregation and other topics that are presented in the textbooks as given truths. According to Adley, the female students in her study were well aware of the contradictions manifested in these official books. Altan

(2007), in her study of Turkish IS textbooks included as a reference to a few classroom observations conducted as a secondary means for gathering data on how students interact with IS textbooks. Altan found that the teacher-student relationship emerged as a complicating factor that can sometimes undermine and/or reinforce the issues outlined in the textbooks. She specifically observed that IS classes and teachers were trivialized by students and by teachers of other subjects. Class hours earmarked for religion classes were often reassigned to ‘more important subjects’ such as math or science. According to Altan, students in her study saw their IS teachers as ‘coming from rural backgrounds and bringing their lower class views to contemporary religious affairs’ (p.209). This trivialization of the IS teacher and his/her authority contributed to the undermining of the authority of the textbooks themselves. Altan concludes that students were ‘inclined to distance themselves from these teachers and dismiss what they have to say in class’ (p. 209).

In Syria, Cardinal (2009) conducted a comparative study that combined content analysis of the students’ textbooks and teachers’ guides with classroom observations of both the Christian and Muslim religious education programmes. Her study reveals common themes of citizenship, education and national unity in both syllabuses. Classroom observations in Damascus also underscore what Cardinal calls ‘striking’ similarities in Christian and Muslim teachers’ approaches to teaching religion (p.94), particularly given the fact that some of the activities that the teachers originated were their own constructions, and not included in the teachers’ guides. In the extract below, Cardinal illustrates how both types of teacher presented their subject as ‘fact’ or ‘truth’:

When teachers recounted the lives of Jesus and Muhammad, they presented the episodes as *historical fact* just as they did the lives of the first Christians and Muslims. One Christian teacher, when describing the resurrection of Jesus, was arming her students with arguments to counter anyone who questioned the fact that he rose three days after crucifixion. Non-belief is clearly not an option in either programme. The Christian programme

criticizes atheists while the Muslim one condemns apostates. (p. 49)

Finally, Cardinal (2009) describes how both syllabuses aims to unite and build national sentiments in addition to religious ones. Her finding resonates with the broader shift in IRE from purely religious aims to national ones. Unlike other authors, who claim the dominance of the national aims in contemporary IRE, Cardinal notes, for example, that ‘Syrian religious education programmes strike a balance between the religious autonomy and the need for national unity’ (p. 91).

On this issue, the literature is thus replete with studies that probe into the nature and content of IRE textbooks and syllabuses. The question then remains: How influential are textbooks? What do these studies have to offer about the understanding of the teaching process of IRE? Some scholars have argued that in developing countries textbooks may be the only books to which students are exposed, and that hence their legitimacy stands essentially unopposed (Starrett & Doumato, 2007), particularly at the elementary level (Eikleman, 1985). However, particularly in light of recent events in the Middle East, it is unclear about the precise nature and extent of the influence of government-sanctioned textbooks on students. Moreover, the evolution of the Internet and particularly of ‘social media’ networks such as Facebook and Twitter – new sources of information that are considered to have ‘democratizing tendencies’ (Zaman, 2002) – has also had an effect on the ways in which students and teachers respond to the varying official socializing agents induced by governments. This impact, too, is difficult to measure. For example, Starrett (1998), in his work on religious education in Egypt, notes that ‘new media have not replaced old ones, but have merely complicated everything endlessly’ (p. 94).

While the qualitative content analysis presented in previous studies can yield useful insights, it does not allow for multiple interpretations of or perspectives on IRE (see Mills,

1995). Due to the heightened interest in IS textbooks, moreover, the scholarly imagination has at times conveniently over-politicised the status of IRE and has therefore taken a reductionist approach in exploring the wider possibility of meanings attached to IRE teaching. The existing body of literature seems to suggest that understanding IRE rests too heavily on the reading of texts, leading to a conventional view that treats IRE as intrinsically static. Content analysis is useful in the process of mapping the general ideology of textbooks in order to understand official discourse. Yet the discussion above shows that students also bring their ideas, ethnic background and gendered experiences to the classrooms, all of which influence their reading of the text and engagement with the program (Adley, 2004; Altan, 2007; Apple, 1993). Teachers also mediate and transform the textual materials as they implement the curriculum. Further research into ‘textbook use’, therefore, could be just as useful and important as studies of the texts themselves (see Leach, 2003).

3.4 IRE: Trapped in Theoretical Discourse

In addition to the predominant tendency of looking at IRE primarily from a textbook-analysis perspective, another important strand in the literature deals with conceptualizing IRE in its ‘ideal’ form – i.e., studies that provide or examine various theoretical models and purport to show what good IRE teaching *should* look like (see Jallad, 2004 and see further below). This normative approach is particularly prevalent in the writings of Muslim scholars. Indeed, Muslim scholars in this field have focused almost exclusively on theory or meta-theory, on the ‘ideal’ and ‘desired’ form of IRE and Islamic

education¹⁴ in general (see Al Attas, 1979; 1985, Ali, 1984; Abdullah, 1982; Al Saud, 1979; Halstead, 2004; Jallad, 2004, 2006; Sardar, 1991; UI Islam, 2003; Wan Daud, 1998). Such theory or philosophy is also a theology, in as much as all considerations of human endeavor in Islam have God as their point of reference (Merry, 2007). In my account of the aims and characteristics of IRE, I will first render an undifferentiated consensus view, one that would appear to contradict the very fact that the Muslim *ummah* is internally diverse. The aim of this section is to examine the theoretical basis of IRE by addressing three areas: 1) the discourse dedicated to the definition of IRE, its conceptualization, aims and purposes (see esp. Al-Attas, 1979 and Jallad, 2004, 2006); 2) the discourse on the characteristics of the ‘ideal’ teacher in Islam; and 3) the reported gulf between theory and practice in IRE (Panjwani, 2004).

Several works have attempted to define the nature, goals and aims of IRE. Jallad (2004), Oboud (1999) and Abdullah (1991) disapprove of the ‘simplistic’ perception of IRE as a ‘field of knowledge where Islamic Studies subjects are taught’ (Jallad, 2004, p. 23). Oboud (1999) notes in this regard that ‘the first obstacle which impedes IRE is the perception held by some that IRE is nothing but a subject and syllabus of study’ (p.274). Thus, Ibrahim (1983) and Madkor (1991) define IRE more holistically as ‘an Islamic upbringing’, while Jallad (2004) and others propose a more holistic view of IRE as ‘a distinct systematic and comprehensive educational approach’ (p. 27). Common to the approaches and assertions of these authors is the understanding that the aims of IRE are derived from revealed religion, that its sources are the *Quran* and *Sunnah* and that these facts have pedagogical consequences. Jallad (2004), for example, declares the main goal of IRE to be ‘the pursuit of worshiping God’ (p. 36). Consequently, theories of IRE may attempt not only to account for the application of human intellect but also for the response

¹⁴ ‘Islamic education’ here refers to the broader notion of ‘education in the spirit of Islam’ .

to divine revelation, and it is in this context that Muslim scholars have attempted to express the objectives of IRE (Hussein, 2004).

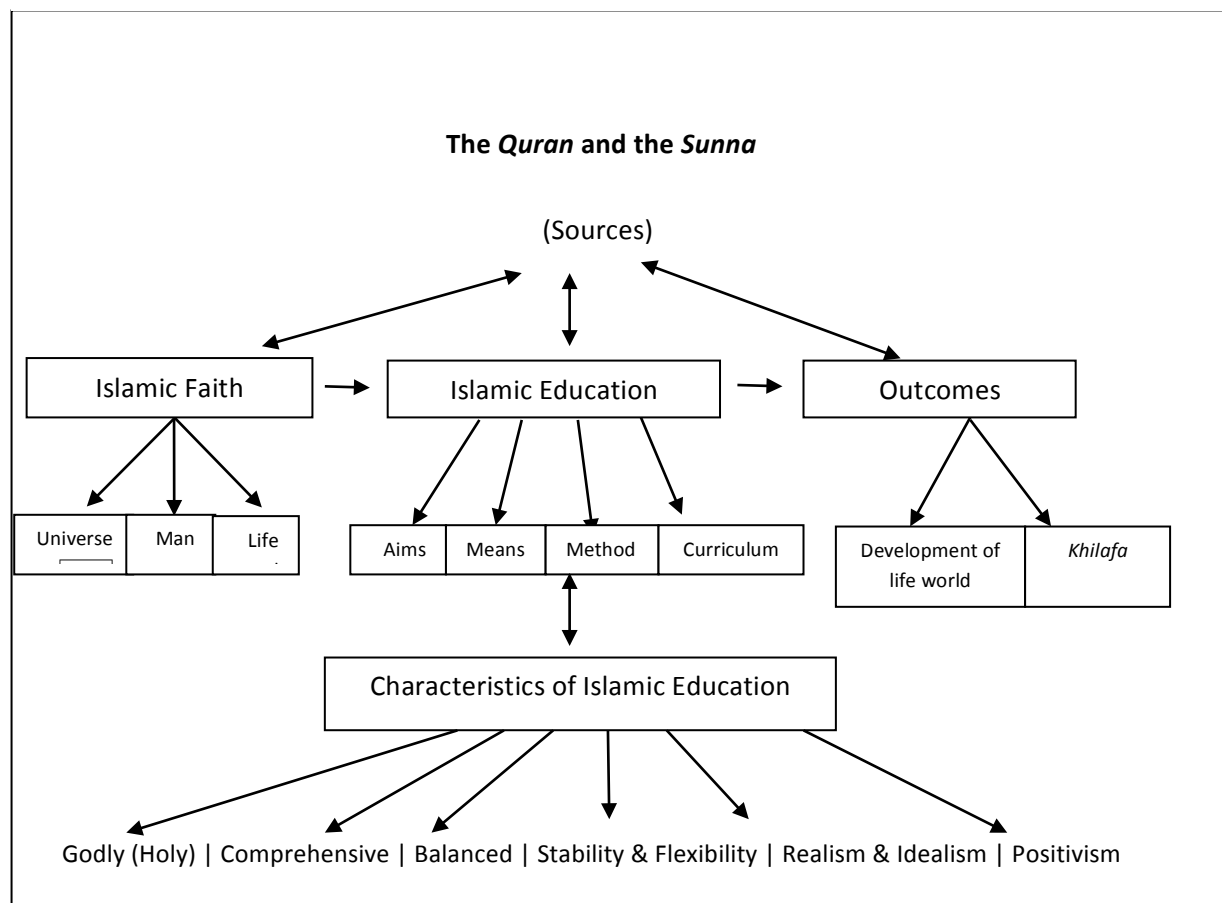
The majority of Muslim scholars agree on three Arabic terms - initially proposed by Al-Attas (1979) – as stipulating the meaning of education in the Islamic sense. The first is the term *Tarbiya*, which comes from the Arabic root *rabd* ‘to grow, increase’ (Ngah, 1996, p. 34). *Tarbiya* ‘refers to the development of individual potential and to the process of nurturing and guiding the child to a state of completeness or maturity’ (Halstead, 2004, p. 522) with the aim of creating ‘good adult’ and/or a ‘worshiper of God’ (Jallad, 2004, p. 36). The second term is *Ta'dib*, which comes from the root *aduba* ‘to be refined, disciplined, cultured’; it refers to the process of character, moral and social development in the light of the divine Islamic laws of *Sharia*. According to Ngah (1996), *Ta'dib* refers to ‘the disciplining of the mind, body and soul’ (p. 38). The term also implies the teaching of good manners, ethics and politeness. The third foundational term in the Muslim scholarly conception of IRE is *ta'lim*, which comes from the root *'alima*, ‘to know, be informed’; it refers to ‘the imparting and receiving of knowledge, usually through training, instruction or other form of teaching’ (Halstead, 2004, p. 255) and indicates that one of the purposes of Islamic education is to *impart knowledge*.

In light of the above, Husain and Ashraf (1979) define Islamic education as follows:

...an education which trains the sensibility of pupils in such a manner that in their...approach to all kinds of knowledge they are governed by the deeply felt ethical values of Islam. They are trained and mentally so disciplined that they want to acquire knowledge not merely to satisfy an intellectual curiosity or just for material worldly benefit but to grow up as rational, righteous beings and to bring about the spiritual, moral and physical welfare of their families, their people and mankind. Their attitude derives from a deep faith in God and a wholehearted acceptance of a God-given moral code. (p. 1)

From a similar perspective, Jallad (2004) offers a conceptual model of the relationship between and among the components and sources of IRE that can be summarized according to the diagram or flow chart provided in Figure [7] on the following page. This model is also based on the notion that IRE is in essence an embodiment to the Islamic faith in its view of the individual and society and on the claim that the outcomes of IRE should be the values stipulated in the Quran with respect to what God desires for man to achieve on earth.

Figure 7. Jallad's (2004) Model for Islamic Education



Although a thorough analysis of this model is beyond the scope of this study, Jallad (2004) essentially argues that IRE commences from the theological understanding of Islam as a way of life. Thus, he argues that the Muslim pupil in many ways requires not only the Islamic atmosphere and the Islamic subject but also the understanding of a worldview that recognizes the relevance of the existence of a Creator to all aspects of life (in other words, as stated above of Muslim scholars in general, he essentially views IRE within the context of divine revelation). Jallad further suggests that IRE is *comprehensive* in the sense that it addresses aspects of the living world and the afterlife, is *balanced* in the sense that it aims to develop the individual into a balanced Muslim in his outlook to life, is *stable* in its aims and goals, yet flexible in its methods and teaching strategies and is *realistic* in the worldview that it presents, yet *ideal* in the sense that it stems from the ideal example of the Prophet. Finally, IRE, in this view, epistemologically encourages optimism, particularly in its view of God, the universe and life.

Regarding notions of the ‘ideal’ Muslim teacher, the literature is replete with polemical discourses but poor in pragmatic ones. In other words, scholars of Islam go into detail in describing the *desired* characteristics of an ideal teacher, yet they say little or nothing about any real-world teachers. The following quotes exemplify the discourse in this regard:

...in the context of Muslim society the teacher has to be a person that is deeply committed to Islam, not only outwardly but also inwardly. He or she must be a virtuous person, a person of piety who considers it his responsibility to train his pupil to be a good Muslim. (Hussien & Ashraf, 1979, p. 107)

The teacher in our Muslim context is no mere member of the community. On the contrary, he has the authority which springs from his strong personality for he follows the path of our first educator Mohamed.... He is expected to do his utmost to impress upon the minds of his students (Khan, 1987, p. 40)

The eminence of the Muslim teacher is also evident in much of the literature on IRE as he/she is described as essentially performing the role of Prophets (Mogra, 2010; Sarwar, 1996). Muslim teachers for example have to imbue the characteristics of the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H) by learning his *sira* (life history). Like messengers, Muslim teachers are expected to be conscious of the impact of their actions upon their students and also to the consistency in their behaviors (Mogra, 2010).

Several scholars of IRE have discussed the incongruence between the ideal type of IRE –including ideal constructions of the Muslim teacher- and heterogeneous body of Muslims and Islamic schools (Merry, 2007; Panjawani, 2004). In part, this tension exists because virtually all Islamic philosophy/theory of education is derived from Muslim religious scholars *ulama* rather than being rooted in the experience of actual practitioners. It remains to be seen whether scholars of IRE will develop a philosophy of education rooted in the actual experiences of practitioners. As Cook (1999) notes, ‘While general agreement exists on a philosophical level, there is significant disagreement among the *ulama* as to the pragmatic issues of organization, administration and curriculum development’ (p. 351). Hence, there is considerable debate concerning the gap between theory and practice in IRE. Panjawi (2004) describes this gap by noting that ‘‘authors go into factual details to describe the problems with contemporary education. However, when these authorities turn to proposing solutions, or rather ‘Islamic’ solutions, their tone changes from factual to rhetorical and from argumentative to assertive’ (p. 5). Mustafa and Cullingford (2008) also express the presence of a gap between IRE rhetoric and reality in their study of IRE in 46 schools in Jordan when they note that ‘there is *supposed* to be freedom of selection of methods in Islamic Education since the subject is *supposed* to entail a greater amount of dialogue and exchange of ideas. However, in reality, this view looks very *theoretical* and in practice teachers have no such freedom to practice a variety

of teaching methods’ (p. 82; emphasis added).

While literature of the kind delineated in this section is useful in laying out philosophical, theoretical and theological ideals as a basis for IRE teaching, it is at least as important to examine how contemporary IS teachers actually teach given the realities of the classroom. Additionally, what the literature reviewed in this section perhaps does effectively perhaps is to generate knowledge *for* IS teachers concerning the ideals of IRE teaching rather than to produce knowledge *about* IS teachers. The present study aims to address the gap in the literature by attempting to contribute to the latter goal, with an additional emphasis on attempting to understand how IS teachers make sense of their own teaching. Thus, the study is dominated not so much by the question ‘What is IRE?’ as by such questions as ‘What does IRE look like in practice?’ and ‘How do IS teachers, diverse as they are, understand and experience IRE?’ Hence, the study engages in and may ultimately recommend a paradigm shift away from an emphasis on *theoretical models of the curriculum* of IRE to an application to IRE of the *theory of social actors* – i.e., in this case, teachers, students and other stakeholders (see Jamjoom, 2010). In the following section, I examine certain previous studies that contribute to the understanding of how contemporary IS teachers go about attempting to explore and gain insights into the realities of the classroom, pedagogy and teaching their subject today.

3.5 IRE: Teaching and Teachers

The aim of this section is to examine work dedicated to the understanding of IRE teachers and teaching. Given the dearth of studies that have looked at IRE teaching and teachers, especially female teachers, in *formal* and *contemporary* educational settings –

i.e., schools and classrooms – I also consulted relevant literature on the *Daiyat* (‘female Muslim preachers’) who teach in *informal* settings such as mosques and private homes. My reason for doing so is twofold. First, the teaching of IRE is regarded in essence as a form of *Dawa* (‘preaching’), with the two crafts sharing the pedagogical aim of orienting students to their religion and helping them to become better Muslims. Second, both sets of studies, although different in context, were selected on the basis that they were praxis oriented. Thus, the aim was to locate and learn from studies that provide insight into what Islamic pedagogy/teaching looks like and into the themes that can be construed from a closer look into such pedagogy.

In section 3.5.1 I examine recent studies dedicated to the understanding of the pedagogical style of female *daiyat* in informal learning settings. Subsequently, in section 3.5.2, I examine works that have looked at IS teachers in contemporary school settings in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. Because the teaching of IRE is usually carried out in gender-segregated settings, this section is restricted as far as possible to studies that focus on the female teacher. Indeed, female religious teachers, whether *daiyat* or IS teachers in schools, practice their teaching in enclosed spaces, but these spaces are not totally private and are very much connected with the wider social fabric.

3.5.1 The *Daiyat*

Topping the social and pedagogical responsibilities of the female *daiyat* is the call for upholding religious and social morality. Their role is more prominent in a time in which public discourse, as frequently expressed in the media, obsesses over protecting the community’s traditional religious ethos from the perceived negative effects of globalisation (‘*awlama*’) and Westernisation (*taghrib*) (Zahid, 2010). As this section will

attempt to illustrate, the *daiyat* also have a distinctive religious pedagogical style, one that is framed under the rubric of *dawa* ('preaching'), through the practice of which they serve informally as a bridge between formal religious authority embodied in the male *ulama* and the tightly enclosed women's sphere in gender-segregated Muslim societies.

In Saba Mahmood's (2005) *Politics of Piety*, an ethnographic study of three female mosque *daiyat* in Egypt, the theme of 'informality' of the *durus* ('lessons') figures prominently in the description of the *daiyat*'s pedagogical practice. Mahmood notes: 'The lessons here are informal and unstructured, none of the *Daiyat* follow any canonical text or any particular order of themes' (p. 91). According to Mahmood, the lessons also demonstrated a 'doctrinal pluralism' that was characterized by flexibility toward the prescribed views of the teacher's *Mathhab* ('school of thought'). Most of the teachers presented views from a range of jurists for each topic that they covered. They also foregrounded the principle of the right of a Muslim to exercise individual choice. Most notably, Mahmood reports an increasing exchange between the attendees (students) and the *daiyat*, which she claims revealed 'the contentious character of pedagogical space in the mosque as young members attending the lessons have remarkable dexterity using sources to counter argue their Daiya' (p.103). Finally, she argues that 'feminine virtues' serve as a precursor to acquiring religious or political authority. In this context, such feminine virtues are described as those that outwardly demonstrate Islamic virtues, such as hijab, prayer, sincerity and humility.

Two other ethnographic studies, Klambach (2008) and Bottcher (1993), provide valuable glimpses into the dynamics of social and religious change in Syria through their observations of prominent Syrian *Daiyat*. Although the focus of these studies is on the construction of female religious authority, several insights can be gleaned about the role

and place of authority in their pedagogical practice of *dawa*. Klambach for example, draws her notions of authority from attending and observing two weekly mosque lessons given by the *daiya* – one of which was a lesson specifically for girls in high school and university – and from lessons given in a summer school run by the *daiya* that teaches girls to memorise, recite, interpret and discuss the Qur'an.

Klambach describes the constant struggle between the formal scholarly authority of the *ulama* and the informal authority of the female *daiya*. She observes that the female *daiyat* regularly emphasised their informal authority (as opposed to scholarly qualifications) – e.g., by referring to their teaching experience in mosques and by referencing their connections to family members who are recognised as religious authorities. The emphasis on informal authority manifested in personal qualities and religiosity of the *daiyat* seems consistent with the broader questions of redefining religious authority in the Muslim sphere, as examined in section 3.2.2. In fact, given the decline of the influence of the *ulama*'s traditional authority, the reliance on informal authority in religious teaching appears to be more salient. Klambach explains the scope of the pedagogical role of the female *daiyat* in the following passage:

Despite limitations imposed by society, new forms of female religious authority represent a significant development in the contemporary Middle East. Female instructors do not merely puppet the teachings of their male counterparts; they have the opportunity to subtly reshape the role of women in society and religion (p.52).

Bottcher (1993), like Klambach, stresses the leading role that female *daiyat* are taking in propagating Islamic teaching, particularly within female circles. She conducted an ethnographic study of female *Daiyat* teaching in a private Islamic University in Damascus that prepares young women to become IS teachers and that offers degrees in

Islamic Law. The *durus* were usually carried out in one of two ways: a *dhikr* session and/or a *dars* session. The *dars* is a lesson about some aspect of Islamic belief; a *dhikr* is a session dedicated to communal prayer and rituals. While the *dars* teaches about principles of religion and a *dhikr* is a form of worship, both methods have the same goal: to advance one on the path to God. During the *dars*, each week the students would discuss a paragraph of a famous scholarly work that they had read at home. In describing these lessons, Bottcher highlights their informality, explaining that participants prayed, studied and exchanged news about family problems.

In conclusion, although the object of the studies mentioned above is IRE under the rubric of *dawa*, in an indirect sense these studies contribute to an understanding of what Islamic pedagogy in general looks like and of the challenges that it faces in a society faced with increasing globalisation. What comes across clearly from these empirical studies is the tendency of individuals to challenge the conclusions of traditional Islamic authorities and to supplant these conclusions with their own. Whether this challenge of authority be in the form of a gendered struggle for space with male *ulama* or of a struggle among different interpretations of religion to make Islam more adaptable to the context and realities of the setting, what we learn from these studies is that IRE teaching is ‘contentious’ and ‘globalized’ (Berglund, 2010, p.206), standing as a meeting point for local and global issues.

3.5.2 IS Teachers

Traditionally, Western research on teaching has been classified under a rubric that divides content into ‘process-product research’, ‘teaching effectiveness research’ and ‘teacher behavior research’ (Beitti, 1995; Brophy & Good, 1987; Fang, 1996). Within the

context of IRE, the majority of the Muslim and Arabic literature on IS teachers in formal school settings belong to the first of these categories, ‘process-product research’, in which the primary focus is on teaching methods and their effectiveness and the primary approaches of research are quantitative. Anderson, Evertson and Brophy (1979) describe the basic tenet of this category of research as ‘to define relationships between what teachers do in the classroom (the process of teaching) and what happens to their students (the products of learning)’ (p. 193). This perspective on teaching typically assumes that causality is unidirectional and thus centers on teachers’ actions and methods and their observable effects (Fang, 1996).

The emphasis on methods and/or strategies buttresses the view that methods are well-packaged canons of knowledge that can be practiced identically by every teacher. For example, in Zia’s (2007) review of religious education in Muslim countries, teachers are scarcely referred to at all, while curriculum and time allocation seem to be the dominant areas of discourse. Even when the writer touches upon the issue of the teacher, the emphasis is once again on teaching methods. As Zia notes, ‘more attention needs to be given to other in-school factors like the content of religious education and teaching methods’ (p. 134).

In the same vein, the Arabic literature on IRE teaching focuses on the *Kifayat* (‘competencies’) of IS teachers. Some researchers are concerned with identifying the effectiveness of IS teachers’ teaching competencies, while others are interested in developing training programs based on their assessment of the required competencies and/or good teaching. The former type of studies focus on effectiveness, while the latter are remedial in their orientation. Among the studies that focus on measuring the effectiveness of teaching competencies is a study by Jallad and Omari (2005), who

conducted a quantitative study aimed at identifying the degree of IS acquisition of required teaching methods among student teachers in the IS teacher Training program at the University of Jordan. The results showed that student IS teachers demonstrated a 'high degree of acquisition and competency' of storytelling teaching methods while they demonstrated 'low acquisition of competencies' related to Quranic interpretation. Several other studies alluded to the 'low level of IS teacher competencies' (Yussif, 1988) in Quran reading (Saad, 1983), in intonation and interpretation (Gafri, 1995), and in effective holy text quoting in the classroom (Al Ayasirah, 2005). Other studies focused on the assessment techniques used by IS teachers in the classroom. For example, Jallad (2003) conducted a quantitative study in 30 Jordanian schools (15 girls' schools and 15 boys' schools) that indicated that IS teachers generally considered Quran recitation to be the most important area for assessment. Teachers in the study also reported essay questions and oral exams as the two preferred methods of formal assessment and described classroom discussion as a common method for informal assessment. Other studies on the use of specific methods of teaching include Jallad's (2006) study of the use of concept maps in classrooms and AlKhawalda and Mashala's (2005) study of the use of computer software in IS teaching. The studies of this kind shared the common finding that IS teachers rely primarily on teacher-centered methods, in particular lecturing and question-and-answer. Other methods appeared to be far less frequently used (see Al-Ayasirah, 2005; Cullingford & Mustafa, 2008; Gafri 1995, Yussif, 1988; Jallad, 1997, 2003, 2004; Jallad & Omari, 2005; Khawalda & Mashala 2005; Saad, 1983).

Cullingford and Musatafa (2008) attempted to investigate why IS teachers in Jordanian schools generally relied on lecturing as a preferred method of teaching. They note that:

Islamic education is seen as the most important subject. It is the best example of the tensions between the desire to control, since what is learned is assumed to be agreed and unarguable and the desire that it should be taught in an exciting way. Such a curriculum is deemed not be challenged, but there is concern that the teachers should use a variety of methods beyond rote learning. (p. 82)

Their study sample consisted of 46 schools in Jordan. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered. Interviews were conducted with students, IS teachers and IS supervisors. The authors concluded that teachers attributed their reliance on lecturing to the following reasons: 1) lack of supporting teaching materials, as these are not equally available to all subject teachers; 2) insufficiency in IS teachers' competency and skills, as they are not professionally prepared to use technological material; 3) pressure to get through material in the textbook; 4) large class sizes and heavy workloads.

Three general propositions can be made concerning the studies mentioned above. The first is that an intellectual tradition exists that emphasizes the culpability and failure of the IS teacher in demonstrating effective teaching skills according to the standards set by the research community. The second is the tendency to dismiss the voice of the IS teacher in research that attempts to understand their teaching. The third is the absence of classroom observations as methods of inquiry into how IS teachers teach, which contributes to a 'fixed', perhaps even 'fictitious' image of IRE teaching. To offer an example of how these studies could contribute to such a fictitious view, I will refer back to the study conducted by Jallad (2003) in which the author reported that IS teachers testified to their use of *discussions* in classrooms. The question that concerns us is here is: What did these IS teachers actually mean by a 'discussion'? (Or: What does a discussion in an IS classroom look like?) Jamjoom (2010) found that the characteristics of a 'discussion' as articulated by IS teachers differed from the typical Western understanding of this concept. Discussion as perceived by the IS teachers in that study appeared to be bounded by the

following parameters: 1) it is considered a form of ‘giving’ known as *ata*, which flows from the teacher to the student; 2) it should lead ultimately to an answer or a state in which students are at least convinced of an answer; 3) it unfolds through a question-and-answer mode; 4) it should be capped by certain limits that both students and teachers are encouraged to respect; and 5) a good discussion evokes the students’ emotions. Thus, although there is a dimension here of active participation and both intellectual and emotional involvement on the part of students, as in the western notion of ‘discussion’, the aim in the IS context is not to arrive at an abstract understanding of a text or concept but to evolve toward an (already) agreed-upon answer to a given question.

Parallel to the IRE Literature conducted in Arab and Muslim countries by Muslim scholars is the evolving Western literature that examines Muslim schools and Muslim IS teachers in Europe. Literature of this latter kind has proliferated in recent decades due to migration and demographic changes in almost all European countries (Heimbrock, 2007) and due to heated debates about the establishment of state-funded Muslim schools in European countries such as the Netherlands (Dweyr & Meyer, 1995) and Great Britain (Meer, 2007; Parker- Jenkins, 2002). Muslim schools are a relatively new phenomenon in European and British education, and there is an undeniable interest in understanding the daily life of classrooms in these schools (Hewer, 2001).

The studies of this type reviewed here adopt an ethnographic approach to research on teachers and teaching and highlight the experience of teaching in the classroom. Within this framework, Berglund (2010) carried out an ethnographic study of three IS teachers in three different Muslim Schools in Sweden. The IRE curriculum in Swedish Muslim schools is not part of a state-mandated body of religious doctrine. Hence, there is, according to Berglund, ‘no predominant tradition in Islam that must be represented by the

teachers to the pupils' (p. 204) – no standardized way of presenting IS. As a consequence, the IS teacher in this context is perhaps more autonomous than the IS teacher in Arab and Muslim countries, where IRE curricula are dictated by government-mandated textbooks. In Berglund's study, the choice of the content was determined by the teacher, as were the interpretations of Islam offered in the classroom. Moreover, the study demonstrated that IS teachers – like most others – struggle to individualize their instruction and to make their classes enjoyable even for less motivated students. Finally, the depiction of teaching IS in the literature from Islamic countries as a form of knowledge *transmission*, according to Berglund (2010) 'no longer holds true and is not fully accurate' (p. 206) in the Swedish context. He proposes the notion of *translation* rather than *transmission* as a more accurate description of what the IS teachers in his study did: translating knowledge of IS according to their perceptions of what was relevant for their students to know. As Berglund explains:

The rich diversity of the extent interpretations and understanding of the common Islamic tradition suggests that the precise meaning of these persons, concepts and words are not *transmitted* in the same way. The use of the word transmission to describe what is being given from one generation to another appears to ignore the diversity as well as the importance of context in determining the outcome of Islamic religious education. (p. 206)

A similar study by Heimbrock (2007) describes the growing quest for IS teachers in Germany in light of the steady increase of Muslim populations in Germany and of recent attempts to implement and/or offer IRE in public schools. Heimbrock explains how this need is met by employing 'committed', 'engaged' and 'passionate' IS teachers who are not formally trained – i.e., have no background in Islamic theology or as teachers of religious issues. Although the situation naturally calls for the development of adequate training programs for IS teachers, at the stage documented in Heimbrock's case study, this has not yet occurred. His subject is a female Turkish IS teacher named Yalza, who teaches in a German school. The study documents her journey in developing what he calls 'self

taught professionalism’ in a situation of intercultural encounter. Yalza’s teaching is described as heavily ‘teacher centered’, with an emphatic ‘personal emotional commitment’ to her goals that the author says she uses ‘to improve her pupil’s knowledge of Islam on a rational basis – and to destroy “superstition” and “fundamentalism”’ (p.187). Thus, in his study the teaching of Islam is not a clear-cut subject that is presented in the light of a fixed Islamic tradition, but ‘a practice of reconstruction at the intersection of cultural patterns’ (p. 188). According to Heimbrock, Yalza chooses her own ways of acquiring knowledge about Islam, including extensive use of material obtained via the Internet, and makes use of her recollection of the teaching that she received during her childhood when determining what to present to her students and how to do so. Discussing the particular case of Yalza and her personal attempts to teach Islam, Heimbrock provides useful glimpses into how non-formally trained IS teachers in Germany conceive ‘professionalism’ and into the question of whether the notion of professionalism as fixed set of competencies applies in this particular context. As he notes: ‘it is especially important to include into the concept of IRE teacher professionalism in interculturally shaped schools – next to expert knowledge – the relevance of practice, experience and self organizing activity related to cultural and religious diversity’ (p. 190)

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to illustrate some of the myriad of significant changes that IRE has undergone since the early twentieth century. During this period, the introduction of mass public education reshaped IRE from an informal learning system – a ‘dynamic network’ (Berkey, 1992) with no formal institutional structure – to a ‘formal’

and ‘functionalized’ system under the auspice of governments and their education ministries. It was also altered from its predominantly religious orientation to a predominately national one. Parallel to and continuing from these changes have been shifts in the perception of who and what is considered a legitimate Islamic authority. In the context of burgeoning new technologies of communication, the formation of ‘virtual domains’ that defy the authoritarian control of the state *ulama* over ideas and knowledge of the correct Islam is most visible today. Hence, a gradual shift in the discourse and practice of transnational Islamic authorities is taking place. Within this context of formalization and modernisation, two predominant areas emerged with respect to the rhetoric on IRE: 1) textbooks as objects of particular interest for researchers: in this regard, Western scholars have seen textbooks as windows onto the understanding of IRE while Muslim researchers have seen them as tools that need to be improved in order to assist teachers in their teaching; and 2) a theoretical and philosophical foundation for Islamic education has begun to emerge in the work of Muslim scholars. In the latter regard, two questions have dominated the theoretical work on IRE: 1) What is the ideal conception of IRE and what are its goals, aims and methods? and 2) How do we reconcile ideal notions of IRE with pragmatic issues? Answers to these questions, as we have seen, are many and various, and doubtless others will continue to be proposed.

The chapter also addressed the fact that IS teachers have for the most part taken a secondary place in the research on IRE. Most of the studies that did address teachers and teaching emphasised teaching methods, with a few studies taking an ethnographic and/or narrative approach in their investigation. The discrepancy between theory and practice in IRE can be inferred from the pragmatic studies of IRE classrooms and teachers illustrated in this chapter. A gap between the ‘ideal’ image of IRE and the realities of the classroom is expressed in the work of researchers, yet few attempts have been made to observe

classrooms and to give a voice to IS teacher. In the following chapter, I attempt to add a layer to the context-specific literature discussed here, through reviewing selected works from the broader body of literature devoted to the understanding of teaching from the teachers' perspective, with a view to discerning the directions in which this literature is evolving.

Chapter 4: Methodology I: Research Questions, Strategy and Design

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I outline and discuss the design of this study, which took place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia over a period of four months between November 2008 and March 2009. The design was chosen to investigate the specific research questions selected for this project and presented in section 4.2. The study aimed at providing a descriptive and interpretive account of *what it is like to be a female Islamic Studies teacher teaching in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia today*. In what follows, I first discuss the research questions chosen for this study after having reviewed relevant literature in chapters 1,2 and 3. Next, I present the conceptual framework that underpinned the study as a whole, after which I discuss the methodology of the study and, finally, provide an explanation of the decisions that were made in designing the study and of the issues that arose during the fieldwork.

4.2 Delimiting Research Questions

The research questions proposed for the present study take into account both the aims of the study and the literature reviewed in the previous chapters. In broad spectrum, the overarching aim of the research is to produce a descriptive and interpretive response to the general question: *What is it like to be an Islamic Studies teacher teaching in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia today?* This goal could be achieved in a variety of ways, depending on the focus of the specific research questions that are used to guide the inquiry.

The substantive literature reviewed in chapters 1, 2, and 3 alludes to the fact that research on IRE in Saudi Arabia and in other Arab and Muslim countries has remained largely silent about praxis oriented studies of IS teachers. Deeply immersed in textbook content analysis, constructions of the ‘ideal’ Muslim teacher and a competency (*kifayat*) based approach to understanding teaching, these studies have highlighted an existing gap or tension between theory and practice. While this study borrows heavily in its approach from the strain within Western literature on teaching that has given a voice to teachers, their identities and their beliefs, it remains fundamentally sensitive to the context in which teaching takes place. Hence, the research questions presented below were chosen to be open-ended, praxis oriented and exploratory.

The research questions explored in this study were also influenced by the fact that knowledge of teaching is ‘tacit’ and ‘complex’; therefore, any attempt to understand this knowledge must be grounded in the teachers’ actual practice (what they do) by allowing teachers to make sense of their teaching through an emphasis of concrete examples based on real occurrences in their classrooms (Brown & McIntyre, 1993). The questions are grouped into three *central questions*, each of which is followed by a list of *sub-topics* or *procedural* questions. The final research questions that guided my study were thus as follows:

1. How do female Saudi Arabian Islamic studies (IS) teachers teach in the classroom?
 - a. What are the common teaching strategies used by IS teachers in the classroom?
 - b. What kinds of interaction take place between IS teacher and student in the classroom?
 - c. How does the IS teacher use the IS curriculum/content in the classroom?
 - d. What is the role of the IS teacher in the classroom?
2. How do Saudi Arabian Islamic studies (IS) teachers make sense of their teaching

practices?

- a. How does the IS teacher make sense of her teaching strategies in the classroom?
 - b. How does the IS teacher make sense of her interaction with students in the classroom?
 - c. How does the IS teacher make sense of her use of the IS content in the classroom?
 - d. How does the IS teacher make sense of her role to in the classroom?
3. What is essential to or implicit in the experience of being an Islamic studies (IS) teacher in Saudi Arabia today?
- a. What themes/postulates exemplify what is true for all IS teachers' teaching experiences in the study?

The research questions that guided this study were refined in light of Marshall and Rossman's (2006) typology of qualitative research questions. All of the questions were posed in an open-ended and evolving manner. The first central question is *exploratory/descriptive* in that it investigates a phenomenon that is studied and with respect to which there is little previous literature to guide the inquiry. Therefore, the first question poses the open ended query 'How do IS teachers actually teach?', and most of the data compiled to address this question will be collected through non-participant classroom observations. The second question could be labelled as *interpretive*, in that the aim is to understand from the IS teachers' perspective how these teachers make sense of their own teaching. This will ultimately be addressed through an iterative process of data analysis that combines both observations and interviews. Finally, the third question is perhaps best seen as *summative*, in that the aim is to derive an understanding of 'what is essential about these teachers' experiences in this particular context and at this specific point in time'. This question can only be addressed after analysing the data for each individual teacher and after scrutinising what may be common about these teacher's experiences (see Chapter

7). The third question takes into account the phenomenological influence in the study by searching for the essences of the experiences of these teachers.

As with the set of sub-topic questions that follow each central question, the aim is not to limit the inquiry itself but to cover possible anticipated subtopics for examination during interviews and observations. The sub-topic questions also guided the selection of ‘teaching incidents’ to be discussed with the teachers in the interviews that followed the classroom observations. Nonetheless, in many instances the teachers themselves chose to elaborate on certain aspects of their teaching i.e. planning lessons, role of parenting in teaching. As explained by Cresswell (2007), ‘sub- questions advance the procedural steps in the process of research, steps that are typically conducted within one of the approaches to research’ (p. 110). The topics for the sub-questions were chosen after consulting the literature on teaching in order to identify what possible areas may be of importance to discuss, as well as after gaining certain insights from the pilot study. For example, the context-specific literature on IS teachers in countries such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia points to the crucial role of the ‘textbooks’ – which I broadly refer to as *IS content* – in influencing the teachers’ approaches to teaching (Al Qassimi, 1995; Al-Saif, 1996; Jallad, 1997; Mustafa & Cullingford, 2007); hence, the sub-question on content was selected. Other literature on religious education teachers and on teachers of other subjects in a western context has singled out the importance of *teachers’ perceived professional roles* (sometimes used interchangeably with the term *teacher identity*) as an important paradigm for the study of teaching and teachers (Beijard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Goodson & Cole, 1994; Nias, 1989a; Shkedi, 2000; 2001). These studies have pointed out that teachers’ answers to questions about teaching were in fact answers to questions about identity and about their perceived professional roles. The pilot study further confirmed the importance of the IS teachers’ perceived roles and its influence on

their teaching (see Jamjoom, 2010). Hence, given the exploratory nature of this study, it was essential to include a sub-question on teachers' perceived roles.

The pilot study also influenced my choice of sub-questions in a number of ways. First of all, I found that teachers referred to both the nature of their interaction with students in the classroom and their teaching strategies repeatedly while attempting to make sense of their teaching practices during the interviews (Jamjoom, 2010). Themes such as *discussion as a teaching strategy* and the *struggle to understand students* were salient in the pilot study (Jamjoom, 2010). Although not limited by the sub-questions, I found them most useful in dividing the central questions into manageable chunks. It is important to note that since the study is exploratory in nature, the sub-questions were not used as conceptual categories for data analysis since imposing an *a priori* framework in qualitative interpretive studies rather than allowing categories and themes to emerge from what is learned may be a threat to the validity of the interpretive study itself (Maxwell, 1992). The final themes were derived from the data gathered and hence may tread on other unanticipated territory. The findings presented in Chapters 6 and 7 will further reveal the diversity of the themes; nonetheless, entering the field with some form of guidance proved vital in guiding my inquiry.

4.3 Conceptual Framework

Many efforts have been made to understand teaching and teachers, but the development of an adequate conceptual framework for this special kind of *understanding* is a difficult task and in practice is often influenced by the nature of one's research questions. The conceptual framework for the study refers to the 'system of concepts' (Maxwell, 1992, p. 25) that both supports and informs the designs taken in the course of

the research. In this case, there were several problematic analytical slippages that I was hoping to avoid, which further complicated my search for an appropriate conceptual framework that would allow the research questions to be addressed fully and comprehensively. First, owing to a tendency of researchers to look at too big a picture – as well as to difficulties in access and documentation – the role of women in Saudi Arabia has suffered from a myopic interpretation, in which they are often presented as a homogenised group that is subordinate in its social, political, religious and economic status (Arebi, 1994). This fact suggested that a conceptual framework that supports *the understanding of the other* was necessary for a study such as this one, particularly since studies of gender in the Middle East have been strongly informed by feminist and Western liberal assumptions, which in the view of Abu- Lughod (1993) and other leading figures studying women in the Middle East (e.g., Al Torki, 1992, 1988, 1986) carries the danger of misattributing forms of consciousness that are not part of the women's experiences. Another recent genre of studies regarding schools and teachers in the Middle East adopts a critical ethnography (CE) approach that, according to Herrera and Torres (2006), 'calls into question the existing cultural traditions that conceal relations of domination' (p. 4). Although this genre of research may be useful given that it is developed in opposition to more mainstream research conducted in the Arab region, it still offers a bleak image of reality given its emphasis on *questioning* existing modes of practice rather than on *understanding* them. To offer a concrete example, two works that are exceptional in their focus on the teacher are among those presented in Herrera and Torres's (2006) edited volume of critical ethnographies in Arab schools. These are Farag's (2006) study of teacher status in Egyptian culture and Maugith's (2006) work on teachers in rural villages in Egypt. These works present images of Egyptian teachers who are frustrated, underpaid and self-defeated and who often hit students or pull their hair as part of their classroom

discipline methods. Maughith's work offers ten short vignettes of Egyptian village teachers. Among them is a physical education teacher who forbids girls from joining his class, a librarian who does not read and an Arabic teacher who dislikes language. While these images may be true, their presentation lacks a discussion that contributes to the understanding of why things are the way they are from the perspective of the subjects under study. Despite their aim of giving voice to teachers, the authors use prescriptive language as well as an inherent deficit view of the teachers' work. For example, Muagith notes that 'despite constant lip service to the importance of education that promotes critical thinking, the teacher is lacking the intellectual and critical training and preparation that would enable them to express an individual view point' (p. 149).

Second, I needed a conceptual framework that would be sensitive to and inclusive of the role of religion in this study, which in a country like Saudi Arabia – and even with respect to IS teachers – is considered among the most basic and intimate of personal affairs. Third, a need was identified to explicate certain terms, such as 'experience', in addition to identifying the best way in which to understand teachers' meaning-making in light of the fact that the literature has often described teacher knowledge as 'tacit' (Calderhead, 1987a, 1987b, 1996).

This study was influenced in both its conceptual and methodological framework by a number of works, including those of van Manen (1997), Moustakas (1994) and Shutz (1932) – whose phenomenological orientation helped in the understanding of meaning-making and of the actions of individuals – as well as those of Olson (1992) and Brown and McIntyre (1993) with respect to their views on teaching and teachers. Additionally, the study sought to remain consistent with an interpretive constructionist paradigm (Schwandt, 1994; Gergen, 1999; Shutz, 1932), in which 'how people view an object or event and the meaning they attribute to it is what is important' (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 27). It is a

study that takes seriously the need to use qualitative approaches to understand the point of view of the other.

Although by no means limited to this approach, the study was influenced by interpretive phenomenology in its overarching epistemological orientation. The phenomenological approach also influenced the study in several specific ways. First, the study aimed to develop an understanding the meaning-making of individual teachers through a non-interventionalist, non-evaluative approach (Brown & McIntyre, 1993) that brought to the foreground the personal meanings that teachers themselves attach to their teaching. The focus was on the teachers' *experiences* or *understandings* of particular phenomena, in this case those associated with their own teaching. The aim of phenomenology, both as a philosophy and as a research tradition, is to describe phenomena just as they appear from the perspective of the doer; the epistemology inherent in phenomenology reflects a non-dualistic worldview in which the subjective reality of the doer gives meaning to the phenomenon under study (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology is also a study of *essences*, i.e., “that which makes a something what it is – and without which it could not be what it is” (van Manen, 1997, p. 10). Therefore, the study also highlights on the ‘common experience’ shared by individual teachers, which not only allows for a deep understanding of how one individual teacher makes sense of her teaching but also focuses attention on the teachers’ collective insight. In this regard, van Manen (1997) notes the following:

Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences. Phenomenology asks, “what is this or that kind of experience like?” it does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can explain and/or control the world, but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world. (p. 9)

Of course, claiming that one is documenting or studying experience is not clear-

cut, since experience is a broad term and has been used to mean a variety of things. In this study I opt for the definition of Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) in their work on the Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA):

Experience is itself tantalizing and elusive. In a sense, pure experience is never accessible; we witness it after an event. Therefore when we speak of doing research which aims to get at experience, what we really mean is that we are trying to do research which is experience close. Indeed, because IPA has a model of a person as a sense making creature, the meaning which is bestowed by participants on experience, as it becomes an experience can be said to represent experience itself. (p. 33)

In addition to its phenomenological orientation, there were several guiding principles that shaped this study, notwithstanding (nor leaving aside) the challenges stated at the beginning of this section. First, the study was not bound by any theoretical framework that explains teaching, e.g., cognitive or ecological. Instead, it used existing theories and concepts as tools for putting together the study design. There was no intention to fit the findings within a particular theoretical model of teaching, particularly since the context of this study has its own unique attributes and the research questions are exploratory in nature. Second, the study adopts a non-deficit model of teaching and teaching is also viewed as a purpose oriented activity. Therefore, an ‘understanding of teaching will be severely limited unless it incorporates an understanding of how teachers themselves make sense of what they do’ (Brown & McIntyre, 1993, p. 1).

Third, given the religious nature of the subject and the special context in which this study occurred, there was strong emphasis on regarding teaching as a *moral act*, best depicted in the words of Olson (1992) when he notes that ‘teaching is not aimed at the production of something, but at developing and exercising the virtue of the group to which students and teachers belong – it is a moral enterprise and not a technical one’ (p. 1). Fourth, what teachers *do* is seen as meaningful and purpose oriented. According to Shutz (1932), ‘action is meaningful for him who acts’ (p.15); moreover, according to Weber

(1922 as cited in Shutz, 1932), ‘In action is included all human behaviour when and insofar the acting individual attaches a meaning to it’ (p.15). Hence, the actions of teachers were not regarded as isolated events; instead, teachers were asked what purpose and meaning these teaching acts served in order for the study to contribute to the understanding of their teaching (Olson, 1992). In practicality, this was done through creating a shared context or shared classroom events on which the teachers could further elaborate.

4.4 Genesis of a Methodology

Three factors furnished the basis for this study’s methodology and design: 1) the nature of the research questions; 2) insights gleaned from relevant literature on teaching; and 3) lessons learned from the pilot study. In what follows, I provide a brief explanation of how each factor contributed to the overall methodology. The factors will also be discussed throughout the chapter in order to explicate in more detail how they contributed to the edifice of the design and to specific research methods.

4.4.1 Nature of Research Questions

The strategies and methods selected for carrying out this research depended heavily on the type of research questions asked (Robson, 2002). The research questions for this study required an in-depth understanding of the teachers’ sense making and they were exploratory in nature; hence, a qualitative research method based on an interpretive paradigm and a flexible design were chosen (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Robson, 2002; Seidman, 2006). The design was flexible due to the ‘repeated revisiting of all aspects’ (Robson, 2002, p. 81) as the research unfolded. Although a general framework had been

worked out prior the fieldwork, the detailed aspects of the sample, setting and data collection methods were refined as I went along. There was also a ten-day break in my fieldwork, which eased the process of revisiting my design. This break was particularly valuable for reflecting on the set of research questions – which became clearer as the research unfolded – through reviewing the nature of the data I was eliciting out of the teachers themselves as it was after the break when I decided to add the third question which seeks to understand the essence of the experiences of the whole group of teachers.

4.3.2. Insights Gained from the Literature

The intention of the study was to gain a phenomenological understanding of *what it is like to be an Islamic Studies teacher teaching in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia today*. This understanding must be grounded in the teachers' own practice. This was decided upon reviewing Argyris and Schon's (1974) postulate that 'theory-in-use' (that which teachers do) often differs from 'espoused theory' (that which teachers say they do). The aim, therefore, was to minimize the gap between theory and practice by focusing on shared classroom experiences, which were collected through classroom observations and then followed up by interviews (Brown & McIntyre, 1993). Similarly, the set of research questions was calculated to address both what *teachers do* (question one) and what *teachers say* (question two), in hopes of achieving *interpretive validity* (Maxwell, 1992) from an *emic* rather than an *etic* perspective (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Headland, Pike and Harris, 1990).

4.3.3. The Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia over one and one half months between March and April 2008. I treated this pilot study as an opportunity for myself, a novice in the field, to do the following: 1) explore the best approach to answering the research questions; 2) work out the details of a theoretical framework drawn from phenomenology; 3) develop a method for the research, including piloting a questionnaire for what is nonetheless an essentially qualitative study; and 4) hone my skills in interviewing, observing and responding to the ambiguities and surprises of fieldwork.

The study was designed in two phases: a quantitative phase that included implementing a preliminary questionnaire for all participating teachers followed by a qualitative phase that included semi-structured interviews and observations with the teacher participants from one private school. Findings from the latter were explicated in detail in Jamjoom (2010). Several insights gained from the pilot study experience guided the design of the current study and are discussed in what follows.

4.3.3.1 Eliminating the need for a questionnaire.

Although the questionnaire provided little information as to how teachers make sense of their teaching, the trends that emerged from the questionnaire were useful in designing the interview protocol for the main study. Through it I gained a degree of insight, even if minimal, about issues that IS teachers consider relevant to their experiences. Nonetheless, the teachers often seemed to answer the questions hastily, assuming that when the questionnaire was submitted, the research would be over. This

provided them with little incentive to participate in the post interviews, which I considered to be at the heart of my study and central to addressing my research questions.

4.3.3.2 Refining the interview protocol.

The interview protocol was refined after the pilot study. The teachers found it difficult to answer some of the questions and noted that some were similar or repetitive – e.g., How would you describe your role as a teacher of IS? How would you describe yourself as a classroom teacher? They indicated that the questions were slightly abstract and hence difficult for them to respond to with discursive and concrete answers. Hence, the questions for the main study referred to concrete examples from the teachers' own teaching.

4.3.3.3 Observation/interview order.

In the pilot study, it was also difficult for me to give examples to help extend the conversation since the interviews took place prior to the observations. Additionally, I had conducted only one interview and found that some of the teachers needed more time to open up and to feel at ease in the interview. For the main study, I conducted two interviews (introductory and post interview) and two observations to avoid the previous pitfalls in design.

4.3.3.4 Sample.

The decision was taken after the pilot study experience to limit the sample to secondary and intermediate school teachers. Secondary school teachers were more forthcoming than the elementary school teachers and often provided more concrete

examples of their teaching. Elementary teachers did not associate with the role of *religious education teacher*, since IS is only one of many subjects that they teach. They typically referred to themselves simply as ‘teachers’ rather than as IS teachers.

4.3.3.5. Time spent at school site.

For the pilot study I spent one whole month in one school site. The pilot study revealed that this time needed to be reduced for several reasons. First, both the teachers and principal alike did not understand the concept of lingering around in school as a form of research. They regarded this time as ‘wasted time’ and often inquired as to what I was doing and whether I wanted to sit in the school library and read. Second, spending a rather long time in the teacher’s room was also a nuisance to them as I felt they were beginning to feel uncomfortable and confused as to what the real purpose of my research might be. For the main study, I thought it wiser to maintain *enough contact* through conducting an additional interview and observation (*in which I was seen as doing something in the view of the teachers*) without having to be with them at the school site *all* the time.

4.3.3.6 Translation.

After the pilot study, the decision was made to transcribe the interviews in Arabic without translation. I found that maintaining the authentic language brings forth meanings that were difficult to capture in English. Additionally, the transcription into English during the pilot phase was carried out partly to share the transcripts with my supervisor in order to extend my training in the area of data analysis prior to engaging in the main study. This function having been achieved, it was now possible to move forward without repeating this

step.

4.5 Research Design

The previous section illustrated the genesis of the methodology for this study. In this section, I delineate the actual research design highlighting on access, sample and site selection, data collection schedule and methods. I conclude with a discussion on building rapport reflecting on my role as researcher in this study.

4.5.1. Access

Upon my arrival in Jeddah in early November 2008, I made it my first priority to start working on acquiring *official access* to schools. From my pilot study experience, I had learned that it was easier to gain access to private schools than to public schools given that the primary decision maker in private schools is usually the principal of that school. Public schools operate under a more centralized process in which permission to access schools and/or approach school principals required first having attained official authorization in the form of a letter granted from the Education Ministry's Research and Development (R&D) director in Jeddah. Given that the identification of the relevant gatekeeper is not always straightforward in formal organizations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), I had decided to probe into the matter prior to my travel to Jeddah by contacting other students with knowledge of such procedures. I decided to visit the R&D women's office unannounced, anticipating based on my intimate knowledge of the culture that calling ahead to book an appointment would be of no use. As I entered the building I asked for the whereabouts of the office of the R&D director, knocked on the door and

asked to meet with her. The director was very kind and helpful, and we chatted for a while about my research and experience of studying in the UK. She seemed to be more interested in my family and kinship relationships than in my research objectives. As such, I found that my credibility and trustworthiness was being formed through an assessment of whose daughter or sister I was, as well as to which mutual friends I was related. Being an insider, I understood this emphasis on family since the individual's status in the Saudi world is deeply embedded in the *aila* (family) (Altorki, 1988) as will be illustrated later in this chapter.

Toward the end of the meeting, it was agreed that I was to submit a research proposal in Arabic with research questions and detailed information on my research methods and sample requirements. The director was somewhat surprised that I had no survey questionnaire and that my data collection methods consisted only of interviews and unstructured observations. I explained that my study aimed at understanding how IS teachers made sense of their teaching and that therefore quantifying matters or even deriving causal conclusions was not consistent with the goals of my study. The next day, I submitted the required proposal, which was sent to the male section, where the authorization would be attained and then transmitted back to the women's office where I could pick it up. I was finally given the letter of authorization one month later. However, my dilemmas regarding access did not end there. In fact, I found myself constantly negotiating and clarifying my role as researcher and the different ascribed aspects of my role – e.g., gender, age, and kinship – which were fundamental to people's perceptions of me. This was necessary at every school, with every principal and with each of the teachers who participated in this study.

Having anticipated that access to public schools would require more time, I started working at one private school (School one in Table 1) while I waited for the letter of

authorization to arrive. I did not wish to waste valuable time spent on location given the time constraints of doctoral research and the fact that schools would be closing for a two-week *Hajj* break in late December. This first school was a private school which was recommended to me by the Principal of the private school where I initially did my pilot study the year before. I had made arrangements to contact the school prior to my arrival to Jeddah to inform them about my research and assess their interest in participating.

4.5.2. Sample and Setting

For this study, I drew on the concept of *maximum variation sampling* (Tagg, 1985), which is a form of purposeful sampling commonly used in qualitative studies according to which I sought differentiation in sites and in participants' ages and years of experience (Creswell, 2007, Tagg, 1985). Seidman (2006) notes that 'maximum variation sampling provides the most effective basic strategy for selecting participants for interview studies' (p. 52) particularly when the sample is not large. This was reiterated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) who argued that the most useful strategy for the naturalistic approach is maximum variation sampling. This strategy:

aims at capturing and describing the central themes or principal outcomes that cut across a great deal of participant or program variation. For small samples a great deal of heterogeneity can be a problem because individual cases are so different from each other. The maximum variation sampling strategy turns that apparent weakness into a strength by applying the following logic: Any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts of a program (Patton, 2002, p. 172).

More importantly in the light of my study, maximum variation seemed to be the most reasonable approach to addressing my research questions, which were exploratory in nature. It was decided that maximum variation can yield in a detailed description of each

individual in addition to identifying shared patterns across. I also decided to vary the sample and sites with the intention of increasing the robustness of my theoretical conclusions through cross-case analyses. Additionally, differentiating the sites and participants in this manner would increase the likelihood that the findings would reflect a diversity of teacher perspectives and experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). To achieve the aforementioned goal, I had to first define what I meant by an *Islamic Studies Teacher*, and then determine the range of school types in Jeddah that I would be able to explore.

Although an attempt was made to maximize variation in sites and in participating teachers' backgrounds, the final selection was made after having contacted the school principals and teachers and after assessing their interest in being involved in the research. It was essential that both the school principal and the staff be cooperative and willing to assist in the research logistics in order to maximize the benefits of this cooperation given the limited time available for the study. Additionally, it was of great importance to have participating teachers who were willing to take time out of their busy schedules to engage in research of this kind – which would require that they participate in interviews and make available their classes for observations.

4.5.2.1 Selection of school sites

Initially, the intention had been to work with six schools in total: three private and three public. I did, however, intend to follow a flexible design approach (Robson, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) and was therefore ready to revisit my initial plans. For instance, once I was in the field and after consulting the school directories packet (a packet given to me by the R&D office with phone numbers of schools in Jeddah), I realized that I had completely forgotten about a third category of schools known as *Tahfeez* schools (*Tahfeez*

means memorization; these schools are more widely known as Quranic schools because although the same nationwide IS curricula is taught, graduating students must have memorized the entire Quran); therefore, I decided to include one Tahfeez school in my design.

Several factors were taken into account when attempting vary the sites. Table 1, which follows the account of these factors below, summarizes the school settings selected for this study (See Appendix A for a brief description of each school).

1. Location (North, South or Central Jeddah): North Jeddah is where many of the new schools are being built given that the city is expanding northward; south Jeddah is where the old schools are, and schools in the southern area usually cater to the middle and lower socioeconomic strata. Central Jeddah has a mixture of both old and new schools.
2. Type of school (Private, Public or Tahfeez): I chose to include both public and private schools since public schools cater to the lower and middle classes in Saudi Arabia while private schools cater only to the upper class. It is important to note that although private and public school settings are significantly different in some respects, such as funding and student backgrounds, they are similar in the sense that both teach IS from the same national curriculum, which also stipulates the required textbooks.
3. Old/New Schools: Some of the schools chosen for the study were relatively new schools and others were significantly older; the oldest school in the study was a private school that was founded about 50 years ago, around the time that education for women started in Saudi Arabia.

Table 1. Type, location and age bracket of schools selected as study sites

School	Type	Location	Old/New
School One	Private	North	New < 7 years old
School Two	Private/Research	North	New < 4 years old
School Three	Public	Central	Old > 15 years
School Four	Private/ <i>Tahfeez</i>	South	Old > 15 Years
School Five	Public	South	Old > 15 Years
School Six	Private	South	Old > 15 Years

After having stipulated the main criteria for differentiation, I began contacting the schools by phone to schedule contact visits. I had a maximum of six schools in mind, which I estimated would make my research both feasible and realistic while at the same time allowing for a variety that would reflect the multiple perspectives that I was hoping to capture. Contacting the schools was not an easy task. Many of the numbers listed in the directory packet were wrong and were in fact numbers of domestic homes. Other schools did not pick up. When I did get an answer, I immediately asked to speak to the principal to explain my research. I would indicate that I have a formal letter of authorization from the Ministry to conduct my research and that I am calling to simply assess the interest in participating in the study. I would then set up an appointment with the Principal and ask for a preliminary meeting with the teachers in the school. For the contact visit and meeting with the all IS teachers in the school, I would first give an introduction about myself and what I do, I then share an information sheet which I had prepared about my study (See Appendix B), answer their questions and concerns and ask about their backgrounds. I

finally leave them with a consent form for them to think about whether they would like to participate (see Appendix C). The final selection was based on the degree of enthusiasm and cooperation that I sensed at each site through this contact visit. It is important to note, however, that since this study was about the individual teacher's meaning-making and not about the particulars of the school context, a greater emphasis was given to the individual than to the setting. This is consistent with the interpretive paradigm of this research, in which the object of study was persons, not settings. My pilot study was conducted along similar lines, in which I indicated the following:

There were three main inconsistencies or limitations to this study. First, given that the focus of this study was on the lived experience of the individual teachers, there were other aspects of the context of the teachers' work that were not examined; in particular I did not set out to explore the social structures in which the teaching was set or the details of the context of the school setting. Although in one sense the teachers whose experiences are reported here are themselves the product of contextual forces, I have nonetheless attempted to present the subjective reality of teachers working experiences without focusing on the particularities of the school context, hoping to shed the light on what it means to be an IS teacher in Saudi Arabia today. (Jamjoom, 2010, p. 550)

4.5.2.2 Selection of teachers

In addition to considerations such as ease of access and the desire to differentiate teacher backgrounds, I stipulated a number of criteria for participant teachers. First, they must be Saudi Arabian females and not foreigners teaching in the kingdom as discussed in the literature review chapter. Second, they must have a teaching degree in Islamic studies (which means that they had to be either intermediate or secondary school teachers, since elementary teachers do not need specialized degrees in IS). And third, they must be interested in participating in the study.

There were a total of 24 teacher participants in this study, of whom 12 taught at the intermediate level and 12 at the secondary level. There was relatively little variation in the teachers' degrees and places of graduation due to the fact that the study was limited in its geographic location. Hence, most of the teachers who taught in Jeddah had graduated from the College of Education in Jeddah. One teacher Graduated from the University of *Medinah* and another from the Teachers College in the city of *Tabuk*. Table 2 below provides details illustrating the background of the teacher participants in this study, including the sources of their degrees ("Place of Graduation"), years of experience, type of school setting, and grade levels taught.

Table 2. Background of teacher participants in the study

Teacher	School Setting	Years of Experience	Grade Levels	Place of Graduation
Teacher 1	Public	15	Intermediate	College of Education
Teacher 2	Public	21	Intermediate	College of Education
Teacher 3	Public	29	Intermediate	College of Education
Teacher 4	Private	16	Secondary	College of Education (Tabuk)
Teacher 5	Private R.	5	Secondary	College of Education
Teacher 6	Private R.	7	Secondary	KAU*
Teacher 7	Private R	10	Intermediate	College of Education
Teacher 8	Private	5	Intermediate	College of Education
Teacher 9	Public	3	Secondary	College of Education
Teacher10	Private T.	5	Secondary	College of Education
Teacher11	Private	3	Secondary	College of Teacher Prep.
Teacher12	Private	2	Intermediate	College of Education
Teacher13	Public	21	Intermediate	Madenah University
Teacher14	Public	29	Intermediate	College of Teacher Prep.
Teacher15	Private R.	9	Secondary	College of Education
Teacher16	Private	10	Intermediate	KAU
Teacher17	Private T.	9	Intermediate	College of Education
Teacher18	Private	2	Secondary	College of Education
Teacher19	Private	14	Intermediate	KAU
Teacher20	Private T.	8	Intermediate	College of Education
Teacher21	Private	3	Secondary	College of Education

Teacher22	Public	12	Secondary	College of Education
Teacher23	Public	15	Secondary	College of Education
Teacher24	Private	7	Secondary	College of Teacher Prep.

**King Abdulaziz University is the largest and main public university in Jeddah*

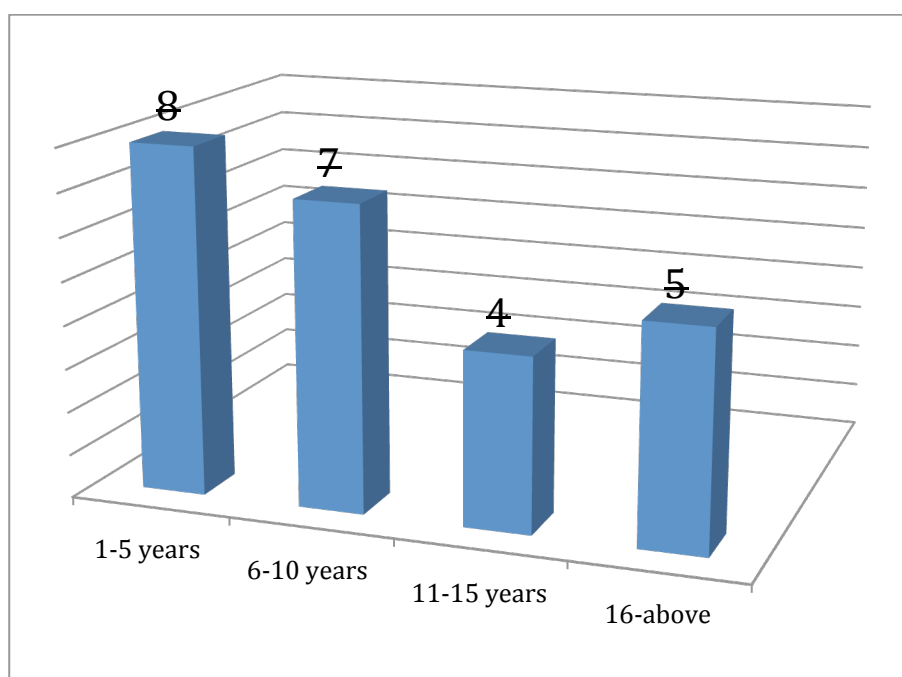
Table 2 above, also illustrates that most of the teacher participants graduated from the College of Education which is the main girl's teacher college in Jeddah. Three of the participating teachers graduated from the College of teacher preparation which only offered two year diplomas in subject specific teaching and not Bachelor degrees. Another three teachers graduated from King Abdulaziz University (KAU) which offers Bachelor degrees in Teaching Islamic Studies but, unlike the college of education, it does not have a practical training component in the final 2 years. Table 3 below summarizes the above information in terms of the number of participating teachers who taught at each of the four identified school types.

Table 3. Distribution of participating teachers across identified school types

Number of Teachers	School Type
8	Public School
8	Private School
4	Private/ Research
3	Private/ Tahfeez

Most of the variation was with regards to the years of teaching experience. Figure 8 below graphically illustrates the distribution of years of experience across the sample of participating teachers.

Figure 8 Years of teaching experience of teacher participants



Although my initial plan had been far more ambitious, the richness of individual cases in the study was surprising. At the beginning of my fieldwork I was constantly asking myself: What is the right sample size? How many teachers should I interview? When should I stop? I soon realized that I was asking myself the wrong mundane questions and that what I should have been contemplating all along was whether I had rich enough data that addressed my research questions and queries. I therefore decided to implement two measures to help me determine when to stop. First, I would review my findings after having conducted interviews with five teachers and try to identify common themes, differences and gaps in knowledge. Second, although at first sceptical of the concept of ‘saturation’ (Robson, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Seidman, 2006), I found it quite useful, not in the sense that further data appeared ‘to add little or nothing to what you have already learned’ (Robson, 2002, p. 199), but in determining when themes in both interviews and observations were becoming more salient. Additionally, I noticed that I had begun to anticipate the answers of teachers, which seemed to me to provide an indicator that it was time to terminate the fieldwork.

4.5.3 Data Collection Schedule

Table 4 below provides an overview of the data collection schedule for the study. The research lasted for a total of 18 weeks (about four and one-half months), not counting the ten-day Hajj break.¹⁵ A period of about three weeks was chosen as a suitable time to spend at each school in order to interview teachers, observe their classes and produce a

¹⁵ Schools in Saudi Arabia close for 10 to 14 days during the Hajj (pilgrimage) time every year to allow those individuals who perform the Hajj that year sufficient time to worship and to complete their pilgrimage.

sufficient amount of comprehensible data. The number of IS teachers per school varied depending on the size of the school. In light of the pilot study experience, I realized that spending a whole month in a single school could result in some loss of valuable time, since the teachers and sometimes their principal alike did not understand or appreciate the concept of a researcher lingering around in school while she was not visibly engaged in interviewing teachers or observing classes. Therefore, I decided to visit two schools per month by dividing the days of the week between the two sites – e.g., I would spend three days in school one and two in or vice versa, depending on my schedule of meetings with the IS teachers. Much of the spare time that I had between classes was spent in the IS teachers' room – though typically only when I was invited to do so by the teachers. Although not part of my study design or data collection regimen, the time spent with IS teachers in their room proved to be valuable in building rapport and trust. The teachers sometimes invited me to eat with them or just to drink some Arabian-style coffee. The conversations varied, ranging from questions about my experience studying in the UK to queries about family members and relatives of mine whom the teachers might know. None of these conversations were written down, recorded or analysed.

Table 4. Data collection schedule

November	December	Hajj Break	January	February	March
Work on attaining official access	School Four (Tahfeez)	Back to London for 10 days	School Two (private/research)	Still working with School Five (public)	Completing interviews with School Six (private)
Work in School one (private)	School Three (public)	Met with supervisor to review progress	School Five (public)	School Six (private)	

4.5.4. Data Collection Methods

Having established the main design features of the study, a key area for decision-making was the nature of the data that could best be collected in order to address the research questions at hand. The research questions, in turn, embody several important facets that were taken into account while deciding on data collection methods. First, since teacher knowledge is ‘tacit’ (Calderhead, 1987a, 1996) and often difficult to articulate, data collection procedures must be grounded in the teachers’ actual practice – thus, for example, the first research question was given a descriptive emphasis in order to focus on what teachers do in the classroom. Second, the research questions begin with descriptions of concrete accounts and move on to a more abstract level of inquiry intended to elicit meaning about teaching practice.

Bearing the above in mind, two principal methods for data collection were adopted for this study: semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations. In addition, I followed a particular order of data collection whereby I initiated the study with an

introductory interview (Interview a), followed up with two different classroom observations and finally conducted the main interview (Interview b). These data collection methods are described in more detail below.

4.5.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

In light of the aims of the study, an interview framework was needed that would enable me to provide a snapshot of the teachers' attempts to make sense of their own teaching. I had chosen semi-structured interviews as the primary method for data collection as I was trying to strike a balance between the open-endedness required in a phenomenological/interpretive study and maintaining a focus on key ideas (Moustakas, 1994). The approach to the interviews was influenced by Seidman's (2006) work on in-depth phenomenological interviews. Additionally, guidance was sought from Rubin and Rubin's (2005) interviewing approach known as *responsive interviewing*. Seidman (2006) puts forth a three-interview structure for phenomenological interviewing. In this schema, the first interview focuses on the life history or the context of the participants' experience, the second allows participants to reconstruct details of their present experience and the third encourages them to reflect on the meaning of their experience or on finding an emotional connection between their work and their life.

Although I had made use of Seidman's framework in designing my interview schedule, I did not commit to the 'three interview' program. I decided that two interviews with each teacher would be sufficient for the following reasons. First, from my pilot study experience, I learned that the participating teachers probably would not understand the concept of interviewing as a data collection method, for which reason they remained

somewhat uncertain throughout the process as to what exactly I was doing and why. Second, I noticed that, in the perception of some teachers, asking too many questions seemed more like an evaluation of their teaching than taking a neutral ‘interest’ in it. This was a perception that I wanted to avoid, as its effect on the participating teachers would distort the data that I was collecting. I recall, for instance, that when I asked one teacher to elaborate on a certain topic she thought that this meant that I had judged her previous answer to be ‘wrong’ – as was clear when she subsequently asked me whether her follow-up answer was ‘correct.’ (Another teacher asked me after every answer she gave: ‘Is this what you want? Did I answer your questions?’) Thus, different as this might be from interviewing in a western context, I realized that a request like ‘Could you elaborate on X’ might alarm the teachers, regardless of my reassurances that there are no ‘wrong’ or ‘right’ answers. Saudi society is, after all, a culture of ‘black’ and ‘white’, ‘true’ and ‘false’, ‘permitted’ and ‘forbidden’, in which grey areas are scarce or, in some domains, non-existent. Similarly, I also learned to refrain from beginning questions with phrases like ‘Why did you do that?’ since I did not want my questions to sound intimidating. Hence, I would often say: ‘I found it interesting when you did X. Could you *explain to me* why you did that?’ Speaking in Arabic, I used the word *Tishraheeli*, which literally means *explain to me*, thereby communicating that my position as researcher did not mean that I considered myself an expert in the field, and that I was indeed asking for information and/or opinion to understand and not seeking to validate a preconceived notion.

For this study, I worked with each teacher individually, according to her own schedule and preference. I would usually ask for an introductory interview with the teacher, which lasted about 30 minutes. This interview can best be described as ‘a conversation with a purpose’ since my engagement in it was more salient than in the second and main interview. In the first interview, I often described the goals of my study

and spoke briefly about myself and about the reasons why I chose my research topic (a question that often came up in my pilot study). I then moved on to reiterate the non-evaluative nature of the study, which was necessary because Saudi teachers are used to constant evaluation by Ministry supervisors. I then moved on to questions about how they came to be IS teachers by asking them about what motivated them to enter this field in the first place, their years of experience, places where they had previously worked and so on (See Appendix E for a sample of Interviews *a* and *b* which was translated to English for this purpose). Rubin and Rubin (2005) explain that introducing oneself and one's topic is the first stage in responsive interviewing, which is followed by a list of easy questions and finally the more intellectually difficult questions. Their framework was useful in guiding my work with the teachers as it allowed for enough time to build rapport and gave me an opportunity to explain that I was not judging the teachers on the quality of their answers and that I was more interested in their experience. Towards the end of the interview I would arrange a date for two classroom observations, explain the purpose of the observations and discuss the post-interview and its aims. I usually indicated that the post interview would be longer and might require 60 minutes or more. I found this very helpful in the sense that teachers usually scheduled the interviews when they had a lot of free time. I did, however, try to keep the main interview date as close to the observation dates as possible. Thus, some of the main interviews took place right after the observations, whereas others were no later than two to three days thereafter.

Of the 24 main interviews conducted with teachers, 22 were tape recorded and transcribed in their original language, Arabic. For each teacher, both the introductory and the main interview were recorded on the same tape and transcribed in that order. I found that on a few occasions it was harder to record the introductory interview since teachers were still unconformable with the idea of being recorded and were often uncertain about

the idea of ‘interviewing’ as a form of data collection. For the first interviews, I was able to record 20 interviews and took notes on those with the other four teachers. For the second (main) interview, all but two of the teachers gave me consent to record. My having attended two of their lessons and having had an introductory interview with them made them more at ease with the idea of recording their words. In fact, the teachers who opted out of the recording option indicated that the issue was not one of ‘trust’ but had more to do with their beliefs regarding women’s voices being *oura* (private), and that recordings, no matter how carefully secured, left open the possibility that a male could listen to the tapes.

The sites of the interviews varied according to each teacher’s preference. Sometimes interviews were conducted in the school library or cafeteria. Other times it was in the classroom after a lesson. I did not specify a site, but left it entirely up to the teachers to choose. I did, however, indicate that a quiet place would be preferable given the length of the interview and the fact that I would be recording.

For the second interview (Interview *b*), I began by asking the teachers to first describe what they do in general as they enter a classroom. I asked them to visualize what they do with their students. I also asked general questions about their views on Islamic studies content and their interaction with the students. While having an interview protocol was valuable (See Appendix D), many of the questions for the second interview were ultimately added after I had observed the lessons. After the observation I would usually select some potential incidents to be discussed and would prepare some follow up questions about these incidents. I used my sub-questions as broad guidelines for selecting the teaching incidents. Often, the teachers themselves would choose a particular incident to elaborate on, and this discourse would lead to a further discussion of subsequent incidents.

Most of the questions for the second interview were in response to what the teachers would say. I would ask for clarification, seek more details or request for stories. For example, the observation extract reproduced below was flagged as an example of *student-teacher interaction* and *teacher role in behaviour management*, and the list of follow-up questions that I prepared for my second interview with this teacher included several that were intended to elicit elaboration on these aspects. In chapter 5, I refer to this incident and discuss it in more detail within the framework of the themes and findings (see Appendix E for complete Interview):

Observation Extract: 12th Grade Lesson about Zeena

Students were throwing questions at the teacher about different issues regarding *zeena* (beautifying). They were mainly concerned with what is permitted and what is forbidden. One student asked about the religious ruling with regard to piercings. The teacher indicated that ear piercings are considered normal and natural for women. The student then abruptly asked whether piercings in other areas were ok. The teacher indicated that it depends, but that anything that transgresses the *fitra* (nature) is usually *Makrooh* or beyond the limit. The student then looked at her friend laughingly and said:

‘Maha has a piercing down there [student referring to vagina].’

Other students in class were in shock and some laughed.

The teacher looked at the speaker angrily and said in an aggressive tone that such a joke was extremely inappropriate and then turned away from her. The teacher continued her lesson, ignoring this girl for the rest of the session.

One disadvantage, I realized, arose in the case of the interviews that were not tape recorded. Although I initially attempted to take notes on spot, it was often difficult to maintain eye contact and to write thorough notes simultaneously. I therefore decided in cases in which recording was not feasible to simply listen and to write down my notes after the interview was finished. This seemed to me to constitute the most respectful and viable

solution. The interviews that were transcribed verbatim were used as a primary data source given that they provided a word for word account of the explanations offered by the teachers. Interviews that were not recorded were used mainly as auxiliaries to the transcribed interviews. This approach was decided based on the notion that the words that people use are of considerable analytic importance. These ‘situated vocabularies’ (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) provide valuable insights about the ways in which individuals from a particular group understand their surroundings and engage in the production of a social construction of reality (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

4.5.4.2 Non-participant observations

The choice of non-participant observations as a method of data collection was underpinned by the exploratory nature of my research questions. Observations are commonly used in exploratory studies in which the aim is to find out what is going on in a particular situation (Robson, 2002). Observation also provides a vantage point for getting at aspects of ‘real life’. Nonetheless, observation is neither simple nor unproblematic. There remains a major concern as to the extent to which the researcher influences both the individuals and the situations being observed (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Robson, 2002). Although this concern remains a subject of debate in methodological literature, several steps intended to mitigate the influence of the researcher were taken in this study. First, I intentionally selected non-participant observation or unobtrusive observation, in which a goal was for the researcher to remain a pure *observer* in order to minimize any disruption on my part. Thus, I always sat at the back of the classroom and made a conscious effort to distribute my attention widely. Second, the purpose of the observation was clearly communicated to the teachers. I intentionally reiterated that I was not a subject matter expert and that my goal was to seek to understand the teachers’ practice and

expertise. This was very different from the evaluative form of observations that teachers were used to from Education Ministry officials, in which the aim is often to correct or guide the teachers' practice. Third, my general familiarity with the context, having once been a student studying the same curriculum, made me aware of the subtleties and customs of the classroom. This seeming advantage of being an insider, however, carried even more serious potential consequences for my research, i.e., the risk that presuppositions and assumptions might cloud my understanding of the situation at hand. Persistently, however, I tried to achieve a balance of roles between being an outsider after my many years spent as a student abroad, being an insider who was familiar with the relevant customs and mores, and being a researcher interested in studying a phenomenon that has not been studied extensively. The teachers often presented me to the students hastily during the first observation session. They would indicate that I am a PhD student coming from the UK and that I was doing a research on Islamic Studies teachers. The teachers many times would encourage the students to work hard to earn their PhD's referring to me as an example of scholarly aptitude. Although this made me slightly uncomfortable, the teachers mentioned that it was of significance for their students as they felt that I was of closer age to the students, articulated by one of the teachers as 'being a good role model'.

I conducted two classroom observations with each teacher. Both observations were scheduled after the introductory interview. Each observation session lasted for about one hour, and thus the observations for the study as a whole totalled approximately 48 hours. The observations were unstructured (Robson, 2002) in the sense that, given that every classroom situation was different, I did not decide what to observe before entering the classes. I used a simple observation rubric, with two columns dividing the paper in half, one for simple description and the other for my own reflections on the classroom interactions observed (see Appendix F for sample rubric). In the description section I

would write notes on such things as teachers' words or students' reactions, sometimes even describing the setting, drawing pictures of the class, etc. I did not limit myself by choosing a specific criterion for observation. This was not easy, given the inherent complexity of the classroom situation and the presence of predetermined customs that were already part of the daily interactions between teacher and students. I did, however, focus primarily on the teacher since she was my object of interest, and hence I noted her actions, facial expressions, words and so on. This was parallel to my observation approach in the pilot study, which proved to be valuable in the data analysis stage. Although my field notes were written during the observation sessions, I took up the discipline of daily writing, as suggested by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995). I transformed my notes into a more concrete narrative and tried to preserve the actual speech of the participants hence I wrote my notes in Arabic. Reflections were also written at home on the same day of the observation since I learned from the pilot study that observation details fade from memory or become muddled if not recorded as soon after as possible after the actual observation.

4.5.5. Establishing Rapport and the Role of Researcher

As someone with roots in Saudi Arabian society – Jeddah in particular – my relationship with the teachers and the role identities that I took on as a researcher were multifaceted. This fact facilitated my work in several areas, but made it more complex in other respects. I argue here that despite certain immediate advantages – such as intimate knowledge of the vernacular and familiarity with the people, the discourse and the environment – a number of problems also had to be confronted and resolved.

Arriving in Jeddah, my native city, gave me a slightly different feeling this time than on previous occasions. I knew that I was coming back – after having spent several years abroad – as a researcher with the intention of recording a certain phenomenon that had not been studied extensively. I understood the advantages that being an insider would offer me, particularly since I was a member of a well-known local family of merchants. Thus, I knew that *familiarity* and *kinship* provided me with significant advantages. Altorki (1988) illustrates this fact in her study of *The Elite Families of Saudi Arabia* when she notes that:

In order to appreciate the crucial importance of an insider's view for an understanding of the reality of women's power in urban Saudi Arabian society, one must know that [in] Jeddah, in spite of its appearance as a modern, perhaps 'Americanized' city, all social classes are still primarily structured by kinship and secondarily by friendship ties that extend the person's network of social interaction beyond family connections. (p. 64)

Repeatedly, for instance, I found that the gatekeepers and/or teachers knew my relatives by name. Others were reassured by the fact that I belonged to a family that had been historically involved in establishing the first independent school in Jeddah in 1905 and that I was related to a well-known female Da'iya (*preacher*), Dr Samira Jamjoom, whom I never actually met but knew very well by reputation. Dr Jamjoom had been involved in training many of the teachers who participated in my study, in addition to the various religious sermons that she still holds for women. In short, I found practical advantages in my field situation: I was comfortably set up in my family home, I was fluent in the vernacular and was familiar to the teachers who were the subjects of my field research.

Being an insider, however, did not afford me immunity from all types of challenges. Among the issues of which I had nevertheless to be aware, the most important was careful self-presentation. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) explain, 'The personal

characteristics of the researcher and how these relate to those of the interviewee can be important though their effects can never be entirely determinate, and they can be controlled to some degree by the interviewer's presentation of self' (p. 141). In this light, I took measures to dress modestly and grew my hair slightly longer just below my ears. I wore long skirts and shirts that were loose and that covered my elbows. I did not wish to appear too modern or liberal, nor too strict, but just simple and plain. I also found that the teachers were interested in several facets of my life. They asked about my being married and accompanied by my husband abroad, which they perceived as a positive.

Being an insider studying abroad had another irksome drawback in that some of the teachers exhibited some apprehension that I would judge them as a westerner. They inquired as to why I was conducting the study in a western context and under the auspices of a western university. In fact, this appeared to be one of their main concerns. I explained briefly that being abroad provided me with certain advantages and that the research facilities were much more advanced. I also explained that much research is conducted in the area of Islamic Studies today without being "Orientalist" in the negative sense. Even though I understood that it was not my role to explicate new perspectives on the dilemma of *Islam and the West*, I was constantly asked about my opinion on this matter, and I knew that participating in such informal discussions prior to my interviews would facilitate the building of rapport and trust.

Nonetheless, there were instances during these informal discussions – which are not part of this study as such – in which I intentionally chose not to pursue the subject further. This was the case with issues that were seen as religious taboos, on which I judged from experience that any further chitchat on the matter would be counterproductive – e.g., veiling. In such cases, I reiterated my ignorance as a non-specialist in religious matters.

Although my native status provided me with certain advantages in terms of being part of the same cognitive world as that of the participating teachers (Stephen & Greer, 1981), I still found that I was being resocialized into my own culture. Moreover, it was sometimes difficult to maintain an emotional distance from that which I experienced in the field (Cassell, 1978), and this may well be the most difficult challenge to overcome when one is studying one's own society. Throughout my fieldwork, however, I strove to be reflexive and wholly aware of my moments of disappointment or delight. This degree of reflexivity has been invaluable to the evolution of my research.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

From an official and logistical standpoint, I have already completed and received the approval from the Ethical Committee at the University of Oxford. During my fieldwork, I made arrangements to meet with all the school principals and all participating teachers prior to the commencement of my work. This was done through the initial contact visit where I shared information about my study openly. I provided the teachers with a consent form and reiterated that participation was voluntary and that I wasn't a researcher from the Ministry of Education where participation would have been compulsory. Also I did not try to persuade the reluctant teachers to participate as I left the matter entirely in their hands.

Although I managed to attain informed consent from school principals and teachers alike, I still found such procedural elements to be inherently unsatisfactory in addressing many of the ethical questions that came to mind during fieldwork. For example, I understood that my research places the teacher at the vanguard of the research process, where the teacher functions as the central informant, the only subject of research and the

source of reflection (leading ultimately to personal narrative and descriptive outputs). This kind of research, which digs deeply into individuals' experiences, requires that a researcher such as myself 'penetrate...the teacher's mind' (Sabar, 1994, p. 110), which often brings the affective aspect to the foreground (Sabar, 1994). In many instances for example the teachers talked about their own children, husbands, work conditions, and aspirations therefore I tried to strike a balance between the need to probe deeply into information about the teachers' experiences while respecting their comfort zone, i.e. the extent to which they feel at ease disclosing such information. I also ensured that the teachers' identities would be protected given that the Saudi Arabian society is still essentially conservative in nature and given the sensitive character of the issues which arose at times e.g. *personal views on Osama Bin Laden, the Palestinian/Israeli situation, anti-western sentiments* which may be misinterpreted as *fundamentalist* or put the teachers at risk.

On a final note, it is essential to bear in mind that the findings of this study will reflect in part the teachers' own religious beliefs and their views on what constitutes good Islamic Studies teaching. Hence, it was vital for me to 'bracket' or hold back any preconceptions or biases that I may have about what constitutes good Islamic Studies teaching. As explained in the previous section, I found that being reflexive of my own feelings, even writing them down at times was most valuable throughout this study.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to discuss the research questions, strategy and design. I began by explicating the process by which the research questions were

developed. Next, an outline of the conceptual framework which guided the study was presented while highlighting on the phenomenological paradigm and the non-deficit model of teaching adopted by the researcher. This was followed by a detailed discussion on the genesis of the methodology with a focus on lessons learned from the pilot study. I finally discussed the actual methodological design reflecting on issues of access, sample and site selection and data collection methods and schedule. The chapter concluded with a discussion on ethical issues and the role of researcher.

Chapter 5: Procedures for Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate on the *general principles* that guided the analysis of the data and clarify the *process* by which the data were analysed. Although for the purposes of clarity these procedures are described in a series of stages, the analysis was actually neither linear nor straightforward, but cyclical. Moreover, data analysis was not a purely mechanical process, but rather a creative one that sought to bring out a depiction of the essential features of the experience narrated by the teachers who participated in the study. As such, the analysis involved identifying patterns that emerged from the examination of the data across material generated by diverse participants or observed in diverse contexts, telling the story of these patterns and being perceptive of the variations within these patterns. Examples to clarify this approach will be provided in the course of this chapter. First, however, we can note that data analysis for this study served the following two purposes:

- Organizing the vast quantity of unstructured data into a coherent structure to allow for review, critical analysis and comparison.
- Developing a deep understanding of how teachers make sense of their teaching in order to structure the write up of key essences.

Although unrefined analytical insights and interpretations emerged during data collection, formal analysis began with the organization of data. The initial goal was to generate a *sense of the whole* while putting the data into ‘analysis-friendly’ form, e.g., checking transcriptions and formatting data display. The analysis was also guided by the

purpose of the study as exemplified in the research questions and in the primary aim of phenomenological analysis, which ‘seeks to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people’ (Patton, 2002, p. 482). Additionally – and after having consulted the literature on qualitative data analysis, which suggests that *perfectionism* may well be a major caveat in the process of analysis – I began my analysis with the premise that the findings may raise important questions that can be taken up in future studies. Hence, gaps, unresolved ambiguities and possible emerging themes that present analysis cannot fully address on the basis of the data at hand are noted as part of the limitations of the study in the concluding chapter.

The sources of data used in this study were the interviews and observations conducted with the participating teachers. There is no universal recipe for data analysis, and actual processes must always be responsive to the available material and the questions and goals of the study. Nonetheless, guidelines and insights of analysis for this study were derived largely from Miles and Huberman (1994), Patton (2002), Carney’s (1990) ‘Ladder of Analytical Abstraction’, Moustakas (1994) and van Manen (1997). The findings of this study are reported in detail in chapters 5 and 6. In what follows here, I will begin by explaining the principles that guided the analysis of the data, after which I will detail the stages of data analysis and provide examples.

5.2 Data Management and Preparation

Two important considerations guided the final form of data display: first, I wanted the data to be displayed in a manner that facilitated comparisons and between interview and observation data. Second, I wanted data display to facilitate comparisons across cases,

i.e., across individual teachers for the purpose of group analysis.

All of the audiotaped participant interviews were initially transcribed word-for-word in Arabic. This choice to maintain these data in the participants' original *indigenous words* was motivated by a desire to reflect as directly as possible 'the categories and terms used by the informants themselves' (Bernard & Ryan, 1998, p. 608). This decision was also taken after having translated all of the pilot study interviews into English, which turned out to be impractical because the researcher had to continually check printed data against the original audio tapes to find the exact words that the teachers used. For similar reasons, I decided to function personally as translator for those quotes that were rendered into English for presentation and discussion in the findings chapters, using professional editorial assistance only for the punctuation and in some cases to preserve native-like readability in the transcribed presentation of these translated speech samples. However, as will be seen in the chapters that follow, original Arabic words are retained with glosses in some of these quotes where the terms evoke particularly language and/or culture-specific meanings.

Throughout the dissertation, names of participating teachers have been replaced with numbers, i.e., 'Teacher 1,' Teacher 2', etc. Given that two interviews and two observations were conducted with each teacher, I decided to number the interviews and observations as follows: Interview 1a and Interview 1b (i.e., first and second interview with Teacher 1), Observation 1a and Observation 1b (i.e., first and second observation of Teacher 1's class). All interview transcription was conducted after the formal field work had been concluded, whereas the notes from the observations were typed on the same day that each class observations was conducted. In this regard, I used a simple rubric that facilitated writing remarks and reflections about the interview and observation data in the

margins. Finally, it is noteworthy that *data reduction* (Miles & Huberman, 1994) such as condensing material in matrices, graphs and charts was not conducted for this study given that the phenomenological orientation required the researcher to be sceptical about the effects of such arguably inauthentic procedures. Indeed, rigid coding is incompatible with phenomenology, within which framework one seeks rather, through continued reading of material with the goal of identifying and understanding the invariant constituents of experience, to ‘uncover and explicate the ways in which people in a particular (work) setting come to understand, account for, take action and otherwise manage their day-to-day situation’ (van Manen, 1997, p. 31).

After having established an organizational format that facilitated the process of data analysis, I was guided by several overarching principals that informed the analysis itself. These principles are described in the following section.

5.3 Principles of Data Analysis

The following four principles provided both an organizing and a procedural framework for the analysis of the data collected in this study:

Principle 1: *Purpose will guide analysis*

Principle 2: *All data will be treated equally through ‘horizontalization’*

Principle 3: *‘Interpretive Thematic Analysis’ will be the primary method of data analysis,*

Principle 4: *Data will be used to illustrate meaning as understood by the participants themselves.*

These principles are discussed in detail in what follows.

Principle 1: *Purpose will guide analysis*

Phenomenology assumes that there is an essence or essences to every shared experience. The nature and purpose of phenomenology, which aims to understand how individuals make sense of a particular phenomenon (in this case, IS teaching), influenced the analysis process and its outcome in many ways. First, the analysis focused on the patterns and commonalities that represent the essence of the experience of IS teachers. Hence, the findings are presented in the form of major themes that characterize this experience while attempting also to capture subtle differences across individuals or across clusters that might be observed in the data. Second, variables such as teacher age and years of experience or type of school were systematically organized and analysed in tables and charts for the purpose of explicating the sample of the study only (see chapter 4). These are provided as relevant facts for the reader's convenience and to facilitate understanding. Since the study was not conceived or designed to be about how teachers differ according to different variables but was about uncovering the essential structures of the common experience of teaching IS in Saudi girls' schools, from the teachers' perspectives, these variables were not looked at comparatively.

Principle 2: *All data will be treated equally through 'horizontalization'*

For reasons that should be clear by this point, no data from the interview transcripts and or observations were or could fittingly be considered to be 'irrelevant' for the purposes of this study. Rather, in intention and as far as possible in execution, all data were treated with equal value. In practice, this meant that all data were *horizontalized*

(Moustakas, 1994) and spread out for examination. All elements and perspectives were given equal weight and were used to corroborate each other. For example, interview transcripts were not seen as primary data and observations as secondary; instead, both were used equally to elucidate meaning. This approach was planned for during fieldwork, since many of the interview questions were generated after the observation of particular incidents in class (see Chapter 4). Even talk that was not directly relevant to the research questions was considered for analysis. This inclusion was partly due to the exploratory nature of the study but also, once again, to its phenomenological focus on lived experiences. For example, on many occasions, the IS teachers talked about themselves as parents, women and wives instead of as teachers. These, which proved to have substantive value in understating participants' teaching practice and the meanings that they found therein, were considered relevant to the study in ways that will be further clarified in the presentation of the findings in Chapters 6 and 7.

Principle 3: *'Interpretive Thematic Analysis' will be the primary method of data analysis*

Interpretive Thematic Analysis was chosen as the most suitable method given its compatibility with the study's phenomenological orientation. Thematic analysis involves searching across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun & Clark, 2006). In the present study, the 'themes' or patterns thus identified were data-driven through the use of inductive analytical approaches. Moreover, the word *theme* in this study is used synonymously with *essence(s)* – since, as explained above, the latter describes the patterns with respect to which the study was primarily concerned. Thus, both terms are used to refer to the three core themes on which the findings chapters focus, which were determined through an analytical process of clustering similar meanings together (into relatively loose *meaning clusters*) and moving toward a more precise understanding of the

phenomena in question through further examination of related and contrasting data – yielding a *thick description* of the main ‘essences’ found in the study. The study is, however, interpretive as well as descriptive, although both the process and the write up focused on reflecting (and interpreting) the subjective meaning of the experiences as lived and reported by the participating IS teachers. In fact, given the phenomenological orientation, safeguarding the subjective point of view of the teachers was of paramount importance. For this reason, too, analysis of overarching themes was supported by reference to excerpts from the raw data – as can be seen in the findings chapters – to ensure that interpretation remained directly linked to the words of the participants. In some cases, however, second order understandings through which to interpret and describe the phenomenon under investigation (Schutz, 1932) were formulated and are presented, particularly when the observation data elucidated meanings which did not come across clearly through the interviews (as in the case of the subtheme of *hybrid teaching* – see Chapter 7).

Principle 4:

Data will be used to illustrate meaning as understood by the participants themselves

The aim of analysis in the present study was not to impose meaning, evaluate performance or find causal explanations for potential problems in teaching practice as identified by the researcher, but to remain as faithful as possible to the explanations offered by the teachers for what they do and how they experience the phenomenon of IS teaching. For this reason, no preconceived themes were identified from the review of literature to be checked against the study data. Rather, the themes or essences presented and discussed in the chapters that follow were derived from the shared

experiences of the teachers. Thus, as noted, in the analysis, the specific words that the participants used were given great value and often guided the categorization of themes. For example, the use of the word *ikna* ' ('convince') provided an initial thread that led to a potential pattern, which was noted as follows: *The teachers reported a constant need for ikna* ' (*persuasion*) *in their teaching*. This pattern led to the development of a categorical entity under the heading 'persuasion', and the researcher's efforts to deconstruct the concept of *persuasion* led further to the theme of 'teaching as persuasion', as represented later in this dissertation.

5.4 Stages of Data Analysis

This section describes the specific stages in which the data analysis procedures described above were carried out. The first stage, *Reading and Orientation*, consisted of familiarization with the data. In the second stage, *Inductive Analysis*, patterns were discovered and themes therefore emerged from the data. In the third stage, *Deductive Analysis*, these themes were tested against and modified on the basis further examination of the interview and observation data. In the fourth and final *Creative Synthesis* phase, where decisions about the holistic depiction of the study were deliberated. In what follows I explain each stage in detail, drawing on relevant examples to illustrate the cognitive process that took place through a monitoring of my own analytical procedures.

5.4.1 Reading and Orientation

Given that I performed my own transcription and re-writing of observation notes,

initial (informal) familiarization with the data took place prior to this stage; nonetheless, the reading of data in this stage was a crucial part of the analysis, as it was here that I took up a more systematic approach to familiarization. The strategy that I enacted was to begin my reading within a given case, followed by a cross-case reading. Beginning with a case-specific reading meant that for each teacher involved in this study I identified critical incidents and wrote down descriptive and explanatory comments about the experiences of that individual teacher, likes and dislikes, views, beliefs etc. Next, I read my data in cross-case fashion, meaning that I read all of the interviews successively, followed by a similar reading of all of the observations accounts. At this stage, I began to identify common patterns in their teaching practice and experiences of the participants, and my notes at this stage became more categorical or thematical in nature than previously.

5.4.3 Inductive Analysis

After spreading out the data for examination and after writing the initial notes, I began organizing the data into *meaningful clusters* (Moustakas, 1994) with the goal of identifying emergent themes. Meaning clusters are different from core themes or essences in the sense that they are clustered with as much openness as possible and, at this point, no attempt is made to address or reflect the research question(s). Rather, meaning clusters are a crystallization and categorization of what the participants have said, using as much as possible the participants' actual words. Each meaning cluster thus 'expresses a unique and coherent meaning' (Hycner, 1985,p.282) irrespective of what the researcher seeks to learn (i.e., the research question). During the analysis, whenever there was ambiguity or uncertainty as to whether a given statement constituted or belonged to a discrete meaning

cluster, these statements were nevertheless included since meaning clusters represent an initial attempt to thematize data and are therefore expected to be loose and inclusive.

Developing these meaningful clusters meant that at this stage my data changed from a flowing narrative to discrete chunks of transcript and observation notes. Although at first I felt uncomfortable about fragmenting the teachers' experiences through this re-organization of data, I came to realize that this is one manifestation of the hermeneutic circle, whereby a new whole emerges at the end of each (stage of) analysis. Notably, however, at the very beginning of analysis I had a list of eleven meaningful clusters: *teaching and the self, teaching and the community, limited thinking, defending religious values, behaviour management, role as preacher vs. role as teacher, IS as a moral subject vs. IS as an academic subject, importance of charisma, teaching strategies of persuasion, becoming an IS teacher, struggle*. At this stage, these meanings represented a simple categorization of the experiences described by the teachers, irrespective of whether they were later found to be essential, contextual, or tangential to the structure of the experience of IS teaching. Nonetheless, naming the meaningful clusters at this stage involved not only reflecting the participants' original words and thoughts, but also my own interpretations (van Manen, 1997). Thus, for example, only one IS teacher in the study used the term *charisma* to refer to her charm and personality as a teacher. I did, however, determine that this term could reasonably be used to encompass all data in which the teachers referred to their attractive individual traits and innate abilities in the areas of interpersonal skills and persuasion, including voice, dress, personality, and humour.

I then developed a set of eleven corresponding tables, each containing all of the data associated to a given meaningful cluster (see Appendix G). This was done not in order to condense the data but to organize it in a manner that facilitated the construction of a

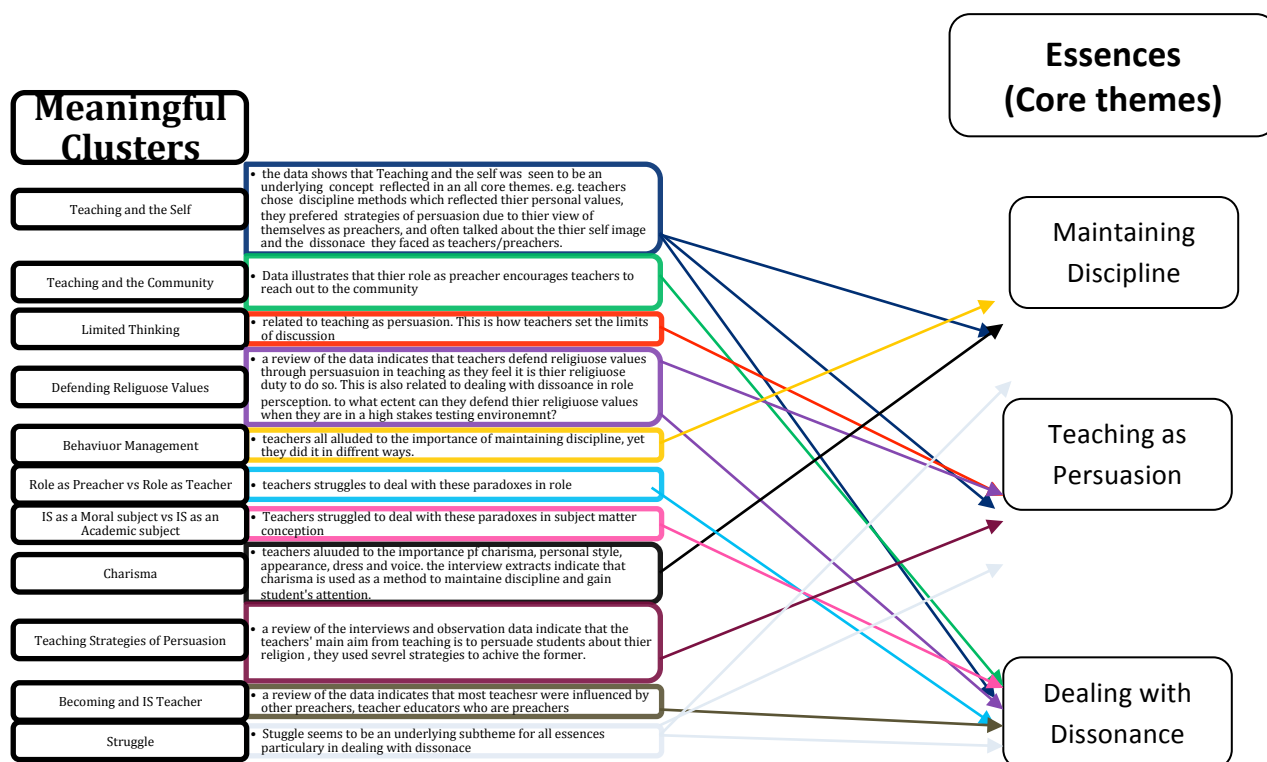
holistic narrative. This means that I regularly went back to the original Data transcripts. The tables contained four headings: Key Words, Interview Extracts, Observation Extracts and Potential Links to other meaningful clusters and emergent themes. These tables were then used both as an organizational framework and as a method of data display (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in order to facilitate cross-case analysis and the identification of patterns. As Miles and Huberman point out, coherent data display ‘permits careful comparisons, detection of differences, noting of patterns and themes’ (p. 92). In practice, however, this process involved not only use of the table (as an elaborate “key”) but also constant reference back to the original transcripts and observation notes as well.

As noted, the meaning clusters inevitably began as loose and contingent groupings; however, I proceeded to look for what Moustakas (1994) terms *Invariant Constituents*’, i.e., core themes of experience by searching for connections across meaning clusters. This stage involved ‘looking for a means of drawing together the emergent themes and producing a structure which allows you to point to all of the most interesting and important aspects of the participants’ accounts’ (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 96). Here, I sought to determine whether any of the meaning clusters in turn clustered naturally together – in other words, whether there seemed to be common themes or essences that united two or more meaning clusters. Such essences emerge through rigorous examination of the data with attention to the essence of each unit of meaning and to the context from which it was derived (Hycner, 1985).

At this point, looking for connections was done manually by placing each meaning cluster on a separate piece of a paper and physically manoeuvring these units in order to capture the parallel or similar understandings that they represented. Through this process, for example, *charisma* came to be regarded as a subtheme associated with participating IS

teachers' efforts to maintain discipline. Similarly, themes that appeared to stand in opposition to each other – e.g., *Islamic Studies as a moral discipline* and *Islamic Studies as an academic discipline* - were placed at opposite poles. Greater clarity emerged as more time was spent re-examining the data in this manner and reflecting on its overall context. For example, further analysis of these two final opposing themes suggested that they could be grouped together under one *invariant constituent* or core theme, *Dealing with Dissonance*. To determine the final core themes, each meaning cluster was at last considered in relation to the following question: "Is this an essential constituent of teaching IS as experienced by the participating teachers?" After a long process of iterative analysis, I decided that the core themes that emerged from the interrelationships among the eleven meaning clusters were as follows: 1) Maintaining Discipline; 2) Persuasive Teaching; and 3) Dealing with Dissonance. The analytical process to this point is

Figure 9. Meaningful clusters and essential themes



After determining the three essential themes, I began the process of *imaginative variation* (Moustakas, 1994), which Patton (2002) describes succinctly using the analogy of ‘moving around a statue to see it from all perspectives’ (p.486). This process contributed to the understanding of the varying meanings and feelings associated with each theme and thus helped to highlight the variations in participants’ experiences of that theme. Performing imaginative variation was also important because, for example, although all of the participating IS teachers spoke about the core theme of Maintaining Discipline; each teacher manifested this theme differently in her teaching, as will be seen in Chapter 6. Performing imaginative variation also involved developing both a textural and a structural description of each core theme. A textural description involves ‘what’ is being experienced, e.g. Persuasive Teaching, and a structural description involves finding

out ‘how’ it is experienced. According to Moustakas (1994), this involves turning ones attention to the conditions that precipitate the textural qualities, i.e., the feelings and thoughts of participants as represented in the data.

5.4.4 Deductive Analysis

Once the patterns and themes had been established through inductive analysis, deductive analysis was used to carry out the final confirmatory stage. Deductive analysis for the purposes of the present study refers to and consisted of three crucial steps: 1) affirming the authenticity and appropriateness of themes generated from the inductive process through checking recurrence across the data; 2) carefully examining divergent cases or data that did not appear to fit with the categories that had been developed (Patton, 2002); and 3) ensuring sensitivity to context by identifying, where appropriate, links to the existing literature (Yardley, 2000).

First, in order for a theme to be considered an *essence* of the phenomenon studied, it was necessary to check for the recurrence of that theme across cases. In *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis*, Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) recommend that, since group level themes are taken from individual examples, it is best to measure the recurrence of these themes across cases, particularly where large study samples are concerned. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to such measurement as ‘counting’. Although the hallmark of qualitative research is that it goes beyond quantitative assessment and aims to tell us something about essential qualities, a great deal of counting typically needs to go on in the background when qualities are being evaluated, such as when the aim of research is to identify themes and patterns and to understand whether a given incident or type of event happens or is experienced in the same way every time (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Hycener (1985) also notes in this regard that ‘it is important to note the actual number of times a unit of relevant meaning was listed since that in itself might indicate some significance’ (p.286).

Since the study sample consisted of 24 IS teachers, which is considered large for a phenomenological study, the researcher determined to measure the recurrence of themes in the data, setting the benchmark that to be considered a main theme or essence, a given theme would have to be identified as recurring in more than three-fourths of the sample. Table 5 below presents a summary of the recurrence across the study sample of the three themes that achieved this status: Teaching as Persuasion, Maintaining Discipline, and Dealing with Dissonance.

Table 5. Recurrence of themes across study sample

Theme/Essence	Recurrence	Comments
Teaching as Persuasion	22 Teachers	Although all 24 teachers referred to the importance of convincing students of their religion through teaching, two teachers emphasised the academic dimension of the subject rather than teaching for persuasion
Maintaining Discipline	All 24 teachers	All of the IS teachers in the study talked about the importance of maintaining discipline. However, each teacher manifested this concern differently in her teaching.
Dealing with Dissonance	All 24 teachers	All teachers espoused a feeling of conflict, particularly in role and subject matter understanding. However, this conflict was not visible in practice from the observations, as all but two of the teachers integrated the conflicting roles smoothly into their teaching.

After carefully reviewing the recurrence of the main themes across the study sample, the second step involved looking closely at divergent (‘deviant’) cases in the study and assessing why they were considered deviant in the first place. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) argue that ambiguities in the data must be dealt with clearly, noting that: ‘it is not that contradictions shouldn’t be in the data[; in fact], they are often the richest part of the text, but the analysis of the contradictions should not itself be contradictory’ (p.182). Thus, a discussion of the experiences of the two teachers represented as diverging from the

group with respect to the first and third of the main themes in Table 5 above is presented in Chapter 7. Revisiting the interviews and observations conducted with these two teachers was indeed instructive. First, I found that their reasons for not adopting a complete hybrid approach in teaching by combining their preacher/teacher roles were the same as the reasons given by other teachers who adopted a hybrid approach. Moreover, I found that the dissident teachers had not discarded their preacher roles entirely, but rather attempted to find alternative milieu outside the classroom within which to fulfil that role. Ultimately, my findings were strengthened through such an examination, which led to a far better understanding of the multiple ways in which the participating IS teachers dealt with role dissonance.

The final stage of deductive analysis involved reviewing existing literature to establish potential links to the present study. In contrast to traditional deductive analysis, however, which involves a procedure of verifying theories and propositions based on qualitative data (Patton, 2002), the literature presented in the findings chapters are referenced to show *sensitivity to context*, as recommended by Yardley (2000), rather than to fit the findings into a pre-existing framework. As Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) explain,

‘the [phenomenological] researcher can show sensitivity to context through an awareness of the existing literature and this in turn can be either substantive or theoretical, the former related to the topic of investigation, the latter to the underpinnings of the research method itself’ (p. 181).

In this study, I consulted the theoretical literature continuously, but particularly at the inception of the research process in order to guide the development of the research question and the choice of methods for data collection and analysis (see Chapter 4). I decided to review substantive literature, i.e., that which is topic-specific and theme-related, after data collection and analysis had been completed in the belief that a review of

substantive literature prior to data analysis might present a quandary for the qualitative inquiry process in that it might bias the researchers' thinking and reduce openness to whatever emerges in the field (Patton, 2002).

Substantive literature is referenced in connection with the findings presented in Chapters 6 and 7 to provide orientation for the study and to demonstrate connections to other work. After all, while the intention in phenomenological research is not to generate theory but to describe and understand the essence of concepts, it remains useful and viable to compare the findings with those of parallel or related studies, and similarities thus identified can lend weight to the validity of the findings and methods (Priest, 2002). For example, when the data alluded to *charismatic authority* as a subtheme, I conducted a review of the literature on charisma and teaching in Muslim cultures. The literature reviewed indicated that, in Arab Muslim Cultures, the personal qualities of the teacher were found to take precedence over other qualities, such as subject matter knowledge and interaction with students (Riechel & Arnon, 2009).

At the deductive analysis stage concluded, it was important to think about bringing the findings together through building a logical chain of evidence to make a whole. This led directly to the decisions taken in the creative synthesis and writing process, as described in the following section.

5.4.5 Creative Synthesis

The creative synthesis stage involved mental and written exercises dedicated to connecting the discrete bits and pieces to create an overview of the landscape of the study

while remaining attuned to the successive layers of the IS teachers' experiences (Patton, 2002). The process of creative synthesis was guided by two principles: First, the written synthesis must demonstrate a commitment to attending to the 'thing itself' by constantly going back to the data in order to capture an eidetic picture of the experiences reported by the teachers. Second, the writing process had to be understood as an extension of analysis. Indeed, in the experience of the researcher, writing was where the selecting, organizing, explicating and transformation of data into meaning occurred. Creative synthesis was therefore a continuing confluence between written and mental processes, which meant that my ideas became more and more thoroughly informed by the data as the writing progressed. In this regard, Atkinson (1991) notes 'the analytic induction of categories; themes and relationships; the explication of meaning; and the understanding of action may all proceed via the writing itself' (p. 164).

During the process of creative synthesis, several processes actually took place simultaneously. For instance, a sense of narrative developed that illustrated how the themes were inherently connected. At the same time, tables and graphs were developed to illustrate the themes and subthemes and to help communicate the full research experience and its complexity. In addition, decisions about data display were still being deliberated. At this stage, for example, vignettes were chosen as a type of data display that would provide a vivid portrayal of the conduct of everyday teaching events.

5.5 Validity, Reliability, and Credibility

Given that this study operates within the constructivist and interpretivist paradigms, the criteria for ensuring validity and reliability were derived from constructivist

notions of validity (see e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Peshkin, 1988). As Patton (2002) points out, constructivists are ‘more interested in deeply understanding specific cases within a particular context than in hypothesizing about generalizations and causes across time and space. Indeed, they are suspicious of causal explanations and empirical generalizations applied to complex human interactions and cultural systems’ (p. 546). From this perspective, the study embraced the *subjectivity* expressed by the teachers as a pathway to a deeper understanding of their experiences of the world in general and of the phenomenon studied in particular.

Proponents of interpretivist perspectives continue to generate emerging concepts for distinguishing quality in interpretive research (Lincoln, 1995). For the purpose of this study I consulted Lincoln and Guba’s (1986) proposed criteria where they suggested ‘*Credibility* as analogous to internal validity, *transferability* as analogous to external validity, *dependability* as analogous to reliability, and *confirmability* as analogous to objectivity’ (p.76). In combination, they saw these criteria as addressing *trustworthiness* as a parallel term for rigour (ibid.). These terms served as useful *apparatus* for understanding and assessing the research at hand as it progressed through the different stages.

Being true to the constructivist, interpretivist and phenomenological sensibility, I also attempted to demonstrate a commitment to attending closely to the ‘thing itself’. I therefore sought to provide a rich descriptive and interpretive account of the IS teachers sense making with respect to their teaching and to their experiences as teachers in the particular spatial, cultural and temporal contexts in which they occurred. I also refrained from providing causal explanations derived from the data, even in instances when the data appeared to lend themselves to such explanations. These potential explanations were set aside because the study sought to create a dialogue between themes rather than to identify

a singular truth.

In addition, several specific steps were taken and/or used as points of reference to ensure the overall *trustworthiness* of the study. First, the subjectivity of the researcher was made clear and hence transparent in many sections of this study, since the researcher is the main instrument in qualitative inquiry (see sections 1.1.). The previous experience of the researcher with IS teachers was presented at the forefront of the study in addition to alluding to the philosophical orientation of the researcher. Chapter 4 also illustrates in detail how the researcher gained access to the study sites and documenting the reaction of the IS teachers towards the concept of qualitative study. Additionally, and in order to remain true to the subjectivity expressed by the teachers, any presuppositions were set aside as much as possible through a process of *epoche* or ‘bracketing’ and as indicated earlier leaving the substantive literature review after analysis was complete. Having said that, it is important to note that it is impossible for a qualitative researcher to be standing in a totally presuppositionless space. In fact, phenomenology teaches us the impossibility of a complete and absolute bracketing (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), and that ‘intersubjectivity’ is a key concept in phenomenological research. Hence, in this study ‘bracketing’ need not be absolute or definite but more pragmatically represents the deepest understanding available through utilizing a method or methods which will be as “faithful” (Giorgi, 1975) to the phenomenon as possible.

Second, to ensure credibility of the analysis, a *triangulation of methods* was applied, along with a *reporting of negative cases* (Denzin, 1989). The triangulation of the research methods –checking the consistency of finding generated by the data collection methods – as explained in detail in chapter three provided the researcher with an opportunity to compare both interviews and observations. This was useful in the sense of that the observation data provided some different perspectives from those generated from

the interviews, as different kinds of data captured different things. This contributed to the overall credibility of the findings. For example, the interview data showed IS teachers talking about the dissonance they face in role and subject matter perceptions, while the observation data shows the teachers integrating both dissonant roles and conceptions in their teaching. The triangulation of methods also assisted in providing an understanding in practice of what the teachers, for example, when teachers talked about persuasion, the observations illustrated what the teachers meant by persuasion. Looking at the classroom observations alone would have possibly generated a different perspective if not coupled with what the teachers said about their teaching. It is the convergence and divergence of the data collected from both methods which influenced the final construction of themes. Credibility of the analysis also comes across from bringing to the foreground the negative cases in the study and hence also focusing on what Stake (2000) terms as 'particularization' through showing how two teachers do not fit in the overall pattern of teaching IS.

Perhaps the most important question to be raised herein is whether the research accurately 'captures' the phenomenon under study. In other words, is it a valid, credible and trustworthy depiction of these women's teaching and experiences? A number of validation procedures could have been undertaken in this study, the most obvious being to seek 'respondent validation' and to ask for more feedback from the teachers themselves after generating the essential themes. I decided not to seek respondent validation for several reasons. First, having understood at the outset of the study that the IS teachers – although enthusiastic about the non-evaluative nature of the study – did not fully understand the value of data gathered in qualitative research, it would have been difficult to convey the findings to them and for them to see value in displaying a detailed account of their teaching. Second, the value of respondent validation rests largely on the

assumption that there is a fixed truth that can be accounted for by the researcher and confirmed by the respondent, and this assumption would be incompatible both with the nature of the phenomenon under study and with the study's phenomenological orientation. Rather, phenomenology aims at an 'intersubjective' understanding of reality (Shutz, 1932); thus, for an account to have validity in the phenomenological sense, its readers must have grasped 'what it is like' to be that which one claims to study.

The next level of validation is that of the researcher him or herself (Hycner, 1985). The researcher needs to question whether the findings 'ring true' and whether a fresh look at the data would yield similar results. In this regard, it was most valuable to place my final findings *vis a vis* those of my pilot study (Jamjoom, 2010). For example, I found that the findings in this study – which consisted of an entirely new sample of teachers and schools as compared to the pilot research – represent a more sophisticated, detailed and richer account of the same phenomenon, yet the essential themes do not contradict any of the findings of the pilot. Instead, this study confirmed many of the themes discussed in the pilot. For example, the pilot study illustrated how IS teachers reported a *struggle* in teaching IS given the challenges that they face from students, parents, society and the school system. In the present study, this struggle is manifested and further elaborated through their feelings of dissonance between their role as preacher and their role as subject teacher. This study thus offers a 'textural-structural' (Moustakas, 1994) account of the preliminary themes discussed in the pilot study.

In addition to her own validation, the researcher pursued trans-subjective agreement with regard to the findings through the involvement of a number of people in the research process. These included both her academic supervisor and the members of the Confirmation of Status committee, who offered critical perspectives on the work and its

findings. Given the phenomenological outlook of the research, the question to be asked in this regard was and remains not whether another researcher can replicate the findings of this study; rather, as Giorgi (1975) has articulated: ‘The chief point to be remembered is not whether another position with respect to the data can be adopted (this point is granted beforehand), but whether a reader adopting the same viewpoint as articulated by the researcher can also see what the researcher saw, whether or not he agrees with it’ (p. 96).

As a final level of validation, the findings were also checked against current literature to explore the extent to and ways in which they do or do correspond to or ‘fit’ with approaches, insights and results applied to and derived from the literature in this area. This was carried out through creating a constant dialogue with the parallel literature in the presentation of the findings in Chapters 6 and 7 and in the final discussion in Chapter 8.

Finally, the study, although not aiming at generalizability, does not dismiss the question of the *utility* of the findings: i.e., what can one do with qualitative findings? Rather than generalization – an idealistic goal in all cases – the researcher prefers the term *extrapolation* – i.e., going beyond the narrow confines of the data to think about other applications of the findings. It is from this perspective that modest speculations, insights and directions for the future are proposed and discussed in Chapter 8. Extrapolation is particularly insightful when comparisons are made with similar people, settings and times (Patton, 2002). Therefore, this study provides detailed information regarding the participants, selection methods, context and analysis methods in order to assist with reflections about ‘how far and to whom’ the findings may be extrapolated.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter illustrated the analytical processes, including the specific steps and

procedures, involved in data analysis for the study, beginning with organization of data and ending with how the essences or core themes were derived. Issues of credibility and trustworthiness were also deliberated and discussed, with emphasis on the measures that the researcher took in order to remain credible and transparent throughout the research process. The two chapters that follow present and delineate the findings of the study, with Chapter 6 presenting the themes of *Maintaining Discipline* and *Persuasive Teaching* and Chapter 7 presenting the theme of *Dealing with Dissonance*.

Chapter 6:

Findings I: Understanding *Discipline* and *Persuasion*: The Teachers' Perspectives

6.1 Introduction

Drawing on both the interview and observation data recorded in the field, this chapter reports the findings that aims at answering the first two research questions:

- 1) How do female Saudi Arabian Islamic studies teachers teach in the classroom?
- 2) How do female Saudi Arabian Islamic studies Teachers make sense of their teaching practices?

The analysis presented in this chapter aims to meet two goals simultaneously: the first is to provide a *description* of how the teachers typically teach in an IS classroom through a deconstruction of the key themes; the second is to provide an *explanation* of how the teachers in this study make sense of their teaching. By *description*, I mean rendering complicated things understandable by providing an analysis that reduces them to their component parts (Bernard, 1988), and hence attempting to provide a clear account of the phenomena at hand. *Explanation*, on the other hand, takes the analysis a step further by illustrating how the component parts of complicated phenomena fit together according to certain rules (Bernard, 1988). Naturally, there was no clear or definitive boundary between description and explanation, as I typically experienced a cyclical series of analysis episodes while attempting to make sense of the data. Nevertheless, in producing this chapter significant links between description and explanation emerged that suggested that a meaningful account could not be constructed without further integration.

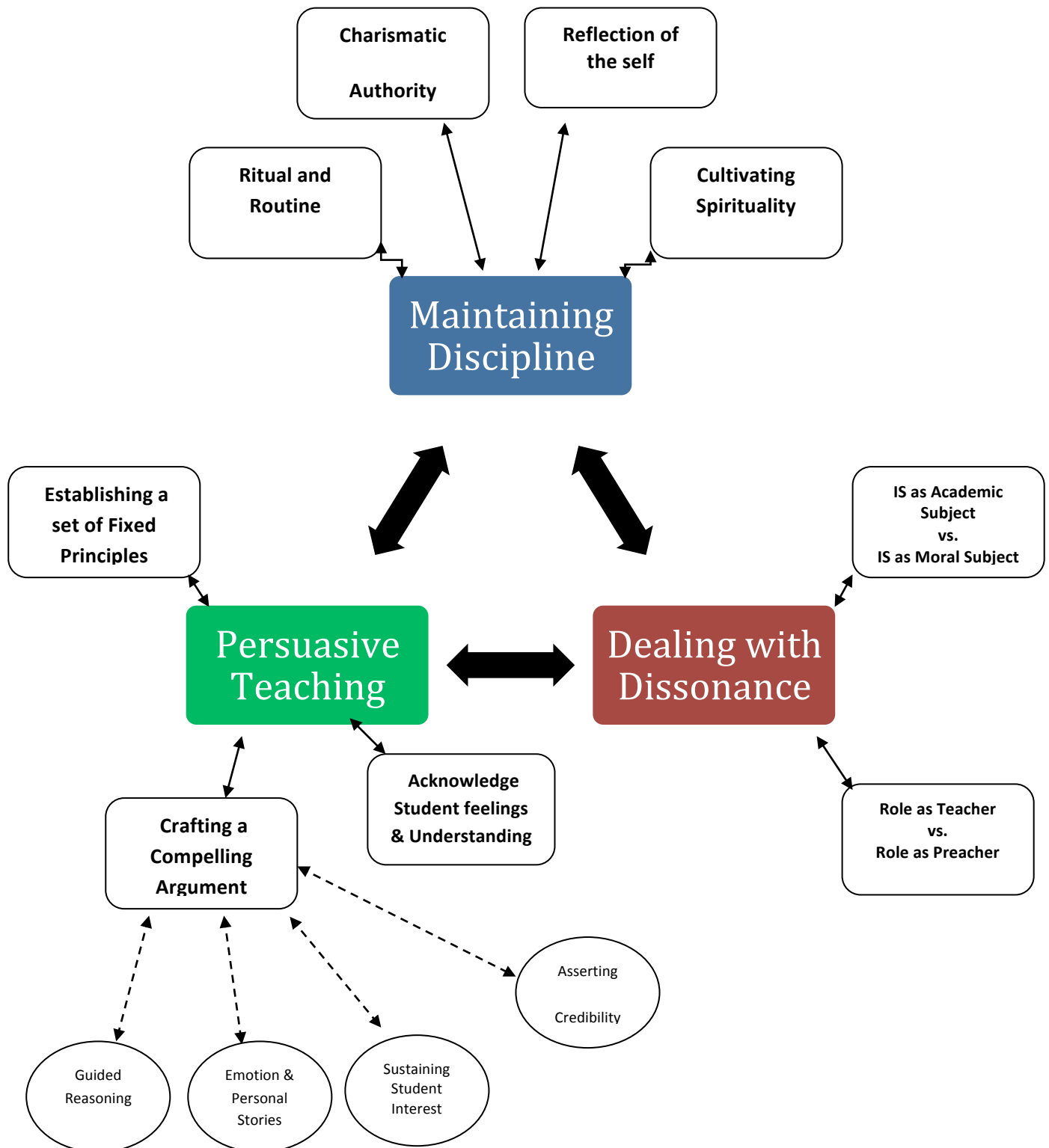
As explained in detail in Chapter 5, the core themes and the illustrative subthemes reported here were initially developed individually and treated as individual entities. However, after careful analysis of the body of data, the themes of ‘maintaining discipline’, ‘teaching as persuasion’ and ‘dealing with dissonance’ were identified as the core essential themes interlocking or underlying other subthemes, which were deemed to be imbrications leading toward these essential themes. For this reason, although all subthemes were dealt with separately during the genesis of the data analysis process, they have been carefully integrated as subcategories within the three main themes. This approach allows for greater synthesis wherein the analysis of the parts does not obscure the whole. More importantly, this procedure by no means denigrates the importance of subthemes, but rather intrinsically consolidates the links between the themes. In this chapter, I deal with the first two themes of ‘Maintaining Discipline’ and ‘Teaching as Persuasion’ in detail as they address the first two research questions directly. The third theme, ‘Dealing with Dissonance’, will be addressed in Chapter 7. This is because the data analysis indicated that the former theme underpinned much of the teachers’ teaching behaviour and conceptualisation. Chapter 7 will argue that issues of dissonance bedevilled the IS teachers. The data will also show that the IS teachers’ teaching practices were tinged by instances in which they had to deal with dissonances in role and in determining the nature of the subject. Additionally, the theme of ‘Dealing with Dissonance’ has relevance to the third research question, which asks: ‘What is essential, however implicit, about the teaching experience of these teachers?’ and it attempts to elevate the data into one explanatory framework.

Despite the idiosyncratic nature of teaching and the uniqueness of any classroom situation, the data reported here highlight patterns that emerged from the study of these teachers’ activities and reflections. Throughout my engagement with these teachers, I

found that I was becoming aware of the similarities among the issues that concerned them, the ways in which they viewed themselves and their teaching and the routines that they set in their classrooms to allow the classroom business to unfold and take shape. Although similarities among the teachers were evident, the differences and idiosyncrasies were not overlooked. There were, for instance, differences in the manifestations of each theme, and these varied manifestations will be explained in detail within the accounts of each theme. While I am aware that any effort to conceptually order and analyse what teachers do in their classrooms is a provisional reduction of the intricacies of how teaching and learning unfold in the classroom, this chapter will attempt such a reduction in order to facilitate analysis and explication. Thus, the teaching description provided here will be presented in a series of discrete themes as a measure of data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1994) for the purpose of deconstruction, illustration and finally understanding how teachers make sense of their own teaching (see figure 9 below).

The first part of this chapter examines the theme of *Maintaining Discipline*, highlighting first what the IS teachers themselves mean by ‘discipline.’ Thereafter, I consider the ways in which teachers understand and manifest their understanding of discipline in their teaching through an analysis of the subthemes underpinning this concept. The second part of the chapter examines the second theme: *Teaching as Persuasion*. It begins by explaining what teachers mean by ‘persuasion’ and proceeds to a consideration of the tools and teaching strategies that teachers employ to achieve persuasion. The chapter concludes by offering an overview of the themes, revisiting the study’s research questions and explaining how a synthesis of the two aforementioned central themes will link with the third theme: *Dealing with Dissonance*.

Figure 10. Conceptual map displaying themes and subthemes



6.2 Maintaining Discipline

One key theme that emerged from the analysis of the data, both here and in my pilot study, was the need to *maintain discipline*. The IS teachers who participated in the study talked about discipline in one of two ways: 1) by contrasting it with *tazamut* (Strictness, especially with respect to religious behaviour) and repudiating this idea of strictness; and 2) by endorsing the view that their own understanding of discipline and what it entails has changed over time. These findings are expanded on below.

Maintaining Discipline was often raised as a concern during the post-lesson interviews. The teachers had developed a variety of tactics by means of which to create a classroom environment that they felt was conducive to learning in general, in addition to other tactics that they identified as being specific to the teaching of IS. The teachers I worked with described their notion of *discipline* as a quality distinct from *tazamut*. They often contrasted this more ‘modern’ understanding of discipline with the older and more traditional ways of teaching IS. Conscious efforts were employed to ‘modernize’ the teaching approaches, as will be explained later in this chapter; hence, the notion of discipline, in these teachers’ views, seemed to have changed into a different concept of what discipline in their classrooms actually meant. For example, one teacher explained her understanding of discipline as follows:

Discipline is different from strictness. Discipline means that the student should be comfortable in class while maintaining respect for her teacher and most importantly paying attention. (Interview 7b)

The notion of strictness was also criticized by another teacher when she noted that

If we are generally strict with the students, they will not take in what we say nor give back. And you generally find them – *Exalted is God* – not even liking your subject. If they loved your subject, they would put more into it.

(Interview 14b)

Two other teachers succinctly captured similar view in the following definitions of a ‘disciplined’ classroom:

...a disciplined classroom...is when I give students the core of my lesson [and] they are attentive. There is some sort of interaction between me and them, not [just] them feeling [that] I am above and they are below. (Interview 17a)

...discipline in my classroom is not that the girls display quiet behaviours. They have to be interacting with me and responsive, enriching the lesson with new information...as well as being influenced by me. (Interview 13b)

The above quotes suggest that IS teachers value respect for one’s teacher, paying attention, loving the subject and attaining a degree of interaction with the students. Added to this, IS teachers referred to discipline as a concept that has evolved. For instance, one teacher proffered the view that, that in her view, discipline was no longer about a ‘passive quietness’; rather, it has come to refer to a ‘quietness of loving to listen’. As one teacher explained: ‘I like quietness in the classroom, but by this I mean the quietness of loving to listen, not forcing students to be quiet. I don’t like passive quietness’ (Interview 5b).

The preceding was followed by a probe in which I asked the teacher what she meant by passive quietness. She extended her answer by saying:

It’s when they sit and not move.... Quietness alone does not always indicate that the students are paying attention. They could be daydreaming. As I said, I like quietness, but I want them [the students] to be engaged *with me*. (Interview 5b; emphasis added)

Along these lines, another teacher explained:

I am one of the people who don’t like it when the girl is attached to her table answering my questions. I don’t do that in my classroom most of the

girls have their freedom. I believe that when the girl is comfortable and participating she will learn more than when she is tied down. Many times the girls are quiet you think they are paying attention, but in fact they are not, they are daydreaming in another world. (Interview 3a)

Again, these statements suggest that the notion of strictness exemplified in the words ‘forcing’ and ‘tied down’ was seen as no longer appropriate for these teachers. In interviews with the teachers I was struck by the unanimity of their use of the words ‘with me’ to describe how their lessons flowed. The phrase *with me* (Arabic *Ma’aya*) was these teachers’ yardstick for assessing whether their students were paying attention or not. Thus, a typical statement might be that ‘today the girls weren’t with me’, indicating a lack of attention and discipline.

Moreover, several teachers contrasted the discipline of the past with the discipline of the present. The teachers attributed the changes in their understanding of discipline to changes in the students themselves. In their view, it is the characteristics of the new generation of students, especially their fondness for questioning, that prompted them to rethink the meaning of discipline and how it should be manifested in their classrooms. One teacher expressed this sentiment as she reflected on the past and contrasted it with the current situation:

Of course – *Exalted is God* – the girls are very different nowadays. We used to be afraid of asking the teacher questions. It’s not that we were embarrassed, but we were afraid of talking to the IS teacher. [But] the girls are very forward nowadays and they talk to you with no embarrassment. (Interview 10b)

The extracts quoted above suggest that the teachers perceive that they are moving toward a more interactive understanding of discipline. Discipline is no longer seen as static or simplistic, but rather changing into a more dynamic term. In particular, the teachers’ rejection of passive quietness in favour of a more interactive quietness in which students

are attentive and engaged with the lesson implies a transformation in their understanding of discipline. In this regard, several of the teachers explicitly contrasted the notions of past/present and strict/interactive in their talk about discipline.

In order to provide a clearer perspective on how teachers manifest this revised understanding of discipline in their teaching, the next section delineates these manifestations in the form of subthemes. The data suggested that teachers manifested the theme of *maintaining discipline* in one of the following four ways: 1) maintaining discipline through rituals and routine; 2) maintaining discipline by tapping charismatic authority; 3) maintaining discipline as a reflection of self; and 4) maintaining discipline through cultivating spirituality. A discussion of each subtheme is presented below. Each section begins by first laying out what the teachers mean by the subthemes then illustrates how they are manifested in the teaching. The former will be conducted by taking into account the need to evidence both understandings and manifestations from the data; therefore illustrative vignettes from the observation extracts were used throughout when deemed necessary.

6.2.1 Maintaining Discipline through Rituals and Routines

The analysis of both interview and observation data showed that the participating teachers had developed both rituals and routines to maintain discipline and to avoid future disruption. The words *ritual* and *routine* were conjured up by the teachers when they were asked to talk about disciplinary issues. The term *routine* was expressed in the English language, as is commonly the case in colloquial Arabic, while the word *ritual* was expressed by Arabic *tkoos*.

By *rituals* the teachers referred to a set of religiously derived practices that they often performed at the start of a lesson to allow students to calm down, signal the commencement of the class and teaching and bestow *Baraka* (blessing) on the lesson. There were two crucial rituals that the teachers performed: 1) saying the *Salam* (the greeting and farewell ritual in Islam); and 2) starting off the lesson with a *Dua* (supplication to God, similar to a prayer).

The *Salam* was often uttered by the teacher as she entered the classroom and the students always responded. This exchange of phrases took place while students prepared themselves for the new lesson by putting away textbooks from previous subjects and bringing out the textbook assigned for IS. This practice was not only clear from the observations but was supported by the interview data, in which almost all teachers specified that they commenced their lessons with the *Salam* – as in the following: ‘When I first enter I make sure I say *Al Salam Alaikum* [Peace be Upon You]’ (Interview 23b).

Although the exchange of the *Salam* is an integral part of traditional Islamic education practices both in *Madrasas* and in modern school systems in the other Muslim countries (see Borhan, 2004; Luckens-bull, 1998), it is important to acknowledge that it may not be simply a continuation of the traditional Islamic educational practice of preserving the heritage of Islam. However, the data showed that there may be other reasons for teachers to start with the *Salam*, for example, teachers linked their saying of the *Salam* with their claim that students need time to calm down (i.e., attaching a pedagogical purpose to this tradition). This is illustrated in the following interview quote: ‘I first say the *Salam*, then a *Dua*. Then I ask about the girls’ mood. They need time to calm down, [so] I don’t start my lesson immediately’ (Interview 8b).

The second ritual of which teachers made use is the *Dua*. The observations showed

that the *Dua* was either displayed on PowerPoint and read aloud by the teacher or simply uttered by the teacher at the beginning of the lesson (but after the *Salam*). Each teacher used different *Dua*; most, however, were related to education and learning. A common *Dua* was the following: 'O Allah! Teach us that which benefits us and benefit us with that which You teach us, and increase us in knowledge'. The following observation extract shows how one teacher began her lesson:

Observation Extract 7b: Lesson on Fitna (Sedition), 11th Grade

Teacher started the lesson with a *Dua*

Teacher: Oh Allah! Nothing is easy except what You have made easy. If You wish, You can make the difficult easy

Then, as a reminder for students to say 'Amen' (since no one did), she said: Allah Grant mercy for those who say 'Amen.'

Students (while settling down in class): Amen

This teacher in the preceding extract mentioned that commencing the lesson with a *Dua* bestows a sense of *Baraka* (spiritual wisdom and blessing transmitted from God) on her teaching and on the class in general and that this is why she asked the students to say 'Amen'. The teacher expressed the view that these rituals, particularly the *Dua*, were conjoined and interdependent with the pragmatic act of teaching in the sense that a lesson without *Baraka* may end up being an ineffective lesson. In contrast to some anthropological literature on ritual (see Turner, 1976; Bell, 1992), which distinguishes ritual from pragmatic activity, it is evident from this teacher that ritualized behaviours belong to a continuum of practices that serve as a necessary means to the realization of good teaching.

The teachers' religious rituals, however, did not suffice to establish a well behaved

and disciplined classroom, and hence a set of pragmatic pedagogical routines for managing behaviour were intertwined with the performance of the rituals. From the interviews it was found that the term *routine* was used in the context of deliberating discipline and was described as the situations in which the teachers intentionally evoked some recurrent behaviours aimed at specific goals. It was interesting to note that the word *routine* pointed to a conscious cognitive activity performed with a purpose. The quote below elucidates this concept:

Every time I enter the classroom, or let us say my *routine* before I enter the classroom, is that no one enters after me. [This is] so I can prepare them. When they see me approaching the classroom and they are usually in the hallways I start counting firmly: ‘one, two...’ and they say, ‘Teacher, please wait, wait!’ You have to do that, you know, [because] you are dealing with a whole new generation that doesn’t have.... I mean you could find a student talking in the hallway with her friends and I start calling her.... I can’t keep calling them all the time, so sometimes I leave some of them outside my classroom. (Interview 6b)

With this particular teacher, the preceding description of events was consistent with both classroom observations. In both situations the teacher walked firmly, stood at the door of the classroom and made it a point that no one enter after her. The students rushed into the classroom while she ensured that they were all inside. Embedded in this quote is also an explanation for why the teacher adopted this particular routine e.g. ‘you are dealing with a whole new generation’ which supports and links with the previous point describing the reasons why teachers in this study maintain that their understanding of discipline has changed in response to changes in society.

Another teacher gave the following account of the steps that she took when she entered her classroom:

When I first start I utter the *Salam* to the girls [and] reprimand them for being late. But now I shut my classroom door and they run to the classroom - I mean this happens for a short period of time until they know [that] you are firm. I ask about the homework, [then] I say a *Dua* for the Prophet -

Peace Be Upon Him - and start from where I ended the previous lesson.
(Interview 22b)

Yet another teacher described her routines as follows:

Well, my routine is always like this: I ask about the girls, see who is absent [and] look at the homework. Then I share a virtue about learning – you know, just so there can be some time for students to settle down. (Interview 4b)

It is evident from the quotes above that a mixture of rituals and routines comes into play at the start of the lesson. In addition, routines were not only emphasized at the start of the lesson, but, more importantly, at the start of each academic year. This has been previously discussed in the literature on effective and ineffective teachers, arguing that the former spent a considerable amount of time at the beginning of the school year establishing classroom norms and routines in order to avoid disruption later (Calderhead, 1987b; Tsui, 2009). Despite the fact that this study is not about effective teaching, maintaining discipline through routine was singled out as the first thing that IS teachers consciously did as they entered their classrooms. For example, one of the teachers emphasized her routine of launching the year with a discussion on discipline with the students through a ‘contract of good behaviour’ that she had devised. She uses the contract both as a teaching tool – since students have a lesson on contracts in *Fikh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) later in the year - and as a measure for ensuing accountability on the part of the students. She explained this function as follows:

I have a distinct routine at the beginning of the year: a contract of good behaviour. It’s like my contract with the school. I take the same components of a contract that students will eventually study in *Fikh* and apply it to a classroom situation. Each student has her contract in her file and when we have a dispute, we usually go back to this contract, which we discussed at length at the beginning of the year. The contract has all the consequences of bad behaviour written down. (Interview 9b)

It can be argued thus far that what the IS teachers referred to as routines were a

series of conscious actions and behaviours, often pedagogical in nature (e.g., asking about homework) and aimed at maintaining discipline. These routines reflected a conscious judgement that teachers made about how they structured their lessons. The teachers were mindful of the fact that students ‘need time to settle down’ at the beginning of each lesson, and hence each teacher devised a set of rituals and routines to allow for this settling down to take place.

6.2.2 Maintaining Discipline through the use of Charismatic Authority

The question of how teachers construct their pedagogical authority in the classroom has been discussed extensively in the literature (Frier, 1993; Noddings, 1992; Pace, 2003; Pace & Hemming, 2006; Opdenakker & van Damme, 2006; van Manen, 1991a, 1991b, 1994). The literature focuses on the difference between positive and negative forms of classroom authority, and many authors regard authority as ‘relational’ rather than as a quality that a given person possesses (Harjunen, 2009). By contrast, this section will argue that the IS teachers in this study regarded pedagogical authority as *a personal quality that they possessed*, one that is a function of their *charisma* rather than a product or aspect of a complex social relationship with the students. The section will also argue that, within the context of this understanding, *charisma* was used as a means to bring about education and to maintain discipline.

The participating IS teachers understood *Charismatic Authority* as a personal quality that they held or acquired from experience, manifested in such aspects as voice, self-esteem, captivating and interesting personality, presence, humour and even clothing style. *Voice*, for example, was regarded as an important quality; this is evident in the following two quotes:

I have a strong voice when I teach the lesson. I even chant sometimes, particularly when some of the students are misbehaving. I get their attention [laughs]. (Interview 3b)

I know my subject very well [and] I am very confident, but the quality of my voice is highly poignant and moving. (Interview 17b)

Another teacher lamented that her teaching voice is not what she would like:

It is true I am standing and they are sitting, so I can easily spot any misbehaviour, like when they [student] are reading the textbook and not listening. But I wish my voice were stronger than it is.... [I]t's not what I want it to be. I wish it were stronger. (Interview 24b)

The above quote seems to be making two fundamental points: the first that the teacher associated the strength of her voice with a disciplinary issue—reading the textbook while teacher explains the lesson as it indicates that students are not paying attention- and the second is the fact that she treated voice as a characteristic that grants authority and emanates from the teacher herself. She also reflected on the quality of her voice by repeating her desire to strengthen her voice.

In fact, charisma at times appeared to be regarded as more important than subject matter knowledge. One teacher stated the following:

I learned that one's self-esteem and personality is - I mean you can be very well prepared for your lesson, but your style and manner make a difference. When I was in my previous school, the principal asked me to teach a lesson in psychology. You know, it was an experiment: every teacher taught one lesson outside her subject speciality. I gave a great lesson in psychology. It's not a must that you are a psychology teacher to give a great lesson. You can certainly be innovative by just your stand and presence and style. These are important factors in your success. I have seen doctors who still don't know how to teach. (Interview 6b)

Despite the fact that this particular teacher had sixteen years of experience teaching Islamic Studies, she stressed the fact that personality and self-esteem sometimes take precedence over subject matter knowledge. She used words like 'stand', 'presence' and

‘style’ (i.e., mode of dress) to signify points of self that can be used to advantage as a teacher. In a study conducted with Arab teachers in Israel, Riechel and Arnon (2009) also found that the personal qualities of the teacher (including charisma) took precedence over other qualities such as subject matter knowledge and interaction with students. Additionally, studies of female religious leaders associated with the mosque movement in Syria and Egypt have illustrated that many female instructors base their credibility on reputation, teaching experience and individual rhetorical style rather than on formal religious training, suggesting that charismatic authority continues to be an important conduit for female religious leadership (Mahmood, 2005; Klambach, 2008).

Unlike in previous studies however, IS teachers in this study emphasized the importance of clothing style. Although as researcher in this study I tried to dress plainly, I found that the IS teachers dressed in exuberant colours and wore makeup. For example, one teacher wore dresses with flowery patterns, while another wore a black T-shirt with the word ‘love’ printed in fuchsia in English. The need to look ‘hip’, modern and up to date with fashion trends was deemed essential by the teachers in order to gain authority and leverage their charisma. According to the teachers, being ‘hip’ meant that students would find them more interesting, hence they would be able to exert more authority. For example, when I asked one of the teachers about the factors that, in her own view, made her successful at managing her classroom, she mentioned the following:

You know, it’s your style and personality [that matter].... One student told me, ‘I wish I could open your closet and see what outfits you have’, and another told me that she told her friend in another school ‘I am sure your teacher is not as stylish as mine’ (Interview 6b)

In the quote above, the teacher seems to be attributing a particular importance to appearance and style. She spoke about how the students complemented her clothing style and fashion sense several times during the interview proudly. In fact, during the interview

she seemed very happy that one of her students talked about her personal style with another student in a different school. During the lesson observations, I also noticed that the students complemented this particular teacher on her style saying ‘ Teacher [name of teacher] you look nice today’. Additionally, the importance of style was sometimes expressed in the introductory interviews, in which several teachers shared the view that the image of the IS teacher of the past, who wore long black skirts and a white shirt, was something from which they deliberately sought to distance themselves. For instance, one teacher explained:

I was really concerned when I first decided to be an Islamic studies teacher that I would transform and become like those old Islamic studies teachers wearing white shirts and black skirts and black gloves. But I liked Islamic studies - *that's it [spoken in English]!* (Interview 11a)

In another interview, one teacher expressed a view along similar lines to the above when she indicated that ‘dress’ and ‘appearance’ are issues which she constantly deliberated. This particular teacher seemed to be indicating a struggle between wanting to be ‘normal’ and abiding to the traditional dress style of an Islamic studies teacher:

Because we are IS teachers, students are always looking at the way we dress.. your often worried that if you dress in a particular way you will be criticized because you are an IS teacher.. But I am trying to be as normal as possible in the way that I appear to people (Interview 5a)

Moreover, the data confirm that humour was regarded as an important aspect of Charismatic Authority. Humour allows the teachers to laugh and joke with their students even when the students make comments that are considered unorthodox or slightly derogatory about Islam, the Prophet (PBUH) and/or the *Sahaba* (Prophet’s companions). The following vignette exemplifies this notion:

Observation Extract 17 b: Fikh Lesson on Permitted Food in Islam (Public School)

In this *Fikh* Lesson about *permitted food in Islam*, the teacher stood in front of the PowerPoint screen in a small room crowded with 35 students. The teacher began by reviewing material that had been learned previously and then moved on to asking questions and expounding on points raised in the lesson. She talked to the girls about permitted foods, following the outline on the PowerPoint but adding points as she went along. She asks questions and students shoot their hands up and clamour to answer. Toward the end of the lesson she notes that it is also permitted to eat the grasshopper and that the Prophet (PBUH) ate it, while displaying a picture of a grasshopper on PowerPoint. At this point, the students began to laugh and talk to one another. One student shouted out:

Student: Eew! That's disgusting. How did they eat it? What do I eat? It's tiny [laughs]!

Teacher: [Ignoring the use of the word 'disgusting' in a context involving the Prophet, points to the picture and simply says with a grin] This part.

Student: Teacher, did you ever eat a grasshopper?

Teacher: No, no, I never tried it, but it's like popcorn. [Teacher and students laugh] My brother tried it.... I used to go to Madinah [where the Prophet lived], and there are a lot of grasshoppers - that's why people eat them a lot there.

Student [changing topic abruptly]: Miss don't give us an exam this Saturday...

Teacher: Why, because you want to go to the beach on Thursday and not study? [Students and Teacher laugh.]

When asked about this incident, the teacher noted the following:

A sense of humour is important.... You cannot reprimand the students for everything they say or they will never tell you anything. (interview17b)

She went on to explain how she thought that her strength as a teacher derived from her personal character, saying:

You know, character, charisma and laughter [are important]. I never participate when students say demeaning words, even when I am angry - but I can laugh, though I never join in. (interview 17b)

Several authors have argued that charismatic authority in the form of developing a captivating personality is often resorted to in times of crisis (Kalmback,2008;

Weber, 1968). In this study, such times of crisis appear manifested in those incidents in which the teachers find the students' arguments or complaints too compelling to address directly. Hence, they resort to a form of charismatic authority to exert some control over the situation. From the vignette above it can be argued that the teacher did in fact resort to humour and highlighted charisma and personality in the interview as important measures for handling similar situations. In this vignette, the teacher provide a justification for why the people ate grasshoppers by indicating that the environment of Madinah had a lot of grasshoppers, hence making them accessible and convenient as food. Yet she also combined this justification with an exercise of her sense of humour when she said that grasshoppers were 'like popcorn'.

In summary, it can be argued that the teachers in this study attached a particular importance to charisma. Different teachers talked about different attributes which they thought exemplified charisma and personal charm. Some teachers relied on voice while others on clothing style and humour. Although the interviews showed that the teachers' talk about charisma was mainly related to discipline and classroom management, it was also a way by which the teachers sought to gain the attention of the students, particularly since 'paying attention' was regarded as one characteristic of a disciplined classroom.

6.2.3 Maintaining Discipline as a Reflection of the Self

Implicit in the participating teachers' understanding of discipline were their definition of the *self* and the *personal values* that they hold dear. In other words, the teachers' own beliefs about themselves and their religious, moral and teaching values were manifested in the ways in which they dealt with discipline and with related aspects of

classroom management. To illustrate this point, this section will focus on how the teachers' parenting styles at home influenced their decisions about discipline in the classroom. It will also explain how the teachers intertwine their understanding of discipline with aspects of personality, e.g., individual learning styles.

Several of the participating IS teachers proffered the view that how they dealt with their own children at home influenced how they implemented disciplinary tactics with their students. The teachers always referred to their students using the word *banati*, literally, 'my daughters'. They also described themselves as being mothers before being teachers and thus their role was essentially about *tarbiya* (upbringing). The following quotes demonstrates this view:

You know, I am both a teacher and a Parent (*Murabiya*, from *Tarbiya*). I spend several hours with the students at school and this is my role. (Interview 23a)

I always ask my students about how they are in the morning. In this hour you have to be a teacher, a mother and a *Murabiya* (Interview 20b)

IS teachers' role is difficult because you have to provide the students with *Tarbiya*, teach them and guide them at the same time (Interview 7a)

The word *Tarbiya* is derived from the root *rbw*, meaning to grow, raise, bring up, rear. It is different from the word *Ta'lim*, which means to educate and teach. *Tarbiya* has a stronger moral connotation and is seen as superior to *Ta'lim*. It is also a more ubiquitous concept in circles of religious education. This marriage of moral upbringing, parenting styles and education was observable in the IS teachers' teaching. Although the teachers evoked the concept of parenting, there were substantial differences in the way in which this association was manifested in their teaching. For example, it was observed that one of the teachers displayed a more strict and distant relationship with the students in class. The teacher addressed this by pointing out that she drew on personal values as a mother of

boys:

I know that the students find me rather strict. They complained to the principal about my strictness. I explained to her that I am strict because I have four boys at home - *Mashala (By the Will of Allah)*. I had my daughter after sixteen years, which was late. It is because I am raising boys that I am strict. But I still believe that this is the right way to do it (Interview 15b)

When I asked her to elaborate what she meant by ‘strict’ she continued by saying:

The most important factor in teaching these days is the personality of the teacher to be able to discipline your class. It is impossible to give a lesson while you laugh and joke because if you give students a little leeway things will get out of control. I am talking about myself of course, other teachers might disagree. I do not joke with my students; I can do it after class (Interview 15b)

As illustrated in the previous section, this teacher also highlighted the importance of personality in maintaining discipline, yet her understanding was tinged with her own views on parenting. She elaborates on the meaning of strictness by referring to certain characteristics such as laughter, joking and personality. Although the teacher seems aware that other teachers may use these characteristics in maintaining discipline she opts for the opposing view while asserting that ‘personality’ remains to be an important factor.

Similarly, in the next quote the role of parenting appears once more in teaching. The teacher in the vignette quoted in Chapter 4 (see section 4.5.4.1), in which the student insulted her classmate in the teachers’ presence by referring to the student having a piercing in her private parts, explained her response with reference both to her religious values and to her values as a mother:

I did not shout at her in front of [the other] students. Shouting and reprimanding should not occur in front of others, but I knew that I would have a talk with her later. First, she trespassed the rights of her classmate by insulting her. You know, the Prophet said: ‘every Muslim is inviolable for

another Muslim'. Also, you cannot shout in front of students [and] the girls were already giving her disapproving looks for what she said. Even with my children at home I never shout at them in front of people. I am totally against that, even when the situation requires [scolding] you can reprimand your children lightly and discuss it more later (Interview 6b)

Here, the teacher indicates that the student wronged her friend by trespassing on her religious rights. She refers in this regard to a *Hadith* that is often cited to promote Muslim brotherhood: 'Every Muslim is inviolable for another Muslim: his blood, his money and his honour'. She then combined her religious conviction with her personal experience and values as a mother who holds strong opinions with regard to reprimanding children in public. Her understanding of disciplining as a private and confidential act stems from her personal values as a human being. Moreover, from the excerpts above, it seems that although both teachers referred to *parenting* as an essential factor in determining their disciplinary styles, and both replicated what they did at home, each teacher applied this connection differently: while the first implemented a strict approach, the second employed a more lenient one. It follows from this example that an understanding of IS teachers' actions and reactions must be based upon a knowledge of them as people first (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1989a).

The data also showed that the ways in which IS teachers saw their own personal learning styles influences their understanding of discipline. For example, one teacher referred repeatedly to her 'visual' learning preference as an individual and to how it influenced her notion of discipline. She explained that she frequently told her students that she was a *visual learner* and that hence she would appreciate if they looked directly at her while she explained the lesson. She said:

I don't mind if they take notes, but I told them to look at me every once in a while. I know that some of them might be auditory learners but I still ask them to look at me so I can know that they are *with me*. (Interview 16b; emphasis

added)

Although the teacher acknowledges that some of her students may depend on their auditory skills, she insists that they look at her as an index that they are paying attention to the lesson. It can be argued, then, that one can best understand how IS teachers construe their notions of discipline by grasping the importance they attach to a sense of personal identity as their work calls for a massive investment of their selves.

The data in this study pointed to several notable aspects of the *self* and *personal identity* as influencing the participating IS teachers' teaching. Parenting and learning styles are only two examples of how the self plays an important role in how IS teachers make sense of their teaching. Nonetheless, a decision was made to include these elements here due to their relevance to the theme of *maintaining discipline*. The salient and recurring theme of the *self* (sometimes referred to as *role identity* and/or *professional identity*) will be addressed in detail in Chapter 7.

6.2.4 Maintaining Discipline through Cultivating Spirituality

Cultivating a feeling of spirituality in the classroom was another way for IS teachers to maintain discipline. The observations showed that the participating IS teachers often reminded students that IS lessons were inherently holy and praised them for good behaviour through the use of short prayers. For example, in several of the observations, IS teachers reminded their students that these lessons are similar to *Majalis Al Dhikr* (assemblies of worship or when people meet – usually in mosques - to deliberate issues associated with God, e.g., prayer, religious instruction and interpreting the Quran). The IS teachers also reminded the students that these lessons are opportunities for them to gain credit for good deeds for the hereafter. One teacher stated the following:

I plant something *Akadi* [related to religious belief] at the beginning of each

lesson. I remind them that we are surrounded by angels and that even if they [the students] do not like the lesson or the teacher, they must use these moments to gain good deeds and purify their intentions. (interview 9b)

Another teacher expressed a similar view when she explained as follows:

Look, dear, I always try to make my students feel the spirituality [of the lesson]. So, for example, if you have a Quran lesson, [the students should] feel that they are getting ten good deeds for every letter that they read from the Quran. (Interview 14b)

This desire to build up a feeling of spirituality was also palpable in the observation data. For example, in one of the lessons the teacher began by saying: ‘Girls, let us all renew our *niyya* [an intention one evokes in the heart before doing an act of worship]’. The act of renewing the *niyya* by reminding the students that all actions are based on intentions is paramount in Islamic observances like prayer and fasting. In this instance, it was linked to the classroom situation in a way that was indicative of the sanctity of the lesson.

Another teacher explained that she did not like to reduce grades for bad behaviour and preferred that her students elevate their souls to another level, where they understood the importance of IS lessons. She, too, associated her perspective with the presence of angels:

I always tell my students that I hate to have to deal with them by reducing grades for their bad behaviour.... I would rather that they elevate their souls and become disciplined through feeling the presence of angels in the room. (Interview 7b)

These reminders of divinity and sanctity are not only spoken by the teachers but also displayed on PowerPoint screens as wisdoms for the day. Examples documented in the observations include sayings like the following: ‘the most pious of you are those who display the best ethics’ and ‘this lesson is a sacred time when prayers are heard by Allah’. The teachers referred to these aphorisms as ‘principles of learning and *Tarbiya*’. For example, one teacher explained: ‘I utilize the principle of learning and *tarabiya* of the day to conjure discipline; sometimes I display it through a picture on PowerPoint’ (Interview

14b).

Even in instances in which these aphorisms were not expressed at the beginning of the lesson, the teachers used praise in the form of short prayers to reinforce good behaviour, saying things like *Barak Allahu Feeki* (May Allah bestow his Blessings on you) or *Allah yinawir Aleeki* (May Allah make your path full of light). These prayers were often uttered after the student had answered a question during class. One teacher elaborated as follows on her use of praise and prayer with her twelfth grade class:

It is important to praise the girls in class like this. It motivates them and sustains their attention. You know, sometimes you treat the students like older women because they are in secondary school, but still other times you have to remember that they are young souls and young girls. (interview 6b).

Based on the quotes and observations reported above, it can be concluded that a sense of *Spirituality* is a quality that the IS teachers aspired to instil in their students based on the assumption that a feeling of spirituality and holiness would contribute to good behaviour in the classroom. This emphasis on spirituality could be a reflection of the teachers' perceived role as preacher, which will be discussed in Chapter 7 in connection with the theme of *Dealing with Dissonance*.

6.3 Teaching as Persuasion

This section argues that IS the teachers in this study orchestrated their lessons around the concept of *persuasive teaching* which seems to indicate a change from a more traditional notion of transmission led teaching. Thus far a few researchers have attempted to study persuasive teaching in the school context. The metaphor of *Teaching as Persuasion* may not resonate positively in a western context, as the term *persuasion* itself

may evoke negative images associated with manipulation and convincing (Murphy, 2001; Sinatra & Kardash, 2004). According to Sintara and Kardash (2004), ‘if you ask a teacher if they use persuasion as a teaching technique, he/she may suggest that it is not the purview of teachers to dissuade students of their beliefs’ (p. 485). Murphy (2001) defined *persuasive teaching* as ‘the process of convincing others (in this case students) to look more deeply at some concept, to change their behaviours, understandings and judgments appealing to both reason and emotion’ (p.224). Although the former definition provides valuable insight about the notion of *persuasive teaching* from a theoretical standpoint, it lacks any empirical description. This section will seek to both describe and explain how teachers understand and make sense of their *persuasive teaching*, drawing on both interviews and observations and interpreting these findings whenever possible in light of relevant literature.

Many of the IS teachers in this study used the word *Ikna*’ (literally, ‘convincing’ or ‘persuading’) to describe their teaching. The ability to persuade students through teaching was of paramount importance to these teachers. For example, one of the teachers spoke proudly about her persuasive abilities when she noted that: ‘The ministry evaluators who attend my lessons are always impressed with my well-planned logic and my ability to persuade my students and discipline them’ (Interview 9b).

Another teacher recounted how her teaching changed from transmission oriented to more persuasive oriented:

In the beginning I was focused on giving the whole lesson as explained in the textbook from cover to cover and I would estimate the time required for each section. Now I really don’t care anymore: even if the bell rings, I will continue next time. Instead of the ministry evaluators criticizing me for not finishing on time, they should ask why.... I could carry on for three or four lessons just deconstructing one sentence and trying to persuade the students of the issues surrounding the lesson itself. (Interview 7b)

From the preceding it seems that persuasion was not only of paramount importance to the teachers, but that it was for them a skill that required thought, logic, time and effort. As explained by the teacher in the second quote, persuasion cannot be achieved through simply following the format and order of the prescribed textbook. This teacher was also conscious of her decision to subordinate her previous efforts to apportion time to the different sections of the lesson to the critical need to persuade students. Traditionally, the literature on the teaching of Islam has concentrated on the importance of transmission of knowledge (Berkey, 1992; Messick, 1993; Starrett, 1998). The metaphor of *Teaching as Transmission* from master to student has prevailed in the discourse of Islamic scholarship. Also, the teaching of Islam historically emphasized memorization, recitation and - according to some - even indoctrination (Böttcher, 1993; Zaman, 2002).

Contrary to these former views on teaching Islam, the findings of the present study point to a shift in teaching orientation among IS teachers from a pure *transmission model* to a more *persuasive model* of teaching. One teacher elaborated on this change when she asserted that ‘the person who teaches religion today must be able to construct a strong *Hujja* [reasoned argument]’ (Interview 5a). This statement came in response to a general question in the introductory interview about the essential qualities and abilities that IS teachers today need to acquire.

The data also gives some ideas as to why teaching has become more persuasive. For example, according to the IS teachers, persuasive teaching rejects the idea that there can be a simple transmission of knowledge from teacher to student for a number of reasons: First, that students no longer accept blindly whatever is presented to them and second, that the information age has made it easier for students to acquire information hence the aim of teaching changes from knowledge acquisition to belief revision. One

teacher noted the following: ‘Students can acquire information today from anywhere, [from] the Internet or from friends [or] from anyone. But your role as a teacher is to give them a convincing argument...’ (Interview 8b).

Another teacher made a similar claim when she explained that:

Teaching is both harder and easier these days. It’s easier because we use thinking skills to explain the topic and that makes it easier and more interesting for the student. But [it’s] harder in the sense that girls are not persuaded by [just] anything anymore. So I leave every lesson [only after] making sure that I persuade the students.... It’s not easy. Sometimes no one is convinced in class! (Interview 21b)

Having established that persuasion is a major concern for IS teachers and that the change to persuasive teaching seems to have occurred because of changes attributed to the students, information technology and society, the remainder of this chapter will illustrate some of the ways in which the participating IS teachers manifested this theme in the classroom. The sections that follow here will argue that *persuasive teaching* as understood by the participating IS teachers involved a complex set of teaching practices, strategies and – most importantly – preplanning that aimed at developing a compelling and well-crafted message. They will also attempt to show how persuasive teaching was primarily teacher-led while being attuned to students’ background knowledge. The subthemes of ‘establishing fixed principles of thinking’, ‘acknowledging understandings and feelings that students bring’, and ‘crafting a compelling argument’ are examined in turn as they provide an extensive illustration of some of the key concepts that the teachers employed when talking about their teaching.

I offer at this stage two vignettes from the classroom observations which I will draw on in this next section to illustrate relevant points. The first vignette is an extract from an 11th grade *Tawheed* (Monotheism) lesson on *Bida’* (Innovation in Religion) and the second is an extract from a 12th grade *Hadeeth* (Sayings of the Prophet) lesson on

Identifying False Hadeeth. I will also offer other evidence for each subtheme as necessary.

Vignette 1: Observation extract: 11th grade *Tawheed* lesson on *Bida'* (Innovation in Religion)

Teacher started the lesson with a prayer. She then reminded the students that these moments spent in class are sacred and are moments when Allah receives our prayers. She then reviewed the previous lesson by asking questions while holding a notebook in her hand, taking note of the names of students who participated and answered the questions. This review lasted only a few minutes. Then the teacher then turned to the PowerPoint screen and said: Girls, using the skill of observation, what do you notice from the pictures displayed? (Pictures were associated with Mothers' Day, Christmas, Valentine's Day and birthdays.)

Teacher: Where have you seen these pictures?

Student: In Egypt

Teacher: Yes, because it's not an Islamic country.

Teacher: What about birthdays and Valentine's Day. What do Muslims do on these days? What do you girls do?

Student: Dress in red [student smiles].

Student: The red roses on Valentine's Day cost 10 riyals each.

Teacher tells the story of Saint Valentine.

(There is a saying on top of the PowerPoint screen, which is the wisdom of the day: *I am proud of my religion.*)

Teacher then says: Using the skill of deduction, what can we deduce from the following verse?

"Say I am not a novelty among the messengers, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I only follow that which is revealed to me, and I am not but a clear warner"

Teacher: From the verse, what do you think *Bida'* means? Come on, girls!

Student: [hesitantly] Something new...

Teacher: Yes, Barak Allahu Feehi. [Teacher explains:] A *Bida'* literally means an innovation, a novelty, something unprecedented. In *Sharia* context it means any Innovation in Islam; it is the invention, creation or addition of any religious matter that was not [originally] found in Islam. There are two types of innovation: innovation in tradition and innovation in religion. [Who can] give me an example of an innovation in tradition?

Student: Birthdays and wearing of the *Abaya* [black cloak worn by Saudi women].

[Teacher appears somewhat agitated, presumably because the student mixed up the two kinds of *Bida'*: it was the celebration of birthdays that should be prohibited, as it is a *Bida'* in religion. The teacher did not correct the student. Instead she moved on to the topic of celebrating the Prophet Mohammed's birthday.]

Teacher: I will tell you whether you answered correctly at the end of the lesson. Now let us think about the Prophet - Peace be Upon Him. How do you feel about him?

Student: We follow his Sunnah and believe in him.

Teacher: Yes, we follow his Sunnah, but some people today celebrate the Prophet's birthday.

Have you been to any *Mawlid* [celebrations of the Prophet's birthday]? Describe what happens...

Student: A lot of dancing and drum playing - there are even certain foods for *Mawlid*.

Teacher: Yes, yes, and God has said: 'This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion'. This means that religion or Islam is complete and does not require innovation, hence the *Mawlid* is an innovation in religion. [Teacher then talks about *Sahaba* (Worthy ancestors who lived during days of the Prophet).] Did they celebrate his birthday?!

Student: No!

Teacher: Girls, did you know that according to astrologers the Prophet's birthday is the ninth, not the twelfth when it is commonly celebrated? So even the date is wrong!

[She then recited the following poem:] You disobey Allah and yet you claim His Love. That is indeed a very strange kind of love! If you are truly a lover of God, you will obey Him because the lover is in a state of total surrender to his Beloved'. So what do you think now? [Indicates the student who answered incorrectly at the beginning of the lesson.] Are birthdays an innovation in tradition or religion?

Student: In religion, because If the prophet's birthday is forbidden, what about others?

Teacher: Yes! The *Sahaba* did not do it. We also have two better celebrations that are *Eid*. And if there are so many celebrations, we will forget the hereafter and always be consumed with the present life. Ok, now, girls, in groups where you are sitting, think of alternatives to [celebrating] the Prophet's birthday. What can we do to remember the Prophet?

Student: [After a brief pause.] Pray for him always.

[Other students raise their hands and shout out ideas.]

Teacher: Ok, we agreed that a *Bida'* is an innovation in religion, [and that] an innovation in Religion makes people fall astray from the righteous path. A *Bida'* is like when you light a fire in desert: it starts very small in the heart, then consumes you totally.

Vignette 2: Observation Extract: 12th grade *Hadith*(Sayings of the Prophet) lesson on *Hadith mawdū‘ (fabricated Hadith)*

Teacher: [Enthusiastically:] Using the skill of associating, what are the similarities between a hairpin and the science of Hadith?

[Girls remain quiet, then teacher prompts them by simplifying the question:]

Teacher: What does a hairpin do?

Student: Arranges hair.

Teacher : Yeah, that's it.

Another student: I got it: the Science of Hadith arranges the kinds of Hadith like the hairpin [arranges hair].

Teacher: *Baraka Allahu Feeke* [May Allah Grant you *Baraka*]. The science of Hadith delimits which Hadiths we take and which we refuse, which are correct.... Good. Ok, girls, what is a false Hadith? What do scholars mean when they say this is a false Hadith?

Student: Invented, added to...maybe attributed to the Prophet when he didn't really say it...

Teacher: Ok, that's very good. Look at the PowerPoint screen. [It says:] 'Persian is the most despised language in the eyes of God and the language of those in heaven is Arabic'. What do you think of this Hadith?

Student: Of course it's false!

Teacher: Why do you think so? Use your common sense!

Student: Because it promotes intolerance and tribalism.

Teacher: Yes, and it creates sedition among Muslims. Remember, the Prophet said: 'There is no preference of an Arab over a non-Arab; Allah prefers those who are most fearing of him'. Ok, what about the next Hadith? 'I am the final Prophet and there are none after me unless God wills it'

Student: It's false because of the last part, 'unless God wills it', because the Prophet Mohamed is the final prophet, [whereas] this [Hadith] makes people doubt whether he is the final prophet.

Teacher: Good. *Baraka Allahu Feeke*. You know, there was a woman who said that the Prophet didn't say there is no female prophet after me.... [She was] trying to play around with words! [Students laugh.] You know, girls, some people - even saints - may forge Hadiths with good intentions in order to make people more pious, but that is very dangerous. [Teacher narrates a story of a saint who invented Hadith.]

Student: Teacher, you know those email forwards we get? How do I know it's a false Hadith? And if I forward it, I mean, do I get [credited with] a sin because I didn't know it's false?

Teacher: Honestly, I don't know, but I don't think so because the sinner is the one who fabricated the Hadith in the first place.

Student: Ok, there are [also] those [text] messages we get on the phone: 'If u don't send this message to ten people this and this will happen'.

Teacher: No, that's overburdening. It doesn't make sense. I get them too!

Student: The Prophet never forced anyone.

Teacher: [Tells a story of a scholar who invented a Hadith in the presence of a Muslim *Khalif* to gain his trust and acquire worldly goods. Explains how scholars of kings often have their own agenda. Then tells the story of a *Khalif* who ordered the killing of a man who fabricated 4,000 Hadiths.] Now, girls, let's use our imaginations: Imagine you were *Imam Bukhari* who compiled all these Hadiths for us. Imagine the trips he went on.... [Tells a story about how *Imam Bukhari* was meticulous in compiling Hadith.] How do scholars test if a Hadith is correct? What can we do?

Student: Learn the *isnad* [chain of narrators].

Student: Memorize the fabricated Hadiths.

Teacher: Yes.

Student: Study biographies of the narrators.

Teacher: Yes, yes. Excellent

Teacher: Girls, how do you feel about what Imam Bukhari did? [Holds up his compilation of Hadiths.] This is the most authoritative book after the Quran.

Student: You know, teacher, we are really lacking in faith. I can't even imagine how they used to travel all that distance. We are Muslims by ID only.

Teacher: It's ok, my daughter. You know the saying that says 'extend yourself as long as your quilt permits'. You don't have to be like Bukhari. The most important things today are *prayer* and *Hijab* - simple things that we can do.... Girls, I want you at home to write some recommendations on how we can protect the Hadith and keep it alive. Also, consider the example of email forwards that your friend brought up and how you can check if they are fabricated or not.

6.3.1 Establishing a set of Fixed Principles

This section will argue that persuasive teaching as understood by the participating IS teachers is first and foremost bound by a set of fixed principles. The notion of fixed principles also came through in my pilot study but is further developed here. Although all participating teachers attempted to harness persuasion, each teacher devised an idiosyncratic set of principles and rhetorical style that governed her discussions and/or questioning with students in the classroom. The data in this study shows that, teaching for persuasion was capped by certain limits ‘fixed principles’ which both students and teachers are encouraged to respect. The principles are 1) The principle of limited thinking 2) The principle which states that the nature of subject and/or topic determines what can and can’t be deliberated 3) The principle of ‘submitting reason to text’

As indicated in the literature review (see Chapter 1,3), numerous studies have been conducted on the IS textbooks used in Saudi Arabia. These studies have employed a content analysis approach (Starrett & Doumato, 2007) where the focus was solely on textbook analysis while dispensing with the fundamental issue of classroom practice and teaching. Looking at a text critically and analytically is one thing, but understanding how the same text is contextualised in the classroom once it is shaped by the teachers and students and by social, cultural and political forces is another. Nonetheless, this study does not discount the value of the textbook analyses studies or the insights gained from this approach, particularly since the data in this study point to the fact that both *content* (textbook/message) and *process* are inseparable in persuasive teaching. The data thus show that the selected fixed principles offered by the teachers are derived from the corpus of traditional Islamic thought, particularly from the official state ideologies regarding Islam. In other words, many of these principles are commonly expressed in the school textbooks.

Nonetheless, an attempt was made here to describe how the teachers used these principles in their teaching.

The first fixed principle that was set down by the participating teachers in their attempts to teach in a persuasive way is the notion of the *limited thinking of mankind* (Jamjoom, 2010). This simply means that there are issues which the human mind cannot comprehend and at times should *not* comprehend. For example, according to the teachers there are two worlds: the ‘seen’ and the ‘unseen’. The world of the seen is usually what students are allowed to discuss in the classroom - issues that are related to the material universe, e.g., Islamic rulings such as those regarding permitted and forbidden. The ‘unseen’ is often revealed to prophets and can only be discussed to the extent that it is revealed to mankind by means of the Quran or Hadith (Prophet’s Sayings). For example, one teacher gave the following account of how students sometimes think too much of the ‘unseen’ world as a result of their excessive imagination:

I was telling the students that the Sun comes nearer to Earth on Judgement Day, as stated in the Quran, and people start to sweat.... [One student] asked me if she could raise her hand to touch the Sun on Judgement Day. Do you see how video games have affected their thinking? This is too imaginary. Of course, because I understand the developmental stages, I try to prevent them from [engaging in] such excessive [uses of the] imagination (Interview 8b).

This quote was shared by a teacher who taught the early intermediate level, which accounts for her emphasis on developmental stages. Throughout the interview the teacher reiterated the claim that early intermediate girls were very much like children and that therefore their imagination needed to be curbed.

The data also indicated that even though the principle of *limited thinking* is postulated by all the IS teachers, they were nonetheless divided on whether to provide an answer to questions that go beyond the limits they set or simply close down the

conversation. Some teachers in this study opted to provide an answer based on the premise that ‘you should not leave issues totally blurry, but provide an answer whereby the student doesn’t need to question the matter further’ (Interview 12b). Other teachers opted for closing down questions all together based on the original premise that these very questions transgress the limits. For example, in the quote below the teacher chose to answer the student’s question even though the question treaded on the ‘unseen’ world, she noted:

Once, a student asked me what she could do if she went to heaven and her parents went to hell and she wanted to see them. It’s an unusual question. I told her, ‘My daughter, why don’t you work on this issue with your parents now? Why do you think they will go to hell? Work on it so that you all go to heaven *inshala*. Hell is not something easy for people to simply go in and out of.... [So] work from now so that your family remains together.’ (Interview 12b)

It is evident from the quote above that while the teacher did not provided the student with a concrete answer from authoritative texts in Islam – as is common practice-, nor did she offer to investigate the matter, due to the principle of *limited thinking of mankind*, she nonetheless provided an answer that could in her view appeal to the student, comfort her and sounds realistic. On the other hand, some teachers in this study chose to simply close down arguments. For example, one teacher talked about how she sets limits for thinking at home with her children when prompted to elaborate on her discussion methods with students:

I set limits first..It’s like my son yesterday.. I reprimanded him for asking me about something. I told him there are limits to what you can ask about because sometimes it’s the *Satin* that prompts you to think about these things.. he asked me, he is third intermediate like my students.. he said don’t shout but ‘ Who created God?’ I said this is *Satin* prompting you to think this way. There are things we cannot know..we just believe... we know God is the one and only who does not beget nor is He begotten.. He does not die. (Interview 10b)

The above quote succinctly captures two important elements, first is that the teacher in this incident once again connected her teaching practice to her parenting style and second that she clearly set the limits to what the mind can and cannot think about. When discussions and/or questions become difficult for IS teachers to maintain they often simply ignore or close down the conversation by availing themselves of the established convention of setting limits for a discussion. In fact, it is common practice among the teachers to set the limits of the discussions early in the year. In this next example, the teacher introduces the second fixed principle of thinking at the beginning of the year by making a distinction between the different inherent natures of the subjects under the umbrella of IS. *Tawheed* (oneness of God) is generally seen as a subject on which little discussion can take place, whereas *Fikh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) is a subject on which teachers are more likely to negotiate rulings. One teacher illustrated this distinction when she said:

At the beginning of every year I explain the difference between *Tawheed* and *Fikh* to my students. *Tawheed* is about your faith and hence we don't discuss the unseen. It's not right to think about it too much because if you open the door to it you might commit *shirk* (polytheism), so I close the door of discussion on these issues. If there is a description in the Quran, it's fine, but what is not described I don't discuss. (Interview 14b)

This statement again shows that the inherent or assumed nature of the *content* and *process* of teaching are inseparable in persuasive teaching. The nature of the content will often determine how and *if* the teachers respond to the students' questions.

In addition to the two principles above, the IS teachers also grounded their discussions in the principle of 'submitting reason to text'. According to the teachers, there exists a hierarchy of knowledge that is explicit in their teaching. The Quran and Hadith are the bedrock of Islamic scripture, while reasoning exists for the purpose of understanding this scripture. For example, when asked about the lesson described in the first of the two

vignettes quoted above, the teacher explained that she distinguishes between *Hiwar* (discussion) and *Jadal* (*argumentative* discussion). She noted that ‘My students know this distinction. We *discuss*, we do not *argue*, and the purpose of this discussion is always to increase our knowledge of Islam and our understanding its texts’ (Interview 9b).

It is also evident from the first vignette that once an authoritative text is cited, e.g., from the Quran or Hadith, little argument goes on. This is apparent, for instance, in the segment in which the teacher cited the verse ‘this day I have perfected your religion’, followed by her assertion that Islam is therefore complete and does not require innovation. Students did not attempt to contradict the teachers’ use or interpretation of the verse. Rather, the Quran and Hadith are used as evidence to support one’s persuasive message. In the second vignette the hierarchy of knowledge is once again asserted when the teacher claims that Imam Bukhari’s Hadith compilation is the most authoritative book after the Quran and therefore can be used as evidence in determining authentic and fabricated Hadiths. Almost all of the participating teachers offered their own expressions of the view that ‘argument for the sake of argument itself is not merited’; rather, discussions are to be based on the honourable intention to increase one’s knowledge of Islam. Notably, in the second vignette the students were allowed to contest both fabricated Hadiths that were presented as examples on PowerPoint through the use of reason and ‘common sense’ as uttered by the teacher. Nonetheless, the limits were clear and the authoritative sources were not to be contested but rather used as evidence within the persuasive message.

As explained earlier in the section, many of the fixed principles set by the teachers were influenced by the religious discourse purported in the textbooks. They are also common principles and features of the *Salafi*¹⁶ Islamic tradition that is practiced in Saudi

¹⁶ *Salafi* is a Sunni Islamic movement that takes the pious ancestors, the *Salaf* of the patristic period of early Islam, as exemplary models. Some of the Salafi principles include: staunch monotheism, abstaining from

Arabia. Nonetheless, a complete understanding of how IS teachers make sense of their teaching and how they go about persuading students cannot be reached without an explication of how the principles of *limited thinking*, *submitting reason to text* and *nature of subject* are manifested in the teaching itself.

6.3.2 Acknowledge Feelings and Understandings that Students Bring

In the previous two sections (6.3 and 6.3.1) it was argued respectively that persuasive teaching as understood by the teachers required first a shift in student attitudes and beliefs - given that it is primarily about belief change and not knowledge acquisition - and that the process of persuasion itself was bounded by a set of fixed principles. In this section, I argue that the IS teachers placed the student at the forefront of the teaching process by acknowledging the students' feelings and understandings, drawing out and eliciting their ideas, even though the teaching remained primarily teacher-led.

Acknowledging student feelings and understandings was usually manifested through the teachers' questioning techniques and through keeping an open mind about some student opinions that might be considered controversial. Additionally, the data illustrates that the IS teachers perceive that it is important to elicit students' ideas in persuasive teaching in order to be able to connect their arguments with the students' lives and experiences.

From the first vignette describing the lesson on *innovation in religion* it was evident that the belief or attitude of each individual student mattered to the teacher given that she explicitly told the student that she would notify her later whether her answer was

heretical beliefs, innovation and practices and the prohibition of speculative theology.

correct. It seems that this was in order to make the student feel that their belief or attitude is taken seriously so that the student will listen to the argument the teacher then puts forward. The teacher also clearly asked the same student toward the end of the lesson about what she thought now when she said: ‘So, what do you think now? Are birthdays an innovation in religion or tradition?’ It was after this lesson that the teacher came up to me and shared her delight about being able to craft a compelling argument to persuade the students that ‘birthdays *are* an innovation in religion’. She told me the story of a student who came up to her before teaching this very same lesson to another eleventh grade and told her that she was ready to argue with her over the issue of whether celebrating one’s birthday is forbidden; according to the teacher, this student came back to her at the end of the lesson and told her, ‘Teacher, you really convinced me’.

Moreover, when asked why she did not correct the student immediately instead of leaving it to the end of the session, the same teacher explained:

I know that all the students celebrate their birthdays and that they associate birthdays with innovation in tradition, which is permitted; therefore, I wanted to take her through [the matter] gradually by discussing a parallel topic, the *Mawlid* (Prophet’s birthday). I wanted her to compare [the two]. (Interview 9b)

This teacher also explained that her use of pictures of holidays at the beginning of the lesson was aimed at eliciting what students knew about these holidays. She wanted to find out how her students felt about celebrating these foreign holidays, e.g., Christmas and Valentine’s Day, which are not part of the Islamic Tradition. She elaborated: ‘I wanted them to deduce that these are not from our culture, they are western imported holidays and we have *Eid* instead’ (Interview 9b).

Additionally, the same vignette illustrates how the teacher carefully devised a series of questions to elicit student understandings, beliefs or feelings. This included

asking the following questions: 1) Using the skill of observation, what do you notice from the pictures displayed? 2) What about birthdays and Valentine's Day? What do Muslims do on these days? What do you girls do? And 3) Now, let us think about the Prophet. How do we feel about him?' These questions were not only carefully planned (see section 6.3.3.1), but also guided the teacher's argument structure.

Another teacher remarked that the questions that students ask in class are of great importance. These questions allow the teachers to do two things simultaneously: 1) understand the beliefs that students bring to class and where they come from; and 2) learn how to address these questions as a teacher. Hence, preplanning of lessons takes into account what the students have previously asked, what previous students have asked in the context of the same lesson or topic, what the students typically read and what background knowledge they have probably acquired from the media or elsewhere:

I strongly believe that the questions that the students throw at you throughout your teaching experience of this topic assist you in addressing these questions. You will know how to answer because you anticipate some of their questions and concerns. As you know, teaching now is different, [because] the girls are always reading things on the Internet. It used to be that you [would just] write on the white board and students [would] listen and take notes, but now you have to plan ahead [and take account of what is discussed] on the Internet too. (Interview 6b)

Another teacher remarked: 'I always ask my students to interpret the verse first, just to see what they are thinking. Sometimes they ask me questions that make me rethink things' (Interview 16b).

From the second vignette on *fabricated Hadiths* it is also clear that the teacher took the time to address the students' queries on Hadiths that are forwarded via emails or text messages. From the observation it was clear that she engaged in this short exchange with the student quiet comfortably. She also shared the fact that she receives these burdensome

text messages as well. She followed this by a narrating a story on individuals who fabricate Hadiths for their own benefit. Toward the end of the lesson she asked the students to think of suggestions at home on protecting the Prophet's Hadith from fabrication and specifically referred to the issue of email forwards brought up by one of her students.

Nonetheless, acknowledging what the students bring to class is not always easy. Therefore, a degree of 'open-mindedness' on behalf of the teachers to hear what the students have to say becomes crucial. Consider the following incident from an observation extract of a *Hadith* Lesson in the seventh grade:

After Reading the *Hadith* out loud, the teacher talked about the narrator, *Abu Huraira*¹⁷ (the Prophet's Companion):

Teacher: Girls, how do you feel about *Abu Huraira*, who narrated many *Hadiths* that we wouldn't have had if it weren't for him.

Student: Didn't the prophet become bored with *Abu Huraira*? He was always stuck to the Prophet! [Students laugh.]

Teacher: Well, hmm. It's like Lujian who sits next to you all day in class. She knows all that you do because you are sitting next to her. *Abu Huraira* was not wealthy and did not have a job like the other *Sahaba* (Companions). So he spent most of his days with the Prophet, listening to his *Hadith*.

In this extract the student displays a possible awareness of a heated debate between *Sunni* and *Shia* Islamic scholars. While the *Sunni* and *Salafi* tradition in Saudi Arabia regard all of the Prophet's companions as trustworthy narrators, the *Shia* tradition claims that many of Abu Huraira's hadiths were about events that took place when he was not present or not even nearby. They also claim that it would have been impossible to narrate

¹⁷ The contestation of *Abu Huraira*'s credibility is not accepted in Saudi Arabia given that it is dominated by a *Salafi* Tradition which assumes that the Prophet's companions represented the ideal society which new generations should aspire to.

the thousands of hadiths that are attributed to him unless he had been with the Prophet frequently and without interruption (Ozon, 2004). The teacher in this extract, like many others (see extract on permitted foods in section 6.2.2), attempted to provide an answer or justification. When asked about this incident, the teacher explained that one must have ‘a big heart’ to be able to tolerate such comments: ‘You have to provide them with the comfort [in their environment] to express their ideas freely [so that you can] know what they are thinking’ (Interview 8b). This view was reiterated by another teacher, who explained that

It is important for me to connect lessons with students’ lives today...because there is no interest in religion nowadays - not like it used to be. The students are furious about certain things, or upset. I don’t like to push them away, [so] I embrace their ideas with an open heart.... Sometimes a girl’s classmates may correct her, but I receive what she has to say even if I couldn’t persuade her otherwise. [That way] at least I don’t make her loathe religion. (Interview 24b)

From both of the above examples it is clear that while IS teachers aim to persuade and often to provide some answer or justification to the student, they tend to accept *incremental change* in the students rather than insisting on a complete and/or instantaneous transformation of their opinions. In other words, the teachers do what they can and, as the last-quoted teacher noted, try to consider their overall responsibility to support and nourish religious sentiment over and above contesting students’ views on every doctrinal point.

Additionally, in order to persuade, the IS teachers apparently tried to find a *balance* or a *comfort zone* between the limits that they set on thinking, as discussed in the preceding section, and the degree to which they seek or are able to accommodate and understand students’ background knowledge, feelings, opinions and questions. This ‘comfort zone’, although idiosyncratic, stems from their teaching and religious beliefs

about what they are allowed to discuss, their experiences with students and their perceived ability to persuade through crafting compelling arguments. This is evident in the following two quotes:

There was a student who asked me about sexual relations. Of course, I wanted to answer with something convincing, but I can't answer everything. It's important not to let things remain unclear or vague in their heads. (Interview 10b)

It all depends on the student's question and on what I can address. I mean, I teach these girls about marriage and divorce, about *zina* and about being a wife [so] I should expect some uncomfortable questions [and] objections. Sometimes I give a brief answer, sometimes I avoid a direct answer, but I never silence the student. (Interview 6b)

Again, the notions of comfort zone and incremental change are clear. While the teachers acknowledged that it is sometimes difficult to tackle all students' concerns, they also considered it important 'not to let things remain unclear or vague'. This was made even more evident when one of the teachers reflected on an incident that pushed her out of her comfort zone a student who was a relative of Osama Bin Laden asked her whether her uncle was an infidel:

The lesson was about obedience to the *imam*. ... [The student] asked me: 'Is my uncle an infidel?' I told her that opinions on that question differ. Some scholars hold that those who are not obedient to the ruler or imam are immediately removed from the circle of Islam. I mean, it was hard for me to talk about this sensitive political issue [particularly because the subject] was her uncle. So I told her that I never met the man [and that] I cannot make a judgement on something like that but that I cannot attribute all the evil doings to him, and killing innocent souls in an evil doing, however, the media is sometimes deceptive, [especially since] nowadays you can fabricate anything, a voice or a picture.... But it was hard for me to answer. (Interview 11b)

Although the teacher in this situation chose to provide an answer, doing so was clearly difficult for her. The difficulty was compounded due to her desire to address this individual student's concern while simultaneously being pushed out of

her comfort zone by the nature of the question. In situations similar to this, the data show that the teachers are willing to accept not being able to provide clear cut or definite answers.

6.3.3 Crafting a Compelling Argument

The analysis of the data confirmed that crafting a compelling argument was conceived by the teachers as a seminal aspect of persuasive teaching. I have chosen the term ‘crafting’ in recognition of the skill, dexterity and technique as well as the preparation, thinking and planning that are put into this facet of teaching. Aspects of the message, the discourse and how it is formulated and presented emerged as a prevailing function in the participating IS teachers’ teaching, as will be explained below. This perception was affirmed when one teacher criticized the outdated methods of lesson planning that the Ministry demands, maintaining that lesson planning is all about one’s argument flow and presentation:

Of course, lesson planning has changed dramatically nowadays. It used to be all about writing a complete lesson plan in the lesson planning notebook provided by the Ministry. They still require it, you know.... I don’t even acknowledge this notebook [because teaching] is not about the goals and the visual aids anymore. It’s about your argument flow, what you say, how you present it. Not the goal of the lesson and the visual aids, no, no. I plan my lesson by looking at how the textbook presents a topic, then I plan on the Internet and add things and think to myself ‘this is what I will say about this point’ – and write it. (Interview 6a)

Once again, the quote above confirms several features of persuasive teaching: the first is the claim, reiterated by this teacher, that a kind of *change* has occurred in both teaching and planning, and the second is the emphasis on aspects of the argument,

discourse and presentation. The teacher clearly visualizes and plans the edifice of her argument when she says to herself ‘this is what I will say about this point’. Details of ways in which such reflection is manifested in the IS teachers’ teaching will be presented in the following subsections, where I present the strategies and/or devices used by the IS teachers to craft their arguments, ranging from preplanning to execution in the classroom. In this connection, the analysis identified four strategies that the teachers used to craft their arguments:

- 1) Asserting Credibility
- 2) Sustaining Student Interest
- 3) Drawing on Emotion and Using Personal Stories
- 4) Drawing on Appropriated Reasoning

In what follows, each of these strategies will be discussed in turn, considering how it was used by the teachers with reference to examples from classroom practice and interview extracts.

6.3.3.1 Asserting Credibility

In this section I argue that asserting credibility appeared to be a thorny issue for the participating IS teachers. The teachers were cognizant of the fact that this era of globalisation has brought with it many challenges and hence that the need to assert credibility has intensified. I also argue that the process of asserting credibility takes several forms, particularly: 1) through an emphasis on preplanning lessons; and 2) through ensuring that students are given the correct information by the teacher.

The literature on religious discourse in Saudi Arabia suggests that students today

have become more conscious of the functionalisation of religious knowledge in textbooks through official reproductive institutions such as the school and government sponsored media. An opinion poll conducted in 2003 of 5,500 Saudis pointed to the considerable dissonance between the rule-based Islam propagated in textbooks and how most Saudi people want to live their lives (Cordesman & Obaid, 2005). The repetition of themes such as the totalitarian slogan of the ‘one correct form of Islam’ forcefully defended in textbooks and schools has gradually resulted in a backlash among students (Starrett & Duamato, 2007). This perspective was expressed by the participating IS teachers, who reported their dismay at the current climate while reiterating the dream of recapturing the esteemed position that IS once held in Saudi culture and society. The teachers complained of the trivializing of IS in comparison to subjects such as maths and sciences. One teacher noted, ‘We Islamic studies teachers have unfortunate luck, even though it is the most honourable of sciences’ (Interview 15a), and others complained of the dire reality that parents never ask about their daughters’ grades in IS any more. As one teacher explained, ‘Parents [today] are all more concerned about their student’s grades in maths than in IS’ (Interview 10a).

Amidst these sweeping changes in society and with the advent of the ‘information age’, IS teachers feel the need to assert their credibility more than ever before. One teacher exclaimed:

There is a disappointing culture of boredom with religious subjects.... We are suffering from the society, the cheap media, friends and the home. So we are always redirecting wrong perceptions in the students’ minds, but it is harder to assert your credibility nowadays. (Interview 21a)

Teachers have a number of ways of asserting credibility. They initially perceive that preplanning is important in asserting credibility. As for preplanning, the data confirms that it involves several steps, including revisiting authoritative Islamic sources, drawing

conceptual maps of their arguments and adding relevant information to the textbook.

Consider the vignette on *Innovation in Religion* quoted above: it is clear that the teacher is guiding the students through a sequence of questions that she has thoroughly thought through, from asking about the pictures of foreign holidays on display up until her conclusion which she based on the analogy between the forbidding of celebrating the Prophet's birthday and the forbidding of birthday celebrations in general. The teacher explained the planning process for this lesson as follows:

The first thing I do is consult Islamic sources. Then I start to summarize the main point of the lesson. [At first,] I am a bit unorganised in my planning, but then I draw a conceptual map of what I will include in the lesson. Next, I think how I can incorporate the six thinking hats¹⁸ in my lesson and write down the questions that I want to ask about each thinking skill. Then I simply imagine myself giving the lesson. I prefer to have a free lesson before my lesson just so I can visualize myself [executing the plan]. (Interview 9b)

From the extract above, it is evident that a great deal of thinking takes place prior to the lesson itself. The teacher elaborated on the purpose of this preplanning when she explained that her role is to 'persuade a contemporary generation influenced by the information age'; she explained that planning in such a way may be difficult at first, but it is certainly more effective in persuading her students and attaining a degree of credibility in their eyes:

Students respect you more as a credible source when you know your subject well. In my students' evaluations of my teaching I hear things like, 'She knows her subject well' [or] 'She is able to convince us'. These statements make me happy when I hear them. (Interview 9b)

Additionally, it is clear from the quotes above that *providing the correct*

¹⁸ The de Bono Hats system (also known as "Six Hats" or "Six Thinking Hats") is a thinking tool for group discussion and individual thinking widely used in the company innovation sector. The teachers were given a training session by the Ministry of Education on the use of the six thinking hats. The hats correspond to the following skills: The white hat 'facts and information', the red hat 'feelings', Black hat 'critical judgment', yellow hat 'positive', green hat 'new ideas', blue hat 'the big picture'

information to students by ‘consulting Islamic sources’ was deemed important. In my previous findings from the pilot study (Jamjoom, 2010) I put forth the view of the teachers saw their teaching as a form of *giving* which emanates from teacher to student. On further analysis of the larger set of data from this study, the provision of correct information was regarded as a central aspect of *establishing credibility*. One teacher elaborated on this point as follows:

I have to show the students what is *Halal* [permitted] and what is *Haram* [forbidden]. My role is to give the correct information because there are many corrupt influences nowadays. (Interview 1a)

Another teacher reflected in the following manner on her strong subject knowledge and on the fact that she was taught by respected female scholars, which she felt added to her credibility as a teacher:

My background knowledge of the subject is very strong. Honestly, I was also taught by great scholars and teachers at university. I am honoured to have been taught by them. They prepared me well [and this preparation] makes me very credible [as a source for my students]. (Interview 11a)

Other IS teachers in this study reported ensuring that they gave the correct information by reinforcing their arguments with scientific facts. While the classroom observations showed that teachers rarely cited or referenced these scientific facts, they often used them in their arguments (see Vignette 1, where the teacher claimed that astrologers have proven that the usual date for the birthday of the Prophet is incorrectly calculated). The following short observation extract provides an example of how teachers commonly integrate (unreferenced) scientific facts in their teaching:

Observation extract: 3rd Intermediate *Fikh* Lesson on Permitted Foods:

Teacher had been talking about olive oil, which is mentioned in the Quran:

Teacher: Girls, in our religion we do not take an excess of anything. If you drink it moderately, olive oil protects you from breast cancer. That's why our religion calls for moderation in everything. *Subhan Allah* (Exalted is God).

On the other hand, the data showed that teacher did reference their religious opinions and arguments by citing the Islamic sources that they used.

Moreover, the study showed that teachers occasionally asserted their credibility by taking on the role of a *learner*. This strategy was usually used when the teachers did not have the correct information and/or argument to answer the students' questions on the spot. A typical response to such situations was expressed by one teacher when she noted that:

When I don't know something, I don't give them [the students] the wrong information. I tell them that I am seeker of knowledge as well, that we are all learning and that I will have to inquire [into the answer/explanation] and get back to them. (Interview 4b)

Similarly, another teacher stated the following:

I search for the information to make sure that I am providing the correct knowledge. This is a [serious] responsibility, and students are always placing you under the microscope. But I always tell them that we are all learners in the path of God. (Interview 3a)

Finally, the data showed that IS teachers also search for answer by referring their questions to an *Alim*, i.e., to a religious scholar whom they know in their community, or by consulting other sources in books or on the Internet. These sources, however, must be accepted by the religious *Ulama* in Saudi Arabia and cannot represent the opinions of a non-sanctioned Muslim sect (e.g., *Shia*, *Sufi* or *Ismaili*).

6.3.3.2 Sustaining Student Interest

This section illustrates how the participating IS teachers were preoccupied with the issue of sustaining student interest in the lesson. The data suggest they placed particular emphasis on contriving attention grabbing ‘openers’ for their lessons. The teachers referred to this component using the Arabic word *Tamheed*, literally meaning ‘prelude’ or ‘preface’. The *Tamheed* was described as a distinct stage in the teaching process, one that was followed by the ‘*Ard*, which means ‘presentation’ or ‘demonstration’ and, thereafter, by the *Galk*, which means ‘conclusion’ or ‘shutting down’. *Tamheed* starts with an activity of choice - often idiosyncratic in nature, depending on the teachers’ goals - and ends with a link to the body of the new lesson. According to the participating IS teachers, the selection of an inherently interesting task for this function is worthwhile, as the level of interest generated at this stage can be used as a predictive measure of how students will react to the subsequent lesson.

In the second vignette on *Fabricated Hadiths*, the teacher started her lesson with an association question in which she asked the students to think of similarities between a hairpin and the science of hadith. When asked about her choice of this unusual question at the start of the lesson, she explained as follows:

The *Tamheed* has to be attention grabbing. I put all my energy, thoughts and creativity into the *Tamheed* because [doing so can free me from having] to keep asking the girls to pay attention later on, and it also means that I am varying my motivational techniques. I feel that I have to get [the students to be] enthusiastic about every point in the lesson, so I don’t move on to another point unless I am sure that [the *Tamheed*] is instilled in their souls and that it was beneficial for them. (Interview 13b)

After discussing the principle of *Tamheed*, she elaborated on her choice of the hairpin example and said:

I looked at the topic of my lesson. I really worked hard on this idea. Then I thought of the hairpin. I was thinking that the object I choose had to be tangible even though I would proceed to connect it to an intangible concept. (Interview 13b)

Another teacher explained how she enjoys devising an attention grabbing *Tamheed*:

We have to employ a *Tamheed* for the lesson. The *Tamheed* is usually something entertaining, like a set of mixed up letters that the students have to rearrange to form a sentence to deduce what the lesson will be about. I used such an activity once for a lesson that was about prayer. The final sentence was ‘O’ Comfort us, Bilal!’¹⁹ The students immediately felt relieved [and exclaimed:] ‘It’s about prayer!’ I always love to start my lesson with something motivational so that the students will be enthusiastic about the lesson that follows. (Interview 8b)

As can be observed from the above quotes, the teachers felt that selecting inherently interesting tasks created an enthusiastic momentum for the class and assisted in ‘instilling the issues in the students’ souls’. In the vignette on *Innovation in Religion*, the teacher indicated that her *Tamheed* consisted of sharing pictures of foreign holidays with the students in order to generate a discussion about what students and their families do for holidays – which was followed by the teacher narrating the story of Saint Valentine. The goal was for the students to deduce that these holidays are Western or foreign – i.e., alien to the religion of Islam - and therefore constitute an innovation in religion.

Occasionally, the teachers would select one or two students to participate in the *Tamheed*. In one lesson about *zeena* (beautifying) the teacher had a prior arrangement with one of her students to come into class in full *zeena*, i.e., newly manicured, and wearing earrings, makeup, high heels, gold and silver bracelets and even leather. The teacher then went through the lesson about the permitted *zeena* for women in Islam by going through each item that the student wore. She exclaimed that her ‘students would never forget this

¹⁹ Bilal was the Muazzin (person who called others to prayer) in the time of the Prophet. The expression is a well-known saying that the Prophet used to say before prayer.

lesson because it [constituted] active [learning]’.

In addition to the *Tamheed*, many of the participating teachers devoted considerable attention to devising interesting *worksheets* for their students. They regularly complained about the boring and repetitive format of the textbooks that they were required to teach from cover to cover. Perhaps in part as an outgrowth of this dissatisfaction, worksheets not only provided supplementary material, but in many instances teachers depended entirely on them. Consider the following question from a worksheet that one teacher shared with the researcher as an example of what she considers ‘different’ from the typical one-word questions in the textbooks:

We have recently discussed the issue of wearing jackets made from pigskin. Scholars have had different opinions on this point. A) Discuss the different opinions while keeping in mind that the Prophet - Peace be Upon Him - said ‘if leather is treated then it is cleansed’ B) Report the opinion of Sheik *bin baz*.²⁰

Another teacher indicated that she often shares her worksheets with her daughter at home, who is of similar age to her students. In this we see the role of parenting and its influence on teaching reiterated. The teacher explained that she usually asks her daughter to provide her with feedback on the level of difficulty of questions, whether they are interesting and thought provoking or boring and repetitive:

My daughter is my students’ age. I show her all my worksheets and ask her to answer the questions. I look at her answers so that I can anticipate what my students will think, and I ask her whether she finds [the material] interesting or boring. (Interview 14b)

Finally, the findings suggest that in order to sustain interest and remain persuasive, IS teachers are becoming increasingly responsive to the informational demands of the post-modern age. This is achieved by becoming familiar with TV shows, movies and

²⁰ Grand *Mufti* of Saudi Arabia from 1993 until his death in 1999.

technology that are popular with students, including the use of computers in the classroom and Internet-based communications tools such as Facebook. All of the IS teachers who participated in this study put forth the view that it was essential that they become comfortable handling technology in and out of the classroom. One teacher, for instance, indicated that ‘We used to be poor in our knowledge of technology; I already know how to engage in a discussion with the students, but using Data Show and Smart Camera, for instance, are skills that I am still learning’ (Interview 7b). Other teachers explained how their lesson planning was influenced by watching popular TV shows and most importantly by using the Internet:

We try to connect what we see on TV with religion, even if it’s just a documentary on sea creatures. But the best shows are on *Al Jazeera*. [These programs] have really taught me how to approach a topic with my students. (Interview 13b)

As an example of how teachers use their knowledge of popular media to sustain student interest and persuade them simultaneously, we can consider the following interview extract about the *Hijab* (headscarf), which is a highly contested issue in Saudi Arabia today. The teacher explains how she uses her knowledge of contemporary Egyptian movies to support her argument on the obligatory ruling on *Hijab*:

I am teaching a whole unit on *Hijab* this year. I am teaching that *Hijab* is a covering of the face, not only the hair.... It’s a big unit! It starts with presenting evidence that *Hijab* is obligatory for women in general.... Then it presents evidence [i.e., from the Quran and Hadith] that *Hijab* is about covering the face. Then it presents the contrary evidence that *Hijab* is about covering the hair only, and finally it refutes the evidence that says that *Hijab* is covering the hair only.... The author of the textbook does this by citing a verse that says ‘and that they [women] should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments’. [In this way] he is arguing that if the feet are forbidden [to be revealed], then the face, which is the essence of beauty in a woman, is most certainly forbidden and must be covered.... But the girls still say: ‘If God wanted us to cover our faces, why is this not written explicitly in the Quran? God could have just said, “Cover

your face!’” The way I handle [this objection] is by referring to Egyptian movies, something that they are familiar with and that they like... I tell them, ‘You know how in Egyptian romantic movies the director often starts by filming the legs of the village girl? The camera moves from the bottom up, first showing the legs of a girl dressed in a short *Jalabiya* [dress] and then moving up to her face. Why does the director start by filming the legs and leaving the face for later? Because the face is what the viewer is anticipating and what directs the gaze of the viewer. [In this way] the director creates anticipation.... This is why the author [of the textbook is able to] deduce that the face must be covered from a verse about foot ornaments.’ (Interview 6b)

Here it seems that the teacher is trying to make her argument more appealing and thus more persuasive to her audience by adding a contemporary reference with which the students are familiar. In this case, the teacher uses her knowledge of Egyptian movies and how their directors manipulate the viewers’ gaze to create an analogy that supports the argument of the textbook author, which is in turn based on religious authority.

6.3.3.3. Drawing on Emotion and the Use of Personal Stories

In the previous sections it was argued that the participating IS teachers attempted to assert credibility and sustain student interest in order to render a persuasive argument. In this section, the data will further highlight the fact that they teachers also drew on emotion and used both personal and other *stories* to craft persuasive messages.

The classroom observations showed that the IS teachers often used the word *Shu’or*, literally translated as ‘feel’, in their questioning. For example, in Vignette 1 and Vignette 2 the teachers asked the students, respectively, ‘How do we feel about the Prophet?’ and ‘Girls, how do you feel about what Imam Bukhari did?’ Additionally, in the observation extract on *Abu Huraira* (see section 5.3.2) the teacher also asked the students how they *felt* about *Abu Huraira*. Furthermore, the IS teachers in this study understood

that stories were seminal in their success or failure to persuade. In almost every lesson, a story, whether long or short, was narrated by the teacher. In Vignette 1, the teacher narrated the story of Saint Valentine and in Vignette 2 the teacher narrated three different stories, each corresponding to a different point in the lesson. The first story was about how pious saints sometimes fabricate hadiths, the second was about a scholar who fabricates hadiths to the *Khalif* (imam or leader) to attain worldly goods and status and the third was about the painstaking efforts and endeavors of Imam Bukhari in compiling hadith.

From the classroom observations and interview, it was clear that the IS teachers taught students about social and religious proprieties, discussed issues of relevance to the Muslim world and strived to acculturate student beliefs and behaviour through conjuring emotions and stirring nostalgic sentiments of the glorious past. A common strategy was to contrast the past with the present through the use of stories. This is what teachers commonly referred to as *rabt*, which literally means ‘tying things together’. Several of the IS teachers claimed that even though textbooks demand of students to act in accordance with the ways of the Prophet, they are *dry* and *repetitive* in their presentation of topics. For instance, the teacher who taught the lesson about the narrator Abu Huraira elaborated on the value of stories:

I use stories in my teaching. I would love it if they had more stories for students to read in the textbooks about the Prophet or more accounts of incidents that confronted the Prophet and his companions - then we could connect [these stories and their themes] with our reality nowadays. When I tell the students the name of the narrator of a hadith, we talk about him/her briefly. But such discussions will not make the students love the companions of the Prophet. [For this] we need more stories of the Prophet and his companions.... (Interview 8b)

In a lesson on the *Tafseer* (Quranic Interpretation) of *Surat Al Hashr*,²¹ which deals

²¹ The *surah* describes expulsion of the Jewish Banu Nadir tribe from their settlements in Medinah.

with the expulsion of the Jews from Medinah in the time of the Prophet, the teacher selected video clips from the Internet that showed the current conditions of Palestinian children living under Israeli occupation. She then asked each student to write on a piece of paper how they *felt* about the images and clips that were shared in class. The teacher then connected the past as described in the verses with the present conditions in Palestine. When asked to elaborate on her choice to use visual images, she argued that connecting with people is a more powerful tool than listing facts from a textbook – for example, about the Palestinian occupation - and that she considered her topics to be both social and religious. Both of the above examples suggest that IS teachers use stories to connect the glorious past with present conditions of the Muslim *Umma*.

Connecting lessons with societal concerns is another avenue for using stories and tapping into emotions. In one *Fikh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) lesson about the ruling on suicide in Islam, the teacher explained that she consciously withheld the ruling (suicide is forbidden) to be deduced at the end of the lesson and that she opted to use a newspaper story about a Saudi man who had committed suicide as a means to move the students toward the desired understanding. The man in the article had seven children and they all lived under extremely poor conditions. The teacher asked the students to share their thoughts and feelings orally about why they thought the man might have wanted to commit suicide. She then moved on to a more philosophical discussion about ‘the self in Islam’ and its ownership. Does one own the self or is it a shared self with the family and with one’s dependents? The teacher, although mainly leading the students toward a particular conclusion, was attempting to introduce debate on a simple example of a moral dilemma. This was more evident when a student asked her whether this man would go to hell; although the conventional answer would have been ‘suicide is forbidden, hence it leads to one going to hell’, the teacher provided an alternative, more sophisticated answer when

she explained that people who commit suicide are often psychologically unwell or depressed individuals; this immediately places them under the category of people who are mentally unstable and hence they will not be judged by God as will those who are mentally healthy. This teacher made sense of this lesson and of her use of stories in the following manner:

You know I have changed [my teaching] one hundred eighty degrees. I used to follow a traditional approach in teaching - just transmission - but now when [even] one student is not paying attention, I feel that my lesson is weak.... So I started enrolling in workshops about thinking skills, and I started using stories in my teaching and I am certain now that what the student deduces on her own from what I say is far more powerful than the old outcome when I just transmitted the information. (Interview 24b)

The above quote supports the view that a shift has taken place among some or even most female Saudi IS teachers away from the notion and practice of teaching as a purely knowledge-transmission process. It also highlights the fact that IS teachers are beginning to incorporate their own understanding of thinking skills and stories in their teaching. Again, in this example, the teacher culminated her lesson by connecting the story of the suicide victim with sayings of the Prophet and with stories of his companions that dealt with the theme of accepting one's fate.

Data analysis, moreover, further suggested that the use of stories by the IS teachers was not limited to what 'others' have done in the past or present, but often included stories about the teachers themselves. Two observations, at least, provided insight into the use of personal stories: 1) the IS teachers displayed a peculiar comfort in sharing their own stories with their students; and 2) they used their stories as examples of morally acceptable behaviour. This is probably related to the fact that IS teachers consider themselves to be role models and that this role requires a certain degree of self disclosure:

I know that the girls look at me as a role model...so when we talk about

issues such as listening to music, I tell them, ‘Girls, I attend weddings with music and my children all listen to music’. I also tell them that I pluck my eyebrows. Some teachers prefer not to say [such things, but] I do. I know that I may be committing a sin. I won’t shout it out, but if they ask me [about such matters], I will never pretend to be an angel. (Interview 6b)

Other teachers spoke openly about their relationships with their husbands and about their behaviour at home and in public in order to provide examples of what a Muslim woman should aspire to. In this regard, the same teacher explained:

You know, one of my former students - she already graduated - we are in touch and she told me, ‘I still remember what you used to tell us in class about the things you did at home as a wife’. Yes, I give them examples from my marriage. It doesn’t mean that I am always happy. Of course, I have ups and downs, but you don’t share the negative with the students.... [Y]ou have to instil the good images. So, I don’t cook, for example, but I tell them that in the early stages of my marriage I did cook – though now no more kitchen time for me! [All in all,] you don’t tell them in detail about your problems but you make them see the good things about marriage. (Interview 6b)

Additionally, in one of the observations of a lesson on witchcraft, the IS teacher talked about witchcraft as a dangerous form of polytheistic behaviour. She openly shared an incident in which she had felt vulnerable to this behaviour and as a result had almost committed what is commonly known as *Shirk Asgar* (a minor act of polytheism consisting in associating with Mankind attributes that belong to God). She said to her students:

Girls, one day I came back from school feeling very tired and depressed – Exalted is God. I saw that I had missed a call from an unfamiliar number. I was feeling very low in my faith that day. I called the number back and someone on the other end said, ‘[caller used teacher’s name], we are calling you from North Africa. Your name appeared on a plate of gold while we were praying. I immediately hung up the phone. It could be [a result of] black magic, but I won’t hide from you that for a few seconds I actually believed the caller – or wanted to believe. (Observation 7)

The quotes above suggest that IS teachers are inclined at times to share their stories as examples of morally acceptable behaviour and at other times in order to show the

flawed nature of humanity. The participating teachers displayed great comfort in sharing their stories with their students and found something to say about themselves in most lessons, such as how they dealt with particular rulings in Islam, incidents in which they had felt vulnerable to temptation and so on. In the following section, I argue that in addition to storytelling, the participating IS teachers employed a form of guided reasoning in their teaching.

6.3.3.4 Guided Reasoning

Based on the study the data, this section sets out both what the IS teachers meant by *reasoning* and how they manifest this quality or activity in their teaching. I have chosen the term *guided reasoning* to denote how IS teachers make sense of reasoning due to the influence of the *fixed principles* set by the teachers, as examined earlier in the chapter. According to the participating IS teachers, the use of reasoning and/or thinking skills is seminal in persuading students. In this regard, one teacher explained the following:

They [the Ministry of Education] should try to include thinking skills in the curriculum. This is important in order to achieve persuasion. Many Islamic studies teachers reprimand students for asking controversial questions, which is a huge mistake! We need to change this attitude and start implementing thinking skills in our teaching and use discussion to achieve persuasion. (Interview 13b)

Another teacher used a concept from the Quran to support the notion of reasoning in teaching:

I always remind myself of the concept of *ulul albab* (People of Understanding) in my teaching. I mean the girls have brains and fifty percent of their mental capacity goes unutilised. (Interview 17a)

The IS teachers espoused or demonstrated a number of specific beliefs about the importance of and proper approach to using reasoning and thinking skills in their teaching. First, in their view, the process of reasoning and the use of thinking skills need to be made

explicit so that the students know what thinking skills are being used. In this regard, the teachers differentiated the actions known to them as *Inqudi* (critique), *Halili* (analyse) and *Istanbidi* (deduce). These distinctions were clear from Vignettes 1 and 2 quoted at the outset of this chapter. In Vignette 1 the teacher explicitly framed her questions with phrases like ‘using the skill of observation’ and ‘using the skill of deduction, what can you deduce from...’. When asked why she had explicitly identified the required thinking skill, this teacher proffered the view that it was important because this strategy was new to the students. She also elaborated on how she taught students about the skill of analysis in the following interview extract:

For the skill of analysis, I made the students work in groups, I gave them a worksheet that had [the following] sentence written on it: ‘There is no discord between the reason and the text’. I asked them to analyse what this means. When we analyse, we break down the sentence word by word and explain what it means concisely. So I try as much as I can to train them in how to use the different thinking skills through worksheets. (Interview 9b)

Similarly, in the second Vignette on *fabricated hadiths* the teacher specified ‘using the skill of association’ as crucial to the task at hand. This teacher further explained in the interview how she liked to use the skill of deduction frequently in her teaching. In one of her lessons, for example, she underlined the thinking skill that she wanted students to put to use in answering a particular question on the use of contraception and family planning. Second, given that the reasoning process was teacher-led, the strategy most commonly used was questioning. All of the participating IS teachers used questioning as a way to guide students through their persuasive message. Questioning is not new in the literature on teaching - on the contrary, it has long been and remains a predominant technique in many classrooms, particularly in subjects that require enquiry (Dillon, 1982). Questioning by IS teachers in this study was not used to stimulate open ended discussions, but rather as

a form of ‘discursive weaponry’, as described by Edward and Mercer (1987). These authors argue that teachers’ questions are often used to check student knowledge, ensure that they are paying attention and define the agenda for the anticipated discussion. In considering the vignette on *Innovation in Religion*, it becomes clear how the teacher guides the reasoning process by first selecting the types of questions and then expanding on most of the answers herself - e.g., ‘Yes, yes. And God has said...’, ‘Astrologers have determined that the date commonly cited for the Prophet’s birthday is incorrect’, ‘ Yes, the *Sahaba* did not do it so....’

Third, the IS teachers occasionally used what they termed as *word problems* in their worksheets and as a teaching strategy in the classroom. In one of the lessons observed, the teacher introduced a word problem that posed a dilemma as a culminating activity for the lesson. Specifically, she asked the students to write their recommendations and to predict the sanctioned Islamic ruling with regard to the case of a mother living in a non-Muslim country who unknowingly cooked her daughter’s birthday cake with gelatine extracted from pigs. In another observation, the teacher used word problems not as a culminating activity but as a teaching strategy throughout her lesson. She introduced the concept of *nisab*²² and how to calculate the exact amount of *Zakat* (Alms giving) by presenting a number of word problems to students, asking them to think about the different circumstances in each case and finally asking them to attempt to deduce the general principles of *Zakat* established by *Sharia* law. This teacher elaborated on her use of word problems in the following manner:

I don’t like the questions in the textbook, so I change how the lesson is presented. Traditional questions like ‘What are the principles of *zakat*?’ are

²² In Sharia (Islamic Jurisprudence) *niṣāb* is the payable amount, which savings or capital or product must exceed in order for the Muslim owner to be obliged to give *zakat* (Alms giving).

boring! I try to include thinking skills and reasoning in my worksheets and teaching. (Interview 10b)

It can be construed from the examples above that IS teachers not only acknowledge the importance of using thinking skills in teaching but have devised specific strategies by means of which to do so. Most importantly, many asserted or manifested the belief that thinking skills need to be made explicit for students, should or can be formulated by the teacher by means of a series of questions and/or problems and are more effective means for achieving persuasion than the passive reception by the students of knowledge that is merely transmitted by teachers and textbooks.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to address the first two research questions regarding what IS teachers do in class and how they talk about and/or make sense of what they do. This was achieved through presenting a descriptive and interpretive account of the themes the teachers most frequently talked about. The interpretive facet aimed at providing a close reading of what the teacher participants actually said and did. I also thought it reasonable not to have a clear demarcation between literature and themes as I attempted to integrate some relevant literature which I felt provided an important context for the existing study.

What clearly emerges from the data presented above is that the teaching of IS teachers described here is multidimensional and complex. The chapter contended that ‘maintaining discipline’ and ‘teaching as persuasion’ were two central themes that appeared to dominate the ways in which IS teachers talked about their teaching. In

summary, and on its most basic level, the analysis shows how IS teachers focus first on issues of discipline through establishing a set of routines and rituals; through finding their own charismatic characteristics; building an atmosphere of spirituality in the classroom; and through reflecting on their multiple selves beyond the classroom e.g. their role as parents. IS teachers also attempted to orchestrate their teaching around the theme of persuasion, which was not always easy and involved a set of elaborate strategies such as the need to set principles for thinking and discussion; the need to acknowledge student feelings and elicit their understandings and the acquiring the skill of crafting a compelling argument.

On a more general level, there are two common threads that seem necessary to mention about these findings: first, the findings suggest a recent change in the ways in which IS teachers make sense of their teaching. This change was not only deliberated at a rhetorical level but was buttressed through an examination of what teachers did in class. The change was manifested in the teachers' understanding of discipline and in their frequent statements regarding the shift from a transmission approach to a persuasive approach to teaching. Second, the ways in which the teachers construed the situations in which they were acting and the actions that they took depended on various complex conditions with which they had constantly to reconcile. Hence, the themes of maintaining discipline and teaching as persuasion were neither simple nor straightforward. Each theme had idiosyncratic meanings for each teacher as they deliberated the multiple layers involved, dealt with ambiguities and contradictions. For example, although IS teachers attempted to set out fixed principles for discussion in persuasive teaching by demarcating limits; they remained faithful to the idea of addressing student concerns and answering their challenging questions.

Moreover, the two-dimensional view that described the teaching of IS as a mere amalgamation of the two themes of *discipline* and *persuasion* would undoubtedly lack coherence without a third dimension, which introduces how IS teachers attempt to harmonize and coordinate contradictions or dissonances that they encounter in their teaching and the surrounding milieu. The data reveals that IS teachers, possibly due to the rapid changes they perceive to be happening in society, are compelled to deal with certain contradictions which influence their teaching. Hence, in Chapter 7, an attempt is made to delineate the theme of *dealing with dissonance*, which appeared repeatedly in the data as the underpinning factor influencing much of the teachers' teaching. The chapter illustrates how concerns such as *Role as teacher vs. Role as spiritual leader* and *Islamic studies as an academic subject vs. Islamic studies as a moral subject* posit polarities for the teachers that need to be ferreted out as it influences how they make sense of their teaching.

Finally, while this chapter dealt with each theme independently, it is important to sound a note of caution: these themes are not mutually exclusive; in fact they are interdependent as they have implications that influence one another. For example, the non-attainment of *discipline* hinders the realisation of *persuasion*. Also, subthemes are interconnected and often relate to both central themes. Hence, the need to motivate students for example is also associated with the theme of maintaining discipline. The demarcation of clear-cut subthemes as explained in the beginning of the chapter is for the purpose of data reduction and the construction of a coherent narrative. Even though the subthemes are strongly associated with the themes in which they are intended to illustrate, that does not discount them from being associated with the other themes discussed. Given that the teaching of IS was found to be highly complex, and nonlinear- as is teaching in general- , I have chosen to illustrate this cyclical interdependent feature in figure 2 which was presented earlier in the chapter through the two way arrows indicating that the

phenomenon studied here can only be understood through the totality of the experience of Islamic Studies teachers and by looking at the themes collectively through a hermeneutic circle going back and forth between the whole and the part.

Chapter 7:

Findings II: Dealing with Dissonance

7.1 Introduction

Listening to the teachers discourse on their teaching practice, I became aware of the need to consider their remarks in the context of the overall experience of being an IS teacher. In fact, this experience was essential to the ways in which teachers understood their teaching practice. A focus on classroom practice alone would thus have resulted in a parochial, perhaps oversimplified understanding of their teaching. Indeed, the teachers' discourse was replete with expressions of the challenges that they faced *as* IS teachers and of references to how their particular role affected their teaching practice. As a result, I chose to take a step back and to focus on the essential features of the *experience* of being an IS teacher as described by these women. This chapter reports on the findings that relate most directly to the third research question, which asks:

- According to the IS teachers, what is *essential*, however implicit, about the experience of being an IS teacher?

As noted earlier, this question is best seen as a *holistic* one in that it focuses on what is essential to the whole experience rather than on individual aspects. Relevant answers here are to be found in the fundamental themes that arose from the data as explanations of and principles underlying how and why the IS teachers teach in the ways that they do. Thus, while chapter 6 provided a concrete description of how the IS teachers made sense of their teaching *practice*, this chapter will focus on their ontological *experience* of being an IS teacher. Van Manen captures this difference effectively:

A phenomenological concern always has this twofold character: a preoccupation with concreteness (the ontic), as well as the essential

nature (the ontological). Phenomenology is not concerned primarily with the nomological or factual aspects of some state of affairs; rather it always asks, what is the nature of the phenomenon as meaningfully experienced? (van Manen, 1997, p. 40)

The data presented in this chapter illustrate how the participating IS teachers described their experiences as tinged with instances of dissonance, conflict and tension. Two kinds of dissonances were reported by the teachers and are therefore highlighted in this chapter: 1) dissonance in their degree of religious observance, which is characterized by a *struggle* to attain congruence between what IS teachers preach and how they personally practice Islam; 2) dissonance in role and subject matter conception, in that IS teachers shift between the roles of *Daiya* (preacher) and *Subject Matter Teacher* in their teaching; and between treating IS as a moral discipline and/or an academic discipline.

As will be seen below, the first espoused dissonance was characterized by a constant struggle (*jihad*) of the self for all participating teachers, whereas for the second espoused dissonance the teachers rested on a continuum between being preachers and being subject matter teachers. Additionally, the observations from the data show that most of the participating teachers seemed to master the integration of the two extremes in their teaching. In other words, although most of the teachers spoke in the interviews about their dual role and about the paradoxical nature of their subject matter as sources of dissonance, in practice most were, skilled at integrating both demands in one lesson. Only two of the teachers, however, preferred to deal with both roles as separate and hence decided to adopt one role at a time. The choice of which role to adopt depended on factors such as the particular topic of the lesson, lack or abundance of time left to complete the curriculum and school administration and Ministry demands. Given the aforementioned, the chapter will conclude by explaining how IS teachers resolve this dissonance through adopting a *hybrid* role and constructing a *hybrid* subject, which in their view is inclusive of all

paradoxical demands. The chapter will also illustrate how teachers differed in their hybrid approach whereby the majority of IS teachers used *complete hybrid approach* as they shifted between roles in one lesson, while the minority adopted different roles in different milieus. Hence, the minority applied a *partial hybrid* approach whereby they appropriated their teaching to the demands of the context and left their moral goals to be addressed solely outside the parameters of the classroom. Examples of each situation are presented in this chapter.

7.2 The Meaning of Dissonance

All the IS teachers who participated in the study encountered some form of *dissonance* as they entered the world of work. I have chosen the term *dissonance* as it best encapsulates the state of *mental conflict* or *incongruity* that the IS teachers described in the interviews. While manifestations of *dissonance* were by no means identical for every teacher, all participants referred in various ways to a feeling of unease characterised by a strong desire to reduce the discrepancy between two or more conflicting views and/or demands. Although the theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Festinger, 1957), which holds that individuals have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance by changing their attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, or by justifying or rationalizing them, could be invoked to elucidate the findings reported in this chapter, the phenomenological trajectory of this study necessitated that I not subsume the findings under one or more existing theories. Instead, the chapter is concerned chiefly with understanding the nature of the dissonance in this particular context with this particular group of teachers. In what follows I attempt to communicate the various facets of dissonance that teachers reported, explaining how each

facet was manifested in their teaching and how it was or was not resolved in varying situations.

7.2.1 Dissonance in Degree of Personal Religiosity

Given that this study took place in a confessional context, it was entirely appropriate for the participating teachers to share their religious beliefs and practices with their students. Thus, the role of the *personal* may be more salient in this study than in studies carried out in contexts in which the teachers are not encouraged to influence the students to adopt a particular doctrinal stance. Nonetheless, several notable studies have pointed to the fact that no understanding of the teacher is complete that does not take into account the centrality of the ‘personal,’ e.g. *beliefs, self image* and/or *self concept* (Nias, 1989a; Pajares 1992; Levitt, 2001; Clark & Peterson, 1986). Mansour (2008), in his recent study of Egyptian Muslim science teachers, argues that the teachers’ Personal Religious Beliefs (PRB) shaped much of their professional practice in the teaching of science. Similarly, this study accepted the premise that teachers exist as ‘persons’ before they exist as teachers. In what follows I expound on this area of dissonance by examining observations that the participants shared regarding how they became IS teachers, showing how this dissonance was manifested as feelings of guilt or contestation or self-criticism and presenting some of the coping methods that the teachers devised to resolve these feelings of dissonance.

Majoring in Islamic Studies was not the original plan for each of the ‘twenty-four’ participants, nor was becoming a teacher. Female preachers, parents and husbands strongly influenced the decision. Moreover, sixteen of the twenty-four teachers in this study reported that Islamic Studies was not their first choice of subject, but that it was ‘fate’ that

put them on this path The role of ‘fate’ and/or ‘God’s will’ was a chief concept in the ways IS teachers construed their professional trajectory (Jamjoom, 2010)

In their reflections the teachers sounded both like school teachers and like the Daiyat (preachers) they are expected to be. Some IS teachers enter their profession and learned only after that it was God’s will for them to become IS teachers. Also, several of the IS teachers had initially chosen other majors, such as Psychology, Science, Arts and English. For example, as one teacher explained:

I graduated from the scientific section in high school and my real desire was to study English. By the second year of college I had taken many IS subjects, so one of my teacher educators recommended I join the Islamic Studies department. In my third year many great Daiyat taught me and I thanked God. I realized I really was learning the right Islam all over again. (Interview 11a)

Another teacher expressed that she never intended to be a teacher, but that she was drawn to IS for personal reasons:

I graduated from school and got married, [and] for two years I stayed at home. I never really intended to work or to be a teacher. When I decided to study, I chose Islamic studies because it was a subject that would benefit me on a personal level whether I worked in the future or not. It was the best thing for me to learn about my own religion. (Interview 15a)

When asked why they chose the teaching profession, none of the IS teachers proffered the common view held by teachers ‘that they like working with young people’. These teachers, on the other hand, felt a strong sense of having been called by God to preach and to guide others in how to become good Muslims. This additional story in their trajectory fits with the special way in which Islamic educators view themselves and their role: they have surrendered their lives to God’s will and have declared their unqualified readiness to be guided by his plan for them, and this situation is profoundly influential on their teaching practice and experience.

Perhaps it is this feeling of being called by God to perform a sacred duty that leaves the teachers with a lingering question: Am I religious enough to be an IS teacher? Am I living that which I was called to do? In other words, the participants' responses suggested that a high degree of self reflection had taken place regarding their own degree of religiosity, and this reflection was characterized by a personal struggle ('jihad') that underpinned much of their work and seemed to be salient in their teaching. The teachers were concerned with maintaining a solid and coherent Islamic Identity through constantly scrutinizing their own degree of religious observance. Obedience to Islamic principles as laid down by the religious establishment was a central theme in the ways in which the teachers talked about themselves. The study data demonstrate that all of the participating IS teachers reflected on their personal degree of religiosity and on how it influenced their teaching. I use the term *Personal religiosity* here to refer to the religious practices of teachers as persons outside the school milieu – e.g., how teachers wear their *Hijab* in public, whether they listen to music in their private space, whether they pluck their eyebrows, and whether they raise their children in the traditions that they espouse in the classroom.

The data then revealed that the IS teachers saw their own personal religiosity as a potential source of dissonance. Yet they devised a variety of idiosyncratic strategies to align their religious practices with what they taught in the classroom. The data showed that the IS teachers struggled to attain what they perceived as *congruent teaching* characterized by an alignment between the moral values that they preach in the classroom and their own religious practice. This dissonance manifested itself in three ways, first a few teachers felt that they were not 'ideally religious' and believed that this conflicted with the image of IS teacher who seeks to persuade students about particular issues in religion. These IS teachers expressed this dissonance as a feeling of *guilt*. For example, one teacher who did

not consider herself 'ideally religious' expressed her guilt as follows: 'I am constantly teaching with a guilty conscience, I wish I were better, but then again not all properly covered women are good people. I just hope God understands my intention' (Interview 6a).

From the quote above it is clear that this teacher carries a feeling of guilt for perceiving herself 'not religious enough'. She attempted to resolve this conflict in two ways. First, she rationalizes that not all women who cover themselves "properly" according to Islamic practice are more religious than she, suggesting in this connection that religiosity lies more in one's "intention" than in such symbolic gestures. Secondly, she tries to mitigate against this conflict by widening the role of her teaching to exceed mere preaching and by focusing her lessons on societal rather than merely religious issues As she explained:

As you saw in my classroom, I discuss religious topics relating to the permitted and the forbidden through the use of social stories and examples.. problems from society.. because I am not religious enough. So I don't see myself as a religious education teacher only but as a teacher who addresses illnesses in society through religion. (Interview 6b)

The following comments from two other teachers reveal that these participants coupled feelings of guilt with their notion of the responsibility inherent in their role:

I bear a heavy responsibility: I am responsible for teaching these girls about their religion. I feel guilty when I do not act as a proper role model. (Interview 9b)

I am obviously not perfect: I go to the beach not wearing my full *hijab* and I listen to music when I am invited to weddings. I struggle to become a better person, [but] it bothers me sometimes and it is a responsibility. (Interview 4a)

Secondly, a group of IS teachers who consider themselves 'religious enough' and display confidence about their religious practice but who do not totally ascribe to the local

religious orthodoxy also report feelings of *dissonance*. Unlike the previous group, this dissonance is expressed through *contestation* of religious fatwa that in their opinion are not convincing, faulty, or too strict. For example, one IS teacher who considers herself ‘religious enough’ shared the following:

Well, [take] *hijab* [for example:] I am dedicated to [the practice of] *hijab* [and] what I wear in school is what I wear out of school. I wear the *nikab* [which covers the face except for the eyes] and show my eyes slightly. I am convinced that wearing the *nikab* is ok although some scholars say that if it shows your cheeks it’s not ok, but I can’t cover my full face because then I really can’t see, so I am not convinced that I should cover my face [except for my eyes]. (Interview 15b)

This particular teacher was confident in her degree of religious observance. She did not report a feeling of guilt for not covering her face and was convinced that the *nikab* was sufficient. The observation also shows that this teacher displayed confidence in her teaching through providing clear-cut answers to questions about what is permitted and forbidden in Islam. Although she attempted to justify wearing the *nikab* and not blindly following the local fatwa that stipulates covering the full face, she still saw herself primarily as an IS teacher constituting an acceptable role model similar to the previous example, another IS teacher contradicted the mainstream doctrine regarding facial hair for young men: ‘The textbook says that it’s a must for boys to grow their beards, [but] I disagree! It’s only a *sunnah* [Prophet’s Way], so I don’t force my sons to grow their beards! I tell my students that this is not true’ (Interview 3a). Such a contestation of local religious opinion is also clear in the following short observation extract, in which the teacher clearly tells the students to disregard an opinion stated in the textbook:

Observation 3: *Fikh* lesson on Female Modesty, 9th grade

Teacher: Girls, it says in the book that you shouldn’t wear nail polish so [that] you don’t copy non-Muslim women blindly. This is a strict opinion. [But you can] wear nail polish if you want [to,] of course; just don’t wear it when you are praying because you cannot perform ablutions – it blocks the water.

relayed in the textbooks expressed their dissonance as a struggle ('jihad') for constant self reflection and alignment with local fatwa. This group represented the majority of the teachers who participated in this study. This is also a common Islamic principle stated in the Quran: 'O ye who believe! Why say ye that which ye do not? Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allah that ye say that which ye do not' (61: 2) – a passage to which some of the teachers referred. This *jihad* of the self is clearly expressed below:

It is challenging on a personal level because I have to change myself first, then [change] those around me. I criticize myself before teaching my students. I have to be a role model: the girls saw one of their IS teachers wearing a swimming suit once! You can't preach something and do the opposite.... You have to align your actions and behaviour. I never lie about what I do. (Interview 2b)

The most important thing is for a teacher to be a good role model. For instance, she should not tell her students to cut their nails if she has long nails! She should struggle to be a good Islamic role model. (Interview 15b)

Whether the teachers felt guilty or contested a particular fatwa or felt the need to be self critical about their religiosity, they all had different coping methods regarding this dissonance. The teachers who expressed confidence in their personal religiosity were honest about their own religious practice in the classroom, even when their views diverged from the local fatwa. In general, they stood firmly by their views, as in the extracts from interviews 3a and 15b. On the other hand, IS teachers who expressed feelings of guilt regarding their lack of mainstream religiosity and/or teachers who claimed to self-reflect constantly on their religious observance dealt with this dissonance differently. Their coping strategies generally fell in two categories: some chose to tell the truth about their religious practice, claiming that this adherence to honesty ethically superseded the obligation to be a good role model, while others chose to conceal their personal practice from students on the basis that maintaining a role model image ethically superseded the

obligation to tell the truth.

In the example below, an IS teacher shares an anecdote that exemplifies the contradiction between her degree of religious observance and the ascribed role that requires an IS teacher to be a good Muslim role model:

You know, once I was singing in the school bathroom and one of my students heard me sing a common song. She said, 'Hey, teacher, you listen to music?' I told her, 'Yes, I am not an angel.' I hate to portray a picture of myself which is not true, particularly since I teach them that music is forbidden. In the future we might meet at a wedding or [at a party with] a DJ, and...I don't like to pretend.... This way I feel more comfortable about what I am teaching.
(Interview 25b)

In the preceding comment, the teacher admits having encountered dissonance when her actions contradicted her teaching. She accepts the notion that music is forbidden according to the local fatwa, but rationalizes her decision to listen to music by admitting that she was 'not an angel.' In explanation, she asserts that displaying a truthful picture is key to maintaining her credibility with students and that this imperative surpasses the need to serve as a perfect role model. Although one would assume that in a confessional context, in which students are to be nurtured in Islamic tradition, teachers would be required to conceal any deviations from this tradition, this teacher found that sharing her own degree of religiosity, however imperfect, provided her with a sense of comfort and relieved her from guilt.

The teacher shared the above anecdote in connection with a discussion of an episode that took place in her classroom, as represented in the following observation extract:

Observation 25b: Lesson on Hijab

Teacher: Girls, I want to tell you something: my daughter is your age but she doesn't wear the Hijab yet. You know a lot of people in my family don't wear it. I am trying to raise my daughter to appreciate hijab.

Student: Why did you leave her [free not to wear hijab] until now?

Teacher: I might even leave her longer – maybe until next year. I want her to be convinced.

Student: Teacher, you're nice, you're not too strict!

The preceding observation extract supports the teacher's comments about honesty and credibility. By deciding to share her own degree of personal religiosity and being candid about not forcing her daughter to wear the *hijab* although it is a religious obligation on parents to ensure that their daughters wear the *hijab*. Second it is another example (explored in chapter 6) of a teacher referring to her personal experience as a parent when attempting to convince her students about the *hijab* (see chapter 6). The approach taken by this teacher and by others like her reflects Jackson's (1997) view, which suggests that 'experience shows that children appreciate openness in response to religious questions and that teachers should answer questions about personal faith honestly' (p. 135).

A second position expressed by certain participants was that the importance of maintaining a role model image superseded that of telling the truth. The three comments below represent this alternate position:

The girls don't need to know what I do in my private life. What is important is that I be a good role model (Interview 4b).

I pluck my eyebrows, but I never tell my students that I do. I maintain a good role model image because that is the right thing to do, and [also because] I might change [my practice] anyway (Interview 23a).

This is a key issue: to share or not to share? It still confuses me, but the way I think about it is that an IS teacher has to be a role model, so an IS teacher

shouldn't tell the students that she listens to music even if she does
(Interview 7a)

From the discourse excerpts examined above it can be construed that the participating IS teachers often encountered dissonance when reflecting on their degree of personal religiosity (in terms of their practices outside school premises) in relation to what they teach to their students in class. Although such a conflict exists for all the teachers, it manifested in various ways across the study sample: as guilt, contestation, or as constant self criticism. The participating IS teachers also coped with this dissonance in different ways with some teachers preferring to be open with students about the limits of their own religious practice in order to present an authentic image of themselves and others choosing to maximize their presumed value as role models by refraining from sharing with students any incongruence between their religious practice and the doctrines that they preach.

7.2.2 Dissonance in 'Role Perception' and 'Subject Matter Conception'

Perhaps the most salient form of dissonance reported by the teachers who participated in this study occurred in the areas of *Role Perception* and *Subject Matter Conception*. By *Role Perception* the teachers referred to a discrepancy between their *ideal role* as it was perceived by themselves and their *actual role* as realized in their teaching practice. The *ideal role* as defined by the teachers was that of a *Daiya* (spiritual and moral leader who invites people to understand Islam, possibly viewed as the Islamic equivalent of a missionary and/or preacher in Christian tradition) whose responsibility is to ensure that her students practice Islam properly and are convinced regarding its tenets. While the *actual role* as defined by the school was that of a 'subject matter teacher' whose primary responsibility was to ensure the completion of the required curriculum using the assigned

textbook while contributing to the smooth functioning of school operations, one that is accepted by the school administrators and Ministry evaluators.

Secondly, and due to the centrality of school subjects in high school teaching, IS teachers were working within subject-specific contexts and held subject-specific beliefs related to teaching and learning. In this study, I use the term ‘subject matter conceptions’ to refer to the multiple ways in which the IS teachers framed their subject and the beliefs that they professed about the nature of the content that they were teaching. Although my interviews were not specifically connected to subject matter but dealt more with teaching and experience, the teachers talked spontaneously about what their subject did and did not ‘permit’ them to do. These shared beliefs about IS as a subject may help to define the possibilities and constraints that teachers perceive as they do their daily work. The data in this study show that understanding the nature of the subject matter permeated the teachers’ professional practice. The data appears to show that the IS teachers experienced dissonance related to the ways in which they conceived their subject matter. This dissonance was expressed as a discrepancy between the ideal which involved treating Islamic Studies as *Moral Discipline* and the actual which required treating it as an *Academic Discipline*. Hence, when the teachers spoke of their role as *Daiya*, they spoke about their subject as a ‘moral discipline’; similarly, when they spoke of their role as subject matter teachers, they spoke about their subject as an ‘academic discipline’.

It should be noted, however, that although the IS teachers in the interviews expressed a sense of incongruence between the two roles and subject matter conceptions, in practice, the observations illustrate that the IS teachers resolved this dissonance through adopting a hybrid approach. The IS Teachers develop a form of symbiotic practice whereby they devise ways and means to integrate most of the demands set by each role

through hybrid approaches. Having said that, the observations show that the majority of IS teachers implemented a *complete hybrid* approach whereby they shifted between roles and conceptions in one lesson while the minority chose a *partial Hybrid* approach whereby they integrated both demands in different milieus (i.e. they perceived themselves as dedicating the classroom to academic goals while performing their Daiya duties outside of class).

In the coming sections of the chapter I begin by deconstructing the two dissonant paradoxes in the light of the participants' discourses through first examining the *ideal* aspirations of the teachers in two sections: *Role as Daiya and IS as Moral Discipline*, followed by a deconstruction of *the actual* in two sections: *Role as Subject Matter Teacher and IS as an Academic Discipline*. Thereafter, I illustrate how this cognitive paradox is resolved in practice giving examples of complete and partial hybridist approaches. At this stage, I offer two vignettes from the classroom observations upon which I will draw in analysing this espoused role conflict and its manifestations in the discourses and practice of the participating IS teachers. The first, Vignette 3, is an extract from an 8th grade *Tawheed* (Monothiesm) lesson on *Da 'wah* (Preaching). This passage exemplifies how the majority of IS teachers adopt a complete hybrid approach where they shift between the two roles in one lesson. The second, Vignette 4, is an extract from a 12th grade *Hadith* (Sayings of the Prophet) lesson about the authenticity of various types of *Hadith*. This final vignette is an example that shows an IS teacher teaching solely from an academic perspective and adopting a partial hybrid approach as will be explained later.

Vignette 3: Extract from an 8th Grade *Tawhid* lesson on Da'wah

1. Teacher says the Salam and then begins her lesson with a short prayer.
2. Teacher: Girls, let us revise the previous lesson first. Open your textbooks. We are going to answer some questions in the book and underline the important points which we didn't get to do last time.
Teacher begins to rephrase the questions in the textbook into colloquial Arabic and asks students to answer them. Students raise their hands to answer the questions.
3. Teacher: Ok, girls, now close your textbooks and focus with me.
She turns on PowerPoint and begins her lesson with a Tamheed (Motivational Activity) in the form of fill-in-the-blanks questions.
Teacher: Ok, girls, from these questions, what do you think our lesson is about today?
Student: *Dawa.*
Teacher: So, if I see someone committing a sin, what should I do as a Muslim?
Student: We should attempt *Dawa*; for example, if my friend doesn't pray, I have to encourage her to pray.
Teacher: Good, Good. Ok, girls, now we are going to use the skill of implementation.
Teacher presents the following verse in PowerPoint:
Say thou: "This is my way: I do invite unto Allah,- on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes,- I and whoever follows me. Glory to Allah. and never will I join gods with Allah." (Joseph, 108)
Teacher: How did the author of the textbook deduce that *Dawa* is an obligation for every Muslim from this verse? [No response.] Girls, it is your vocation as a Muslim, every Muslim must perform *Dawa*. [No response.] Whose responsibility was it?
Student: Prophets and messengers.
Teacher: Yes. But there are no more prophets or messengers today, so whose responsibility is it [now]? *You* have to make *Dawa*, even if you are in a shopping mall and you see a girl who does not abide to the proper hijab, it's your responsibility to tell her. I know what you are going to say – girls?
Student: What if they shout at me or get upset because I am being nosy?
Teacher: The Prophets and Messengers endured a lot of that in addition to a lot of brutality from their people, but they kept going on. Life is tough sometimes, but we can always pray to find peace and you can always seek solace with your parents. I still do that with my parents. [After a pause:] Girls, you know even in *Makkah*, the Holiest of Lands, there are still people who worship idols! I know you are going to say [that] there are no more idol worshipers you always say that polytheism does not exist anymore...but it is everywhere and in many forms.
Student: Yes, there are also *Sahara* [people who practice black magic or sorcery].
Teacher: Yes, you are right. Excellent! That is a good example of polytheism.
Teacher: *Dawa* is important because there are a lot of Christian missionaries today that work relentlessly to convert Muslims – and other groups among Muslims create doubts around the *hijab*. I am sure you girls have been online and seen all the discourse against *hijab*. [In fact,] many Christian missionaries adopt children and raise them in the Christian tradition. So why should we discontinue *Dawa*? How did we learn that prayer and fasting are obligations?
Student: We studied it with you!
All laugh.

Teacher: Ok, how did the authors of the textbook conclude that [these things are] obligations. [Or, in the same way as] adultery and plucking of eyebrows are forbidden: how did you know – did you just make it up?

Student: No, from *Quran* or *Sunnah*.

Teacher: Good. You cannot just claim a fatwa from your mind: it has to be a sheikh who issues fatwas.

Student: But sheikhs disagree on things?!

Teacher: Yes, they do, but we say that when sheikhs disagree it is to the benefit of Muslims because it diversifies *fatwas* and hence makes Islam easier for people to follow. But you cannot take what you like from every school of thought and be eclectic: you have to follow one school of thought. You can't say I like the Hanafi school because it says do not cover your face. The person who hops from one school to another is a *fasik* [has a flaw in his faith].

Teacher tells the story of the Prophet Ibrahim as an example of a great Daiya and messenger.

Teacher: You were saying that it's hard to make Dawa. Look at the Prophet Ibrahim: his people wanted to burn him – execute him – but God said: "O Fire! Be thou cool, and (a means of) safety for Ibrahim!"

Teacher: The angel Jibreel came to him and asked Ibrahim, 'O, Ibrahim, is there anything you wish for?' He could have asked God to save him from the fire, but instead he said 'I only wish that Allah be pleased with me'. Then the catapult was released and Allah saved his Prophet. Can you imagine the pain he endured? His father was an infidel, a sculptor of Idols; he was going to be burnt and he was asked to sacrifice his son! This is how hard *Dawa* is, but he endured.

4. Teacher: Ok, girls, now open your books. We are going to underline and write questions. Open to page 24. Underline this section and write this question: 'How did the Prophet Mohammed approach *Dawa*?'

Student: Until where should we underline?

Teacher: The first two lines. [Waits, then:] What are the qualities of Ibrahim, father of Monotheists? It's a question I gave you in the exam and you didn't know how to answer it.... Here is the answer: again, underline the section where it says...

Teacher continues underlining the lesson until the bell rings.

Vignette 4: Extract from a 12th Grade Lesson on the Authenticity of Different Types of Hadith

1. Teacher: Girls, focus – this lesson is very difficult [so] you need to pay attention; it is not my fault if at the end of the lesson you don't understand the content or cannot answer questions on the exam.

Teacher places one student in the front of class and provides each student with a worksheet while she explains using a white board.

Teacher: Girls it is important to be familiar with the science of *hadith* in order to assess whether it [any given saying] is really attributed to the Prophet, peace be upon him, or not. We should be able to understand the fundamental principle of this science [in order] to accurately extract or deduce Islamic laws from [given] passages, and we should be aware that there are plenty of fabricated narrations. [This fact] is directly relevant to our lives.

2. Teacher writes the following on the white board:

'Types of *hadith* in terms of authenticity:

1. *Sahih Hadith*: Authentic and correct *hadith* (has a complete chain of narrators and the body of *hadith* is not dubious)

2. *Hasan Hadith*: (Second level of authenticity where the body of the *hadith* has been narrated differently by different narrators while carrying the same meaning)

3. *Daif Hadith*: weak *hadith* [Teacher explains the different types, one of which is the *Mursal*, which is the topic of the lesson]

4. *Mawdu Hadith*: Fabricated

Teacher explains the rules for verifying whether a hadith is authentic and lists the rules. She writes the definition of the Sahih hadith on the white board asks the students to deduce the definition of the weak hadith.

Teacher: Girls, I may confuse you in the exam and say 'What if a *hadith* was not coherent in text and a *hadith* that is *loosely coherent* in text' – What is the difference?

Student: One would be a *daif* while the other a *hasan*?

3. Teacher: Yes, good.

Student: What about the *hadith* I asked you about: 'Women and dogs cut one's prayer'?

Teacher: This is not a weak *hadith* but it has a different interpretation. I will explain it to you some other time – just remind me. Girls, all the *hadith* here are for memorization, but for the exam we will only memorize the short ones.

4. Teacher: Ok, pay attention now: one type of weak *hadith* is the *mursal* [when a Sahabi (prophet's companion) is missing from the chain of narrators or when a Tabiyi attributes the *hadith* to the prophet directly; she draws an example:]

Mursal chain of narrators:

Tabiyi (Met the Sahabi but not the Prophet) → ~~Sahabi (Prophet Companion)~~ → Prophet

Teacher: So, what is the definition of a *Mursal*? [Writes definition while students take notes]. Ok, a *Mursal* is considered a weak *hadith*, but we still accept it in Islamic law.

Student: Why? I mean, [if] someone is missing from the chain, how can [one] ensure that it is a correct narration?

Teacher: Because we consider all the *sahaba* to be trustworthy. So if a *sahabi* is missing from the chain, [the *hadith*] it is still accepted, but if a *tabiyi* is missing from the chain – say, like this:

Tabi Tabiy (third generation) → ~~Tabiyi~~ → Sahabi → Prophet

[then the saying] is considered weaker than a *Mursal*, because if a *tabiyi* is missing we cannot assume that all *tabiyis* [second generation after the Prophet] are trustworthy. The *Sahaba*, however, are all trustworthy, so it doesn't matter who is missing from the chain. The Prophet's companions are all trustworthy. [Pauses, then:] Ok, write this here at the bottom. I will give you the easy definition on the exam. Underline this definition in the book.

5. Student: What if a judge uses a weak *hadith* in his ruling – [isn't it] unfair?

Teacher: They shouldn't appoint any judge who is known to be unjust; there is a rigorous system for appointing judges.

Student: But most judges are not fair in their judging in Saudi Arabia.

Teacher: We will talk about this later. Now, girls, focus with me and let's talk about the *Munkati hadith*. Girls, let me say something: we are not *Hadith* scholars but it is important that you know this information and know that *Sahih Al Bukari* [The Bukhari Compilation of Hadith] is the most correct book after the Quran.

Lesson continues.

7.2.2.1 The ideal

In the next two sections I present the data which elucidates the teachers' views on ideal role and subject matter conception. The *ideal* was deduced from the data which explained how the teachers themselves, regardless of school pressure, constructed a discourse about 'what should be' rather than 'what currently is'. The *ideal* also referred to the values that one should actively pursue as goals given their role as IS teachers.

7.2.2.1.1 On Being a *Daiya*

It is noteworthy to begin this section by noting that IS teachers may acquire an enduring image of the *Daiya* from their teacher educators. The IS teachers in this study espoused a respect for their teacher educators, who were all members of the upper echelon of the female religious community of *Daiyat*. The teachers often mentioned certain *Daiyat* by name, identifying pedagogical values that they had acquired and emulated from these women. The following quotes illustrate how the IS teachers spoke about the concept of *Dawa*:

Many times I think of myself as a *Daiya*; I find that I follow the methods of Dr. Wafa Al Hamdan in her interpersonal relationship with her students and, [from] Dr Fawzia Al Bakr, her approach to teaching and confidence. (Interview 5a)

I have great respect for Dr.Foz Kurdi, who made me fall in love with the curriculum methods course. She is not just a brilliant *Daiya*, but also [one who is] very innovative in her approach. (Interview 18a)

I joined IS to improve my own faith. I want to be closer to God at the same time [that] I want to deliver this sacred knowledge to others. I just needed the tools and methods to do so, and this is what I learned at university from my teacher educators, who were all *Daiyat*. (Interview 10a)

The teachers who provided the above quotes drew attention to the issue of *Dawa*

(preaching) in various ways. The first teacher notes that she thinks of herself as a *Daiya*, while the second teacher alludes to the importance of *Dawa* through mentioning one of her teacher educators. The third teacher acknowledges that she also aims to deliver sacred knowledge through her teaching, a skill she learned from her teacher educators who also embodied the role of *Daiya*. According to the IS teachers, the ideal role of a *Daiya* is characterized by the fact that this role is: 1) to change behaviour and inspire religiosity in students; 2) not bound by time or curricula; 3) not limited to the classroom situation but extends to the community and involves pastoral care; and 4) bound up with a sense of accountability to God.

First, according to the IS teachers, behaviour and attitude change among students takes precedence over other aims of teaching. In the preceding chapter we saw how the participating IS teachers attempted to change behaviour by persuading students about particular issues in religion and by devising complex methods of persuasion. Teachers also accepted incremental change and were reasonable in their view of what constitutes change in student behaviour. Indeed, all of the participating IS teachers reported behaviour change and the instilling of religious values through increasing students' proximity to God as their ideal goals:

My ideal goal.... I mean, I wish, I just wish that [my students] could be closer to God. I think the girls are slightly lost. I mean, when we take them on school trips, with some students you can tell that you achieved your goals because they pray on time and you don't have to pester them to go and pray. While others, they just don't and they hide to avoid praying with the group. (Interview 16b)

Another teacher explained her pride in being able to get through to her students and attend to their spiritual needs in the following passage:

I met one of my old students at one of our school events and she said to me: 'Teacher, you taught us how to have a *conscience*'. I never forgot

that word because this is my goal...: to change student behaviour for the better and for them to be closer to God. (Interview 11a)

From Vignette 3 above, one can also trace how some IS teachers focus on behaviour change and on increasing proximity to God through the use of *persuasive teaching*. In fact, this vignette illustrates the persuasive method as described in Chapter 6. In the first section, the teacher begins with her rituals and routines as she initiates her lesson with a prayer to set the sacred context of her lesson. The third section is where the bulk of persuasive teaching takes place. For example, the teacher begins with a *Tamheed*, as she uses PowerPoint and asks students to deduce the topic of the lesson. Then, she starts her argument by explaining that *Dawa* is every student's responsibility and by encouraging them to practice *Dawa* in public spaces that are relevant to their lives (e.g., malls). She also anticipates their questions and prepares answers when she says several times: 'I know what you are going to say'. Also, she uses stories from the Quran and draws on emotion when she narrates how the Prophet Ibrahim endured difficulties on his path to *Dawa* and how Christian missionaries – who are seen as rivals in this confessional context – have succeeded in their conversion missions. The vignette also shows the teacher laughing with students rather than reprimanding them when she asks 'How did you know that prayer and fasting are obligations?' and one student responds humorously that they studied it with her rather than giving the verses that indicate that these actions are obligations. Finally, the excerpt shows how the teacher responds to the student's questions and concerns when they ask about the varying opinions of Muslim *sheiks* and scholars. The teacher, through her persuasive method, embodies the role and demands of a Muslim Daiya, who is responsible not only for teaching a subject but, more importantly, for teaching students how to live like Muslims.

Second, the data suggest that the teachers describe the ideal role of Daiya as a role that is not limited by the strict boundaries of time in the classroom. This manifests itself in

a number of ways. First, the role of preaching means that more teaching time is needed than is typically allocated. As one teacher explains:

I used to be very strict about giving everything in the curriculum from page to page, and I used to divide up the time we had for each lesson [in such a way as] to complete the relevant pages in the textbook. Now, I don't really care if I don't finish the lesson on time. One lesson might take me several sessions, maybe even three or four.... I mean, I always tell the Ministry evaluator when she criticizes me for lax time management: '[You] ask me why I didn't finish on time? You should [know that] there are so many points that need clarification! Every line in the book requires in-depth explanation in order to connect it to the students' lives and for them to understand how it might be relevant [to them].... I mean, my students could just read the textbook, but what is really important is whether they end up applying these lessons [to their own lives] or not. (Interview 7b)

From the above quote, it appears that the ideal role that IS teachers personify is not always limited to the prescribed times set by the school or Ministry. According to this and other teachers, the textbook provides only certain dimensions of a broader curriculum that should be inclusive of students' needs and made relevant to their lives.

A second way in which the role of preacher extends beyond the confines of the classroom is epitomized by a teacher who set up a Facebook group for her students to discuss issues that were difficult to discuss in class due to the limited time available. This particular example will be addressed in detail in section 7.3 on Hybrid Teaching, the IS teachers also explained that their role as preacher extends beyond the classroom when students actually seek them out for moral advice outside the classroom. In this regard, one teacher offered the following:

Although our subject and our role is sometimes trivialized, when a student really needs [guidance] she won't go to the science education teacher unless she needs her to underline things in the book. But [with] IS teachers, you will find [that] we are popular among the girls because of the nice way we treat the girls. If they have an existential question or a question about their moral or religious practice, they always come to us. (Interview 7a)

Similarly, the teacher with the Facebook group explained:

I am sure a thousand to a hundred percent that what you teach today they forget completely. I was telling the story of Yajuj and Majuj, and one of my graduate students asked me about it on Facebook. She had forgotten everything, but when students are older, they come back to you.... I know that when my students face life they will remember my lessons and maybe even come back to me to ask about things like many of them do. So my role is a future role: I do not have to see the benefits today. (Interview 6b)

What these quotes illustrate is that both of these teachers believe strongly that their role encompasses a pastoral and spiritual dimension that transcends the classroom and may extend to the students' 'future' lives. A third way in which their role as a preacher extends beyond the classroom is to the student's families and their surrounding communities. For example, one teacher explained how she volunteered to give *tajweed* (conventions of Quranic reading) lessons to her neighbors, indicating that it was part of her role as an IS teacher. Another teacher volunteered to hold a lecture for her students' mothers about raising children with love. She explained:

Yeah, I need to know my students; I also like to reach out to the community. I do a lot of lectures here in school for the girls' mothers. I recently talked about how they could express their love to their daughters. The student who came up to me in class and told me that her mother hugged her while she was sleeping – you heard her in class – [that happened] because I told them 'you have to hug your daughters' [and counselled them] not to underestimate the importance of hugging one's children. I also told them not to let their daughters lock their room doors at this age. [Laughs] That's why one of my students said in class, 'Teacher why did you say that to our moms! Now I am not allowed to shut my room door'.... God forgive you [Laughs again]. (Interview 13b)

This strong desire and feeling of obligation to reach out to the community was also visible in the participants' teaching practice, as can be seen from the following extract from a *hadith* lesson about Friday prayer:

Observation Extract: *hadith* in a lesson about Friday prayer

Teacher: Girls, this *hadith* concerns men: why are we studying it?
Student: So we can tell our fathers and brothers to go to Friday prayer.
Teacher: Excellent!
Student: Teacher, but my father and brother don't go to Friday prayer.
Teacher: Girls, let's think aloud: what can Huda do to encourage her father and brother to attend Friday prayer?
Student: She can send a religious song to their mobile phones [*Ila salati*]
All laugh.
Teacher: You can print out this *hadith* and hang it on your fridge.... But *fajir* (Morning prayer) and *isha* (Evening prayer) prayers are the hardest. Who does or doesn't pray *fajir* and *isha*? Come on, let's talk about it!
Student: I forget to pray *fajir*.
Teacher: Why don't you? We can pray *fajir* with our family at home and [with our] brothers and maids.
Student: My maid doesn't understand Arabic. Should I pray in Indonesian?
Another student: There is a Quran in Indonesian.
Teacher: Yes [, but it's] a translation only.

In the observation extract presented above, the teacher seeks to fulfil her goals – to include students' experiences and to increase their proximity with God – through questioning when she asks why they are studying a certain *hadith* that addresses men and, later, 'Who does or doesn't pray *fajir* and *isha*?' We can infer that the teacher personifies the pastoral role when she encourages the student here, pseudonym Huda, to discuss her family's situation in the classroom. She further urges the rest of the students to contribute to the discussion of their classmate's situation at home. Both teacher and students offer suggestions to help the student guide the male members in her family to attend Friday prayer. The teacher hence reaches out to the community, or at least to the family, through her students. When asked about this incident, the teacher explained as follows:

I am aware that there is incongruence between the school and the home [and that] how parents raise their kids at home is different from what I say in school. So [although] I insist on *hijab*, *hijab*, *hijab*, a girl may go back home and find her mother not *muhajaba* [properly covered]. So the teachers' role is to connect things with real life, with the students' families. If a *hadith* lesson is only [concerned with] what the Prophet said, for example, then it's not really a *hadith* lesson, is it? (Interview 9b)

In the following, another teacher reflects on her efforts to reach her students' families:

You know, once I was giving a lesson about *Sadaka* [donating to the poor], so one of my students came the next day and said she had given money to some beggar in the street and her father had reprimanded her. So, I say something [and] the family contradicts what I say! So I told my student 'Anyone who bears the intention of doing something good but doesn't do it is still rewarded'; so I told her not to upset her father but to sit with him and convince him.... It is true that [that woman was] begging, but if she didn't need money she wouldn't resort to begging, she wouldn't have been searching for food in street bins! (Interview 14b)

We see in this teacher's rumination about her pastoral role a frustration regarding her access to the student's family and her scope of influence. In this case, she performs her pastoral role through first encouraging her student to sustain her current behaviour and not to despair when she recites a common *hadith* of the Prophet about the importance of *intention*; she then urges the student to 'sit with her father and convince him' of her perspective on the issue of giving to beggars.

Finally, the IS teachers spoke profusely on the subject of accountability. Though mindful of their obligation to the school, their accountability was primarily to God. This perspective reflected their belief that the knowledge that they teach is sacred, to be known and revered, to be understood and obeyed. They used several formulaic expressions of accountability to God in their talk, such as 'may God forgive me', 'I hope that God accepts me', 'it is a responsibility I bear before God', and 'I am teaching a sacred knowledge for which I am accountable. Being a *Daiya*, then, meant that there was an additional sense of accountability of which the teachers had to be mindful.

7.2.2.1.2 Islamic Studies as a *Moral Discipline*

When the IS teachers spoke about their subject as a moral discipline they referred primarily to four issues: 1) a moral discipline is oratory in nature; 2) a moral discipline is

not rigidly sequenced and requires greater curricular autonomy than an academic discipline; 3) a moral discipline is assessed through actual changes in behaviour and in faith; 4) a moral discipline is based on what can be described as ‘soft’ knowledge. In what follows I attempt to explicate these four features in light of the study data.

To begin with, it was not surprising to find that the IS teachers focused primarily on the oratory nature of their subject. This is perhaps due to their emphasis on their role as preacher in addition to the fact that preaching and the giving of sermons and lectures (*Muhadara*) has historically been a rudimentary and primary conduit serving the religious apparatus in Islam. Indeed, numerous works have focused on the oratory tradition in Islamic history (Allen, 1974). Recently, however, several works of relevance to this study have focused on the salience of audio-recorded sermons as a popular form of modern Islamic preaching (Hirschkind, 2004, 2006). Since the early development of Islam, ‘sermon audition has been identified as essential to cultivating the sensitive heart that allows one to hear and embody in practice the ethical instincts undergirding moral practice’ (Hirschkind, 2004, p. 131). In this regard, it is noteworthy that the IS teachers in this study valued charisma and voice as tools of persuasion (see Chapter 6). The classroom observations also showed that the IS teachers dedicated a substantial portion of their lessons to persuasion, which was carried out mainly orally in class. Looking back at Vignettes 1, 2 one can see that the lessons were for the most part taught through oratory means. Also, from the observations it was found that the IS teachers used writing sparingly, most often when they underlined material, used worksheets or assigned homework. This distribution suggests that the use of writing in participants’ teaching was associated mainly with the elements and conception of IS as an academic discipline, which require rigour and memorization of particular content. By contrast, oratory platforms of expression were associated mainly with IS when conceived and practiced as a moral discipline, which is primarily ‘soft’ in

nature as it addresses matters of spirituality.

In the following interview extract, an IS teachers explains how she tackles a moral dilemma regarding students who do not pray:

We have some girls who don't pray. These students are dealt with in a special manner. Some girls have told me that they never saw Makah even though they live in Saudi Arabia! Also, a lot of girls ask about adultery and about the boundaries of male-female relationships. I *tell* them that there are rules and I *talk* to them and *tell* them stories. (Interview 20b; emphasis added)

As can be seen the teacher emphasises on oral modes of persuasion such as 'talking' and 'telling'. Another teacher shares a similar emphasis on 'talking' when she notes the following:

The most important thing is for the girls to be close to Allah. I always *talk* to them about the importance of one's relationship with Allah even if it is not specifically covered in the curriculum. If their relationship with Allah is good then their life will be blessed in all aspects, even personal. (Interview 13a; emphasis added)

From the two examples above, it seems evident that these teachers are concerned first and foremost with changing behaviour (Encouraging students to pray and be closer to Allah) and, secondly, that they often rely on oral rhetoric when addressing their moral goals. They appear to believe that talking to their students is the best means to increase their proximity with God and to guide them in how to live like good Muslims. Indeed, the participating IS teachers rarely referred to reading and writing as means for achieving their moral goals.

Secondly, The two extracts above (Interviews 20b and 13a) demonstrate that the IS teachers considered their subject as not rigidly sequenced – in the form of a curriculum – but as a continuum in which topics of importance often evolved from the students' concerns. The teacher in interview 20b took up the issues of not praying and not visiting *Makkah* while the second teacher in interview 13a explicitly stated that she talks to her students'

about the nature of their relationship with God regardless of the topics required by the curriculum. The following extract reiterates the fact that IS teachers use the students' concerns as their main points of reference and further illustrates how the teachers viewed oral rhetoric as an essential means for changing behaviour:

I think we should *talk* about issues that touch their lives and are of relevance to them. There was this young *Daiya* who came to school last week. She looked very trendy and talked about love relationships between girls and boys. The girls were so touched that they cried! I mean, it is usually impossible to discipline them in a sermon, but the girls want us to talk to them about these issues. They don't want topics about *Akeeda* (faith) but about things that are of relevance to them. (Interview 12b; emphasis added)

The teacher's comment that the students 'don't want topics about faith' (like the lessons in the textbook) but about things that are of relevance to their own lives again exemplifies the way in which the IS teachers viewed their subject through a moral lens. This comment, like many others in the study data, alludes to the fact that IS as a moral discipline need not be a rigidly sequenced subject; in practice, more often than not, topics are initiated by the students. In the following, another teacher laments her difficulties reorganizing this rigid curriculum:

You know, the girls want to discuss many issues, but unfortunately from first year until graduation [the curriculum calls for] the same information [to be] repeated over and over again.... I thought of combining similar lessons, [and] I did so without the approval of the Ministry. I continue teaching by combining lessons in the curriculum. So when I teach *Tasfseer* [Quranic Interpretation], instead of teaching each chapter in the Quran I combine all the verses about resurrection from all chapters.... [I do this] instead of repeating myself in every lesson; the students don't get bored and they feel that every topic is new to them. When the evaluator from the Ministry saw my strategy, she really liked it, but she said [that] I am not allowed to do that and [that] I need to [follow the curriculum] formally. She argued that if a student moved from our school to another school the student would be confused about which lessons had been covered because of the order of the material, which I had changed around. (Interview 5b)

This teacher expresses her frustration when she refers to a disjunction between the students' desire to address many topics and to avoid repetition and the requirements of the curriculum. Her effort reorganize the material in a more student-friendly manner was met with disapproval from the Ministry evaluator, albeit with a pragmatic basis (the difficulty that might be faced by mid-year transfer students). Similarly to the majority of participants, this teacher found that the textbook presented repetitive and irrelevant topics. She went on to explain that she often used *rabt* (connecting) and Qiyas (extending precedents to new situations by analogy) to discuss issues that are of relevance to students, in order to 'help the students live their lives today' (interview 5b). Hence, the teachers' moral goals are addressed through a flexible approach which is often ignited by the students' concerns.

Finally, the IS teachers considered their moral discipline to be 'soft' in nature. They referred to their subject content in rigorous terms only when talking about exams or in a context in which they were trying to elevate the status of their subject. By 'soft' knowledge, the teachers referred to a kind of knowledge that does not require memorization but that inspires the heart. This is a kind of knowledge that kindles the student's emotions and increases their spirituality rather than one based on facts that need to be memorized. It is a knowledge that awakens the conscience and guides behaviour. In many ways, this leaves the teachers with a dilemma regarding assessment. The intangibility that they associate with their discipline leaves them confused about how to fairly assess their students. In an effort to address this conflict, some of the teachers decided to assign grades to students who lead prayers in school and to students who participated in religious extracurricular activities such as developing a campaign to defend the Prophet Mohammed. In the interviews, when I asked the teachers about their methods of assessment, they often asked me in response: 'What do you mean – assessment of students' behaviour or their grades?' In this regard, one teacher noted that '...in terms of behaviour, I decided to give students who pray extra credit

even if they didn't do well on their quizzes. But the rest of the grades are [based] on the exams' (interview 8). Another teacher combined her moral goals with grades when she told her students: '...every time you read the Quran you are strengthening your faith, and you will also get five percent [added to] your grade' (Interview 19).

7.2.2.2 The Actual

When the participating IS teachers spoke about the goals of their subject and their role as subject matter teachers, they talked about academic development only incidentally. This should not suggest that academic success is unimportant in IS, but that it is a secondary concern to the teachers. However, given that academic development is the primary concern for schools, dissonance surrounding this issue comes as no surprise. Many of the participants reported a sense of embattlement in their relationship with the school at which they taught, a battle in which their privileges were eroded to the extent that their role as Daiya was trivialized. In the next two sections I expound on the dissonance created through being *Subject Matter Teachers* and treating IS as an *Academic Discipline*.

7.2.2.2.1 On Being a Subject Matter Teacher

According to the teachers, the *actual role* of 'subject matter teacher' in the current school context is characterized by the following duties and features: 1) help students memorize lessons and pass exams; 2) follow a prescribed curriculum; 3) teaching is limited to the classroom; 4) teachers are accountable to the school. In what follows, I attempt to describe this role and the teachers' frustrations in this regard based on examples from the teachers' discourse.

First, in terms of helping students memorize lessons and pass exams all but three of

the participating IS teachers ended their lessons with a ten-minute session in which they underlined important material in the textbook or dedicated a follow-up lesson to underlining (the other three teachers used self-designed worksheets instead of the textbook to set questions for the exam). The phenomenon of ‘underlining’ was surprisingly consistent across IS teachers at different schools. Sections 2 and 4 of Vignette 3, reproduced above, provide typical examples of how underlining is accomplished. Underlining in this context is not seen as a study skill, but as a form of breaking down material to help students to memorize content that is relevant to the exam. In some classroom observations, it was clear that when a teacher had omitted to perform this exercise with a previous lesson, she was pressured by both the students and the school administration to allocate time in the next lesson to underline material from that previous class. In fact, in some cases teachers sought to discourage the researcher from attending a particular lesson because it was to be dedicated to underlining one or more previous lessons. Underlining usually begins with the teacher asking the students to open the textbook at a certain page, then assigning questions that the students are to write above the relevant lines in the textbook. Students are expected to memorize these questions for the exams. Teachers who attempt to write questions in the exam which were not underlined with students word-for-word are usually penalized by the school administration. Hence, it is clear in Vignette 4 above that the teacher is communicating the type of questions that she might present on the exam when she says, ‘Girls, I may confuse you in the exam and say what if a *hadith* was not coherent in text and a *hadith* that is *loosely coherent* in text what is the difference?’

The teachers felt that the emphasis on this activity of underlining left them with little autonomy and trivialized their role, creating dissonance with their self-perceived role as *Daiya*. Even though the teachers complained about underlining and memorization, however, they typically found reasons and justifications for doing so. These justifications ranged from

institutional pressure to an espoused belief that underlining is the students' right. The three examples below illustrate how the IS teachers rationalized their actions with regard to underlining material:

Nowadays, girls have to pass all their subjects! In our day teachers never underlined or assigned questions for the exam. But the school just won't let you fail a girl! Especially not in Islamic Studies. (Interview 13b)

You know, it [underlining] has one positive side: if you were in my place, with all the pressure, you would find it difficult to write exam questions about this subject. I mean, it [letting the students know what questions to expect] is fair if you really think about it. I exhaust the students' energy all year long [with] homework and projects, so it's their right at the end of the year to learn the most important points. The girls, anyway, will memorize and [then] forget most of the material, but it's the least I can do to be merciful.... I have already achieved my moral goals throughout the year. Now it's exam time, so it is their right to do well on the exam. (Interview 7b)

The question is not whether you underline or not, but...*when*. I underline material right before the exam so the girls end up having to study all year long and only at exam time can she [the student] memorize the important things. But even that [i.e., put off underlining until the end of the year] sometimes I can't do. The school won't let me do that. (Interview 9b)

Second, the teachers were concerned about having to follow a prescribed curriculum that left little room for them to address their students' concerns and other topics that they believed to be important. Being a 'subject matter teacher' means that one is required to cover a particular curriculum in a particular order and timeframe. Hence, in the interviews, the teachers complained about several topics in the curriculum and textbook that they found useless or outdated. For example, one teacher spoke sarcastically about curriculum development:

They keep talking about 'curriculum development' and they gave us these new textbooks that obviously have better pictures, but the content is the same. I mean, in *Fikh* the girls still learn about an outdated form of 'trade', like rules for selling cattle. Trade and business are different now and women

are major business investors! I am upset that they are still forcing us to teach this irrelevant material. (Interview 11a)

Two other teachers talked about the importance of adding material that was relevant to the age of their students:

Hygiene and sanitation are very important for girls at this age, [as] they are going through puberty. I mean, they brush over this issue in the [text]book, and the girls are sometimes shy about asking such questions. [This topic] should be addressed directly and in depth for the girls. (Interview 10b)

The curriculum is addressed to males! And the topics are similar: too many repetitions. [The textbooks] need to address puberty and *Ghusl* [hygiene after intercourse and menstruation] in more depth. (Interview 20a)

One teacher specifically talked about the importance of student emancipation – the kind of knowledge that would empower their students for life:

[When the textbook was changed] they kept the same content and just changed the type of questions to include thinking skills. It is useless, this change. I mean, we learn about *Zakat* [almsgiving] for a whole term! Alms giving of cattle, alms giving of seeds – the girls say, ‘This is a waste of time! We are not going to live on a farm or raise cattle. Why are we learning this?’ These are difficult times for women. [For example,] a girl who gets a divorce and doesn’t have a male guardian will suffer. [The students] need to learn about their rights under Islam in divorce, marriage and child custody. Who will tell them [these things] if we don’t? They will grow up and become lost in a male dominated judicial system. I discussed this with my *muwajiha* [Ministry evaluator]. She turned me down and said, ‘These [the lessons in the textbook] are the tenets of Islam; they [the students] have to learn them.’ (Interview 15)

The interview extracts presented in this section all alluded to similar issues associated with frustration over the demands of the school as an institution and the school and Ministry perception of the IS teachers’ role as that of ‘subject matter teacher’. Although the teachers romanticised about their ideal role and almost always found ways to integrate their own moral goals into their teaching, they nonetheless remained accountable to the school and Ministry. In general, the data show that the IS teachers’ displeasure centred

around issues like grading papers and tests, and in general in the time involved being a ‘teacher’ rather than a ‘preacher’. Overall, the teachers spoke minimally about the costs or sacrifices their job entailed, perhaps because a calling is not really a job ‘you are like any other subject teacher in a way, you get your pay check at the end of the month but you have a greater responsibility’ (interview 7a)

7.2.2.2.2 Islamic Studies as an *Academic Discipline*

Although the IS teachers talked about their *ideal*, they were nonetheless realistic in terms of what their subject did and did not allow them to do. As noted, the teachers’ ideal was that their role was that of a *Daiya* and that their subject was a *moral discipline* in which moral goals take precedence over academic ones. I spent many hours attempting to learn the extent to which this ideal was the teachers’ norm. In the course of four months, I observed the teachers shift between this ideal and the roles assigned to them by the intuitions within which they worked. I learned that the teachers’ talk about their subject as an academic discipline was mostly a result of feelings of pressure from the institution but was also often instigated by a desire elevate the status of their subject in relation to other subjects that their schools tended to value more highly. For example, higher status subjects like maths and science were able to claim greater resources and power within the school and had more bearing on college entrance. In order to avoid trivialization of their subject, some IS teachers intentionally made their classes more difficult than they were required to do. As one teacher explained, ‘Islamic Studies is not always spiritual; it is a science that requires deduction and analytical skills’ (Interview 16). Although this particular teacher was criticized many times by the Ministry evaluators for making her subject difficult, she remained firm in her approach, even refusing to underline material or to refer to the textbook in her effort to control the material and to focus learning on students’ critical skills. She depended mainly

on her own worksheets and often asked students to produce written research papers and to make group presentations on given topics.

The teachers' discourses reflected a priority associated with the moral dimension, and they referred to IS as an academic subject only as an *additional* feature, aspect or value. When the IS teachers referred to their subject as an academic discipline, they typically invoked one or more of the following postulations: 1) an academic discipline requires writing and note taking and/or underlining; 2) an academic discipline is assessed through examinations; 3) an academic discipline is rigidly sequenced and leaves little autonomy for the teacher; and 4) an academic discipline is seen as consisting of 'hard' and/or difficult knowledge. In what follows I attempt to deconstruct these four positions based on evidence from the study data.

First, although most of the teachers talked about these aspects of IS as negative values, they did not simply or totally reject or denigrate the notion of IS as an academic discipline. Indeed, they also spoke of the subject's academic aspects or attributes in a positive light, particularly since the designation 'academic' - or, as the teachers usually put it, *Mada ilmiya* ('scientific subject') - elevated the status of IS. So, for example, it was common to hear in one interview that the goals of the subject were moral, but that the subject itself was *ilm* ('a science' - e.g., interview 14). Vignette 4 illustrates how one IS teacher took a fully-fledged academic perspective on her teaching. In the first section of the Vignette, we find that the teacher sets the platform of her lesson by noting that the material is 'difficult' and that the students need to pay attention. She then explains why the lesson is important and tries to connect its content to students' lives. In the second section, we find that the teacher uses writing (on the white board and on worksheets, as well as textbook underlining) as her main mode of explanation when she begins to list the different types of

hadith and their definitions on the white board. In the third section, we find the teacher giving examples of questions that she might present on the exam. Most importantly, in this section we find that the teacher ignores a student's question about a particular *hadith* about women and dogs and immediately goes back to her lesson, saying that 'all *hadith* are for memorization'. In section 4, the bulk of the explanation takes place while the teacher again illustrates the lesson on the white board. In the fifth section the teacher again ignores a student's question and focuses on the topic of her lesson. To illustrate this more clearly, in this lesson we find that the teacher does not always address the students' questions that are not directly relevant to the topic. So, for example, in the instances in which students asked about the character of judges and about a *hadith* that degrades women, the teacher replied by saying that they would talk about it later. However, when the question was relevant to the topic, as when the student asked about why a *hadith* was considered authentic if a *Sahabi* was missing from the chain, we find that the teacher tries to convince her student that *Sahaba* are all trustworthy because they belong to the generation that lived with the Prophet and learned directly from him, while the second and third generations did not meet the Prophet. I asked this teacher about these three interruptions and why she chose to answer only this one of the three questions. She replied:

I would love to address all my student's questions, and we usually do. It's important to me to convince them [of the right understanding] – particularly the questions about the *hadith* regarding women and dogs[, because] it's a common misconception. I will talk about it later, but you know we have so little time to cover the curriculum. I am teaching four IS subjects and I have one lesson a week for every subject, [so] I can't afford to talk about other things or the poor girls will be so [far] behind in the curriculum [that] they won't do well on their exams. You know, this lesson [that was interrupted with student questions] is also difficult, [and] if they don't understand this one they won't understand the others that follow. So I will find time for other questions outside of class [because] my students and I are very close.
(Interview 6b)

Notably, the teacher in this example was the same one who set up a Facebook group

for her students to discuss issues of relevance to them. The preceding quote highlight several issues. First, although the Vignette 4 teacher acknowledged the importance of addressing student questions, she qualified this by emphasizing that IS teachers are constrained by time and by the need to cover the curriculum in a particular order. Clearly, this leaves the teachers with little autonomy, contributing to dissonance and dissatisfaction over the teachers' role. At the same time, this teacher did not reject or deny the academic dimension of IS. Rather, she emphasizes the difficulty of the material and the fact that lessons had to be explained in detail, accompanied by diagrams on the white board and careful elaboration. She also alludes to the fact that acquiring the required understanding depends on background knowledge and that therefore a rigid sequence of topics is a necessity.

Another teacher made the following, similar reference to the academic dimension of IS:

Like I said before, we are not lucky like maths and science teachers: we are given a secondary role in school. Although our subject is moral and it's not easy – Islamic Studies is a hard science too – we are trivialized. (Interview 18a)

This teacher was responding to a question about why she often referred to the exam in the context of her IS teaching. In doing so, she refers both to the inherent difficulty of the material and to the need to overcome trivialization within the institution, an issue that clearly created dissonance and discomfort for the participating IS teachers.

As already noted, when the teachers talked about assessment, they often referred to two forms or categories: how the students practiced their religion, which was assessed informally (although some teacher allocated or adjusted grades based on this category) and assessment of content knowledge through exams. One teacher explained as follows:

The school requires us to have four exams for every student. I calculate the

total of [their scores on] the four exams and give them their grade, but I also decided to give grades for behaviour and religious practice. I did that instead of the grades allocated for attendance – I don't really count attendance. I take into consideration attendance to *thuhur* [noon] prayer instead. (Interview 18)

In sum, the data show that when IS is seen as a moral discipline, this perspective demands a particular way of thinking about how to teach and how to organise the curriculum – e.g., the oratory nature of teaching. However, when the teachers adopted a view of IS as an academic discipline, they interpreted the subject and their role much more rigidly, and this dichotomy created dissonance at the cognitive level. In addition, most of the IS teachers seemed to encompass this secondary viewpoint in order to help justify the place of IS as an academic discipline. In practice, the resulting twofold perspective appeared to be resolved in practice through adopting a hybrid role and constructing a hybrid subject. The issue of hybridism will be discussed in the next sections.

7.3 Resolving Dissonance through Hybridity

Patton (2002) in his book on qualitative data analysis explains that 'analysis finally makes clear what would have been most important to study if only we had known before hand' (p.431). Patton's previous quote seems most relevant to the subtheme of *hybridity* which emerges from the data after having scrutinized the underlying meanings expressed by the teachers through the theme of *dissonance*. The disparity caused by the conspicuous dissonance which occurred at the cognitive level in the IS teachers' espoused experiences influenced their choice to adopt hybrid teaching roles. However, this study's data, does not allow us to ascertain whether this hybrid teaching phenomena was a means to mitigate against the institutional demand to take academic approaches while in school or an attempt to balance the moral and academic dimensions of the subject itself which the teachers would

have chosen regardless of the current academic driven context. By *Hybrid Teaching* in this study, I refer to the merging in teaching practice between the paradoxical roles and subject matter conceptions espoused by the teachers. ‘Twenty two’ of the IS teachers in this study adopted a full hybrid approach where they combined both roles and conceptions (moral and academic) in their teaching while ‘two’ teachers adopted a partial hybrid approach whereby they dedicated the classroom to academic demands and left their moral goals and *Daiya* role to be practiced in an alternative milieu. In the next two sections I discuss the two forms of *hybridity* through an examination of the vignettes presented in this chapter.

7.3.1 Complete Hybrid Appraoch

Vignette 3 illustrates how IS teachers manoeuvre between the academic demands and the moral demands of their subject. The teacher in this vignette begins the lesson with rituals and routines. Henceforth, she begins with a prayer to bestow *Baraka* (Blessing transmitted from Allah) on the lesson. In section two of the vignette we find the teacher immediately focusing on the academic dimension of the subject and her role as subject matter teacher when she asks the students to open their textbooks to underline ‘important points’ which they could not do in the previous lesson as they are important for exam revisions. The teacher speaks in colloquial Arabic explaining each line underlined and designating questions for the exam which students have to memorize. After culminating this activity, the teacher immediately says ‘now close your books’ as if indicating the start of the actual lesson. In Section 3 of the vignette the teacher shifts to the persuasive method attempting to convince students about the importance of *Dawa* (Preaching). Towards the end of the lesson we find the teacher moving back to the academic aspect and asking students to once again open their textbooks when she says ‘Ok, girls, now open your books. We are

going to underline and write questions. Open to page 24. Underline this section and write this question: ‘How did the Prophet Mohammed approach *Dawa*?’ the students immediately begin to ask questions about the lines they are required to underline, what they mean etc. Below is another example from the classroom observation extracts illustrating how IS teachers shift between the two roles smoothly:

Observation 20: 2nd Intermediate *Fikh* Lesson on ‘Special circumstances when permissible foods become forbidden’

Teacher: Girls... Pay attention this is a very important point for the exam. In essence all foods are not forbidden, but it becomes forbidden under certain circumstances (Teacher repeats this several times then she clarifies the difference between *Thaka* (Islamic way of killing animals) and *Zaka* (Alms Giving) in Arabic as they sound the same, writing them on the white board).

Teacher: Don’t mix them up in the exam they are different.

Student: Can we eat rotten fish?

Teacher: (laughs) No because it will harm you.

Teacher: The first condition where food becomes forbidden is when the animal is already found dead. Then she talked about the Islamic method in *Thaka* and how to strike the animal in the neck so they don’t feel the pain and then keep the animal upside down until all the blood and urine in the blood leaves the animal’s body.

Student: Do we sacrifice animals if we move to a new house?

Another student answers: No this is witchcraft.

Teacher: (laughs) no it’s not witchcraft! It is an innovation in religion to sacrifice an animal when moving to a new house but I think what you mean is *Akeeka* ,it’s when you distribute the meat to the poor after you are blessed with a new baby.

Teacher: Ok if we have an animal that was bitten by a lion but the animal was not dead yet. Can we eat it?

Student: No because it was bitten?

Teacher: No you can eat it... if the animal is still alive you can.. even if it was bitten... as long the animal is still alive because if it has been dead for a long time it rots and the meat is not good anymore.

Teacher: What about animals that are killed by electric shock? Girls have you seen Salman Al Ouda (Male Daiya) on TV, one student who is on scholarship studying abroad asked him about eating meat that is not *Halal*. He said it’s better to eat *Halal*. So if you have any brothers studying abroad remind them and encourage them to eat in *Halal* restaurants.

Teacher continues explaining why animals killed by electric shock are forbidden.

The observation extract above illustrates how this teacher integrates both roles in one lesson. The teacher begins with the academic demands and her subject matter teacher role when she illustrates the difference between two religious terms explaining how it is

important for the exam. She clarifies the difference by writing the two words on the white board. Next, the teacher shifts to her *Daiya* role, where she accepts students' questions when a student asks jokingly whether it is permitted to eat rotten fish. The teacher laughs and responds to the student's question without hesitation explaining why it is forbidden. The teacher then returns to her subject matter teacher role when she says 'the first condition when the food becomes forbidden is' as she attempts to explain to students why eating dead animals is forbidden. Another student then disrupts the flow of the lesson asking about animal sacrifice; the teacher accepts her query and corrects her background knowledge. She then moves back to the lesson trying to connect it to students' lives when she talks about persuading family members living abroad to eat in *halal* restaurants exemplifying once more her role as a *Daiya* through her efforts to reach the students' families.

What comes across clearly in the extracts and vignettes reviewed is that the majority of IS teachers maneuver smoothly between roles in their teaching practice regardless of their espoused dissonance. Hence, the teaching appears as an amalgamation of both demands where lines are blurred between the espoused paradoxes leading to a form of complete hybrid teaching.

7.3.2 Partial Hybrid Approach

The data in this study reveals that two of the IS teachers (Teachers 6 and 18) who participated in the study adopted a partial hybrid teaching approach where they integrated the two roles by fulfilling each in a separate sphere, by which they meant that they perceived themselves as dedicating the classroom to academic goals while performing their *Daiya* duties outside of class. Vignette 4 illustrates how Teacher 6 runs her lesson from an academic and subject matter lens only. When asked about their teaching these two teachers

declared their frustration with the small amount of time that they had to spend with their students, which left them –after required lessons and underlining – with little time for pastoral duties that transcend the classroom walls. One teacher addressed this predicament as follows:

I don't have time to ask about my students' wellbeing. Sometimes, when a student has been absent from class, I would like to ask her why she was absent. I know some of my students have problems at home, but with one lesson a week for every IS subject I can't really do that. But, thank God, I spoke to the principal and I am now heading another lesson called, “*irshad wa tawjeeh*” [assistance and guidance], in which we talk about the students' personal and academic issues. But there are 25 students in that class! I tell some students to come to [see] me after class if they need [to speak in] privacy, but I am always busy preparing things for class. (Interview 18a)

One of my students encouraged me to start a Facebook group.... I started writing weekly [commentaries] about issues which students ask[ed] me about and [about] other issues which I know concern them.... [Also,] when I can't cover something in the curriculum, I do it through Facebook. I force myself to write [something for this group] every Monday and Friday. I also have pictures of my children [posted on the site]. I think I have a [certain] style in presenting issues; I am not saying I am the best [presenter], but as an IS teacher I know how to tackle issues. (Interview 6b)

The two quotes above illustrate how both teachers attempted to seek alternative milieu to attend to their *Daiya* duties as one teacher explained that she had initiated a Facebook group and the other that she conducted a one-week lesson called ‘irshad’ (guidance). When teacher 6 was asked to give examples about issues she tackles through Facebook, she went on to explain:

There are issues that are glossed over in the [text]book, like the war between the Prophet's companions – [the authors] don't even talk about it! I taught two *Shii* students [as opposed to Sunis, who acknowledge the Prophet's companions] before and I tried to convince them, but at the end of the day they do not favor the Prophets' companions. I still try to convince them, but there is no time in my lessons to cover all this. If you [as a student] were absent for one week or if you missed one lesson, you are totally off track! (Interview 6b)

Teacher 6 exemplifies how she extends lessons present in the textbook through

Facebook. She takes on a topic of political and religious sensitivity to an alternative milieu where she attempted to persuade her *Shii* students of the *Sunni* version of Islamic History, in particular the stories of the Prophet and his companions. Since the teacher was unable to attend to her *Daiya* duties in class which require her to persuade students of particular issues in religion, she attempts to do the previous through unconventional means and in a place outside the classroom. Hence, both teachers in this situation adopt a partial hybrid approach through maintaining both roles in different environments rather than integrating them in the classroom as one.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the IS teachers in the present study encountered two different kinds of dissonance in their work. The first kind of dissonance was characterized by a personal struggle to harmonize their own degree of religious observance with what they preach in class. The second kind of dissonance derived from the teachers' attempts to work out their role and subject matter conception. For the final form of dissonance, the data showed that although the paradoxes of *Daia vs. Subject Matter Teacher* and *moral discipline vs academic discipline* coexisted, each role conception curbed the extremism of the other. This manifested itself in two ways. First, most of the teachers adopted a complete hybrid approach which consists of an amalgamation of the two roles and subject matter conceptions and shifted between them in any given lesson; these teachers were skilled at integrating both roles/conception into their teaching and were attuned to the demands of the school as an institution while remaining true to their own goals and beliefs. Second, two teachers attempted to appropriate their teaching solely to the demands of the school (as in Vignette 4), wherein they adopted a partial hybrid approach focused on the academic side and

relegated their moral duties to other alternative milieu. In conclusion, the data suggest that the majority of the participating teachers resolve this espoused dissonance through integrating the two roles simultaneously while a minority saw themselves as fulfilling the two roles at different times and in different contexts

Chapter 8: General Discussion and Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The study aimed at providing a descriptive and interpretive account of *what it is like to be a female Islamic Studies teacher teaching in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia today*. The aim was also to increase our understanding of how IS teachers understand their teaching and their lived classroom experiences from the perspective of the teachers themselves. As a means to direct this examination, three questions were originally posed:

1. How do female Saudi Arabian Islamic studies (IS) teachers teach in the classroom?
2. How do female Saudi Arabian Islamic studies (IS) teachers make sense of their teaching practices?
3. What is essential to or implicit in the experience of being a female Islamic studies (IS) teacher in Saudi Arabia today?

The aim of this final chapter is to present a summary of the answers to these questions that were presented as findings in the two empirical chapters and of the relationship between these answers and some of the key theoretical perspectives from the literature that were reviewed at the outset of this dissertation. First, in section 8.2, I reflect on the extent to which I have been successful in achieving access to the teachers' own understanding of their teaching, as well as on the limitations of this study. Thereafter, in section 8.3, I present a discussion of the findings in light of the relevant theoretical

literature. Finally, in section 8.4, I consider the implications of the contribution of this study to the understanding of the research questions and of teacher experience, as well as possibilities for further research.

8.2 Reflection *on* Action: Claims and Limitations of the Study

Any conclusions that I reach about the nature of IS teaching must be considered tentative since these conclusions are based on a small group of teachers (24), teaching a limited age group (11-17), in a single city (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia). Moreover, although measures were taken to randomly select teachers and to diversify the school settings, further caution must be exercised in claiming generalizability due to the fact that the local customs and culture in Jeddah differ significantly from those in other cities in Saudi Arabia (Jeddah, as discussed, is considered to be one of the most liberal regions in the Kingdom). In any case, the primary value of this study is not to be found in the general application of its findings but in the richness of the data and in the intrinsic worth of these teachers, their students and their schools as objects of study. As Walford (2007) notes, research sites should be chosen because ‘they or the activities in them are intrinsically interesting or important in themselves for themselves’ (p.165). The analysis of IS teachers teaching in six schools in Jeddah is interesting in and of itself because it is a means for a better understanding of confessional religious education in a dynamic region of one of the most religiously observant Muslim countries in the world. Thus, while it may not be reasonable to broadly generalize the findings of this or – to an extent – any qualitative study, the knowledge herein derived concerning the lived IS classroom experience is clearly linked to general discussions of IRE in the Muslim world and for Muslim minorities in Muslim schools in the West.

Another important question regarding the findings of this study is how one claims access to the teachers' thoughts that underlie their teaching practice and hence their ways of understanding their teaching. The analysis of theoretical literature and research that has attempted to gain similar insights suggested that the only way was to ask the teachers themselves and to do so as soon as possible after the relevant action had taken place (Brown & McIntyre, 1993). Data were therefore collected by means of interviews and observations that related directly to classroom practice. Although even this method cannot allow me to claim that I gained a complete or comprehensive understanding of the way in which IS teachers make sense of their teaching, I am nonetheless confident that what I present here reflects, to a great extent, how they think about their teaching. This confidence is based on three factors: 1) the teachers' consistency in their accounts of their teaching (what the teachers said was not significantly different from what they did, and when it was, an attempt was made to understand the reasons for this discrepancy); 2) it proved possible to represent everything that the teachers said on different occasions in terms of the specific themes presented in the empirical chapters; and 3) the methodology undertaken, i.e., the phenomenological orientation – wherein the purpose is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something and to attempt to describe and understand how the persons involved perceive and experience the aspects under study – created conditions for the teachers under which the emphasis was on understanding rather than evaluating. This rendered the teachers both willing and able to talk enthusiastically about their teaching, and the resulting accounts are both consistent and rich.

This having been said, I must be clear about what I am claiming. I make no claim that I have discovered anything about the process of teacher thinking in general, nor have I come up with general postulates to understand teaching. Instead, the study focused on and provides insight into how the participating IS teachers saw themselves and their teaching

within the working conditions that they experienced, including the subjects that they taught and the context in which they lived. Indeed, as van Manen (1997) points out, phenomenology does not offer the possibility of effective theory with which to explain or control a given phenomenon; rather, it offers what he terms ‘plausible insights’ (p. 1) that bring the observer and the scholarly community closer to the phenomena under study. The narratives presented in this dissertation thus aim to bring us closer, to offer a deeper understanding of *what it feels like* to be an IS teacher in today’s rapidly changing Saudi Arabian schools, as well as how IS teachers cope with this context and with these changes.

8.3 Making sense of IS teaching

All of the 24 teachers who were objects of this study had trained as IS teachers and taught IS classes prescribed by the national curriculum in Saudi Arabia. Through classroom observation and teacher interviews, this investigation aimed at achieving an understanding of their teaching practice. The study showed that the way in which IS teachers teach in the classroom and make sense of their teaching can be characterized in three main themes: 1) *maintaining discipline*; 2) *teaching as persuasion*; and 3) *dealing with dissonance*. The first two themes are mainly answers to the first and second research questions, which deal specifically with the ‘concreteness’ of the teaching experience. Thus, for questions 1 and 2, which ask what IS teachers *do* in the classroom and how they *make sense* of what they do, the answers would relate to *maintaining discipline* and to *persuasive teaching* in all its complex and idiosyncratic forms. However, as noted in chapter 7, the data from this study showed that it would be impossible to gain a full understanding of how these teachers teach without taking into account the process of tapping into the experience of being an IS teacher

in general. When asked about particularities of teaching, the IS teachers who participated in this study spoke about their holistic experiences as teachers and alluded repeatedly to the challenges that come with this role. Teaching, then, must be understood as a manifestation of the essential features of that experience as a whole and of that particular role in society.

The theme of *dealing with dissonance*, in turn, addresses the third research question, which is best described as a *holistic* one in that it focuses on what is essential to the whole experience rather than on individual aspects of teaching. Thus, while the first two themes provided a concrete description of how the IS teachers made sense of their teaching *practice*, the third and final theme focused on the ontological *experience* of being an IS teacher and on how this influences teaching.

In what follows, I explore the findings, including the three main themes, in the light of some of the key perspectives offered by the literature reviewed in the early chapters of this dissertation.

8.3.1 How IS teachers teach

In chapter six, teaching was described in terms of two themes: *maintaining discipline* and *teaching as persuasion*. Regarding the former, *maintaining discipline* was not only a shared concern among the teachers but often the first thing that the teachers spoke about. It is not surprising for teachers to be concerned with discipline, as there is a high level of consistency across diverse studies to the effect that, while teaching, teachers focus their thoughts on pupils, procedures and maintaining discipline in the classroom (Brown & McIntyre, 1993; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Lewis, 1999). McCann et al. (2005) identified that

one of the major concerns for teachers is their relationship with their students in terms of encompassing control, respect and rapport in the classroom. While the concern with discipline may be a shared issue for teachers of all subjects, what is unique to this study are the particular ‘ways’, ‘mores’ or ‘tactics’ that the IS teachers used to maintain discipline, as well as how their understanding of discipline is constructed. In this regard, three terms derived from the theoretical literature can help to describe the thinking of the teachers in this study: alternatively, otherization, and identity.

Nespor (1987) proffered the term *alternativity*, which applies fittingly to the manner in which the teachers’ conceptualization of discipline and expectations with respect to discipline were different from what they experienced in school as students. Their recollected images of themselves as students were of individuals who were ‘afraid of talking to the IS teacher’ (Interview 10b) and ‘afraid of asking questions’ (Interview 10b), and this differed sharply from what they wanted from and for their own students. Rather, they appeared to be seeking to create an alternative understanding of discipline – a more progressive one, perhaps – in which discipline is seen as ‘paying attention’, ‘loving the subject’, ‘being with the teacher’ and ‘participating in discussions’. It is therefore a more interactive or participatory notion of discipline, one that is responsive to changing times and changing students.

Following Clarke (2010), we can use the term *otherization* to refer to the process by which teachers identify themselves as teachers in light of their difference from the *other*. In the present study, the *other* was usually the IS teachers whom the participants remembered studying under when they themselves were in school. The following quote typifies the manner in which the participants tended to view these teachers as somewhat strict and old fashioned: ‘I was really concerned when I first decided to be an Islamic studies teacher that I

would transform and become like those old Islamic studies teachers wearing white shirts and black skirts and black gloves. But I liked Islamic studies...' (Interview 11a). Thus, as in a number of other studies (Calderhead, 1996; Gross & Gilbert, 2011; Richardson, 2003; Zeichner, 1980), it emerged here that informal experiences and early experiences of teaching and of having been taught at school had a strong influence on shaping the teachers' views on teaching.

Despite the fact that the IS teachers all alluded to the importance of maintaining discipline, they did so in a variety of ways. Indeed, the IS teachers' practices associated with maintaining discipline demonstrated the importance of the construct of 'identity' in teaching (Clarke, 2010; Gee, 2000; Kompf, Bond, Dworet & Boak, 1996; Meijer, 2011). Discipline was maintained not only through ritual and routine but also through relying on personal charisma and/or fostering a sense of spirituality in the classroom. Thus, discipline was seen as a reflection of the self and of personal beliefs, and it was in some cases explicitly maintained by fostering personal qualities that appealed to the students, such as voice, dress or humor. This recalls what Whittbeck (2000) found in his study of pre-service teachers, who reported that a 'teaching personality' was more important than cognitive and pedagogical skills or subject matter knowledge.

Additionally, the role of personal identity, and therefore *who* the teacher is as a person, as a parent, as a daughter influenced the ways in which IS teachers chose to encourage discipline in the classroom. In a series of studies in the area of teaching culturally valued texts e.g. Bible, Torah, Quran -particularly those that have a classroom observation dimension- found that the teacher's personal, cultural and ideological background is particularly dominant in this area of teaching and often, outweighs other types of teaching and curriculum ideology set by the school context (Skhedi, 2001; Shkedi & Nisan, 2006;

Shkedi & Horenczyk, 1995). Therefore, it can be construed that rather than relying on pedagogical teaching skills acquired from training, IS teachers referred significantly to those experiences acquired from personal life.

Some researchers in the area of teacher identity argue that events and experiences in teachers' personal lives are intimately linked to their professional roles (Acker, 1999; Ball & Goodson, 1984; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). In the case of the IS teachers, the role of *parent* or – for those who had not been married or had children, their conceptualization of what a good parent is like – proved to be a significant factor in shaping their views on discipline and in defining their roles. The statement 'I am a parent' was offered numerous times by the teachers in this study, more so than 'I am a teacher' (which may have been seen as obvious given the interview context). Certainly, in terms of maintaining discipline, many of the teachers saw themselves as drawing on their understanding as mothers. Some, for example, made specific references to their disciplinary methods at home as comparators for the ways in which they dealt with their students in the classroom. Thus, as also expressed by Ruddick (1981) and by Elbaz (1992), this study showed that there are areas of overlap between maternal thinking and teacher thinking.

Although the role of personal identity was salient in this study, this does not entirely preclude the notion of pedagogical goals. Many of the IS teachers many times in this study combined religious rituals with pedagogical aims. For example, in their routines of saying the 'salam' and the 'doua', some of the teachers combined the goal of bestowing a sense of *Baraka* (blessing transmitted from God) with the pedagogical aim of allowing students to settle down before the actual lesson began.

The second theme presented in chapter six was that of *persuasive teaching*. Both the observations and the interviews revealed that what the teachers essentially did through their

teaching was characterized as a form of persuasion (*ikna*’) framed and adapted to the classroom context. They also described their role as persuaders who have, through experience, developed necessary skills to present well-crafted messages that appeal to both emotion and reason. This insight runs contrary to the simplistic view that grants textbooks the place of primary importance in IRE (see chapter 3). Indeed, the IS teachers in the study made clear that they could not rely solely on textbooks for their teaching because students no longer take for granted the ideas or principles that these texts espouse. The role of textbooks as powerful socializing agents, as argued in some studies (see Doutmato & Starette, 2007), was thus also undermined by teachers in this study. In fact, it was precisely because the texts were ‘not persuasive enough’ or were too ‘strict’ in their interpretation of Islamic rulings that the IS teachers conceptualized their role as one of mediator between text and student. As Gardener and Alexander (1994) point out, a broad range of texts can be characterized as ‘persuasive’ – newspapers, billboards, websites, flyers, etc. – since, whatever the intention, they can be catalysts for changing students’ understanding of a given issue. However, this study showed that teachers go to considerable lengths to plan and craft persuasive messages to be incorporated into their lessons, whether through analogies or other forms of exemplification or through a pre-planned question and answer mode. One way or another, the focus is on establishing a strong *hujja*, a reasoned and logical argument that appeals to both emotion and reason – in this case, also, one that will sustain student interest. Teaching in this respect is, as Calderhead (1994) explains, ‘a skillful action adapted to context’ (p. 136). Thus, too, whether or not they wrote out detailed objectives or procedures, the IS teachers *imagined* themselves acting out the lesson plan (McCutcheon & Milner, 2002). As one teacher stated: ‘I simply imagine myself giving the lesson. I prefer to have a free lesson before my lesson just so I can visualize myself [executing the plan]’ (Interview 9b) (see Chapter 6, section 6.3.3.1).

The literature on persuasion comes from a variety of fields, including philosophy and social psychology, and encompasses diverse perspectives on what persuasion is and how it takes place. Two elements, however, are broadly recognized as relevant: the learner and the message (Chambliss, 1995; Murphy, 2001). While IS teachers appear to direct their consciousness toward both of these elements, there seems to be an additional and important issue that stems from their conceptualization of the subject they teach, from their personal religious beliefs (PRB) and from their existential presumptions (Ableson, 1979): the notion that they need to establish a set of fixed principles with their students prior to the initiation of a discussion. It is common practice for IS teachers to discuss these fixed principles with their students early in the academic year and to draw attention to them again subsequently in the classroom. Although all of the participating IS teachers discussed these limits with their students, in practice, issues were dealt with on a case by case basis, depending on the students' questions, the ability, knowledge and willingness of the teacher to address these concerns and her views on whether it was appropriate to do so or not. While some teachers preferred to answer student concerns that transgressed the limits on the principle of 'not leaving things blurry for students' (Interview 12b), others preferred to close down arguments when they did not fit within the set limits. The teachers sometimes justified this by referring to the nature of their subject matter and by tapping into their subject specific beliefs (Shelvson & Stern, 1981). This was evident, for example, when one teacher differentiated between the branches of *Tawheed* (Monotheism) and *Fikh* (Jurisprudence) in Islamic studies: 'At the beginning of every year I explain the difference between *Tawheed* and *Fikh* to my students. *Tawheed* is about your faith, and hence we don't discuss [it because it is] the unseen. It's not right to think about it too much because if you open the door to it you might commit *shirk* (polytheism), so I close the door of discussion on these issues' (Interview 14b).

By and large, teaching is not activity based (Yinger, 1979) but rhetoric based. In this rhetoric-based teaching we find that IS teachers anticipate conceptual problems and/or pedagogical challenges that might interrupt the flow of their lessons' 'logic' and try to prepare solutions to them (van Manen, 1991). A baseline for the success of teaching-as-persuasion, however, is the need to sustain student interest in the lessons. To do so, the teachers went to great lengths not only to craft their lessons but to find supporting materials from the Internet, to anticipate questions that students might ask based on their prior teaching experience, to plan *tamheed* activities that fostered student interest in the topic, and to evoke their students emotions through stories and religious songs (see Chapter 6, section 6.3.3.2)

Although this study is not about applying existing theoretical constructs to teaching, I find it useful to propose that the theme *teaching as persuasion* may be seen as a form of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) (Shulman, 1986) in the sense that it is the chosen manner in which IS teachers 'represent and formulate the subject [in order to] make it comprehensible to others' (p. 9). The concept of PCK, however, needs to be treated with caution because although RE teachers use persuasion as an overarching aim and construct, they do so to achieve certain moral goals. This means that what IS teachers intend by making their subject 'comprehensible' is essentially a matter of making their students into better Muslims who are convinced of certain tenets and truths of their religion. Also, studies that employ the concept of PCK tend to betray an ideological preference for certain modes of teaching over others (Pendry, 1997). Given that this study is not evaluative, PCK is only employed to illustrate that persuasive teaching is a conscious choice taken by IS teachers to represent their subject matter to their students in a way that they find most appropriate to meet their moral and pedagogical goals.

Alongside motivating students and being warm and charismatic, which the teachers viewed as primary characteristics of good teaching (see Collins, Selinger, & Pratt, 2003; Holt Reynolds, 1992), another crucial dimension of teaching as persuasion is the need to assert and maintain the credibility of the teacher. Many of the teachers saw fulfilling this need as closely linked to their ability to plan well-crafted arguments and to fostering the perception that they had strong subject matter knowledge. As one teacher explained: ‘Students respect you more as a credible source when you know your subject well’ (Interview 9b). The urgency of establishing credibility was linked closely to an element discussed in Chapter 3, namely the fact that the rapid changes in society – in particular, the spread of Internet access – have created circumstances in which students have direct access to a variety of Islamic texts and interpretations. As a result, students increasingly challenge the teachers’ knowledge. As another teacher explained: ‘There is a disappointing culture of boredom with religious subjects.... We are suffering from the society, [from competition from] the cheap media, friends and the home. So we are always redirecting wrong perceptions in the students’ minds, but it is harder to assert your credibility nowadays’ (Interview 21a).

Limbert (2007) and Ghabra (2007), moreover, both argue that because of the highly politicized messages in IRE textbooks, students see IS teachers not as respectable, independent religious authorities but as propagators of official state ideology, a factor that trivializes their role and undermines their credibility (see Chapter 6, section 6.3.3.1). Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 3, formal religious scholarship – as exemplified in the *ulama* – is gradually being eroded as Muslims are increasingly inclined to seek their own interpretations based on other sources (Eikleman & Piscatori, 2004). This phenomenon is also part of a wider debate in Muslim circles regarding how to approach religious text: either by *taqlid* (imitation and unquestioning acceptance of explanations originating from the early

schools of thought) or by *ijtihad* (which allows the use of reasoning to understand and interpret text). It would be an oversimplification to distinguish only between these two perspectives, as there are many reformist schools that seek to practice a compromise between these two extremes (Berglund, 2010). However, what concerns us here is that the tensions that exist between these disparate positions have an impact on the IS teachers and that their students are deliberating issues that were once exclusively the domain of the *ulama*. In other words, accepted versions of Islam – as embodied in textbooks for example – are being challenged due to societal change (e.g., the issue of the interpretation of *hijab* or veil as a covering for the hair or face – see the excerpt from Interview 6 quoted in Chapter 6, section 6.3.3.2). These challenges are being brought into the classroom by the students, and the IS teachers are in a position that requires them to provide some kind of response. In doing so, the teachers are crafting a clear moral message where there is still a ‘right’ answer or right way of viewing things.

As for the Islamic theological debate between *taqlid* and *ijtihad*, the IS teachers in this study took on different positions within this spectrum depending on the situation and the questions posed by their students. Nonetheless, they remained closer to the *taqlid* perspective – not in the sense of ‘blind imitation’ but through creating arguments that supported the views and rulings of the classical schools of thought while making use of both formal and informal Islamic sources. Teachers’ statements like ‘I consult Islamic sources’, ‘I know my subject well’, ‘I am able to convince students’, ‘it is my role to give correct information’ revealed their prevailing view that there is a corpus of classical subject matter knowledge that needs to be understood and that, most often, there is one correct answer to students’ concerns and it is the teachers’ responsibility to relay this correct knowledge to their students – a perspective that is closely allied to the *taqlid* approach. What is distinctive however in the case of these teachers is that although they remain loyal to the

notion of the existence of a ‘correct’ corpus of knowledge, they present this knowledge to their students through discursive means. For example, their ‘subject matter knowledge’ is not confined to what is presented in the textbooks or in the classical sources but extends to the independent interpretive writings available on the Internet and through the popular media, as well as to their ability to craft convincing arguments. That said, it is their knowledge of both formal sources – *i.e. classical Islamic texts* – and informal sources – *i.e. websites, sermons and lectures* – that constitutes their subject matter knowledge and that helps them to establish credibility with their students. Notably, in this regard, the IS teachers were also eager to reduce the gap between themselves and their students by acquiring facility in the type of rhetoric employed by their students and by learning to use social media that are popular with students, such as facebook. Again, in the language of teaching, this may mean ‘knowing what students know’ and ‘using the language that students use’ as a starting point for their lessons.

Although the IS teachers in the study clearly believed strongly in a corpus of ‘correct’ Islamic knowledge, in many instances they were seen to challenge issues raised in the textbooks. For example in Chapter 6, section 6.3.2, a student who happened to be a niece of Osama Bin Ladin asked whether her uncle was an infidel. The teacher noted that opinions differed on this matter, even though the official state position would be to answer in the affirmative. She also implicitly challenged the state position by indicating that one cannot always believe the media, as it can be deceptive.

Yet whatever specifics emerge on any given question, it is clear that the teaching of IS is intimately linked to transformations in society itself, and that as Muslim societies undergo change these changes are reflected in the teachers’ teaching (Keiko & Adelhak, 2011). Also, similar to Adler’s (2004) study of Jordanian IRE classrooms, this study

confirms that the rigidity and sometimes contradictory nature of the textbooks can offer rich opportunities for discussion between among students and teacher. Thus, the study provides a counterbalance to dogmatic comments such as the following:

Religious subjects in particular place heavy emphasis on rote learning; lessons are very repetitive and often use complex language not always appropriate to the age of the students. This philosophy of teaching inculcates passivity, dependence, and a priori respect for authority and an unquestioning attitude.... Interaction between the teacher and his/her students is limited; debate is often absent as the sources of knowledge, the Qur'an and Sunna, are considered inviolable. (Prokop, 2003, p. 80)

In particular, terms such as ‘rote learning and passivity’ and ‘unquestioned authority’ (i.e., the parameters of a pure knowledge *transmission* model; Boyle, 2006) are clearly inappropriate to describe the lived IS classroom experience revealed by the present study, and the interaction between teacher and students in this experience was not ‘limited’ but, on the contrary, often extended beyond the classroom walls.

Nonetheless, the form of teaching described in this study remains strongly *teacher centered*. The participating IS teachers seemed generally to be of the opinion that what students bring to the classroom is highly important but that the teacher should still be the main conductor in the classroom. Indeed, even studies conducted in Muslim schools in Western contexts – for example those of Burglund (2010), who described IRE teaching as a form of translation rather than transmission, and of Hiembrock (2007), who focused on informal and acquired professionalism of the IS teacher rather than on formal training – have noted the teacher-centered character of IRE. Moreover, teaching as persuasion is also different from teaching (and learning) as *critical thinking* – or from teaching as a form of *reasoning*. Interestingly, the IS teachers in this study claimed to practice both of these approaches and to place special emphasis on *reasoning* (see Chapter 6, section 6.3.3.4). However, the overriding theme of *teaching as persuasion* reveals the teachers’ emphasis on

the transmission (or translation) of domain-specific knowledge – which, in this case, means a single body of ‘correct knowledge’ that derives from authority. In such a case, critical thinking and reasoning are mere means to support the internalization of such knowledge (Alexander, Fives, Buehl & Mulhern, 2002; Fives & Alexander, 2001) – and, indeed, in the context of the IS classroom, the texts chosen to elucidate any given lesson are not chosen because they promote critical thinking or reasoning but because they allow for the acceptance and internalization of the corpus of domain-specific knowledge that is seen as correct and essentially ‘true’.

From the above discussion of the first two themes, it is clear that the teaching of IS teachers described herein is multidimensional and complex. While I have dealt with each theme independently, it is important to note that these themes were not mutually exclusive and that the ways in which the teachers construed the situations in which they were acting and the actions that they took were influenced by a variety of complex conditions associated with their individual beliefs and identity with which they had constantly to reconcile. Moreover, the themes of *maintaining discipline* and *teaching as persuasion* were neither simple nor straightforward. Each theme had idiosyncratic meanings for each teacher and brought with it a complex array of issues, such as ritual and routine, authority and charisma, spirituality, student background knowledge, feelings and credibility.

8.3.2 What is essential about the experience of being an IS teacher?

A two-dimensional view that described the teaching of IS a mere amalgamation of the themes of *discipline* and *persuasion* would undoubtedly lack coherence without a third dimension, one that seeks to account for the ways in which the IS teachers attempt to

harmonize and coordinate the dissonances that they encounter in their teaching experience. In chapter seven, the notion of *dealing with dissonance* was introduced as part of the teachers' daily experiences of teaching. In their talk, the teachers frequently espoused strong feelings of dissonance with respect to the relationship between their ideal role as *preacher* and their actual role as *subject matter teacher*, as well as within the dual perspective of viewing their subject both as a *moral discipline* and as an *academic discipline*. This study contests the binary ideology that casts the 'preacher' and 'teacher' roles as essentially static and irreconcilable categories. Thus, while the dissonance in question was strongly in evidence in the teachers' talk, the data suggested that the majority of the participating teachers resolved this potentially polarizing conflict by integrating the two roles in a practice that can be referred to as *hybrid teaching*, whereas a minority saw themselves as fulfilling the two roles at different times and in different contexts. Understanding these polarities and their connections to the literature on IRE and teaching is essential to an understanding of IS teaching in Saudi Arabia in the context of scholarly theory and research. In what follows I offer a discussion of how this *dissonance* – and particularly the IS teachers' emphasis on their moral role as *preachers* – may be understood against the backdrop of relevant IRE and teaching literature.

Examined from the perspective of Muslim education literature, the issue of presenting 'Islam as school knowledge' (Thobani, 2007) has been increasingly perceived as a problematic category in Muslim education. This containment of 'Islam' into a subject alongside other disciplines is what Starrette (1998) calls the 'functionalization of Islam' and its transformation into teachable content. Starrette (1998), Thobani (2007) and others have charted a course by which earlier modes of informality in the teaching of religion gave way to textbooks, fixed curricula and examinations. Although this view may be factual in a pragmatic sense, it over simplifies the complexity of the dynamic that goes on in the

classroom between teacher and students. This study has shown that even within a functionalized and/or a teachable Islam, IS teachers still essentially see their role as *preachers* and characterize their teaching as essentially a *moral* act that stems from their deeply held religious beliefs, a perception (and reality) that differentiates them from other subject matter teachers. Although the IS teachers in this study are skilled at integrating the roles and demands of both preacher/moral actor and teacher, they foreground their roles as preachers and attribute their ‘teaching’ roles, as such, to the demands of the school institution. Their views, as illustrated in Chapters 6 and 7, resonate with Thobani’s (2007) statement that ‘The edifying vision of Islam, if curtailed in educational terms, risks being deprived of its spiritual and moral bearing that has served as an orienting inspiration for Muslim societies for centuries’ (p. 12).

By making the choices that they have made with respect to their teaching, the IS teachers in this study managed to construct and maintain a sense of identity that coheres with both their religious beliefs and their teaching roles. The moral dimensions of this role range from their care for their students’ wellbeing to their emphasis on developing good Muslims, their emphasis in the classroom on the student’s families and their extracurricular activities, which encompass preaching through such media as Facebook or through lectures held in school for their student’s mothers. In such capacities, the IS teachers in this study carry the ‘moral weight’ described by Fenstermacher’s (1990) (see ch.3).

The emphasis on their moral and preacher role can be understood as lying at the backdrop of several issues. First, all of the IS teachers in this study reported a strong respect for their teacher educators, whom they frequently mentioned by name. Most of the teacher educators mentioned are prominent *Daiyat* in the female social sphere, whose roles are

generally fluid²³ and not confined within the teacher education boundaries (see Chapter 7). Having established that IS teachers tend to differentiate themselves from their teachers in school by referring to images of themselves as students, we find that, on the contrary, their images of good teaching derive mainly from their university experience. In Clandinin and Connelly (1987), the notion of image as a living embodiment of previous personal experiences is posited as an aspect of teacher knowledge that guides them in their decision making process while teaching. Other work on the personal and cultural ‘imagery of teaching’ is also crucial for understanding teaching in this current study, life history and biographical methods of studying the teacher have in the Western literature provided insights into the personal production of images in teaching. In keeping with the view expressed by Greenwalt (2008) the personal appropriation of these images may therefore fashion a professional identity.

Second, the teachers’ emphasis on their moral role can be understood in part as a response to the extensive literature on IRE that describes the ‘ideal’ role of the Muslim teacher. Alam and Muzahid (2006) argue that in religious systems of education the teacher often occupies a central position. In their description of the Muslim teacher they note the following:

As an heir of the Prophet, the Muslim teacher is the custodian of the cultural [and moral] values of Islam and...of the society which derives strength from them. He is responsible for preserving the cultural tradition by transmitting it from generation to generation and thus making the growth and continuity of society possible. (p. 86)

The rhetoric of the ‘ideal’ characteristics of the teacher in the IRE literature focuses almost entirely on issues of charisma, spirituality and religiosity. For example, in listing the

²³ For example, Dr. Foz Kurdi was motioned numerous times by the teachers. She is Professor at King Abd al-Aziz University, Jeddah. She lectures in Comparative Studies of Contemporary Religions and *Aqīda* (Islamic ideology) in addition to being a prominent *dā‘iyya*. Also, she currently runs the *International Association for New Muslims* in Jeddah, and she lectures at various mosques, Quranic schools, public schools and at Islamic centres such as the women’s section of *the World Assembly for Muslim Youth* and the *Quran Learning Society*.

competencies of the Muslim teacher, Alam and Muzahid (2006) include characteristics like ‘compliance with the Sharia, fearing God, sound personal character, a role model for students, kind hearted, gentle and lenient, dignified, a missionary, transfers Islamic vision with good motive, [and] intellectually competent’ – of which only the last item alludes to the importance of subject knowledge. While this may not be entirely the case for IS teachers in this study, who appeared to link their credibility somewhat to subject knowledge (particularly to the extent that they were challenged by the students to provide answers to complex questions), one can also understand much of these teachers’ as a relentless effort to embody the ideals enshrined in the literature. The gulf that exists between this idealized rhetoric – which also corresponds with the teachers’ desire to be seen and to see themselves as preachers – and the contextual constraints within which teachers work in schools may contribute to the cognitive dissonance reported by the IS teachers in this study. Mockler (2011), in her recent work on teacher professional identity, succinctly describes the teachers’ inherent need to achieve congruence between personal and professional values when she notes that

The “project” then for developing one’s professional identity is one of articulating and maintaining congruence between personal and professional values, moral purpose, and...“pushing through” the border between moral purpose and “on the ground” action, to create congruence between these and the key work of the teacher both inside and outside the classroom. (p. 524)

Third, having explained that IRE remained for a long time an *informal* craft, we find that the teachers’ emphasis on the moral dimensions that cannot be measured by formal means of education and assessment – *e.g. the emphasis on the oratory nature of Islamic teaching, change in student behavior and faith and complaints about the rigid sequencing of an essentially fluid subject* (see Chapter 7) – is an extension of the essentially informal nature of IRE. This raises important questions as to whether the ‘functionalization’ of

Islamic teaching as a dominant model in today's schools has succeeded in 'functionalizing' Islam. This study suggests, however, that regardless of the constraints set by the process of 'functionalization', IS teachers still hold strong views about IRE teaching as essentially *informal*.

When the participating IS teachers spoke about their role as *subject matter teachers*, they talked about academic goals only incidentally. This should not suggest that academic success is unimportant in IS, but that it is a *secondary* concern to these teachers. However, given that academic success is the primary concern for schools, dissonance surrounding this issue was unsurprising. The IS teachers' talk about their subject matter teacher role appeared to be predominately a result of feelings of pressure that stemmed from the realities of the teachers' working context and conditions, including the desire to elevate the status of their subject in relation to other subjects that their schools tended to value more highly. Yet although the academic aims of the subject were of secondary value to the teachers, they did not reject the notion of IS as an academic discipline entirely, but rather used this conceptualization to their advantage. Indeed, IS as an academic subject was considered an *additional* feature, aspect or value in the teachers' own way of viewing their practice area. Thus, the teachers spoke of the subject's academic aspects or attributes in a positive light, particularly since the designation 'academic' – or, as the teachers usually put it, *Mada ilmiya* ('scientific subject') – was perceived as elevating the status of IS.

The literature on teacher beliefs alludes to the fact that teaching beliefs are sometimes inconsistent with practice (see Fang, 1996) – particularly when the working context creates conditions that make it difficult for teachers to achieve their ideals (Duffy, 1982; Duffy & Anderson, 1984) – and this held true in the case of the IS teachers in the present study. It is in this context that Lampert (1985) portrayed the teacher as a 'dilemma

manager', one 'who builds a working identity that is constructively ambiguous' (p. 190). Teachers generally face contradictory goals and aims. As Lampert writes, 'the juxtaposition of responsibilities that make up the teacher's job leads to conceptual paradoxes' (p. 181) with which the teacher must grapple and to which there is no single 'correct' response. This is because 'the teacher brings many contradictory aims to each instance of her work and the resolution of their dissonance cannot be neat or simple' (p. 181). Even though the theme of dealing with dissonance – or with what some authors call *teaching dilemma's* (Ball, 1993; Lampert, 1985) – is articulated in a number of studies on teaching, what this study offers is insight into the nature and specificities of dissonance that the IS teachers faced. Moreover, the study shows that in the case of the IS teachers the dissonance was manifested mainly in their talk, whereas in their practice the teachers adopted a hybrid or partially hybrid approach in order to achieve what Lampert (1985) terms 'contradictory aims'. Indeed, the adoption of a *persuasive* framework for teaching can be viewed as intrinsic to these teachers' 'ideal' role as preacher. However, the IS teachers in this study do not seem to have experienced an 'identity crisis' (Fang, 1996, p. 54) that resulted in an inconsistency between deeply held teaching beliefs and classroom behavior. On the contrary, they appeared to be able to distinguish between their *substantial selves* as Muslim *Daiyat* ('preachers') and their *situational selves* as 'subject teachers'. IS teachers' espoused beliefs about practice in this study are generally consistent with their choice of teaching strategies.

The IS teachers in this study were skilled at integrating both roles/conception into their teaching and were attuned to the demands of the school as an institution while remaining true to their own goals and beliefs. Even though these teachers had an active role in deciding how to teach, their decision to combine divergent roles in their teaching should not be viewed as a mathematical process in which the decider/teacher sees clearly which route is preferred. The process of choosing what to do and how to do it is not mechanical,

but rather highly personal in many ways. I concur with Lampert (1985) when she explains that viewing the teacher as a dilemma manager differs from other perspectives in the sense that the teacher accepts the conflicts as *endemic* to her work. Similarly, these IS teacher seem to have internalized this espoused conflict and developed ways of teaching that appropriated the conflicting demands of their profession.

The IS teachers' conception of their subject matter as 'holy' and as 'truth' influenced the ways in which they chose to teach the subject. In Skhedi and Horenczyk's (1995) work on Jewish teachers teaching Torah in Israel, the teachers' views of the subject and their presuppositions regarding the normative value of the text that they taught, as well as the ways in which these impressions influenced their practice, contributed to what the authors termed 'teacher ideology'. They argue that in the context of teaching culturally valued texts (e.g., Torah, the Bible or the Quran) teacher ideology must be understood as a major component of pedagogical content knowledge (see also Shulman, 1986, 1987). Their study reports a tension between the teachers' perceptions of the text and their pedagogical conceptions of how it should be taught. As they note, 'When teachers attempted to justify their ideological involvement or distance themselves from the text, pedagogic considerations and ideological conceptions were intermingled. On the one hand, teaching in which there is no teacher involvement was perceived as lacking credibility. On the other hand, teaching that includes too much intervention of the teacher's ideology seemed to many to be indoctrination' (Skhedi & Horenczyk, 1995, p. 116). Similar to the IS teachers in this study, then, in the context of teaching culturally valued texts the Jewish teachers were faced with many instructional situations that engendered dilemmas and/or conflicts between their ideological views and their pedagogical principles, which is to say between their personal and their professional selves. While the Jewish teachers in Skhedi and Horenczyk's study – even those who considered the Torah to be the Word of God – tried to distance their

teaching from their personal ideology so as not to influence their students' views, the IS teachers in the present study opted for the opposite approach of bringing the personal closer to the pedagogical. The IS teachers foregrounded themselves as 'persons' and as 'Muslim women' by constantly offering examples of themselves as wives, parents and daughters in their teaching. Indeed, there was little or no perceivable element of 'distancing' between the *person* of the teacher and the *subjects* that she taught. Even in instances in which the teachers felt that their degree of personal religiosity was insufficient, they still appeared to keep the personal and the pedagogical in close proximity to one another. Rather, the conflicts that they experienced were between the person the teacher saw herself to be – that is, the idealized role as preacher – and the external, contextual constraints imposed by the demands of the school as institution. Nonetheless, it must be noted by way of caution that the observed phenomena do not lend themselves to a determination as to whether the dissonance that the IS teachers experienced was due entirely to the ways in which IS is or is not conceptualized in the school system, and it cannot be said that altering this conception or achieving greater consistency about what IS teachers are expected to do would resolve the problems encountered by these or other IS teachers. What can be gleaned from the study, however, is that external pressures did emerge as a significant source of dissonance in the lived experience of teaching for these teachers.

Given the above, it appears that the practice of the IS teachers in the study was pre-determined and shaped neither by purely individual factors of identity nor by formal role definitions provided by the curriculum and school. Rather, this practice was co-determined by what van Manen (1997) has referred to as the 'life world' situation in which the teacher found themselves. *Life world* in its phenomenological sense means the predetermined, unspoken but powerful background of ways in which things are perceived and understood. In this case, the *life world* may refer to several factors in the teachers' environment,

including culture, politics, school context, beliefs and identity. The essential aspect of the experience of being an IS teacher for these 24 teachers, then, consisted of being immersed in a profession that lies at the intersection of two conflicting roles and that, at least partly for this reason, engenders feelings of dissonance. In practical terms, this dissonance can be seen as an on-going and inherent aspect of the process of creating a professional teaching identity for these teachers within the contexts in which they work.

8.4 Implications and future research opportunities

Perhaps the most important conclusion from this study is that there is a vast reservoir of insights to be gained about classroom practice, teacher identity and the challenges faced by IS teachers in construing their teaching practice. Nonetheless, as I have attempted to show in Chapters 1 and 3, this reservoir of teaching experiences as reported by IS teachers has been generally neglected, untapped or overlooked in light of the preference of IRE researchers for other forms of ‘evaluative’ research. As explained in the aforementioned chapters, research on IS teachers has generally been built on a ‘deficit model’ that has been aimed at overcoming teacher weaknesses and building competencies. IS teachers have been described as lacking in the skills needed to employ approaches to teaching other than transmitting knowledge through lectures in conjunction with heavy reliance on textbooks (Cullingford & Mustafa, 2008). This study, by contrast, points to the fact that IS classroom practice, although substantially teacher-centered, is a far more subtle and varied phenomenon than the conventional description would suggest, as well as to the variety of challenges with which IS teachers are confronted in their teaching and in their identity construction. These challenges emerge from the teachers’ views of themselves, from the

social and cultural context in which they work and from their past experiences and their purposes in teaching (Flores & Day, 2006). I take the view, moreover, that an emphasis on teachers' inadequacies is not only misleading, it is not a perspective that is likely to encourage teachers to explore and develop new possibilities (Brown & McIntyre, 1993). Rather, continued research into the nature of IS teaching should enable both teachers and student teachers to better understand what goes on in the IS classroom.

The findings of this study may contribute to a basis for new thinking about the training of prospective IS teachers and about the conceptualization of teaching IRE in a confessional context. We have seen in this study that the teaching of IS is often loaded with complex and contradictory ideological demands, and this finding calls for pre-service teachers to be exposed to this aspect of teaching dilemmas as part of the development of their pedagogical content knowledge. Despite the fact that these conflicts and dilemmas cannot be expected to be resolved unequivocally, teacher training in this area can be expected to help prospective IS teachers clarify for themselves those components of their identity that are integral to their teaching practice and to explore how one harmonizes personal and professional demands in teaching.

The study also showed, moreover, that the moral purposes of the participating IS teachers and their self-perceived role as 'preachers' operate to a degree under threat from school policies that focus on perceived pedagogical competencies or skills and on abiding by a particular curriculum – a phenomenon that can be described as 'subjectizing' IS. The study's interview data indicated that there was a dissonance between teacher identity and the expectations of the school context. Although the teachers developed several coping mechanisms to deal with this dissonance, the study creates a rich opportunity for educational researchers in this area to investigate how best to assist IS teachers in reducing its effects.

This study examined the teaching of IS from a phenomenological standpoint, one that places the individual's understanding at the focal point. However, a sociocultural approach might be useful to future research on IS teaching. We know from this study, and from other studies of the contemporary *madrasa* (see Kieko & Adelkhah, 2011), that teachers and students are increasingly aware of alternative forms of education and that the teaching of IRE is highly globalized in a contemporary context in which what is right and wrong in Muslim societies is being contested and made subject to a variety of competing claims. Examining individual action from a sociocultural approach – that is to say, revisiting this study backwards – in such a way that priority were given to the *social contexts* and *cultural tools* that shape the development of human beliefs, values and ways of acting (Wertsch, 1991) might provide useful insights for the understanding of teaching in a society that is changing rapidly. I believe that continued research around this issue should therefore be attentive to social context and to the influence of the sociocultural components of the educational situation on the shaping of the ideology and practice of the IS teacher, as well as to the conflicts that arise when there is dissonance between the sociocultural demands and the personal values.

The second area that might make for fruitful research in light of the present findings concerns the question of the 'functionalization' of IRE into a set of teachable subjects and the examination of the value or utility of this approach to teaching Islam in a globalized age. Indeed, the contrast between the functionalization of Islam and the ideal rhetoric about teaching in the IRE literature was vividly exposed in the portraits of the IS classroom reported in this study. This fact, in turn, suggests an urgent need to turn to the classroom – to the lived experiences of teachers and their students – to generate a body of knowledge that is missing from the literature on IRE and one that is representative of what happens in the practice of IS.

As circumstances in the Saudi Arabian society and the Middle East have gradually become more diverse and sometimes more problematic, particularly after the Arab Spring in 2011, several questions come to mind after having conducted this study: Is the ‘functionalization’ of Islam into a teachable subject in school the best way to teach a faith? Are there other forms of confessional religious education, which can serve as models for which countries in the Middle East can learn from as they undergo a process of transformation due to current affairs? After the Arab Spring and the development of social media, print media and etc., is the functionalization of Islam still possible? Does it really take place in schools and to what extent? What is/or will be the role of the IS in light of the political and social changes taking place today?

Although the fieldwork of this study took place before the Arab Spring erupted, I could not help but think what this study has to offer to better understand the changes taking place in the Middle East. What does this study of 24 teachers in Saudi Arabia tell us about societal changes in the country? How can their experiences of teaching be insightful to an inquirer into the Saudi society? While these may be very speculative questions, what we know for sure is that the change taking place in the region at large -even before the Arab Spring- has infiltrated the classroom. In the context of high stakes reform taking place in Saudi Arabia today, one must keep in mind that the Islamic Religious Education for the new era must provide students with more than mere facts, it must attempt to resolve conflicts and analyze what is genuinely important in life, it must give voice to those stakeholders directly involved in the classroom.

8.5 Concluding Thoughts

The teaching described in this study shares universal ways in which teachers make sense of their teaching in addition to also having distinct features as a result of subject matter and the culture where this form of teaching takes place. The preoccupations with maintaining discipline, sustaining student interest and enthusiasm and planning have been signaled out as some of the most important things that teachers in many areas value in their teaching (see Brown & McIntyre, 1993; Olson, 1992). Moreover, the issue of *dealing with dissonance* has also been described in the literature on teaching, particularly in literature that deals with teacher dilemmas. Thus, although the present work illustrates that IS teachers' understanding of their teaching is similar to the ways in which other subject teachers in other countries construe their teaching, this should not imply that IS teachers do not have a distinct way of conceptualizing their identity and their practice. On the contrary, the study has demonstrated in many instances that there appears to be a *distinct pedagogical practice* shared by these teachers. Whether one identifies this practice as a 'personal practical knowledge' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999) held by IS teachers or as a form of 'personal pedagogical practice' specific to the aims of this subject matter and teaching context, what matters is that there appears to be a distinct body of knowledge shared and held by these teachers that shapes their practice. The study aimed to provide an insightful description of this practice rather than to assign names and terms to what teachers do in the classroom. Such categories may emerge from future research, but it is a premise of this study that the descriptive, phenomenological approach taken here will provide a more authentic gateway to or platform for a more subtle and complete understanding of the teaching conflicts, lived experiences and professional identity and practice of the participants and of other teachers like them than one that sought to impose preconceived definitions on these objects of study.

8.6 Final Note

I began this study by asking what it was like to be female IS teacher in Saudi Arabia today and with the goal in mind of telling the stories of these women and of reflecting the way in which they view their teaching, their profession and their role in society. I began with the desire to understand their teaching without imposing judgment as to whether it was or should be considered ‘good’ or ‘bad’ teaching. I learned that the teaching of IRE is far more complex than ‘regurgitating memorized information’ – as one professor had described it to me some years ago. I also came to the conclusion that there is still much to learn about the complex and subtle craft of IRE teaching and that one cannot understand teaching without a deep understanding of the context in which it operates. I hope that this study functions as a springboard for others to follow, to turn for understanding the IRE classroom itself and to those who are involved in the daily practice of teaching and learning. Indeed, I began this study thinking that it was about *teaching*, but I concluded that it was about much more. It was and remains about women, schools, students, hopes, dreams, change, faith, values and challenges. It is a window onto a society of which I am a so-called ‘insider’, but it is a society that never ceases to surprise me.

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Appedices

Appendix A: Description of School Settings

School One:

The first school I visited is a private school for girls which covers all grade levels (elementary through secondary). It is located in north Jeddah. The student population is small about 370 students of upper and middle class. The school was originally a villa which was then renovated and changed into a school. The classes are relatively small 11 to 15 students per class. The atmosphere at the school seemed relaxed as the students went in and out of the teachers' room quite often. The school teaches the Ministry of education curriculum for all grade levels. The principal of the school is also the owner. There was one computer lab which was rarely used. Some teachers in this school used their own laptops to compensate for the lack of equipment in the school.

School Two:

This school is the newest school in the sample. It is known as a *research school* or an *ideal school* ; this simply means that it is a private school in which the Ministry has chosen as a potential research site where new curriculum material, teacher training programmes and extracurricular activities are piloted. The school has a student population of five hundred from elementary to secondary grades. This particular school implements the 'head teacher' programme which was not available in other schools. Hence, Islamic studies teachers reported to their head teacher, shared their lesson plans with her and often got feedback from her on their teaching. IS teachers in the school are also regularly evaluated by their head teacher who only supervises curriculum and teaching implementation but does not teach. All the classrooms were equipped with computers and smart boards. Although this school is run privately, the principal of this school was appointed by the Ministry of Education.

School Three:

This is an old public school located in central Jeddah. It caters to the lower socioeconomic class. The school building is very old and classes are small and crowded. There are about 30-40 students in one class per teacher. There is a small school yard and no computer lab. Some of the teachers in this school use their personal laptops in class. The school implements the national Saudi Arabian curriculum. The teachers in this school complained of a lack of facilities and training. Many of them were also teaching for 20 years or more in this same school. There are no head teachers for the subject. This school struck me as particularly strict. As you enter the school you find a painting on the wall of a woman covered in black with the following saying written underneath 'you are a rare pearl, protect yourself with *Hijab*'. There were several other Islamic messages on the walls of the school.

School Four:

This school is a relatively older private school. It is also considered a *Tahfeez* school where its graduates are expected to have memorized the whole Quran by the time of graduation. Its located in south Jeddah where most of the older school were built. It was originally built as a school and therefore there are excellent facilities, computers and playgrounds for students. The school also has an average student population of 500 elementary through secondary. The principal of the school is a well known female religious preacher in Jeddah. The schools mission is translated from their website as follows ' To contribute to building a generation capable of making the future of Saudi society and the humanitarian community, armed with a high degree of mastery of basic learning efficiencies, faith and modern technology'. This school also had several Islamic messages on the walls and bulletin boards. There was a strong emphasis on abiding by Islamic dress code. For example, at the front gate there was a sign that said 'please ensure that you are fully covered and that you wear the black socks to cover your legs as you leave the school'.

School Five:

This is school is another old public school located in south Jeddah. It also caters to the lower socioeconomic classes. The building was old and the classrooms were crowded with students. The average in public schools is 30 to 40 students per class. The school did not have a yard or a computer lab. The teachers in this school complained of lack of facilities and training. Again, they did use their own laptops in teaching when possible. The school implemented the national ministry of education curriculum.

School Six:

The oldest private school in the sample. The school recently celebrated its 50 th year of operation. It is located in south Jeddah and caters to middle and lower socioeconomic population. The school building is old and the teachers complained of the need for renovation. This school is highly regarded by the Ministry since it is one of the older operating schools in Jeddah. It implements a revised Islamic studies curriculum known as '*thanawiya mutawara*' which is more of less similar in topics to the regular curriculum but operates on an hourly basis similar to the American system. Hence, the students do not have to take all the Islamic studies subjects in one year, instead they are given a choice of two subjects per year which they generally take in more depth. The school caters for about 700 students.

Appendix B: Translated Information Sheet about Study

In the Name of God the Most Gracious the Most Merciful

My Dear Sister the Islamic Studies Teacher,

My name is Mounira Jamjoom. I am currently pursuing my PhD in the United Kingdom at Oxford University, department of Educational Studies. As part of the graduation requirements, I am currently preparing for my research project which will involve a study of how Islamic studies teachers make sense of their teaching. I am writing this letter to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

The aim of this study is to listen to the voices and opinions of the teachers who represent the actual experts on this subject. This research seeks to bring to the foreground the nature of the teachers' practice. Your opinions, suggestions and participation will be of great value in the implementation of this research, note that all data will be treated confidentially, will not be used for purposes other than research. Also, participation is totally voluntary. If you decide to participate, there is no wrong or correct answer but what I am looking for is how you experience and understand your own practice. My research questions are:

Question one: How do Islamic Studies teachers teach in the classroom?

Question Two: How do Islamic studies teachers make sense or talk about their own teaching?

Research methods

- Two Observations of Islamic studies lessons
- Two Interviews with teachers of Islamic studies

Thank you for your support and cooperation

Mounira Jamjoom

Department of Educational Studies

Oxford University

Appendix C: Translated Consent Form

In the Name of God the Most Gracious the Most Merciful

As a participant, I have read the information presented in the information letter about this study being conducted by Mounira Jamjoom, Dphil Student at Oxford University, Department of Education. I have been informed about the project details before hand and have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be tape recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time by advising the student researcher.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree to participate in this study.

YES NO

I agree to have my interview tape recorded.

YES NO

I agree that the student researcher may observe some of my classes in a mutually agreed upon time.

YES NO

Participant Name:

Participant Signature:

Date:

Researcher Name:

Researcher Signature :

Date:

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Introductory questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself (educational background, qualifications, and years of work experience)?
2. Can you tell me how you can to be an Islamic Studies teacher?

Beliefs about teaching

1. Describe your teaching style?
2. What do you think is good Islamic studies teaching?
3. What do you consider to be the founding principles of teaching in Islamic studies?
4. Describe a well organized classroom when you have your classroom running as you like it?
5. Do you address sensitive questions that students may have about Islam in the classroom?
6. What are the common strategies you implement in your teaching?

Beliefs about role as teacher

7. How would you describe yourself as a classroom teacher?
8. What is your main strength as a teacher?
9. What role model do you have for yourself as a classroom teacher?
10. What is your ultimate goal in teaching IS?
11. How would you describe your role as a teacher of IS?

Nature of Islamic Studies (NIS)

1. Are you content with the current curriculum?
2. How do you prefer to have a fixed curriculum or a more flexible one? Why or why not?
3. Do you believe that in IS students are encouraged to think critically?
4. How do you assess your students?
5. In your experience of teaching, What is the one most important topics that should be addressed in IS?
6. Do you believe in dividing IS into subjects?

Beliefs about learning

1. How do you know if your students understood a concept?
2. What do you want your students to gain at the end of the year?
3. How do you think your students learn best in Islamic studies?

Appendix E: Sample Interview

Interview 6 (a,b)

Teacher M.S

Private School 1

Interview a

Interviewer: Ok Teacher M.S as I explained to you in our initial meeting this research is about how IS teachers understand their own teaching practice, so don't worry if your answers are right or wrong as there is no such thing.. I just want to hear your opinion.

Teacher M.S: Sure thing, I have never been interviewed before but I see what you want. Which school did you graduate from?

Interviewer: Alam Al Sigar

Teacher M.S: Ohh yes I know this school, it's a good one.

Interviewer: Yeah, I still visit sometimes.

Teacher M.S: *Mashala* we have students who still visit us as well. It's nice to see how students are loyal to their schools

Interviewer: Yes, I agree.. Ok for today, I just want to know a little more about you, so we are going to talk about things like why you decided to be an IS teacher, where you worked, years of experience and some general views on teaching and the Islamic Studies curriculum.. things like that..

Teacher M.S: Sure.. Sure

Interviewer: Ok tell me a little about yourself where did you study and how many years of work experience do you have so far?

Teacher M.S: well I studied in Tabouk College. I began studying in King Abdulaziz University, I studied Home Economics for two years, in the third year I was going to specialize in management and housing but then God has willed that I move to Tabouk because I got married, I lived in Tabouk.. They did not accept any of the years I completed in Jeddah, so I went into the School of Education and Tarbiya there were only two programmes at the time.. Either English literature or Islamic Studies, I took the entry exam for English literature ,. I passed.. but

Interviewer: So do you mean you were not planning to enter Islamic Studies at all?

Teacher M.S: No I did not want to .. I wanted English literature I did the exam and I passed and my name was posted in the newspaper as one of the accepted students.. then this girl came up to me she said here in Tabouk the teachers are not qualified in English they won't teach you well, the Islamic studies department is stronger and it is really nice.. She told me that I would really enjoy it so Exalted is God I changed my mind..she convinced me maybe God wanted everything to change for me.. and I studied in Tabouk I repeated the whole two years again as if I didn't take anything I Can you imagine I had to repeat everything!

Interviewer: They did not take any of your credit hours?

Teacher M.S: It's because I dropped my file form KAU in the first place. I studied the first two years in Tabouk then the third and fourth in Jeddah I graduated from Jeddah with a BA in Islamic Studies it was the year 1413 H.

Interviewer: How do you see this decision now? Do you see yourself as an IS teacher?

Teacher M.S: Oh I don't regret it, at all! But I am not a strict Muslim. I also don't consider my topics to be primarily and only about Islamic Studies, its not about the Forbidden and permitted My topics are very social, I use a lot of storytelling and talk about societal

concerns, maybe because I know I am not very strict.. sometimes I feel guilty I think I wish I could be more strict in my religious practice I want to be better.. But I know God will reward me according to my intention.. not every person who is covered for instance is a good person.

Interviewer: I understand.. So what about your work experience?

Teacher M.S: When I first started I worked in [name of school] I respect that school I got all my experience and my learning from that school. I stayed there for 10 years and with my experience here I have a total of 16 years experience with my students.. You know time passes. When I think how I was when I started so different from now, like I feel my style in teaching changes every year!

Interviewer: can you explain to me what you mean by your style changes?

Teacher M.S: Ohh God I changed a lot [laughs].. In my first year when I was a fresh graduate the students are did not get their rights fully with me, I think I wronged them by my lack of experience .. I mean my style was that of a fresh graduate! But what I learned from the college is that ...we train in the field in year three to teach in Middle School and year four we teach secondary students. This gave me an incentive. I remember the first time I taught in a public school my legs were shaking my knees were shaking.. that's why you have to go and train.. so the students I taught first I think I wronged them.. I learned a lot from my experience.

Interviewer: what do you think changed the most about the way you teach? And what from your experience do you consider to be a founding principle for teaching in Islamic Studies today?

Teacher M. S: Of course, lesson planning has changed dramatically nowadays. It used to be all about writing a complete lesson plan in the lesson planning notebook provided by the Ministry. They still require it, you know.... I don't even acknowledge this notebook [because teaching] is not about the goals and the visual aids anymore. It's about your argument flow, what you say, how you present it. Not the goal of the lesson and the visual aids, no, no. I plan my lesson by looking at how the textbook presents a topic, then I plan on the Internet and add things and think to myself 'this is what I will say about this point' - and write it.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more..

Teacher M.S: Yeah I don't believe in using this planning book, I use worksheets. I depend on worksheets they are so important it's important that your worksheet is good and attractive.

Interviewer: have you always used work sheets?

Teacher M.S.: Yes but they changed I will tell you the reason Mounira worksheets play an important role in displaying the information with both younger and older girls although my students are in secondary but they still prefer the worksheets .. You will see how I do it in my class when you observe me next time. I can show you how I structure my worksheets

Interviewer: that would be wonderful we can talk about them in the next interview as well.

Interviewer: so are you saying you cannot depend on the textbook? Do you prefer a flexible curriculum?

Teacher M.S: I use the textbook as a guide like I told you but there are a lot of repetitive topics. There are lessons repeated from elementary to secondary.. so the girls would tell you teacher we already took this there is no development in the curriculum style I have taught the six principles of faith believing in God, Angles, Holy Books and Prophets so many times.. There are more important topics! I mean my daughter came to me yesterday they

are teaching her a poem by Umru al Qays, you know, he known for his love story with Layla, they don't even teach her about the love story they gave her this hard poem about him describing a horse. I was laughing.. the curriculum across the board is boring it has to be improved.

Interviewer: So are you saying it needs to be changed.. In terms of what?

Teacher M.S: No not all, some things are very good, like innovation lessons are great because students still celebrate the Prophets' Birthday my husband said he attended a *mawlid* and the people were playing card games! it's not a religious spiritual event I mean you can remember the Prophet but not necessarily on the Monday of his birthday we have to mention the good morals of the prophet.. I am tired of saying its forbidden every year! I mean we commit a lot of sins but I try to connect the love of the Prophet with their lives. The book only says its forbidden so how do you love the prophet.. it's the small things, he was right handed he wore his right shoe first, that's what I do when I put on my shoes I put on my right shoe first, when I wear *kohol* I put it in my right eye first I do everything right first like the prophet.. I mean in the book they describe the Prophet in two words.. There are other issues like the war that happened between the Prophet's companions they don't even talk about it. I have to tell the students what happened between *Aisha* and the Companions. I taught two *Shii* students before, I tried to convince them ..had several arguments with them, they tell me not all *Shii* sects are the same, but at the end of the day they don't like the Prophet's companions, I still try to convince them but there is no time in my lessons to cover all this if you were absent for one week even if you missed a lesson.. you are totally off track.. because you have one lesson a week for every subject Tawheed. Hadith, fikh, Tafseer.. so you end up having to stick to what's in the book. But as I said I try not to repeat, I ask my students what interests them.. that is mainly it about the curriculum.

Interviewer: we are going to talk more about the issues you mentioned in the next interview, thank you that was very insightful ... I am looking forward to attending your lessons.

Teacher M.S: you are most welcome and God bless you.
(Stopped recording)

Interview b

Interviewer: Ok Teacher M.S. I attended two of your lessons, you really made me think of many things, so I am going to be asking some general questions and some specific ones about certain incidents which you can explain to me. Does that sound ok?

Teacher M.S: Yes yes go ahead

Interviewer: Ok to begin with can you describe what you do as you enter a classroom? Or if you were to imagine yourself what do you do?

Teacher M.S: Every time I enter the classroom, or let us say my *routine* before I enter the classroom, is that no one enters after me. This is so I can prepare them. When they see me approaching the classroom and they are usually in the hallways I start counting firmly: 'one, two...' and they say, 'Teacher, please wait, wait!' You have to do that, you know, [because] you are dealing with a whole new generation that doesn't have.... I mean you could find [a student] talking in the hallway with her friends and I start calling her.... I can't keep calling

them all the time, so sometimes I leave some of them outside my classroom. The second thing I do, if some students are not disciplined I warn them but then they know I will keep them outside my class. The school principal doesn't like this, she says you should keep the student in the classroom and make her stand inside. But I don't keep them out for long just about 10 minutes to teach them that I stick to my word and obviously if I leave her out all lesson it's a reward.. But most of the girls beg me to get them back in.

Interviewer: Ok since you mentioned discipline let's talk about the incident in your lesson about zeena where the student told her friend she had a piercing..

Teacher M.S: Ohh yes yes.. I did not shout at her in front of [the other] students. Shouting and reprimanding should not occur in front of others, but I knew that I would have a talk with her later. First, she trespassed the rights of her classmate by insulting her. You know, the Prophet said: 'every Muslim is inviolable for another Muslim'. Also, you cannot shout in front of students [and] the girls were already giving her disapproving looks for what she said. Even with my children at home I never shout at them in front of people. I am totally against that, even when the situation requires [scolding] you can reprimand your children lightly and discuss it more later

Interviewer: So you do not reprimand in class?

Teacher M.S: No I don't like to embarrass them. It depends on the situation but mainly no.

Interviewer: I see

Teacher M.S: But I reinforce them positively in class..

Interviewer: Do you mean like the praises you used in your lessons?

Teacher M.S: It is important to praise the girls in class like this. It motivates them and sustains their attention. You know, sometimes you treat the students like older women because they are in secondary school, but still other times you have to remember that they are young souls and young girls.

Interviewer: Ok you were saying you work on discipline then

Teacher M.S: The second thing I do is exactly what I did today I distribute my worksheets, they take away every distracting from their table, have their worksheets and pay attention.. I like the textbook but like I told you I don't use it, I didn't use it in my lessons like you saw I depend on my work sheets entirely but since the ministry official say you cannot get rid of the textbook completely, I tell the students look at the textbook page whatever. Now I also ask them to do something new this year, I ask for a project. I teach them all the Islamic Studies subject so I ask them for a project of their choice a topic from the internet. The girls found it so easy they download whatever and hand it in. Now I changed it, The students have to construct a work sheet about a lesson we are going to take. They have to summarize it in questions , I want to see how each student understands the lesson and there is this one student who did a very good work sheet I used some of her questions to reinforce her in my own worksheets. She was really happy, sometimes they focus on certain aspects of the lesson that I don't focus on. One time I used one of my student's work sheets but added my own questions.

Interviewer: Ok, what about the sensitive questions in class, like in today's lesson when the students asked you about why men are allowed to wear perfume?

Teacher M.S: It all depends on the student's question and on what I can address. I mean, I teach these girls about marriage and divorce, about *zina* and about being a wife [so] I should expect some uncomfortable questions [and] objections. Sometimes I give a brief answer, sometimes I avoid a direct answer, but I never silence the student. A discussion like that could take forever, so I say some men are like this others are not, so you answered

but still I have to continue my lesson, I answer in a vague way with intermediate students I tell them when you are in secondary we will discuss all this and you will understand it better. But in general as you saw the girls feel very comfortable with me. One of my colleagues was divorced and one of our colleagues used to say God bless her, that my other colleague given that she is divorce made the students hate marriage and me on the other hand I made the students love marriage.. I divorce will certainly look at marriage differently!

Interviewer: So are you saying you talk about your personal life in class?

Teacher M.S: You know, one of my former students - she already graduated - we are in touch and she told me, 'I still remember what you used to tell us in class about the things you did at home as a wife'. Yes, I give them examples from my marriage. It doesn't mean that I am always happy. Of course, I have ups and downs, but you don't share the negative with the students.... [Y]ou have to instil the good images. So, I don't cook, for example, but I tell them that in the early stages of my marriage I did cook – though now no more kitchen time for me! [All in all,] you don't tell them in detail about your problems but you make them see the good things about marriage

Interviewer: Can you tell me more..

Teacher M.S: I know that the girls look at me as a role model...so when we talk about issues such as listening to music, I tell them, 'Girls, I attend weddings with music and my children all listen to music'. I also tell them that I pluck my eyebrows. Some teachers prefer not to say [such things, but] I do. I know that I may be committing a sin. I won't shout it out, but if they ask me [about such matters], I will never pretend to be an angel.

Interviewer: Ok I see, so what do you think are your strengths as a teacher?

Teacher M.S: I know how to discipline my class, convince them and get their attention. When I was in my previous school, the principal asked me to teach a lesson in psychology. You know, it was an experiment: every teacher taught one lesson outside her subject speciality. I gave a great lesson in psychology. It's not a must that you are a psychology teacher to give a great lesson. You can certainly be innovative by just your stand and presence and style. These are important factors in your success. I have seen doctors who still don't know how to teach. I also remember some students who were with me at University they would prepare and plan but their style and class management, there was no connection between them and the students, you must know how to penetrate their minds not just prepare and plan.. I am confident.

Interviewer: So do you mean Charisma?

Teacher M.S: Yes, yes..like You know, it's your style and personality [that matter].... One student told me, 'I wish I could open your closet and see what outfits you have', and another told me that she told her friend in another school 'I am sure your teacher is not as stylish as mine'

Interviewer: Ok how do you know how to address the students' questions?

Teacher M.S: I strongly believe that the questions that the students throw at you throughout your teaching experience of this topic assist you in addressing these questions. You will know how to answer because you anticipate some of their questions and concerns. As you know, teaching now is different, [because] the girls are always reading things on the Internet. It used to be that you [would just] write on the white board and students [would] listen and take notes, but now you have to plan ahead [and take account of what is discussed] on the Internet too.

Interviewer: Can you give me an example..Like I saw you answering the question on

perfume and adultery today..something along those lines

Teacher M.S: ok for example, I am teaching a whole unit on *Hijab* this year. I am teaching that *Hijab* is a covering of the face, not only the hair.... It's a big unit! It starts with presenting evidence that *Hijab* is obligatory for women in general.... Then it presents evidence [i.e., from the Quran and Hadith that *Hijab* is about covering the face. Then it presents the contrary evidence that *Hijab* is about covering the hair only, and finally it refutes the evidence that says that *Hijab* is covering the hair only.... The author of the textbook does this by citing a verse that says 'and that they [women] should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments'. [In this way] he is arguing that if the feet are forbidden [to be revealed], then the face, which is the essence of beauty in a woman, is most certainly forbidden and must be covered.... But the girls still say: 'If God wanted us to cover our faces, why is this not written explicitly in the Quran? God could have just said, "Cover your face!"' The way I handle [this objection] is by referring to Egyptian movies, something that they are familiar with and that they like... I tell them, 'You know how in Egyptian romantic movies the director often starts by filming the legs of the village girl? The camera moves from the bottom up, first showing the legs of a girl dressed in a short *Jalabiya* [dress] and then moving up to her face. Why does the director start by filming the legs and leaving the face for later? Because the face is what the viewer is anticipating and what directs the gaze of the viewer. [In this way] the director creates anticipation.... This is why the author [of the textbook is able to] deduce that the face must be covered from a verse about foot ornaments.'

Interviewer: I see

Teacher M.S: This is how I persuade the students; they are convinced that covering the face is an obligation regardless of the differences in the schools of Islam. It's true the lesson is discussing Hijab, but where is Hijab? most of my students are not covered. If they were covered maybe I could tell them cover your faces, but since they don't even cover their hair I must convince them and give them a religious incentive.. If it were up to me I would cancel this lesson from the book! But whether they like it or not this is the curriculum , they will complain, but if I give them a question in the exam about what is Hijab they will get a big fat zero if they don't write that its covering the face as stated in the book.

Interview: I noticed that you talked a lot about society, the community and the students families in class..

Teacher M.S: Yeah I need to know my students; I also like to reach out to the community I do a lot of lectures here in school for the girls' mothers. I recently talked about 'mother – daughter relationships' how mothers should express their love for their daughters. This student that came up to me in class and told me that her mother hugged her while she was sleeping, you saw that in the Hadith lesson ..

Interviewer: Yes yes.. I didn't know what that was about.

Teacher M.S: it's because I told the mothers ;you have to hug your daughters more often' , I also told them not to let their daughters shut their room door with a key at this age [she laughs] that's why one of my students said in class teacher M.S why did you say that to our moms.. God forgive you [Teacher Laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah thank you for this clarification I didn't know what that conversation was about now I see....what about the student when you told her you will answer her question via Facebook, can you tell me more about that? Do you use facebook in teaching?

Teacher M.S: I have a group on facebook with my students and some other people. When I

first started using facebook, it was for personal use and fun, then I realized from talking to my students many of them are on facebook, so I thought I could use that. I asked one of my students how to start a group....One of my graduate students who found me on face book sent me a message saying 'teacher MS I remember when you taught us how to say the a supplication during prayer'.. [that] was a great motivator for me to start a group!' So I started writing weekly about things which student asked me about and other issues which I know concerns them. I force myself to write every Monday and Friday. I also have pictures of my children. I think I have a style in presenting issues, I am not saying I am the best but as an IS teacher I know how to tackle issues. So although I am close to my students.. I still have limits, like my students know I smoke *shisha*, May God Forgive me, one of them sent me a *shisha* on facebook as a gift I refused it. But when I can't cover something in the curriculum I do it through facebook. You know... also one important point the girls are different, they are nowadays, they are very computer literate. So forget the white board now, you must use technology and be computer literate as well today.

Interviewer: So in summation, what is your main goal from teaching Islamic studies today?

Teacher M.S: I am sure a thousand times that what you teach today they forget completely. I was talking about the story of *yajuj and majuj* and one of my graduate students asked about it on my facebook group,. She forgot everything but when the students are older they come back to you and ask you, you are building for tomorrow. I told her it's ok to ask or forget, but I know my students when they face life they will remember me and the lessons and maybe even come back to ask about things like many of them do. So my role is a future role, I don't have to see the benefits today.

Interviewer: Aha I see ... Thank you teacher M.S

Teacher M.S: Thank you I am very happy to participate.

Appendix F: Observation rubric

Description	Reflection/ thoughts/questions to ask

Appendix G: Meaningful Cluster Table
(See following page)

Meaningful cluster	Interview Extract	Observation Extract	Potential links to other clusters/possible emerging themes
Charisma			
Appearance Style personality	You know, it's your <u>style</u> and <u>personality</u> [that matter].... One student told me, 'I wish I could open your closet and see what <u>outfits</u> you have', and another told me that she told her friend in another school 'I am sure your teacher is not as <u>stylish</u> as mine' (Interview 6b)	See notes on observation extract and teachers' outfit. Observation: teacher talking with students about new cloths in 'Zara'	Teacher was talking in context of her ability to run a classroom smoothly. Persuasive teaching/ behavior management
Humour in teaching	No interview extract	Observation 20 a: Consider section where teacher uses humor with students	Teacher responds to student attempts to humour
Personality, laughter	You know, <u>character</u> , <u>charisma</u> and <u>laughter</u> [are important]. I never participate when students say demeaning words, even when I am angry - but I can laugh, though I never join in. (interview 17b)	Observation 17b: teacher was laughing with students	
Humour	A sense of humour is important.... You cannot reprimand [the students] for everything they say or they will never tell you anything. (interview17b)	Observation 17b: Fikh Lesson on permitted food in Islam when teacher was laughing with students	
Clothing	I was really concerned when I first decided to be an Islamic studies teacher that I would transform and become like those old Islamic studies teachers wearing white shirts and black skirts and black gloves. But I liked Islamic studies - <i>that's it [spoken in English]!</i> (Interview 11a)	Observation 13b: consider how this teacher uses English terms in her teaching in the classroom. What does it mean to use English?	
Self esteem, personality	I learned that one's self-esteem and personality is - I mean you can be very well prepared for your lesson, but your style and manner make a difference. When I was in my previous school, the principle asked me to teach a lesson in psychology. You know, it was an experiment: every teacher taught one lesson outside her subject speciality. I gave a great lesson in psychology. It's not a must that you are a psychology teacher to give a great lesson. You can certainly be innovative by just your stance and presence and style. These are important factors in your success. I have seen doctors who still don't know how to teach. (Interview 6b)	Review Observation 6 a,b:	
Voice	It is true I am standing and they are sitting, so I can easily catch any misbehaviour, like when they are reading the textbook and not listening. But I wish my voice were stronger than it is.... [I]t's not what I want it to be. (Interview 24b)		
Voice	I know my subject very well [and] I am very confident, but the quality of my voice is highly		

	poignant and moving. (Interview 17b)		
Humour	No interview extract	Observation 24: teacher responds to student humour but doesn't initiate	Teacher attempting to convince students about dawa
voice	I have a strong voice when I teach the lesson. I even chant sometimes, particularly when some of the students are misbehaving. I get their attention [laughs]. (Interview 3b)		Voice means presence and presence means authority / maybe links to the Islamic oratory tradition?