

Dealing with diversity in Muslim schools in Britain

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Abstract

This research was designed to explore the ways that Muslim schools are dealing with the tensions arising from the diversity presented to them within their own religious group and how this then shapes individual schools as they operate within a post 9/11and 7/7 social context.

The work was carried out in six case study schools located within four different geographical contexts in England. Giddens' notion of "double hermeneutics" informed the theoretical and conceptual frameworks driving the research in its aim to analyse the relationships between structure and agency operating within these schools and to understand them as social phenomena. To a lesser extent, these frameworks were also influenced by Gadamer's interpretation of the "practical wisdom" concept which is used as a conceptual tool for data analysis.

In setting out to provide a nuanced picture of these schools and explore their trajectories, four traditional theoretical typologies of Islamic education underpinned the analysis. These typologies were identified as important in understanding the dilemmas presented to Muslim schools in constructing themselves as "academically successful institutions" without compromising on their "Islamic ethos". More so, as these schools deal with the tensions arising from maintaining an Islamic ethos while competing in an era where consumerist parental attitudes and academic achievement in the league tables are important to their future. The critical question that these schools' leaders are facing is: How can the right balance be struck between "Islamic ethos" and the market dynamics of quality schooling? In resolving this dilemma, the concept of "what constitutes being a good/practising Muslim" was found to be key to how the case study schools managed this balance.

This thesis argues that Muslim schools in Britain are being diversified by a continuously changing process that is shaped by internal factors as they try to balance the everyday dilemmas presented to them with the external factors that impact on them as they compete and operate within a wider educational context. As they grow in experience and confidence in their educational achievements Muslim schools are less influenced by "imported" factors. This then frees them to work on "tailoring" the education they offer more specifically to their own needs and challenges while taking into account and balancing this with their wider British influences. This has implications for those social debates such as

multiculturalism, inclusion and exclusion and community cohesion that are now necessarily being influenced by a late modern social context.

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Table of contents

Abstract i
Acknowledgements iii
Table of contents iv
Tables viii
Figures and photographs ix
Abbreviations x
Chapter 1. Introduction 1

Introduction 1

1.1 Setting the scene 1

1.2 Positioning for the journey 3

1.2.1 Early education 3
1.2.2 Changing context 4

1.3 Multiple coloured lenses 6

1.4 Organisation of the thesis 9

Chapter 2. Background of Muslim presence in Britain 11

Introduction 11

2.1 Muslims in Britain: A brief history of migration 11

2.2 Muslims in Britain: Basic demographic sketch 13

2.2.1 Muslim community's demographic profile 13
2.2.2 Muslims and their basic religious needs 18

2.3 Britishness and Muslimness 24

2.4 Faith-based schooling in England: The policy context 27

Conclusion 30

Chapter 3. Islamic educational theory and practice in the light of texts and contexts 32

Introduction 32

3.1 Islamic educational practice: Past and present 33

3.1.1 Elementary education: from mosque to Kuttab 35
3.1.2 From mosques to madrasas (colleges) 35

3.2 Islamic educational theory: Historical roots and current discourses 37

3.2.1 The historical roots 37
3.2.2 Islamic educational response to modernity 41

3.3 Contemporary Muslim schools in Britain: Agents of preservation and change 42

3.4 Muslim schools: Divisive or inclusive? 44

Conclusion 49

Chapter 4. The theoretical framework 50

Introduction 50

4.1 Ontological and epistemological considerations 51

4.1.1 The use of Giddens 51
4.1.2 Islamic schools as subjective and objective social reality 55

4.2 Relationship to social research 57

4.2.1 The double hermeneutic 57
4.2.2 Islamic schooling: practice within the contextual present 59
4.2.3 Insider vs. outsider 64

Conclusion 70

Chapter 5. Methodology 72

Introduction 72

5.1 Research design 73

5.1.1 Qualitative case-study approach 73
5.1.2 Designing multiple case-study research 77

5.2 Data gathering tools and procedures 87

5.2.1 Semi-structured interviews 92
5.2.2 Focus groups 96
5.2.3 Recording and transcription 103
5.2.4 Questionnaire 104
5.2.5 Documents 113

5.3 Process for data analysis 115

5.3.1 Analysis of quantitative data 116
5.3.2 Analysis of qualitative data 118

Conclusion 123

Chapter 6. The case-study schools in context 124

Introduction 124

6.1 The case-study schools in context 125

6.1.1 London Primary School (London-PS) 125
6.1.2 Message Primary School (Message-PS) and Iqra Secondary School (Iqra-SS) 129
6.1.3 Andalusia Secondary School (Andalusia-SS) 137
6.1.4 Olive Primary School (Olive-PS) 143
6.1.5 Vision Secondary School (Vision-SS) 148

6.2 Similarities and differences between schools 153

6.2.1 Ethos and curriculum 155
6.2.2 Academic success versus educational resources 156
6.2.3 Schools' demographic backgrounds 159

Conclusion 165

Chapter 7. Diversity between Muslim schools: Tensions in developing Islamic schooling in Britain 167

Introduction 167

7.1 Approaches to Islamic schooling: Diversity between Muslim schools ... 168

7.1.1 The moral approach 168
7.1.2 The social approach 172

7.2 Parental expectations: Tensions from within 178

7.2.1 A general picture 178
7.2.2 Parental choice: diversity within Muslim schools 185

Conclusion 198

Chapter 8. Dealing with diversity from within 201

Introduction 201

8.1 Dealing with diversity 202

8.1.1 Ethnic diversity 202
8.1.2 Jurisprudence diversity and school "Islamness" 206

8.2 Good and practising Muslim in Britain 215

8.2.1 Practising Muslim 216
8.2.2 Good Muslim 219
8.2.3 Good Muslim and practising Muslim: the relationship 223
8.2.4 Practising Muslim and British citizen 228

8.3 The process of change 234

8.3.1 Islamic education for a changing world 234
8.3.2 Muslim schools in Britain: the past and the future 238

Conclusion 241

Chapter 9. Muslim schools and Islamic ethos: Context and diversity . 243

Introduction 243

9.1 Islamic schooling in Britain: Sources and resources 246

9.1.1 Islamic schooling: common mission, diverse approaches 246
9.1.2 Dilemmas of choice: diversity between Muslim schools 252

9.2 "Islamness", diversity and the Muslim school 257

9.2.1 Spirituality and the types of knowledge: finding the balance 259
9.2.2 Islamic ethos, cultural diversity and the "ummah space" 266
9.2.3 Britishness and "Islamness": the search for coherence 270

9.3 Conclusions 274

9.3.1 A focus on development: transition and tensions 275
9.3.2 Choices on the way: diversity of provision 277
9.3.3 Dealing with diversity: the way forward 278

References 287

Appendices 308

Appendix 1: Information letters and consent forms 308
Appendix 2: Headteacher interview schedule 314
Appendix 3: Teacher interview schedule 316
Appendix 4: Children focus group interview schedule 317
Appendix 5: Parental questionnaire 319
Appendix 6: Crosstabs analysis for the questionnaire Likert scale 323
Appendix 7: Sample entry of the research journal 338

Tables

Table 2.1: Muslim religious affiliation in Great Britain (%), 2004-2011 13

Table 2.2: Estimated size and growth of the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic populations in Great Britain, 1951-2000 and possible Muslim numbers ... 14

Table 2.3: British Muslim population by Ethnic group, 2001 16

Table 5.1: Methods to ensure quality of the study 74

Table 5.2: Case-study schools 81

Table 5.3: Knowledge sought by each study phase 89

Table 5.4: Sources of data 90

Table 5.5: Distributed and received questionnaires 91

Table 5.6: Composition of focus groups in the case-study schools 91

Table 5.7: Parents and schools' cultures 107

Table 6.1: London-PS at a glance 125

Table 6.2: Parents' jurisprudence diversity, London-PS 128

Table 6.3: Message-PS at a glance 131

Table 6.4: Percentage achieving Level 4 or above in both English and Mathematics at Key Stage 2 SATS, Message-PS 131

Table 6.5: Iqra-SS at a glance 134

Table 6.6: Andalusia-SS at a glance 137

Table 6.7: Parents' jurisprudence diversity, Andalusia-SS 141

Table 6.8: Olive-PS at a glance 143

Table 6.9: Parents' jurisprudence diversity, Olive-PS 146

Table 6.10: Vision-SS at a glance 148

Table 6.11: Percentage of pupils achieving A*-C in both GCSE English and Mathematics, Vision-SS 149

Table 6.12: Cross-case comparison 154

Table 6.13: Financial difficulties 161

Table 6.14: Parents' jurisprudence diversity, case study schools 162

Table 6.15: Parents' involvement in the case-study schools 163

Table 7.1: Parents' top three reasons for enrolling their children 179

Table 7.2: Meeting parents' expectations 180

Table 7.3: The faculty and staff have been successful in balancing the schools aims and parents' expectations 192

Figures

Figure 2.1: Regional distribution of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs in England and Wales, 2001 18

Figure 2.2: Vernacular languages used in officially registered mosques, England and Wales, 1999 22

Figure 3.1: Percentage of 16 to 30 year olds with a degree: By religion and country of birth, 2003-2004 47

Figure 4.1: Experiencing Islamic schooling 63

Figure 5.1: Chronology of data generation procedure..... 78

Figure 5.2: Methods for data collection 88

Figure 5.3: Variable view of the research database (showing Value Labels box) 117

Figure 6.1: Parents' questionnaire respondents (n=39), London-PS..... 127

Figure 6.2: Parent respondents' educational levels, London-PS (n=39) 128

Figure 6.3: Iqra-SS school curriculum at KS3 & 4, Iqra-SS prospectus..... 135

Figure 6.4: Iqra-SS, 5+A*-C (and equivalent) including English and Maths GCSE results over time..... 136

Figure 6.5: Andalusia-SS, 5+A*-C (and equivalent) including English and Maths GCSE results over time 140

Figure 6.6: Parents' questionnaire respondents, Andalusia-SS 141

Figure 6.7: Parent respondents' educational level, Andalusia-SS (n=33) 142

Figure 6.8: Parents' questionnaire respondents, Olive-PS (N=34)..... 146

Figure 6.9: Parent respondents' educational level, Olive-PS (N=33)..... 147

Figure 6.10: Parents' questionnaire respondents (n= 46), Vision-SS..... 151

Figure 6.11: Parent respondents' educational level, Vision Secondary School (n=44) 152

Figure 7.1: Islamic Education as a moral model of formation 172

Figure 7.2: Islamic Education as a socio-philosophical model 177

Figure 7.3: General parental expectations of the case-study schools..... 181

Figure 8.1: The good/practising Muslim..... 226

Figure 9.1: The double hermeneutic process of change 280

Figure 9.2: The double hermeneutic in Muslim schools' journey in Britain..... 282

Abbreviations

AMS-UK: Association of Muslim Schools

BHA: British Humanist Association

BSI: Bridge Schools Inspectorate

DCSF: Department for Children, Schools and Families

DfE: Department for Education formerly known as DCSF

DfES: Department for Education and Skills

ECFR: European Council for Fatwa and Research

GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education

GPU: Global Peace and Unity

HMG: Her Majesty's Government

LFS: Labour Force Survey

LGA: Local Government Association

OFSTED: Office for Standards in Education

PGCE: Post Graduate Certificate in Education

PTA: Parent Teacher Association

SATs: Standard Assessment Tasks

VA: Voluntary-Aided (school)

VC: Voluntary Controlled (school)

Chapter 1. Introduction

Introduction

The questions for this research have not arisen in isolation, but in the process of my personal and professional journey mediated through various contexts and different roles. Hence, I find it important to situate this study within its history by reflecting on the various issues shaping such a choice and exploring the unfolding of this process. As a result, this brief chapter is organised into four sections. The first section presents the main questions this study seeks to answer, a general outline of the theoretical underpinnings and the data collection methods. The second, third and fourth sections contain a brief narrative exploring my personal and professional experiences and the assumptions, underpinning different Muslim educational contexts, which inform the theoretical discussion (Lahmar, 2011b). In particular, the account is intended to capture, in at least a crude way, some of the insights of the context and its impact on practice. The last section presents a signposting plan of the following chapters.

1.1 Setting the scene

One of the interesting features of the variety of Muslim thought and culture is how one should assess different kinds of experiences and meanings, especially in light of globalisation and a complex and ever-changing world. The backgrounds, experiences and perspectives of Muslims in Western countries are shaped by, and expressed through, a series of geographies. Those sites can be places of oppression such as racism, deprivation and social exclusion, but also of liberation (Phillips, 2009). In the British context, Muslim schools are growing in number, securing state funding, developing their professional practice and gradually building their resources (Ansari, 2004; Association of Muslim Schools UK, n.p-a). However, one might ask: Where are these schools heading? What would a school that is truly Islamic within a British context look like? What do parents and children in these schools expect to see and experience? Are these schools building any bridges with the wider context? Answers to these questions increase in importance when the contextual challenges and tensions, within which these schools are functioning, have the potential to frame their individual interpretations of the Islamic. Muslim schools in Britain and the challenges they face can provide an opportunity for open discussions of ways to help Muslims

balance their complex multiple loyalties and walk the tightrope between being Western Europeans and yet still being faithful Muslims. So, this study contributes to an emerging area of research around Muslim status in late modern societies (Haw, 2011; Lahmar, 2011a). Particularly, it seeks to add a further dimension to scholarship in the field of the education of Muslim children in the West and specifically in the area of Islamic schooling in Britain. The main question for the research is:

- **How do Muslim schools perceive they are resolving the dilemmas that arise from dealing with the diversity presented to them by the same religious group?**

The subsidiary research questions are:

1. What meanings the leaders of the Muslim schools give to "Islamic education" within Britain?
2. What desires and expectations do Muslim parents have from their Islamic schools and why?
3. How do parents' educational priorities compare with those of the schools?
4. How do Muslim schools perceive themselves dealing with possible tensions that arise from existing diversity?

I argue that these research questions can be addressed through the adoption of a hermeneutic theoretical framework that has the potential to relate the various elements in an interlinked fashion. The process for selecting the theoretical framework for the study was not a linear one. Reflexivity plays a great part in my research journey and results in various questions related to the interplay of cultures and religion, the initial establishment of an institution and its development, and about ways in which individuals understand their contexts and the relationship between structure and agency. My concern at the start of the research, therefore, was to build in reflexivity throughout the research process. Despite my similar religious background to the vast majority of participants in this study, I do recognise that power discrepancies cannot be eliminated due to the very nature of the research process (Oliver, 1992). Yet in order to answer the study's questions, there was a need to select research methods that enabled the exploration of some aspects of social life and how people make sense of them. In this regard qualitative methods appeared to be the more suitable 'resources' as described by Miller and Dingwall (1997, p. 3). I used a mixture of qualitative methods to tap into participants' views and experiences, including individual interviews with parents and staff members, pupils' focus groups and open-ended

parental questionnaire responses. The study was conducted in six schools geographically spread across four areas in England. The next sections now present my personal and professional trajectory because as I have argued this influenced the nature of the questions this research seeks to explore.

1.2 Positioning for the journey

1.2.1 Early education

On a personal level I was educated in Algeria, in a post-colonial secular socialist system of education, where Islamic education meant one or two hours per week of Islamic studies. State schooling almost across the country is co-educational from primary school onwards. Universities are all co-educational including the Islamic institutions. Many of those issues raised regarding dress, prayer and mixed gender in mainstream schools were all issues which formed part of the school life norm in my Muslim country. So, my classes were of a mixed gender; in my area wearing the *hijab*[1] was not allowed in the primary school. Those who chose to wear it in the secondary and college phase of their education faced many challenges. Making a conscious decision to wear the *hijab* by year 8 meant facing some of these challenges at school. For example, my female Maths teacher, when she first saw me, said, 'by closing your ears with this cloth you will become stupid'. In other incidents, girls wearing the *hijab* were labelled as the class 'grandmothers' by some staff. As a schoolgirl wearing the *hijab* it was not strange for me to experience these prejudiced statements from time to time. However, this reflects the risk that pupils faced in light of some teachers' expectations and its possible impact on their future career. For me it was not a symbol of ignorance or oppression, it was another way of praying to God and practising my freedom. Beyond the dress code, the *hijab* in Islam has a broader meaning that includes behaviour as well (Guindi, 1999). It is the principle of modesty for both genders that also encompasses non-physical direct contact with the person that they could theoretically marry (Guindi, 1999). The PE lessons demanded many physical positions that would be regarded as not Islamically modest and it also required direct physical contact with the male instructor at times. Yet, in years 7 to 11 my

[1] *Hijab* has different interpretations amongst Muslim scholarship but generally refers to a woman's dress that covers everything except the hands, face and feet in long, loose and non-see-through garments.

PE teachers were all male. Moreover, PE lessons were performed in an open public field in a mixed gender class and the *hijab* was not tolerated as part of the PE kit. The only possible way out of all this was through medical certificates exempting pupils from those lessons. These were not easy to get, given that we were fit and well. I will return to this point in the final part of this section. Prayer during school time was another challenge because pupils were not permitted to perform them. Moreover, punishment, including corporal punishment, was expected if anyone was seen praying during the school day. All this contributed to my later university option for Islamic Studies where compulsory prayers were scheduled on the timetable. The University was mixed gender but in this environment there was more respect for my basic Islamic rituals such as prayer. Going through such experiences as a child, because of my freely-chosen Islamic dress code, raised many concerns for me regarding the type of education I had received in my own Muslim country and about the meaning, space and scope of women's freedom and the unequal treatment of the other by the Algerian educational structure.

1.2.2 Changing context

Moving to Britain shortly after my graduation with a BA in Quran and Sunnah (Prophetic traditions) sciences, I was faced with a new context that was both familiar and different. Joining the English classes in the college was a priority to break the language isolation and it was not long before I started my teacher training courses as well. It was interesting to find female only classes available but what was also of value was the religious and cultural diversity of people I met through those courses. Meeting people from other Muslim cultures raised questions around some issues considered by some to be Islamic whereas I was seeing them as purely cultural. Thus, I found myself as both an insider and outsider in between the Muslim Asian and the Western British cultures. During those early years, I became an Arabic language teacher in the mosque classes and in a weekend Arabic school for primary school children from diverse Muslim backgrounds. It was here that I started reflecting upon the challenges which these children were facing between their experiences of mainstream schooling, their parents' expectations of them and the community educational provision (Halstead, 1986).

Moving from the UK to Saudi Arabia for over three years was another rich experience that raised more questions around the impact of context on how we understand others and ourselves. These experiences led me to question my pre-

assumptions, and how these continuously interact with my personal past and present contexts to constitute new moments of understanding. In Saudi Arabia, I worked for some time in two schools. The first was a primary and secondary, segregated and partially independent school where all subjects were taught in English including Islamic studies. The curriculum was primarily aimed at preparing children for international examinations such as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs) but also inspected, like other Saudi public schools, on their provision for Arabic language and Islamic studies. The fees were high and parents in this school were mainly interested in good achievement in English, Maths and Science subjects. The second school was also a primary and secondary, but co-educational, and completely independent following an American curriculum and not subject to any governmental inspections. In this school Arabic and Islamic Studies were seen as inferior to other subjects and of lesser importance compared to the first school. The extent to which institutions, such as schools, permit for mingling across gender lines forms an indicator of their degree of religiosity. Although my first school was segregated and sounded more 'Islamic' compared to my second mixed gender one, it was there that I came to know about 'The Spice Girls[2]' during pupils' school performances. In this school most teachers qualified in Britain, Canada or America and were highly respected by parents as more professional. They received more than double the salary of those who trained as teachers in Muslim countries. Children in both schools came from diverse cultural backgrounds, but with a majority of either Saudi or Egyptian origin. While in the first school I taught Islamic studies in English, in the second I was a Science teacher, given my triple science Baccalaureate background. My role in both was mainly within my professional subject teaching areas.

Moving back from Saudi Arabia to England, I started teaching in a Muslim school with a rich Islamic curriculum. This was an all female school with diverse Muslim parental backgrounds though mainly from the South Asian community. Based on my Islamic Studies Degree, my professional role was teaching Islamic studies to years 8 to 11 though mostly with post-sixteens due to their advanced and demanding Islamic Studies curriculum. Outside this formal role, I found myself being approached by most pupils as a counsellor, an Islamic scholar, a sister and at times a mother. Building trust was essential, but separating those roles was

[2] An all-girl British pop group formed in 1994

challenging. Occasionally I was approached for advice about social problems affecting their learning because of my experience as an Islamic scholar. For example, concerns about private family matters, like parents' divorcing, were among the issues which some pupils said they found difficult to raise in their state schools or with professional counsellors for fear of being misunderstood, judged, or receiving advice that did not match with their Islamic ethics.

1.3 Multiple coloured lenses

While working in this latter Muslim school in England as an Islamic studies teacher in an *'Alima* (female scholar) course programme I became increasingly aware of the prestigious social status that an *'Alima* or *'Alim* (male scholar) has within a South Asian Muslim community. This was completely new to me when I started teaching in the school. The post-sixteen pupils asked me whether I was an *'Alima,* it was a shock to them that I replied in the negative. My answer to their question was based on the meaning of *'Alim* within an Arab context, where it indicates a prominent and recognised scholarly person within the Islamic Studies. This would be very challenging to achieve for someone in her twenties and only at Degree level in the field. Their shock was based on their use of the word to simply mean someone who had received a rich Islamic studies curriculum during their secondary and college education and therefore had a firm base of Islamic knowledge. After a while, and through communicating our meanings and expectations of the word *'Alim*, I recognised that I am an *'Alima* according to their definition of the concept. It was here I discovered like Gilliat-Ray (2010) the different meanings and degrees of knowledge and authority which such religious titles may hold within Muslim discourses depend on their contextual circumstances. Through this work experience I also came to appreciate the role of the *Hanafi* jurisprudence school of thought within a South Asian Muslim community.

My professional role as a teacher also led to my role as a curriculum developer and later as a Head of the Islamic Studies department. It was challenging to have to consider such areas as assessment beyond the mere recall of the subject, teaching resources, parents' expectations of me as an Islamic Studies teacher and meeting the school's goals of the *'Alima* programme. Adding to this complexity was the necessity to take into account the children's perspectives in light of 21st century British and global context. However, the role was also inspiring. Seeking to develop my teaching of Islamic studies, I completed an MA

in Islamic studies at a British University. This introduced me, as an Islamic studies teacher within a Western context, to Western Scholarship on Islam and it was also a gateway to a more critical interaction with such debates.

Throughout this journey, I could see different frames of meaning as I moved through from being a student in an Algerian context to being a student within a Western milieu, being a teacher within a Saudi environment, and ending up being a Muslim scholar within a South Asian Muslim community. In the midst of all these diverse contexts I was constantly negotiating questions of differentiating between what is 'Islamic' and what merely 'cultural'. Deciding to wear the *hijab* in Algeria meant questioning and challenging preconceptions of how an educated Algerian woman should dress at that time which also included the perspectives of my parents. This constructed view of dress was not detached from the previous French colonisers' assimilation policy in their mission to eliminate the veil from Algerian society, because they judged this traditional women's garment to be medieval and barbaric (Aris, 2007). In the early post-colonial context of Algeria during the seventies and the early eighties the *hijab* was seen as culturally incompatible with being an educated woman. Growing up within such a culture did not negate questioning an aspect of it and seeking change. However, it was sufficient within that process to refer back to religious texts from the Quranic and Prophetic traditions to articulate and defend my choices. Such personal experience embraced elements from Algerian contextual circumstances and discourses. The religious texts formed the basis that bound the different perspectives together and acted as a platform for dialogue in areas of divergence such as dress code. It was not an agreement on perspectives but on the sacred status of those Islamic sources, that was taken as evident, and part of the shared culture. At this stage, I found that belonging to a cultural context within which assumptions, forms of language and of life are shared puts less emphasis on articulating the nature and origin of its practices because they are simply obvious (Wittgenstein, 1968).This approach, however, should not be mistaken for cultural determinism; to undergo some contextual influences and to share some underlying assumptions with others is not necessarily deterministic. Despite the apparent 'obviousness' resulting from a shared culture, our experiences do at various times cause us to question it (Rahman, 1982). Nevertheless, moving to a non-Muslim Western culture is more demanding as it constantly requires me to understand and articulate my practices in a non-religious discourse. It was not the dress that came under challenge; it was my religious convictions as a whole.

With more questions regarding issues of interpretation, the influence of context on our understanding, and our rootedness in the diverse backgrounds from which we have arrived, my later teaching practice became more of an attempt to explore these questions with pupils and by reading the Islamic scholarly heritage in light of its past and our present. During this entire journey my position on philosophy was that it was no more than abstract discussions that had nothing to do with practice. Furthermore, during my earlier years of this journey, I had considered philosophy to be just the other side of the same coin as atheism and the route towards it. My previous depiction of philosophy was not without links to its past discourses within Muslim scholarship going back to the times of al-Farabi (Alpharabius, died 950), ibn-Sina (Avicenna, died 1037), al-Ghazali (also spelled al-Gazel or Ghazzali, died 1111) and Ibn-Taymiyyah (died 1328).

This personal and professional educational journey has raised the question of what light does knowledge about human contexts shed on our understanding and application of texts. Furthermore, what does the diverse cultural background of the Prophet's periods in Mecca and Medina, for instance, teach Muslims today about how they should deal with their own diversity and their wider societies? Such questions are essential and lie at the core of any discussion related to Islamic educational aims. Also, and more significantly for social inquiry, this experience suggests the need to open the debate among Muslim educationalists, both practitioners and scholars, about the aims of Islamic education within the present context beyond the layer of dress code, prayer times, and memorisation of the Islamic sources of the Quran and Hadith (Prophetic traditions). It is at this juncture that self-reflection on religion, culture and language formed the basis for the context out of which my PhD questions emerged.

In this study, the notion of 'double hermeneutic' has three main areas of application. The first is in terms of exploring traditional Islamic educational theory and practice recognising the pre-understanding that has gone into the process of its theoretical development and application through different contexts. The second is in regard to the process of this research and the way it unfolds in a spiral action in which the analysis resulting from one stage of the study becomes the pre-knowledge for the next. The third is in relation to the way the case-study schools are taking account of both enablers and constraints within their contexts and the way participants are involved in a process of sense-making of both their past tradition and their current context.

It is worth emphasising here that I use "mainstream" throughout this thesis to refer to the Community Schools type of state funded schooling as nondenominational local institutions (see Chapter 2, p.29) to distinguish them from state-funded Muslim schools or any other special schooling.

1.4 Organisation of the thesis

Following this chapter exploring the way the research questions emerged, the thesis is arranged around nine chapters and subordinate sections.

Chapter 2 sets the scene for the thesis and discusses the demographic composition of the Muslim population and the policy context in relation to faith-based schooling in Britain. It explores current discourses of Britishness and Muslimness and the way notions of 'integration', 'citizenship' and 'social cohesion' have developed. Chapter 3 focuses on the theoretical and institutional development of Islamic education over time. It seeks to provide a broader framework for understanding the journey Islamic education takes from its initial stage in Mecca to its current practice in Britain. In these opening chapters, I sketch out the socio-political basis for the study that would help in the data analysis and discussion presented in the forthcoming chapters. In doing so, Chapters 2 and 3 endeavour to establish continuous links between individual agents and their contexts. The mutual influence between individual agents and structures affects how individuals perceive meaning in their embodiment of religious actions within their context. Thus, I argue that the meaning attached to Islamic schooling by the different sections of the Muslim community is partly generated through the practical experience of it.

To address the research questions in depth, I devote Chapter 4 to discussing the ontological and epistemological foundation for this thesis. I then devote Chapter 5 to discussing, in some detail, the research design and data collection methods.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 move the discussion from the theoretical to the practical through a detailed analysis of the data. Chapter 6 sets an appropriate context for the following analysis chapters by providing pen portraits of the six case-study schools. It also provides a cross-case analysis by examining the similarities and differences emerging from the case-study schools. In doing so, this chapter raises further questions that form the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter 7 answers the secondary questions concerning meanings the leaders of the Muslim schools give to "Islamic education" within Britain; parental expectations from their chosen Islamic schools and the way parents' educational priorities compare with those of the schools. In doing so, the chapter raises some dilemmas that emerge from the educational practice of Islamic schooling in Britain. The analysis in this chapter sets the scene for answering the main research question in the following chapter.

Chapter 8 follows the tensions that arise as the case-study schools try to resolve dilemmas and deal with the diversity presented to them by the same religious group. It develops a theoretical analysis of the notion of "practising Muslim" and how it shapes the internal discourses of the schools and possible choices. This analysis is applied to the question of how Muslim schools perceive they are resolving the dilemma of promoting the "practising Muslim" without segregating pupils from the wider British context. The chapter ends by following an emergent trail of change in the goals of Muslim schools in Britain.

Chapter 9 is the discussion and concluding chapter. This chapter revisits the research questions and the main themes that emerged through the analysis chapters. It weaves together the different strands of the argument in this thesis and replaces the emerging issues from data analysis concerning Muslim schooling within the wider educational debate in Britain. As part of clarifying the issues involved in answering the main research question, this chapter examines the tradeoffs Muslim schools take to resolve the emerging dilemmas arising from their practice. The chapter concludes by discussing some implications of the choices that these schools make as they deal with emerging dilemmas and internal tensions and the input of this on the possible direction Muslim schooling in Britain may take. Finally, areas of further research are highlighted.

Chapter 2. Background of Muslim presence in Britain

Introduction

The focus that lies at the heart of this study is diversity. By diversity I mean the diversity of perspectives and experiences of participants in seeking to establish Islamic schooling in Britain or to take advantage of its provision. Thus, the question is not so much about these schools' rights or otherwise to become part of the British educational structure, but rather concerns the nature of discourses that position them as aspiration becomes practice within the British socio-political context. Consequently, the aim of this chapter is twofold: to provide a synopsis of the background of Muslim population diversity, and to make explicit the fact that Muslim schools in Britain are a natural outcome of their socio-political context.

To begin to address the study questions posed in Chapter 1 in relation to diversity within Muslim communities, I need first to discuss what those differences are. In doing so, this chapter is divided into four parts. Firstly, it presents an overview of the Muslim presence in Britain. Secondly, it discusses their demographics and contextualises this research within the geographical locations within which participants' discourses are embedded.

Thirdly, it follows the political debates that this presence raises through the interaction of the Muslim community with their new context. These debates are not detached from the shaping of Muslim schools, as social institutions, and the process of social change within Muslim communities. Finally, it sets the scene for further discussions around Islamic educational provision by placing the emerged Muslim schools within the British legislative background. A lot of the arguments about faith-based schools provision as part of the British educational landscape hark back to the educational discourses of nineteenth century and the progressive engagement of the State with the continuum of educational supply.

2.1 Muslims in Britain: A brief history of migration

There is a strong relation between the immigrants' origins in the different European countries and the ex-colonial territories (S. V. R. Nasr, 1999). Muslim

immigration to Britain hails predominantly from South Asian backgrounds mainly Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the early presence of Islam in Britain goes back to the Tudors and Stuarts where merchants and slaves formed the two main groups of this presence (Ansari, 2004; MacLean & Matar, 2011). During the sixteenth century a small community of Ottoman Muslims was said to be living in England (Ansari, 2004). However, the first large wave of Muslims who arrived in Britain were sailors employed to work for the East India Company during the late eighteenth century (Ansari, 2004; Nielsen, 2004). These sailors, known as lascars, were recruited in port cities as cheap labour from India, Egypt, Malaya, and Turkey (Ansari, 2004). As a result of the later trade growth, more workers were needed in ports and on ships. The second large group of Muslim immigration to Britain followed the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 (Nielsen, 2004). Most of these immigrants were Arabic-speaking deriving mostly from Yemen and many of them chose to settle for good in the port cities of Cardiff, Liverpool, South Shields, Hull, and London (Nielsen, 2004; Spencer, 1997). Until World War Two there was no organised migration of Indians into Britain. However, insignificant numbers of sailors, students, and professionals had been entering the country since India's first contact with the Empire, but most of them returned after completing their mission (Nasta, 2002). Amongst those were the well-known Indian and later Pakistani philosopher Sir Muhammad Iqbal and Dean Mahomet, the writer of the famous book 'The Travels of Dean Mahomet' in 1794. The latter was the first to open an Indian take away restaurant in England (Nasta, 2002). Unlike the later generation of economic and low-skilled immigrants from the subcontinent, many of these students came as individuals; already familiar through long-established historical, familial and educational links with the host country they were entering (Nasta, 2002). Later, there was an Indo-Pakistani presence which began slowly in the 1950s, almost unnoticed, and grew swiftly during the booming economy of the later years of the '50s, the '60s and the '70s (Nielsen, 2004). After the Second World War and building up during the 1950s, the new commonwealth represented the source of immigration from the West Indies, India and Pakistan (Castles, Booth, & Wallace, 1984). The majority of those immigrants came as labourers responding to the demands of British industry. This move was facilitated by their British or commonwealth citizenship status in which cases there was no need to seek permission to enter the country. However, from the early 1960s more restrictions started to be placed on immigration. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962 was one of these controlling initiatives, requesting an employment voucher from commonwealth citizens before coming to Britain. This was followed by the 1971

Immigration Act placing more restrictions on the entry of dependants. In order to close more immigration doors children born in Britain from 1983 onwards were no longer deemed to be automatically British (Castles, et al., 1984). The first generations of the latter wave are still alive with strong ties to the original cultures (Kepel, 1997). Further to the economic migration, Muslims reallocate themselves in Europe through many other ways such as: family reunion, through education visas, illegal entry, and through asylum status such as those refugees from religious cleansing in the former Yugoslavia (Vertovec & Peach, 1997). So, in addition to immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, Muslims came from Iraq, Somalia, Lebanon, Palestine, Iran, East Africa, and other 'hot spots' in the Muslim world (Maréchal, 2003). Furthermore, the 1980s witnessed a spreading wave of Islamic religious collective manifestation paralleled with a growing number of native western European converts (Childs, 2004; Dassetto, 2003). This history of settlement has created a very diverse profile for the Muslim population in Britain.

2.2 Muslims in Britain: Basic demographic sketch

2.2.1 Muslim community's demographic profile

The Labour Force Survey's (LFS) measures of religious affiliation suggest that between 2004 and 2010, the Muslim population grew from around 1.9 million to around 2.6 million (Hawkins, 2012). Table 2.1 shows the change in the size of the Muslim religious group as estimated by the LFS from 2004 to 2011, which suggests a continuous increase.

Table 2.1: Muslim religious affiliation in Great Britain (%), 2004-2011

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Muslim	3.3%	3.5%	3.7%	3.9%	4.1%	4.1%	4.3%	4.3%

Source: (Hawkins, 2012, pp. iv-vii)

Nevertheless, in April 2008, the Home Secretary Jacqui Smith announced that Her Majesty's Government (HMG) estimated the Muslim population at 2 million making up 3.3% of the UK population (Travis, 2008). The most recent census of England and Wales took place on 27 March 2011 but its data are not yet available. Hence, unless otherwise stated, the demographic information used in this study is based on the available data from the 2001 Census. In the 2001 Census, there were 1.6 million Muslims in Britain, comprising 3 per cent of the total population and over half (52 per cent) of the non-Christian religious

population (Office for National Statistics, 2004a). As shown in Table 2.2, with the passage of time the Muslim population in Great Britain has been growing and its growth remains higher than the growth of other religious populations.

Table 2.2: Estimated size and growth of the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic populations in Great Britain, 1951-2000 and possible Muslim numbers

				Estimated								
Year	Indian	Pakistani	Bangla-deshi	Total	South Asian	Muslims	British	Muslims	British	Sikhs	British	Hindus	British
1951	31,000	10,000	2,000	43,000	15,430		20,000		7,000		12,000	
1961	81,000	25,000	6,000	112,000	39,980		50,000		16,000		30,000	
1971	375,000	119,000	22,000	516,000	182,700		226,000		72,000		138,000	
1981	676,000	296,000	65,000	1,037,000	430,830		553,000		144,000		278,000	
1991	840,000	477,000	163,000	1,480,000	717,200		950,000		206,000		397,000	
2001	1,053,411	747,285	283,063	2,083,759	1,115,774		1,600,000		340,000		560,000	

Source: (Peach, 2005, p. 9)

This growth is still increasing at a rapid rate because of high fertility rates: in the 2001 Census, Muslims had the highest number of dependent children with 25 per cent of Muslim households having three or more compared with 5 per cent of those describing themselves as Christians (Office for National Statistics, 2004a). In that sense, in 2001 Muslims took the lead of all other religious populations in Great Britain and with the youngest age profile. A third of them (34 per cent) were under 16 years of age, the highest proportion for any religious group (Office for National Statistics, 2004a). Other sources of growth are through asylum from hot zones such as those who came from the Balkans, Afghanistan or lately from Iraq (Peach & Gale, 2003) and the growing number of indigenous people who choose to embrace Islam (Zebiri, 2008).

In terms of the overall demographic composition in 2001, 74 per cent of Muslims in Britain were from an Asian ethnic background. Muslims of Pakistani descent were the majority, followed by Bangladeshi and then Indian (Office for National Statistics, 2004a). Some other ethnicities were also present including white British, Turkish, Cypriot, Arab, Eastern European and Black African, mainly from North and West Africa, particularly Somalia (Office for National Statistics, 2004a). Table 2.3 shows a further breakdown of those ethnic groups:

Table 2.3: British Muslim population by Ethnic group, 2001

	Ethnic group as % of Muslims
White	
White British	4.1
White Irish	0.1
Other White	7.5
Mixed	
White and Black Caribbean	0.1
White and Black African	0.7
White and Asian	2.0
Other Mixed	1.4
Asian or Asian British	
Indian	8.5
Pakistani	42.5
Bangladeshi	16.8
Other Asian	5.8
Black or Black British	
Black Caribbean	0.3
Black African	6.2
Other Black	0.4
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	
Chinese	0.05
Other Ethnic Group	3.6

Source: 2001 Census

Hence, British economic policies, coupled with political unrest in various Muslim countries, have produced a steady flow of immigrants mainly from the commonwealth countries, especially Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. Such

immigration movement has kept the Muslim community in a continuous process of demographic change. This might be reflected in the number of members of the Muslim community born within the UK as 2001 Census data have shown. In 2001, just under half (46 per cent) of Muslims living in Britain had been born in the UK while 39 per cent had been born in Asia – mainly Pakistan (18 per cent), Bangladesh (9 per cent) and India (3 per cent) (Office for National Statistics, 2004a). A further one in ten Muslims (9 per cent) had been born in Africa, including Somalia (2 per cent) and Kenya (1 per cent). Four per cent of Muslims were from parts of Europe outside the UK, including Turkey (3 per cent) and the Former Yugoslavian countries (1 per cent) (Office for National Statistics, 2004a). Despite the South Asian dominance, the data show a considerable ethnic variation among British Muslims (Peach, 2006).

In 2003-2004, unemployment rates for Muslims in Britain were higher than those for people from any other religion, for both men (14 per cent) and women (15 per cent). The Muslim community suffers from a high rate of working age adults not economically active. Moreover, in 2003-2004 31 per cent of working age Muslims in Britain had no qualifications. They were also the least likely religious group to have degrees (or equivalent qualifications). This might explain the 2003-2004 data that shows that Muslim men were one of the least likely groups to be working in managerial or professional occupations (less than a third of them), and the most likely to be working in low-skilled jobs (Office for National Statistics, 2004a). So, as Peach (2006) has commented on such data:

> Taken as a whole, the Muslim population is young and rapidly growing; its socio-economic profile is depressed, marked by the exceptionally low participation rate of women in the formal labour market, and by high concentration in areas of multiple deprivation. (p. 629)

In terms of geographical distribution, around two fifths of Muslims (38 per cent) lived in London in 2001. After London, the regions with the next biggest share of the Muslim population were the West Midlands (14 per cent), the North West (13 per cent), and Yorkshire and the Humber (12 per cent). Even within these regions, Muslims were highly concentrated spatially (Office for National Statistics, 2004a) (see Figure 2.1).

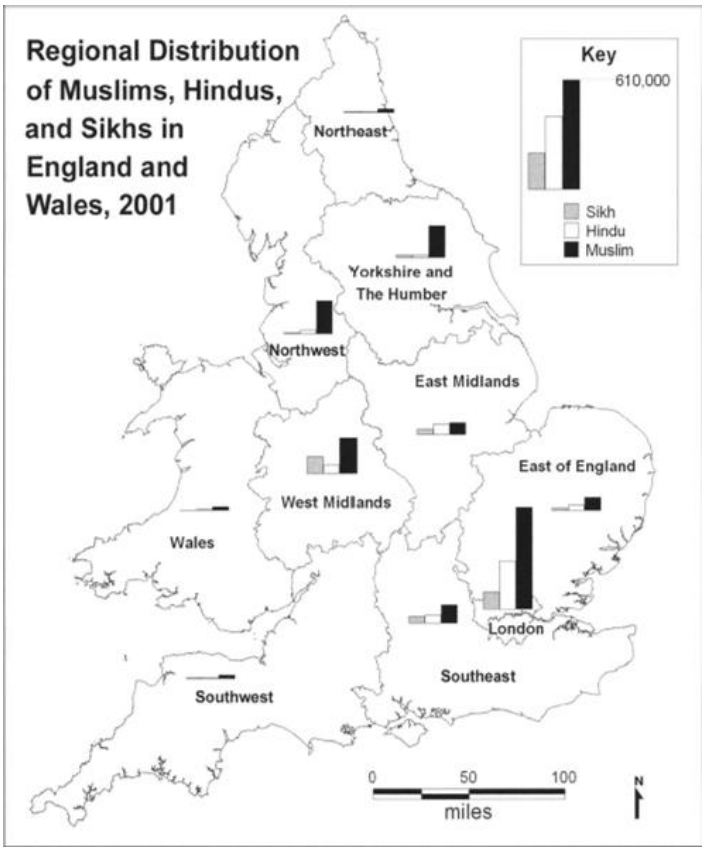

Figure 2.1: Regional distribution of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs in England and Wales, 2001

Source: (Peach & Gale, 2003, p. 476)

2.2.2 Muslims and their basic religious needs

Religious diversity

Muslim communities in Britain are not only diverse in terms of ethnicity but also in the various groups within Islam (Walford, 2003). There is great variation among Muslims in Britain in terms of their religious orientations. This includes diversity along religious jurisprudence lines, creed lines or religious activist lines. The main sectarian divide among Muslims goes back to the very early decades of Islam and resulted in what were later known as the Sunni and Shiite groups. According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life report (2009), the Sunni group represents 87-90% of the global Muslim population compared to 10-13% of Shiite Muslims. Between 68% and 80% of the Shiite population live in four countries: Iran, Pakistan, India and Iraq. In 2001 over 87% of British Muslims were affiliated to the Sunni group which is reflected in the largest number of Islamic organisations in the UK by far (Peach, 2006). The difference between the

two groups is well documented in literature. These two broad groups themselves are internally diverse in various aspects.

While encompassing all groups is not possible within the scope of this study, it remains important to cover the dominant groups amongst the Muslim community in Britain due to their possible influence on Muslim educational provision. The main groups involved in establishing religious institutions in Britain are Barelwi, Deobandi, Ahl-e-Hadith, Salafis and Jamaat-e-Islami Sunni affiliations. The differences between Barelwi, Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith groups in particular are worth briefly highlighting due to their direct relevance to Muslim schools in Britain either as founders or users.

The organisational development of the Deobandi, Barelwi and Ahl-e-Hadith Sunni movements began in India during the second half of the 19th century (Bhatt, 1997). The Deobandi movement is historically based on the teachings of the Darul Uloom Deoband (Islamic seminary) that had been established in 1866 in the Deoband village in northern India (Darul Uloom Deoband-India, n.p). The founders felt that the Indian Muslims were drifting away from the centrality of Tawhid (God's indivisible oneness) and becoming ignorant about their religion due to the failing of the old Madrasas (Darul Uloom Deoband-India, n.p). The institute presents itself as the foundation of a religious, educational and reformative movement that was established in resistance to the British assimilative approach and colonial rule in India (Darul Uloom Deoband-India, n.p). The group inclination towards education finds its way within the British context through various institutional expressions, particularly Islamic 'seminaries' such as those in Bury and Leicester. Their educational growth in Britain also aims at 'protecting and preserving' the religious identity of Muslims through the training of a new generation of British-born 'ulama' (religious scholars) aware of their own context (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 87).

The Barelwi group emerged in Bareilly, northern India. The group's beliefs are based on Sufi devotional Islamic thought. Both the Barelwi and Deobandi groups follow the Hanafi religious jurisprudence school. They, however, differ in their orientation to some of the religious creeds. Barelwi devotional aspects promote inclination towards mysticism and the veneration of saints. In their teaching, the Prophet is almost deified. Hence, intercession by the Prophet Muhammad, minor saints and spiritual teachers *(pirs)* between believers and God are accepted (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). Such elements of belief stand in contrast to the Deobandi,

Ahl-e-Hadith and Salafis' principles of faith, and conflict with their definition of notions of 'Ibada' (worship) and 'Tawhid'.

The Ahl-e-Hadith movement was established with the aim of bringing the Quran and Prophetic traditions (Hadith) back to the centre and understanding their texts around the notion of 'Tawhid'. Unlike Deobandi and Barelwi followership of the Hanafi jurisprudence school, the Ahl-e-Hadith movement advocates bypassing rigid adherence to any of the four established jurisprudence schools of Islamic legal thought. Instead, they promote a direct use of the two main Islamic sources, the Quran and Hadith, for guidance on religious issues (Bhatt, 1997; Gilliat-Ray, 2010). The scholarly works of ibn-Taymiyya (died 1328) and ibn 'Abd Al-Wahhab (died 1791), in particular, had influence on the ideological basis of the Ahl-e-Hadith movement (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). Similar in beliefs to Ahl-e-Hadith is the Salafi movement. Gilliat-Ray (2010) believes that Jam'iyat Ihya' Minhaj al-Sunnah, JIMAS, (Association to Revive the Way of the Messenger) was founded in 1984 out of frustration with the 'lack of dynamism in the South Asian Ahl-e-Hadith movement in Britain and a refusal to prefer English over Urdu' (p. 81). The organisation emphasises its non-sectarian nature and defines its primary role as being education to both Muslims and non-Muslims prioritising activities based on the needs arising in the UK stating that: 'JIMAS seeks to promote an organic, home-grown, indigenous following of Islam, which is relevant to British Muslim concerns in particular and issues of the UK in general' (JIMAS, 2010). As such, JIMAS distanced itself from 'political movements and ideologies that originated abroad' (JIMAS, 2010). The Salafi movement in general focuses on the idea of correcting religious belief where principles of Tawhid are constantly emphasised. The group, however, is widely diversified within itself regarding the issue of political reform (Gilliat-Ray, 2010).

The elements of difference over the approach to jurisprudence or Islamic creed that emerge through this brief discussion are areas of potential difference in the type of religious knowledge that a Muslim school might provide. This, theoretically, would also contribute to parental expectations of the type of religious practice within their chosen Muslim school. Moreover, the different readings of religious texts have resulted in various jurisprudence schools of thought that give another dimension to the diversity of Muslim population in Britain. Hence, in order to help understand the diversity of participants' religious discourses and their possible influence on choices they make, it is worth considering the way scholarly choices concerning jurisprudence are constructed.

To work out legal religious issues, Muslim religious scholars refer to the two main Muslim sacred sources, namely, the Quran and Prophetic traditions (Hadith). However, interpreting these sources involves reasoning power within the guidelines of Islamic jurisprudence. This exercise has resulted in the development of various jurisprudence schools of thought, including the four main Sunni legal schools, the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali, and the Shiite legal schools including Jafari. Muslims generally follow the interpretations of the school of jurisprudence prevalent in the region from which they derive (Hallaq, 2005; Philips, 2007). These schools of legal thought still characterise the Islamic landscape worldwide. Today, the followers of the Maliki school of thought are found mostly in North Africa (Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco), West Africa (Mali, Nigeria, Chad, etc.) and scattered in some other areas such as Egypt, Sudan and the Arabian Gulf states of Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain. Those who now follow the Hanafi school of thought are found mostly in India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Guyana, Trinidad, and Surinam and to some extent Egypt. The majority of the followers of the Shafi'i school are now to be found in Egypt, Southern Arabia, (Yemen, Hadramout), Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, and East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania) and Surinam in South America. The Hanbali school of thought can now be found in Saudi Arabia and parts of Palestine and Jafari in Shiite regions such as Iran and parts of Pakistan (Philips, 2007).

Religious establishments

According to the 2001 Census, the overall Muslim population in Britain is a religious community as more than half of them thought religion to be important to their self-identity (Office for National Statistics, 2004a). From their early arrival onwards, Muslim community members felt the need to establish their religious commitments, which may reflect the establishment of the early mosques in Britain during the period 1860-1945 (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). By 1961 there were just seven mosques (Peach & Gale, 2003). However, over time the number of mosques in Britain has grown. In March 2012, the Islamic website Salaam recorded a total of 1446 mosques in their database (Salaam, 2012). Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine the precise number of mosques because not all mosques are registered with local authorities (Gilliat-Ray, 2010; Peach & Gale, 2003).

Muslim racial, ethnic and sectarian differences are often reflected in the composition of mosques (Nielsen, 2004; Peach, 2006). Based on the Leverhulme survey of officially registered places of worship carried out in Oxford in 1998,

within the overall 321 mosques 278 (87 per cent) were Sunni, 23 were (7 per cent) were Shiite and 3 per cent were Multi-traditional. The Ahmadiyya sect not recognised by mainstream Muslims, due to some fundamental differences about their creed, constitutes 3 per cent. Within the Sunni mosques Peach (2006) reported various groups including Deobandis (13 per cent), Barelwis (16 per cent) and Ahl-e-Hadith (6 per cent). The Sunni Salafi movement has also gained acceptance amongst the young British Muslim community during recent decades (J. King, 1997; Peach, 2006).

These mosques are also varied through the languages used in their sermons and the jurisprudence schools of thought which reflect the original background of their community (Peach, 2006). Figure 2.2 shows the linguistic diversity:

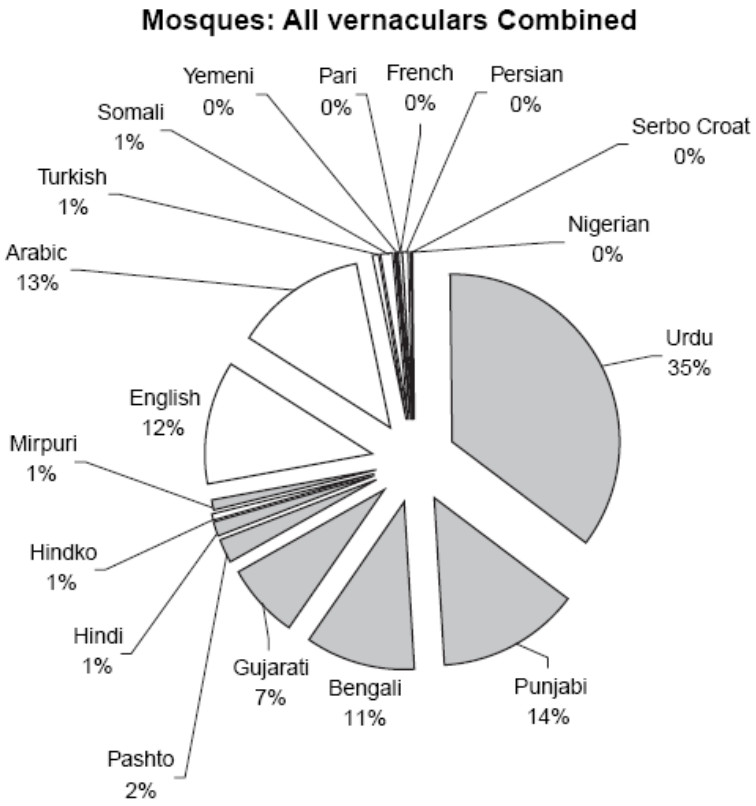

Figure 2.2: Vernacular languages used in officially registered mosques, England and Wales, 1999
Source:(Peach, 2006, p. 638)

This variety of mosques emerged from local initiatives in response to the needs of the community. In addition to mosques, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) is an umbrella organisation with over 500 affiliated Muslim organisations across the United Kingdom (MCB, 2012). The MCB defines itself on their website as:

> A non sectarian body working for the common good without assuming any judgmental attitude toward the variety of expressions of Islamic belief and conduct except that which falls outside Islam. (MCB, 2012)

However, according to Nielsen (2004), the MCB succeeded in coordinating the wide range of Sunni groups but failed to include Shiite or Barelwi associations. Such diversity is not limited to mosques or organisations like that of MCB, but to other community organisations such as schools (Nielsen, 2004; Shadid & Koningsveld, 1991).

Nevertheless, Muslim religious leaders who came to Britain from the 1970s had little or no English combined with a lack of understanding of the circumstances that were different from their Muslim country of origin conditions and specific cultural context. Reflecting the diverse backgrounds of the Muslim population, they mainly spoke Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, or perhaps Sylheti or Arabic (Gilliat-Ray, 2010; Vertovec, 2002). Their mother tongue languages were the medium through which they taught, especially children. The new Western context fostered issues usually not questioned within a Muslim context or ones discussed from different perspectives. Imams were expected to play different roles, like those of priests and pastors, for which they had no training. Language deficiency and cultural differences were extra hurdles in the way for traditional imams to play an effective role concerning questions of faith, identity, and to manage diverse Muslim religious needs and perspectives (Smith, 2002). For such reasons, Gilliat-Ray (2010) believes that young people and women, as less empowered groups within the community, were the ones who bore most of the consequences of such poor religious leadership. Accordingly, a rift occurred between Muslim youth brought up in a Western context and traditional imams from Muslim countries or those known as 'community leaders' (Bhatti, 1999, p. 116).

Muslim schools emerged against this backdrop and the dilemma of Islamic leaders in Britain through their attempts to balance preservation and change in an attempt to provide a different platform from that of mosques. Nevertheless, this new phenomenon of full-time Muslim schooling is a controversial issue in terms of funding, content and contribution to societal social cohesion. In England, debates about faith-based schools in the last decades have taken more of a political turn. Discussing such debates requires a critical examination of the political context within which discourses of 'integration', 'citizenship' and 'social cohesion' have developed. The next section concerns these issues.

2.3 Britishness and Muslimness

The Rushdie Affair, between September 1988 and March 1989, in particular brought the Muslim community into the public domain along religious rather than racial lines. This event was a critical defining signpost in the further development of Muslims in relation with their non-Muslim context (Husband & Alam, 2011). Their failure to disassociate themselves from the Iranian Ayatollah's fatwa (religious verdict) contributed to a reputation of infamy (Modood, 2010), focusing around the dangers to national integrity as a result of the immigration and settlement of diverse Muslim communities. The event also provoked an intricate discussion on political membership and opened up questions on the nature of belonging, placing 'Muslim' and 'British' identities along competitive lines (Thomas, 2012). The South Asian Muslim community in Britain became more assertive about their religious identity and the notion of a 'Black' identity was challenged as not sufficiently presenting the Muslim community's interests and challenges (Modood, 1994, 1997, 2010). In 1996 Modood (1996) called for a rethinking of 'race' and of 'equality' as they applied to the contemporary British context. He (Modood, 1998) further suggested that the relation between the Muslim community, wider British society and the British state needed to be seen in terms of development and the rising agendas of racial equality and multiculturalism. Yet, multiculturalism itself came under censure in favour of a racial cohesion and 'integration' discourse in more of an assimilation approach (Modood, 2010; Thomas, 2012). However, the assertion that multiculturalism had failed was not accompanied by a serious engagement in a self-critical process regarding the possible contribution that the prevailing structural conditions might have had towards the struggles of multiculturalism and ethnic segregation (Husband & Alam, 2011; Modood, 2010).

This debate was further fed by the Bradford riots in July 2001 that involved Muslim youth mainly from a Pakistani community. Fielding (2005) regarded such incidents as 'the worst rioting seen in mainland Britain' that were rather '[s]parked by ethnic tensions aggravated by racist politicians and an inept police response' (p. 213). This event, Fielding (2005) believed, presented 'an opening for politicians willing to exploit the potency of "alien" status' (p. 213). For Kundnani (2002), it was about institutional racism, inequalities or deprivation, and for him the government response that sought answers in the behaviour and values of community groups involved 'seemed to be a case of "blame the victim", rather than an attempt to deal with real issues' (p. 67). Yet, Husband and Alam (2011) argue that the Bradford Muslim youth 'riot' outrage was framed within the

recent history of immigration rather than presenting it within the long history of riots in England. They (Husband & Alam, 2011) believe that this approach was a way of shaping public discourses and the subsequent reactions including the social policies. The fit of Muslim communities within wider British society once again became a prevailing concern in public discourses. The emergence of Muslim identity politics and the public response to this visibility contributed to the discourse of community integration (Modood, 2010; Thomas, 2012). This has shifted the discourse from multiculturalism to 'community cohesion'. The bleak picture for Muslim schools, which gathered impetus in the 1990s, has continued apace. This was further fed by the events of 11 September 2001 in the USA, and the bombings on the London transport system on 7 July 2005 (Husband & Alam, 2011). The Afghanistan and Iraq invasions raised similar questions to those at the crux of the Rushdie affair (Richardson, 2010). Faced with such apparent danger, the state becomes apparently justified in shifting from discourses of plural multiculturalism to those of assimilationist citizenship as the way forward in the integration of ethnic minorities into the national polity. Hence, concepts of 'community cohesion', 'social cohesion' and 'citizenship' have gathered momentum and attained importance in present day British society (Husband & Alam, 2011; Thomas, 2012; Werbner, 2009). In this regard, Husband and Alam (2011) argue that 'Community Cohesion' as a policy needs to be understood in the context of Muslim communities' experience in Britain and their relation with mainstream society.

It is against this backdrop that Haw (2009) warns of 'the potential hazards of creating resistant identities' (p. 376). The wide spread of Hijab and the increase of independent Muslim schools are seen as manifestations of such resistance (Halstead, 2007; Haw, 2009; Shah, 2006, 2012). Through tracing Muslim girls' discourses around ethnicity, religion and identity, Haw's (2009) work reveals the complexities that young Muslim women face in seeking recognition as British citizens and yet rejecting the construction of their 'Muslim and Islamic identities' as ones that are 'difficult or dangerous' (p. 376). Her (Haw, 2009) study shows the challenge facing those educating future generations in genuinely dealing with diversity through a deeper understanding of what might be risky and ways individuals can handle the ontological contradictions in a more comfortable manner without depicting the other as a threat. In this regard, Modood (2007) argues for differences to be recognised within the public sphere because they constitute an important aspect for their bearers. Modood (1998, p. 213) further points out what he regards as 'an ethnic assertiveness' in Britain, shifting from

cultural assimilation towards 'the politics of recognition'. In this regard he (Modood, 1998) states:

> Equality is not having to hide or apologise for one's origins, family or community but expecting others to respect them and adapt public attitudes and arrangements so that the heritage they represent is encouraged rather than contemptuously expected to wither away. (p. 213)

However, if the notion of equality is called into question, the answers may also consider other concepts to be problematic. In this regard, Ramadan (2010b, p. 67) considers the traditional discourse of 'integration' as idealistic and called for a 'post-integration approach'. He (Ramadan, 2010b, p. 67) suggests a deeper engagement by using new concepts such as 'integration of intimacies' to refer to the process of 'feeling comfortable' and 'at home'. Ramadan (2010b, p. 67) views the sense of belonging to Western or European societies as involving 'very deep and sometimes complex psychological dimensions'. According to him (Ramadan, 2010b), this sense feeds on various elements including 'the feeling of being recognised as an asset or at least of being "valuable" in the other's eyes' (Ramadan, 2010b, p. 67). To nurture this feeling of belonging in the Muslim community, Ramadan (2010a, 2010b) argues for a joint effort where all parties must take on their responsibilities. Similarly, Modood (1998) argues that the burden of change, or the costs of not changing, are not the responsibility of a single party only.

The process of migration and the flow of different cultural traditions beyond their nation states' boundaries into Britain associated with late capitalism creates what Featherstone (1990, p. 1) coins 'third cultures'. Muslim transnational communities in Britain can be considered one of these third cultures. Their presence within the new Western context requires overcoming problems of inter-cultural communication at first hand such as that of the Rushdie Affair. The process of moving backwards or forwards between their Islamic heritage, national experiences, British cultural context and global changes necessitates 'new types of flexible personal controls, dispositions and means of orientation, in effect a new type of habitus' (Featherstone, 1990, p. 8).

As shown, this social movement generates new social arrangements, religious discourses, practices, and subjectivities with relative independence from their original nation states. Muslim schools present one expression of such a struggle. In this regard, Parker-Jenkins et al. (2005) believe that the emergence of new faith-based schools, and especially Muslim schools, must be understood within

the wider local and global socio-political context. For such a background, I find it essential to first place these schools within their new British context. So, the following section gives a brief historical review of the British educational structure and the way Muslim schools could fit within it.

2.4 Faith-based schooling in England: The policy context

The 1944 Education Act

Religious-based schools at primary and secondary stages of education are not new to the British educational context. The English education system developed in partnership with the mainstream Christian churches. Various Educational Acts and legislations contributed to this development. The 1870 Foster Education Act forms an important milestone in that process followed by the 1902 and the 1918 Education Acts. These Educational Acts were modified into the Education Act of 1944 that forms the basis for the current educational system of England and Wales (Clarke, 1968; Gates, 2005; Harris, 2007). It is this 1944 Education Act which is directly relevant to this research. By the 1944 Education Act the Christian faith was assured its place in English society where a free Christian education is provided for all; and religious schools were brought under the umbrella of the state system as partners (Gates, 2005; Pring, 2005). The major change that came with the 1944 Act was the compulsory legal status which was given to religious instruction and the daily religious observance in both 'County' and 'Voluntary' schools (Gates, 2005; Green, 2000). What is important is the secured equal status of denominational schools with that of non-denominational schools within the state system. This Act opened up the space to Voluntary Schools to be part of the tax-supported school system (The Ministry of Education, 1944). Under the 1944 Act, non-denominational and community schools, which formed the majority, were classified as 'County' schools. This category received full funding from the LEA. The Act introduced two categories of maintained voluntary school; 'Voluntary Controlled (VC)' and 'Voluntary Aided (VA)'. Schools with the 'Voluntary Controlled' status would receive full financial support from the LEA but the latter would have control in matters of staff appointments and the religious education syllabus. The 'Voluntary Aided' schools would receive financial support from the LEA that covered 50 per cent of the capital costs; this later increased to 85 per cent and at present it stands at 90 per cent (Department for Education, 2012; Harris, 2007). Although the school's founding body has to cover the remaining 10 per cent of costs, the local authority does retain discretion to

cover this (Department for Education, 2012). Aided status grants a school more control over staff appointments, syllabus for religious education and a broader membership in the school's governing body (Department for Education, 2012; Harris, 2007). Most denominational schools came under the two categories of 'Voluntary Controlled' and 'Voluntary Aided' (Department for Education, 2012; Harris, 2007). There was, however, a minority of denominational schools under a third category labelled 'Grant Maintained' similar to 'Voluntary Aided' status but its funding was received under an agreement with the LEA (Harris, 2007).

It is through this 1944 Act voluntary status that the Jewish community, for instance, secured public funding to some of their early schools becoming the first minority faith-based schools to open in the state sector (Department for Education, 2012; H. Miller, 2001; Parker-Jenkins & Haw, 1998).

The 1988 Education Act and after

The period 1988-1996 witnessed a series of legislation initiatives on different aspects of education including school structure, curriculum, assessment, inspection and parental influence (Tomlinson, 2008). The move was a push towards more of a market ideology in schooling where parents were conceived of as consumers, so parental 'choice' was emphasised (Ball, 1993; Crozier et al., 2008; P. Gardner, 1994).

The 1988 Education Reform Act was another significant turning point of relevance to the current educational status. Christianity in the 1988 Act was given a special status in state schools. The school assembly, according to this new legislation, must include an act of worship that is broadly Christian in nature (The UK Parliament, 1989). Nevertheless, parents have the right to withdraw their children from these assemblies if they wish to. Despite this emphasis on Christianity as the main traditional faith, teaching about some other religions such as Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism, for the first time, became a compulsory part of the school curriculum in Britain (The UK Parliament, 1989). The spiritual dimension of a child's development was further reinforced in Part 1 of the 1988 Education Reform Act (The UK Parliament, 1989). The change also meant reducing the powers of local authorities, establishing central government control over the curriculum and assessment, introducing new measures of accountability and introducing the grant-maintained schools category (Downes, 1994). In order to enhance 'choice' and reduce the powers of LEAs, schools could opt-out of the LEA control and be directly funded from central government by becoming grant-

maintained. This move gave grant-maintained schools control over their own admissions (Tomlinson, 2008). The 1988 Act also gave parents the right to choose their children's schools but without any guarantee of a place at the preferred school (Harris, 2007). To help parents make some informed decisions, schools had to publish their GCSE examination results and those tests of children aged 11-14 (Downes, 1994; Tomlinson, 2008). Accordingly, in 1992 GCSE results were publicly accessed through newspapers in the form of 'league tables' (Tomlinson, 2008). In 1992 a new system of inspection that was partly privatised was introduced under the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) control (Tomlinson, 2008). Under the Education Act 1992 reports of state-funded schools would be publicly available (Tomlinson, 2008). Nevertheless, these changes were criticised as dividing and fragmenting the educational system based on competitive dynamics (Ball, 1993, 2003; Crozier, et al., 2008; P. Gardner, 1994).

The Conservative Party's belief in choice and competition between schools developed further during the new Labour government of the 1990s and subsequent years. New Labour had already showed readiness to open doors to independent schools from non-Christian denominations to receive public funds and become Voluntary Aided (Harris, 2007). Hence, faith-based schools gained more support along with specialised schools, and a new form of semi-privatised schools, known as academies, was introduced, while league tables become a forum for increased competition between schools (Tomlinson, 2008). The 1998 School Standards and Framework Act brought the grant-maintained school status to an end introducing the 'foundation' label as a new category. Accordingly, the Act's changes resulted in four types of schools within the state system in England and Wales as follows:

- 'Community Schools (formerly County schools) [which I refer to throughout this thesis as mainstream schools];
- Foundation Schools (formerly Grant Maintained schools);
- Voluntary Aided Schools; and
- Voluntary Controlled Schools' (Parker-Jenkins, et al., 2005, p. 17).

Currently maintained faith-based schools are broadly of three main categories, Foundation, Voluntary Controlled (VC) and Voluntary aided (VA) (Department for Education, 2012). According to Parker-Jenkins et al. (2005, p. 17), 'the School Standards and Framework Act (1998) is noteworthy because it contains a number

of provisions which bring faith-based school communities substantially into the decision-making process.' The right of parents to educate their children according to their own beliefs is further stressed in The Human Rights Act 1998 as follows: 'The State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions' (The UK Parliament, 1998, Part II, Article 2).

Yet, Britain's religious landscape has been transformed since the last decades of the twentieth century expanding its religious capacity to include large populations of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and others (Joly, 1988; Peach, 2005; Peach & Gale, 2003). The 1944 Act gives faith communities up to the present day the right to apply to set up schools based on their religious ethos within the state sector given that there is enough demand from parents. In England, according to July 2010 Department for Education (DfE, 2010) statistics there were 6783 maintained faith-based schools presenting around 34 per cent of all maintained schools. Of these faith maintained schools, the Church of England schools constitute around 68 per cent (4598), around 30 per cent (2010) were Catholic and a further small minority of other schools associated with the Christian denominations. Voluntary Aided Schools with non-Christian traditions in England by 2010 include Jewish (38), Muslim (11), Sikh (4) and Hindu (1) (DfE, 2010). The first Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh state schools have all opened since 1998 (DfE, 2012). By January 2012 Al-Hijra Primary School became Voluntary Aided making it the first VA Muslim school in Britain that has both primary and secondary phases for both boys and girls in the 4–16 age range (AMS-UK, 2012b). The number of the Muslim state-funded as well as independent schools is dynamic:

> There has been a real energy and motivation nationwide in terms of establishing new schools, both independent and free schools, which reflects the Muslim community's concern for education and identity of future generations. (Chowdhury, 2012, p. 3)

This expansion is not without opponents, such as that from the British Humanist Association's (BHA) (2012) strong opposition to Government plans in expanding the number and variety of state-funded religious schools.

Conclusion

This chapter shows that Muslims in Britain are not a homogeneous group. They do share similar religious principles but are a heterogeneous population along various facets including ethnic, national, linguistic, class, Islamic interpretation

and rootedness in British society. While some are the descendants of early pioneer migrants and, therefore, part of established communities, others are recent immigrants. In this respect, the community consists of economic migrants, asylum seekers, students and uncontrolled migrants. Based on their differentiated experiences, such diversity is expected to have its influence on Muslim community members' educational needs, goals and expectations. The community is not only holding a deprived social profile but the London 2005 terrorist attacks raised concerns around the community's lack of integration and potential risk to the wider society. It is within such a background that Muslim schools are functioning and struggling to find their space as part of the British educational structure. In order to help understand the diverse future directions of Muslim schools and to contextualise participants' accounts, Chapter 3 continues placing the case-study schools within their historical background. In doing so, it reviews the body of literature on Islamic education and its interaction with diverse contexts through time and space including that of Britain.

Chapter 3. Islamic educational theory and practice in the light of texts and contexts

Introduction

In light of the British educational development discussed in Chapter 2, the debate on who should provide public education has gained its renewed vigour today. Questions arise regarding children from minority backgrounds and ways in which their religious as well as cultural needs are cared for in state schools. This issue has been widely discussed from different perspectives of whether faith-based schools have a positive contribution to society at large or whether the opposite is true (Burtonwood, 2003; R. Gardner, et al., 2005; Parker-Jenkins, et al., 2005). In the background of the national and international socio-political changes and challenges, new conceptions impinge around the educational goals that these schools should be working towards and there are concerns regarding their outcomes. At the heart of such debates are both independent and Voluntary Aided Muslim schools. This highlights the necessity of understanding Islamic schools in Britain within the context of their long history beyond the 'war on terror' climate. In this respect Parker-Jenkins et al. (2005) consider the emergence of Muslim schools as an important sociological development in England and Wales. Yet, new faith-based schools such as those of Muslims and the communities they serve 'do not fit easily into existing theoretical, social or educational models' (Parker-Jenkins, et al., 2005, p. 167). In light of this challenge, there is a need to review the body of literature on Islamic education and its interaction with its diverse contexts. Firstly, while literature on Islamic schools continues to grow (Abbas, 2011; Halstead, 1986; Niehaus, 2009), proportionately less effort has been devoted to reviewing the long journey these schools have made as they established themselves in present-day Britain. Secondly, I believe that the continued perception of Islamic education as completely foreign to Western structures and theories of education adds little to researchers' understanding of the shared links and historical threads. Hence, this chapter looks inwards to explore outwards. It examines debates over Islamic education that come at the heart of Islamic history and thought and explores socio-political contexts that are embedded in the institutionalisation of Islamic schooling through time and space.

Thus, the chapter presents a brief multi-layered exploration of the diversity of Islamic educational practice and theory. The historical variety, richness and complexity of the Islamic educational tradition, as well as its dialogue with Western thought, is demonstrated quintessentially in recurring debates between 'Islamic' and 'Western' theorists. Names such as al-Farabi, ibn-Sina, al-Ghazali, and ibn-Rushd (Averroes, died 1198), were famous in intellectual circles in the West. Moreover, the titles of 'the Philosopher' for Aristotle (383-322 B.C.) and 'the Commentator' for Averroes show recognition for such an interaction (Kimball, 1996). In this regard Kimball (1996) argues that regardless of the political struggle between Europe and the Muslim world during the period between the late twelfth and late thirteenth centuries, '… masters of the liberal arts receptively translated, employed, and honored Islamic texts and their authors' (p. 16). A background such as this remains important for those seeking to envisage what the next century of Islamic education within a Western context may hold. It is also important in understanding participants' perspectives and expectations of Islamic schooling as it interacts with its British structures.

In this endeavour, the first section of the chapter follows the journey of Islamic educational institutions up to the present Islamic schools in Britain. The second part briefly traces the evolution of theory in Islamic education, highlights its interaction with Greek philosophy and reviews key theoretical perspectives on the current Islamisation of knowledge debate. The review identifies four key educational approaches: the pragmatic, the speculative theological, the philosophical and the sociological. Then, the third and fourth sections follow the contemporary threads of the educational discourses which are currently influencing British Islamic schooling. Threaded through the exploration of this journey is the unifying theme of the engagement of diverse Muslim communities with their diverse socio-political contexts and the ways it contributes to how they shape Islamic educational theory and practice accordingly.

3.1 Islamic educational practice: Past and present

Before Islam, reading and writing were not widespread within the Arab Bedouin culture (Al-Baladhuri, 2001). In the wake of Islam, education secretly started in a private home in Mecca and the Quran was the first text book (Ibn Hisham, 2004). Soon after, the new Muslim community found a safe refuge in Medina, and a mosque was built which became the centre of education (Ibn Hisham, 2004). Since then, and due to the central role of mosques in Muslim community life and their association with education, their establishment has been a priority wherever

Muslims settle (Al-Baladhuri, 2001; Ramadan, 2007). This holds true even today. Special measures were put in place by Prophet Muhammad to move the culture towards reading and writing (Ramadan, 2007). As a result, two types of teaching emerged. First was the teaching of the Quran through study circles (*halaqahs*) in mosques and mainly to adults, delivered by Muslims. Second was the teaching of reading and writing that was primarily carried out by non-Muslims (Tibawi, 1972). This early practice paves the way for British Islamic schools to include non-Muslim staff as part of delivering the national curriculum and yet remain true to their goals. What also emerges from a study of this phase is that educational provision was not restricted to a certain social or economic class but was free and equally open to those from poorer backgrounds (Ab Nu'aym, 1932). The Suffah school, a room that was attached to the Prophet's mosque, was an educational provision at the time of the Prophet that also functioned as a residential place for homeless new Muslims and to travellers (Ab Nu'aym, 1932).

After the Prophet's death (in 632) his Companions scattered through Arabia, Africa and central Asia and started teaching what they had learnt (Al-Baladhuri, 2001; Tibawi, 1972). To fulfil their religious duties regarding his teachings, some prominent classes to teach Quranic reading and interpretation (*tafsir*) were established by the Prophet's Companions in Medina, Mecca and Iraq. The jurists amongst the Companions were also faced with continually emerging new and contextual issues which they had to adjudicate on regarding fundamental teachings of the Quran and the Prophetic tradition (*Sunnah*). From this initial phase there developed some distinct schools of thought (Ibn Ashur, 1972).

At this point in Muslim history, mosques were working as educational centres in a variety of fields of knowledge (Al-Nuaimi, 1990). The most famous higher educational institute in the Muslim world is al-Azhar in Cairo (Dodge, 1974). During the tenth century, the Fatimids (who were *Isma'ili* Shiites) constructed this mosque to serve their newly-built city of Cairo, and as part of their political struggle in spreading their religious doctrines against those of the Sunni Abbasids (Ab Nu'aym, 1932; Dodge, 1974). The mosque was later developed to serve as an institution of higher education (Dodge, 1974). Religious studies were taught in the early morning and late afternoon, while medical lessons took the middle period of the day (Shalaby, 1954). Other subjects such as logic, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, astronomy, geography and even philosophy were also cultivated at al-Azhar as well as at some other similar institutions (Dodge, 1974; Tibawi, 1972).

3.1.1 Elementary education: from mosque to Kuttab

In contrast to the early period of Islam, the tenth century period had better provision of teachers, and as a result children's education flourished. Quranic classes, known as *kuttab*, were arranged in mosques as well as in private premises (Shalaby, 1954). Ibn-Khaldun (died 1406, also spelled ibn-Khaldaun) (2005a) describes the rapid spread of *kuttabs* in his time where nearly all villages had their own *kuttabs*. A careful reading of ibn-Khaldun's report (2005a) reveals variation in elementary education throughout the Muslim world. Some concentrated only on Quranic sciences while others included some other core subjects such as writing, logic and literature. The curriculum was open, and progress to the next stages was largely according to individual pace assessed through interaction and by contribution during lessons (Shalaby, 1954). This type of schooling resembles in its structure and content the mosque afterschool classes (known as *madrasas*) that the British Muslim community initially adopted.

3.1.2 *From mosques to madrasas (colleges)*

With the quick expansion of Islam in various places, educational classes in the mosque were faced with an increased demand. Furthermore, mosques started to offer courses in a wider variety of subject areas including specialist subjects. This demanded the setting up of a paid educational system to attract the best-qualified teachers in each field and to facilitate their full-time dedication to teaching (Shalaby, 1954). By the tenth century, a more institutive form of education had emerged in South and Southeast Asia, known as a *madrasa* (college). The famous Nizamiyya madrasa in Baghdad was established in 1067 by the Seljuq vizier Nizam al-Mulk (Makdisi, 1981). The date for the initial emergence of madrasa is contentious; Riaz (2008) argues that its initial existence was well before the celebrated Nizamiyya madrasa in Baghdad. However, Makdisi (1981) believes that mosque-inn complexes, i.e. places that were built attached to mosques for law students, existed before the madrasa system.

There was also a political aspect to the rapid spread of schools. After the overthrow of the Fatimid and Buwayhid Shia' states in Iraq, Syria and Egypt by Sunnis, it became essential for the new leadership to win the loyalty of the various racial and sectarian groups (Dodge, 1974; Makdisi, 1981). These *madrasas* enjoyed a widespread presence in South Asia during the Mughal Empire (1556-1858). Its graduates, known as *Ulama* (scholars), were highly respected and politically influential, especially with respect to education (Riaz, 2008). In the wake of the colonial and postcolonial eras, the *madrasas* started losing their

status (Riaz, 2008). This decline was partly due to the establishment of new Western well-resourced institutions. A period of competition between the new Western type of education and *madrasas* ensued, resulting in tensions between colonial interests and those of local communities determined to preserve their tradition and heritage (Nielsen, 1999; Riaz, 2008). As a result of the perceived failing role of the old *madrasas* new educational networks of institutions, such as that of Darul Uloom Deoband, were developed in resistance to the British assimilative approach and colonial rule in India (Darul Uloom Deoband-India, n.p). Yet, as part of the re-establishment of immigrants into Britain, various institutions, particularly Islamic 'seminaries' such as those in Bury and Leicester were founded (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 87) (see Chapter 2).

Thus, there were religious, educational, social and political reasons for this move from voluntary teaching in mosques to the establishment of a more centralised educational system that was shaped by its different contextual inputs up to present day. Makdisi (1981) explains the emergence and the flourishing of the educational institution of *madrasas* as an outcome of the institutionalisation of charity for the purposes of education by the law of *waqf* (charitable trust). According to Nielsen's (1999) assessment 'it is from such *madrasas* that Europe inherited much of the basis of its modern culture' (p. 71). On the other hand, Makdisi (1981) believes that the university as a corporation is a Western product, but the college, as a charitable foundation, is without doubt native to Islam. In making this point, he (Makdisi, 1981) traces the development of the charitable trust of England, that led to the inception of the first college foundations in Oxford, back to the Islamic *waqf* system. Moreover, Makdisi (1981, p. 225) appreciates the contribution of Arabic learning to the 'great revival of learning' in Western Europe through the influx of new knowledge mostly through Spain and partly through southern Italy.

Muslims may certainly try to adapt to the coming century's challenges and demands, but adaptation implies understanding of, and comparison with, the past. In the following section I follow some ongoing tensions between theory and practice, and between change and preservation in the field of Islamic education influenced by its milieus.

3.2 Islamic educational theory: Historical roots and current discourses

This section gives an overview of the theoretical framework that underpins Islamic educational practice through its different environments. It also provides a synopsis of contemporary Islamisation of knowledge theory that is useful in understanding teaching practices in British Islamic schools. These approaches vary in terms of the degree of authenticity required to accept narrations, conditions placed on interpretations, the space given to reason as opposed to narrated texts, and the degree of acceptance and integration of non-Islamic thought. Hence this gives rise to different and sometimes divergent definitions of what Islamic education truly is. The point to notice here, however, is that all approaches are mostly closely related with regard to the spiritual, physical, mental and moral aspects fundamental to an Islamic philosophy of education.

3.2.1 The historical roots

For analytical purposes I will examine four main earlier discourses. All deal with questions of 'how to attain knowledge?' with contextual influences that have contributed to their answers to this question.

The pragmatic approach of jurists

Fearing that philosophical interpretations were a threat to religion itself, traditional jurists felt decisive about the degree of using reason in interpreting Islamic sources. The nature of knowledge for this school is summarised by ibn-Taymiyya (died 1328) (Hallaq, 1993) who was a Hanbali jurist who grounded himself in both Islamic science and Greek philosophy. Ibn-Taymiyya rejected the philosophers' theory of knowledge which holds that religion and philosophy in the metaphysical sense cannot be reconciled (Hallaq, 1993). In defence of Sunni doctrines, ibn-Taymiyya believed there was no contradiction between objective rational investigation and the authentic Islamic narrated texts. Any claim of interpretation, according to this jurist's school of thought, would need to be supported by Arabic language classical usage or by other Islamic texts on the same topic (Hallaq, 1993). This argument was a rejection of any interpretation of Quranic verses or Prophetic narrations based on claimed insights into hidden meanings that could only be accessed through mystical illuminations or philosophical actualisation.

Among the adherents of this approach were theorists who took the lead in the field of Islamic education such as ibn-Sahnun (died 869) who wrote a concise treatise entitled 'the behaviour of teachers' (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 290). This was followed by al-Qabisi's (died 1012) detailed book (Al-Qabisi, 1986) entitled 'Detailed report on the situation of schoolteachers and the regulations governing schoolteachers and pupils'. Both were following Malikite jurisprudence and were also amongst the first jurists with a traditional religious approach who are known as Ahl-al-Hadith. The Jurists' educational theory started from the concept of *fitrah* (natural instinct), that is, as humans we share a basic instinct to believe in One Creator. However, this instinctive belief can be changed by the social environment in which people develop their concepts about life. Thus, the main educational aim is to preserve this *fitrah* and strengthen the belief in God. In order to do so, al-Qabisi argued that a sound base of religious education – both theoretical and practical – was essential. However, al-Qabisi's theory of education neglected the natural sciences as an important field of knowledge; the psychological aspects of learning were also omitted. On the other hand, al-Shawkani (Shawkani, died 1839) (2000) stressed the importance of a broad curriculum that included other fields of knowledge.

The speculative theologians' (al-Mutakallimun) approach

Three main schools emerged within this approach. Firstly, the Jabarites who believed in fatalism and that humans had no free will and their choices were pre-determined by God (Khadduri, 1984). Secondly and in contrast, the Mu'tazilites argued for complete free will, claiming that humans are free agents who can decide on and initiate their own actions (Khadduri, 1984). Amongst the most important educational aims, according to Mu'tazilites school of thought, is the achievement of freedom through the use of reason. Unlike jurists, in cases of contradiction between a religious text and a rational argument, Mu'tazilites would give the priority to what they thought was rational and then interpret the text accordingly (Khadduri, 1984). Al-Jahidh (also spelled al-Jahiz, died 869) is the most distinguished figure in this school. He (Al-Jahiz, 1969) adopted scepticism as a starting point for matters that were not supported by apparent and authentic religious texts. Scepticism for him was a skill that could be gained through training which made it possible to avoid imitation.

Thirdly and later the Asharite school emerged which may be described as occupying the middle ground between Jabarites and Mu'tazilites. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali became the most prominent Asharite theologian at the time. Like al-

Jahidh, al-Ghazali considered scepticism to be the natural way to arrive at authentic belief. In his (Ghazzali, 2000) book 'the incoherence of philosophers', al-Ghazali rejects metaphysics as a genuine route to true knowledge. Fusing mystical heritage with the rationalistic aspects of Islamic jurisprudence *(fiqh)*, al-Ghazali called for the spirit of free rational enquiry *(ijtihad)*. Beyond the literal reading of Quran and Sunnah texts, al-Ghazali was attempting to find ways that required the integration of the human and social contexts when implementing legal rulings and yet remained faithful to the objectives of scriptural sources. This gave birth to the 'school of objectives' that was further developed, especially by the work of ash-Shatibi (died 1388) (Ramadan, 2009, p. 63). It could be argued that there is a link here with Islamic schools in Britain facing contextual challenges that need a fresh look within the Islamic framework while taking into account their environment. Al-Ghazali's role in drawing up a broad educational theory that gives priority to divine grace without denying the importance of rational thinking, empirical observation and logical deduction have given him an appeal which has endured for centuries (Tibawi, 1972). His views find their echo in the current Islamisation of knowledge discourse which is further discussed at the end of this theory section.

The philosophical approach

This approach to Islamic education is more controversial than the other three approaches discussed in this chapter. The main characteristics of this philosophical approach can be seen in the attempt to reconcile religion, philosophy and the natural sciences. Some prominent philosophers such as al-Kindi (died 873), al-Farabi, ibn-Sina and ibn-Rushd were all natural scientists (Khadduri, 1984). This reconciliation had many facets such as the explanation of religious truths using Greek terminology and arguments as can be seen in al-Farabi, ibn-Sina and the Ikhwan al-Safa (Brethren of Purity) (Khadduri, 1984). In order to prove the Islamic notion of creation, for instance, al-Kindi (1978) utilised his mathematical research to refute the Greek theory of the infinity of the world. Some philosophers still researched the natural world from within a religious frame of reference. As an example there is the physicist ibn-al-Haitham (965–1040) who has been described as 'the founding father of modern optics' by UNESCO (Salih & Gomati, 2005, p. 2). Furthermore, in an attempt to harmonise Greek philosophy and Islam ibn-Rushd (Averroes, 2001) argues for different levels of truth. Additionally, he (Averroes, 2001) argues for the need to use philosophical debates in presenting religious truths since, according to him, not all people accept religious texts as truth. In trying to help Muslims overcome their political

and religious fragmentation, al-Farabi developed his epistemology based on 'universal reason'. Reconciling Aristotle and Islam, al-Farabi came to believe that human reason was superior to revelation. For him the faculty of reason was the highest status which humans needed to gain in order to attain supreme happiness (Al-Talbi, 2000). Furthermore, values, knowledge and practical skills needed to be acquired for individual and societal happiness. The success of education could only be measured in light of the transformation of learning into action. Hence, al-Farabi stressed the importance of morality in education (Al-Talbi, 2000). So, reason and its tools of logic became the means for such discourse.

The sociological approach

Another approach which was established by ibn-Khaldun was the sociological approach. Ibn-Khaldun (died 1406) (2005a) discussed his philosophy of history and sociology in his book '*al-Muqaddimah*' (The introduction) in which he presented the diversity of educational practices in his fourteenth-century era in the Eastern and Western parts of the Muslim world. Based on his principle that education was a social phenomenon, ibn-Khaldun (2005a) analysed disparity in learning outcomes as dependent on the content of the curriculum, teaching methods, teachers' conduct, material resources, and the learning environment and circumstances. He described the decline in knowledge in the western cities of his contemporary Muslim world as increasing as a result of the fall of Cordoba in Andalusia and Kairawan in Tunisia, two of the main research centres. In contrast, and as a result of the stability in civil life, students in the east were enjoying well-resourced educational institutions and good financial support (Ibn Khaldaun, 2005a). Following Muslim theorists before him, ibn-Khaldun divided the sciences into the religious and the rational. The most important amongst the non-religious sciences according to him is logic and the least is metaphysics. Hinting at a hidden curriculum, ibn-Khaldun emphasised two types of learning, the subject matter and the teacher's conduct. In his view, the teacher's conduct could have a stronger impact on the child's personality than the theoretical teaching.

Up to this point I have considered major trends in Islamic educational practice and thought. But what relevance do these themes have to British Islamic schools in particular?

This diversity of thought does not just belong to the medieval period but has continued to our present time and educational practices. While Greek philosophy had its impact on steering earlier Muslim discussions, al-Ghazali's work in turn

had a widespread influence on Western medieval scholarly debates such as those of Thomas Aquinas (Ghazanfar, 2000). Furthermore, al-Ghazali's thought has impacted greatly on the recent debates around Islamic education, its philosophical underpinnings and the curriculum (Nofal, 2000). Indeed, the very fact that forms of learning like '*kuttab*' or '*halaqah'* (study circle) are still used within the British context demonstrates the influence of tradition and its engagement with the present. An example is the Suffah Primary School (2012) whose name is inspired by the very early learning space in the Prophet's mosque. The school is an Ofsted registered school and is also a part of Hounslow Mosque and Islamic Centre. The Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation (2009) is another living example of this marriage between past and contextual present, especially in its *'Halaqah'* approach to teaching and learning. The *Halaqah* Curriculum approach, as its developers believe, 'combines the best of classical culturing with modern dialogic approaches' (Ahmed, 2012; The Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation, 2009).

3.2.2 Islamic educational response to modernity

When analysing the critiques of Western modernity or modern education in the Muslim world today, the first impression is of an agreement that Muslim education is presently in crisis. The common thread in all these discussions was the concept that Islamic education should encompass the whole of man without divorcing the physical from the metaphysical where both mind and soul are nurtured (Al-Attas, 1979). The achievement of this vision, however, necessitates the establishment of institutions that can integrate both revealed and acquired knowledge (Qutb, 1979). Yet the understanding of this principle varies considerably among Islamic theorists. Many support the idea of adopting the scientific discoveries and technology, stripping them of their ideological elements and then placing them within an Islamic framework of *tawhid* (monotheism). As a response, the First World Conference on Muslim Education was held in Mecca in 1977 to discuss the theoretical foundation for such an Islamic educational system (Iqbal, 1978). The main outcome of the conference was the emergence of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in the USA in 1981, followed by more conferences, publications and institutions in different parts of the world (IIIT, 2007). The London based Association of Muslim Social Scientists (UK), is a similar organisation that is 'committed to the development of Islamic thought through research, scholarship and publications' (AMSS-(UK), 1999). Muhammad Naguib al-Attas (1979) and Ismail al-Faruqi's (1982) writings form the foundation of such a project. Sardar (1998), however, calls for a fundamental transformation and the development of a separate Islamic paradigm that is free from the embedded

values of the 'West's epistemological imperialism'. Nevertheless, the theoretical approach to the Islamisation of knowledge is not without its Muslim critics (Abaza, 2002; Rahman, 1988). Taking these points into consideration, the next section follows the emergence of the Islamic schooling body within the contemporary British context.

3.3 Contemporary Muslim schools in Britain: Agents of preservation and change

The challenge sketched

As discussed in Chapter 2, most of the Muslim community in Britain is from a diverse immigrant background. As they settled in the new context, their first concern was to find living accommodation. Soon Mosques were established by transforming some homes into places for performing congregational prayers (Nielsen, 2009). Many Muslim parents, however, were not pleased with what their local state schools had to offer in relation to religious and cultural provision (Parker-Jenkins & Haw, 1998). Giving their children an education that catered for their religious and cultural needs became a pressing priority. Religious and cultural-language classes were run in mosques (*kuttab*) and other community buildings during weekends or after school (Nielsen, 1999). These *kuttab* classes are commonly called madrasa amongst the Asian community in Britain. However, in addition to being an extra academic burden for the children, these classes were not adequate in terms of resources and approach to teaching. For example, aspects like corporal punishment, unqualified teachers and rote learning compare negatively with the local state school provision (Halstead, 1986). The 1944 Education Act had already given the chance for some other religious groups to accommodate the educational needs of their communities, and Muslims could see no reason for their case to be an exception (Parker-Jenkins & Haw, 1998). Consequently, in this sense faith-based identity became an educational goal to some groups of the Muslim community.

The initial impetus for these schools was as a protest against the inadequacies of provision for Muslim pupils by local state schools (Parker-Jenkins & Haw, 1998). This drive gradually developed more momentum with more organised schools that steadily increased in number reflecting a diversity of backgrounds and educational interests (Ansari, 2004). At first concerns were about resources (Parker-Jenkins & Haw, 1998). Persistent attempts of these schools to enter the state-funded sector during the Conservative Government – during the 1980s and

early 1990s – were unsuccessful. But, in January 1998 the first two Muslim schools gained recognition. The widely publicised case was that of Islamia Primary School in Brent, the first to get recognition from the Labour Government after a long struggle (Nielsen, 2009).

Islamic schools: towards a unified structure?

The spontaneous sporadic and fragmented development of these schools, however, led to equally fragmented Islamic educational provision (Ansari, 2004). In response to this status of fragmentation and isolation the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS-UK) emerged as an umbrella body. To date, it has 100 affiliated schools and *madrasas*. The AMS-UK's publicised aim is to work towards developing a more robust Muslim educational body and 'to represent, inspire, motivate, support and build capacity in institutions, so that they become centres of excellence' (AMS-UK, n.p-a). Ansari (2004) summarises this move as follows:

> Education represents for British Muslims a major area of struggle for equality of opportunity and assertion of a distinct identity. It was over education that Muslims became increasingly vocal in raising their demands from the early 1980s, and it is where they have succeeded best in having many of their needs recognised in the face of controversy and opposition from broad sections of British society. (p. 298)

Being part of the state educational system is evidence that Muslims in Britain are starting to put down roots and abandon the binary of diaspora-homeland.

Moreover, in an attempt to bridge the gap between research and practice the Centre for Research and Evaluation in Muslim Education (CREME) (Panjwani, 2012; 2011) is launched in June 2011. The Centre aims at supporting, organising and disseminating academic research into a range of contemporary issues related to Islam, Muslim communities and education in the UK. Such initiatives can certainly be credited with helping Islamic schools evaluate their practice and adjust to their British milieu's demands and challenges.

Nevertheless, the state support for more faith-based schools, especially Muslim schools which hold control over their own admissions, continues to raise much controversy. The most avid argument against faith-based schools in general, and Muslim schools in particular, is that of social divisiveness (Abrams, 2011; Dawkins, 2010). This debate has expanded to also include independent faith-based schools. The next section examines this debate in relation to Muslim schools.

3.4 Muslim schools: Divisive or inclusive?

Regardless of the fact that levels of pupil segregation in British schools are widely apparent as a result of geographical, class and ability factors and to some extent by the nature of local schools (Nielsen, 2004), faith-based schools in particular are depicted as being a threat to social cohesion (R. Gardner, et al., 2005; Short, 2002). The exclusion of pupils coming from different faiths or from no-faith families and the inculcation of certain beliefs are considered to run counter to the essential aims of a broadly secular education and, therefore, to undermine the eligibility of faith-based schools as candidates for state funding (Bailey, 1984; Barrow, 1981; Burtonwood, 2003; Pring, 2005; White, 1982, 2003). Moreover, in light of theories concerning international conflict such as 'the clash of civilisations' (Lewis, 2003; Lewis & Schnapper, 1994) the argument against faith-based schools in general (and Muslim schools in particular) as divisive by their own nature is an ascendant discourse in contrast to other debates. This discourse focused around the safety and security of the whole society is considered a sufficient justification for sacrificing parts of the society's requests (Halstead & McLaughlin, 2005). As the backlash against multiculturalism has gathered pace, the private spheres of Muslim communities in Britain, including religious institutions, have become more exposed to public scrutiny (Werbner, 2009). Consequently, Islamic schools in Britain have yet again come under intense public censure because it is claimed they play a role in threatening British social cohesiveness through their perceived links to extremism (Ahmad, 2011; BBC News, 2009). Many of these assertions thus far have relied upon investigative media coverage.

There are two main characteristics for faith-based schools that distinguish them from the common type: the first is linked to their distinctive aims and the second regards their special environment (Halstead & McLaughlin, 2005). Their distinctive educational aims, it is argued, will lead to inculcating religious values that are not compatible with the pluralistic nature of a democratic society. The British Humanist Association (BHA) (2006, 2012) is an extreme example of such views; it dedicatedly criticises faith-based schools accusing them of social divisiveness by promoting a school ethos that is not universally accepted. The distinctive environment of faith-based schools is also criticised for social segregation (Pring, 2005). Thus, it is claimed, both the aims and the environment features of faith-based schooling sow the seeds for divisiveness and cause a threat to social cohesion (BHA, 2006). For example, the riots in Northern Ireland and the Oldham and Bradford areas are presented as evidence of the 'lethally

divisive' nature of faith-based schools (Dawkins, 2001, p. 17). Following this line of argument, the common schooling in Northern Ireland, where both Protestant and Catholic would share their education, is seen as the remedy to the problem (Dawkins, 2001). Critics of such arguments (Grace, 2003; Halstead & McLaughlin, 2005; Short, 2002) counter that the charge lacks evidence, is rationally inconsistent and is based on a decontextualised and oversimplified view of the roots of social conflicts. In this regard, Grace (2003, p. 151) considers such strong claims to be deploying a 'guilt by association' mode of analysis. What further complicates the political and public debates around faith-based schools, Grace (2003) argues, is the distorted and partial knowledge of the great majority of people involved in such debates, amongst them Professors of Public Understanding. In this regard, Parker-Jenkins et al. (2005) believe that '[t]here are no easy answers to these problems of segregation and racism, and local communities themselves will have to become centrally involved in solutions' (p. 176).

Moreover, the claims for those presenting the vision of common schooling as the ideal model for balancing pupils' cultural needs and developing shared national identities are challenged. Parker-Jenkins et al. (2005) question the claim that by simply providing a shared educational space for children from diverse backgrounds through mainstream schooling, challenges of institutional racism would be resolved. From a different standpoint, Halstead and McLaughlin (2005) argue that there is complexity in achieving a balance between developing mutual respect for the different worldviews without teaching that all perspectives of life are equally correct. By rejecting the divisiveness assertion of faith-based schooling, they (2005) argue that these schools are well positioned to contribute towards a healthy formation of citizens who can achieve an equilibrium between their overall life outlook and their political standing. Similarly, Short (2002) argues that faith-based schools can legitimately be seen as a force for unity, given an appropriate curriculum. Nevertheless, Parker-Jenkins et al. (2005) also challenge the view that faith-based schools are positively contributing to social integration and harmony. Thus, they argue that both faith-based schools and mainstream schools need to seriously consider concerns over their potential contribution to the deepening of social division. On the one hand, faith-based schools need to reflect upon ways to overcome potential risks of becoming 'insular, introverted and dogmatic' (Parker-Jenkins, et al., 2005, p. 194). In doing so, these schools are called upon to show a genuine respect for the cultural and religious diversity within them in both aspects of provision and application. On the

other hand, mainstream schools are urged to reflect upon their contribution to the expansion of faith-based schools, particularly to those from minority ethnic groups (Parker-Jenkins, et al., 2005).

However, one further point of relevance to these complex debates is that the divisiveness argument makes the assumption that by not funding faith-based schools, parents will not find any other alternatives for their children's education except that of common schooling. In fact many parents are already sending their children to private religious schools, using home-schooling or schools abroad (Brighouse, 2002; Islamic Home Schooling Advisory Network (IHSAN), 2006; Rothermel, 2002). Against this background, Brighouse (2002) argues that alternatives can be extreme ideas, which may have a better market when moderate voices are suppressed. It is also worth noticing the consequences of the ideological war against religious schools, as Brighouse (2002) rightly points out, give legitimacy to the extreme interpretations of religious texts in positioning the state and the public in a war status. In this respect, Halstead and McLaughlin (2005) argue that:

> There is currently no evidence available to link Muslim or other faith schools to political extremism or civil unrest; the hypothetical possibility remains that this might happen in the future, but it is unlikely because children who have a strong self-identity and who are treated fairly and justly by the broader society are much more likely to grow up into tolerant, balanced and responsible citizens. (p. 67)

Further it has been argued that an important aim of a universal education is the empowerment of disadvantaged individuals. Thus, qualifications which might be attained are seen as paths to better social position and enhancement of self-esteem (Hewer, 2001). However, for Muslim young people in Britain that aim is still yet to be achieved. Although the 2001 census data show that Muslims in the UK are doing better than Muslims outside the UK in terms of education, the same data show that Muslim youth are still achieving less than some other religious minority groups (see Figure 3.1).

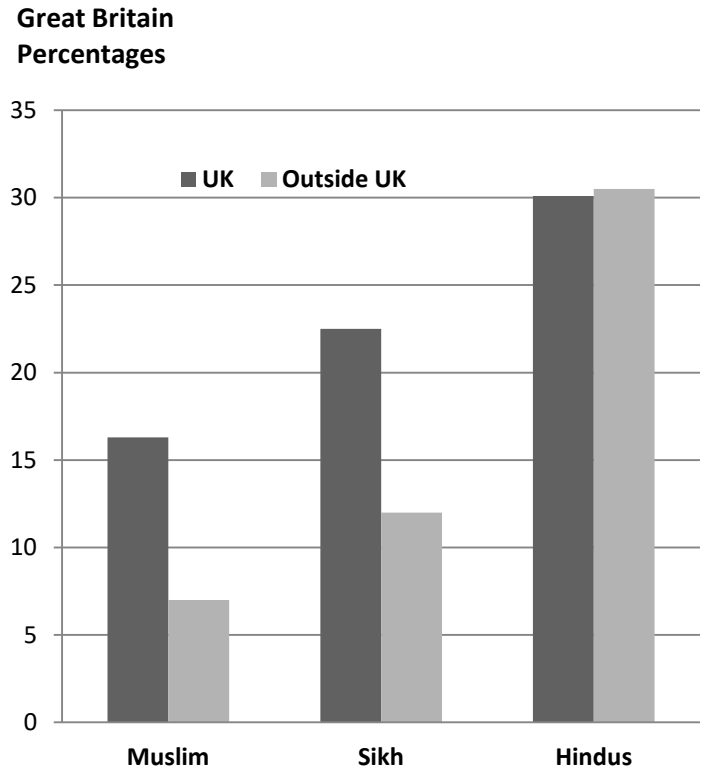

Figure 3.1: Percentage of 16 to 30 year olds with a degree: By religion and country of birth, 2003-2004

Source: (Office for National Statistics, 2004a, p. 12)

Yet, under-achievement among Muslim pupils, and some other minorities, is often discussed as a product of their personal beliefs, attitudes and cultural practices and values (L. Archer & Francis, 2007). Nevertheless Muslim schools, regardless of their lack of resources and lack of experience, are showing some evidence of dealing more effectively with these obstacles and, as a result, raising standards (Hewer, 2001). In this sense, Jack Straw, former Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor, stated:

> You might expect Priory Academy, Lincoln, or Watford Grammar School for Boys to be top of the tree for their exam results. But Tauheedul Islam Girls High School, Blackburn? Third-best in the country with 98 per cent of pupils getting five or more good GCSEs including maths and English. What's going on? (Straw, 2010)

The fact that such a statement is about Muslim girls being educated in a Muslim girls' school illustrates something important about the change Islamic schools are working towards. This, Hewer (2001) believes to be due to the safe environment provided in these schools and the high expectations from parents, staff and the

Muslim community. These aspects Hewer (2001) argues play as key factors that help in affirming pupils and boosting their sense of worthiness, which is positively reflected in their attainment levels. Nevertheless, Muslim schools in Britain are still mainly serving their own community. Despite this fact, based on the experience of Muslim schools in the Hong Kong model, Halstead and McLaughlin (2005) expect these schools to develop more inclusivity as they become more established and in consequence gain better public acceptance and support.

All the above indicates that in order to further inform the debate around Muslim schools in particular more scholarly voices need to be added to a debate dominated by the media and politicians. This is not only for national harmony and understanding but also, as Grace (2003) argues, for international understanding. However, Halstead and McLaughlin (2005) do not perceive complex empirical judgements as sufficient for assessing the divisiveness or otherwise of faith-based schooling. Hence, they argue that philosophical, religious, political and cultural considerations are of vital importance because they touch, among other aspects, upon the construction of the notion of divisiveness and its related virtues.

The research into practices in Muslim schools in Britain as well as in Europe is still a developing area. There has already been a growing corpus of research in relation to educating Muslim pupils or Islamic schooling. This includes raising questions over Muslim pupils' needs in mainstream schools (Joly, 1984; Parker-Jenkins & Haw, 1998); priorities that educators perceive in regard to educating Muslim children in both mainstream and Muslim schools (Haw, 1994; Parker-Jenkins & Haw, 1998); issues of equality in relation to public funding (Parker-Jenkins, 2002; Parker-Jenkins, et al., 2005; Tinker, 2006); discussions on school knowledge concerns (Halstead, 1994; Niehaus, 2009; Thobani, 2010; Walford, 2002) and parental interests in Islamic schooling for children in the early years (McCreery, Jones, & Holmes, 2007). One of the tasks for this intellectual debate, in relation to the current situation and the vision for the future of the Muslim community, is to focus on the question of exploring Islamic educational aims in twenty-first century Britain. Moreover, for Muslim educational practitioners, this philosophical discussion raises questions and opens doors for reflection on the curriculum and on day-to-day school activities. Yet, as presented in Chapter 2, Muslims are not a homogenous group:

> Even with those for whom a Muslim identity is in many contexts not just a background, it does not follow that it is the religious dimension that is most prominent… We cannot assume that being 'Muslim' means the same thing to all. For some, being Muslim is a matter of community membership and

> heritage; for others it is a few simple precepts about self, compassion, justice and the afterlife; for others it is a worldwide movement armed with a counter-ideology to modernity; and so on. Some Muslims are devout but apolitical; some are political but do not see their politics as being 'Islamic' (indeed, may even be anti-'Islamic'). (Modood, 2010, pp. 2-3)

This diversity raises questions concerning parental expectations of their chosen Muslim schools and the way Muslim educationalists imagine Islamic schooling, and/or respond to their contextual demands. In examining diversity within these schools, the present study seeks to explore the emergent issues from the way Islamic education is being practically constructed within the British socio-political context. Guided by the broad questions presented in Chapter 1, this study adds theoretically to the debates around Muslim schools' diverse provision in Britain and in Europe at large.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that Muslim discourses in Britain are not separate from the prevailing socio-economic structure in which they are functioning. Muslim community members execute practices in relation to the existing structures of their time and space. Although the current initiatives of Muslim educational practice within its British context share similar antecedents to those of earlier generations, they have begun to be shaped by their new structural conditions within a broadly secular British society. Yet, their current situation raises several concerns including their contribution to the fabric of British society. This debate, however, still lacks sufficient empirical evidence with regard to where these schools are now. This chapter forms a theoretical base that contextualises these schools in their long journey beyond the current socio-political context. In doing so, it seeks to provide a better understanding of the dynamic nature of the debate over Islamic educational goals and forms and the role the socio-political milieu plays in shaping them as they also feedback into it and change wider debates about inclusivity and diversity.

The next two chapters discuss issues of theory and methods of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4. The theoretical framework

Introduction

The discipline of Islamic education in Britain demands taking into account the diversity of Muslims' backgrounds, the variety of experiences and the responses of Muslim individuals and organisations in the face of complex contextual challenges. In order to link the research questions to the theoretical underpinnings of the research, this chapter argues for my theoretical choices already signalled in Chapter 1. The research framework is shaped by:

1. Theoretical approaches to Islamic education
2. Giddens' theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984) and specifically his notion of 'double hermeneutics' that forms the basis for the study's assumptions about the relationship between structure and agency in understanding social phenomena.
3. Gadamer's (1982, 1989) interpretation of 'practical wisdom'.

In so doing, the chapter is divided into two main sections. In section one I unravel my ontological and epistemological foundations that influence the research design presented in the following chapter. The autobiography presented in Chapter 1 reveals some aspects of my subjectivities related to agency, structure, Islamness and textual interpretations through diverse contexts. In section one, I argue for the relevance of such a narrative because this subjective background is formed with respect to my ontological positions. Section two, then, pursues this line of argument through a critical assessment of the two key concepts that I am bringing to bear upon my analysis of data. I argue that 'the double hermeneutic' process is a process to which this research is contributing as I am trying to address the issue of Islamic schooling. The notions of 'double hermeneutic' and 'practical wisdom' seemed to clearly explain the ways people involved in Islamic schooling reflect on their day-to-day activities and, in the light of new knowledge, are able to influence the structure of these schools. This includes reproducing current educational practices, changing them or preserving and altering parts of them through the choices that individual agents continuously make and how this feeds back into the wider social discourses about these schools. In doing so, I draw on the theoretical underpinnings of the 'double hermeneutics' conceptualisation to further explore the nature of the

relationship between the researcher and the researched including the insider and outsider dichotomy.

4.1 Ontological and epistemological considerations

This section discusses the theoretical approach that underpins the research arguing that social actors possess agency, reflexivity and the capacity to act if they will. However, this needs to be understood within their wider social structures that may enable them to act or constrain them through the dynamics of power and inequalities and contribute to the shaping of their thinking, sense of self and conduct. Although such a status is restricting, it is not deterministic. This study is sensitive to the debate on language and reality but it is far less committed to relativist positions such as that of a purely postmodernist view of the world. In this respect, I adopt Giddens' (1993) perspective that it is particularly important 'to sustain a principle of relativity while rejecting relativism' (p. 23). Hence, the research takes up Giddens' analysis of the duality of structure and agency to explore the process of change within Muslim schools.

4.1.1 The use of Giddens

The enduring opposition of subjective and objective assumptions is challenged by both post-positivism and critical theory and related ideological positions (M. S. Archer, 1996; Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Giddens, 1993; Walsh, 1978). The critical realism view of structure and agency, for instance, perceives human action as both enabled and constrained by social structures, but this action in turn reproduces or transforms those structures (Bhaskar, 1979). In this regard Bhaskar (1979) argues for the stratification of reality allowing diverse methodologies to be adopted depending on the nature of the matter being investigated. In distinguishing epistemology from ontology Bhaskar (1979) believes that reality is not dependent on observation because some variables might be at work but not realised. Linked to Bhaskar's writings, Archer (1996, 2000) and Giddens' theories (1984) both seek to straddle, in different ways, this apparent split between an objectivist and subjectivist view of the nature of the social world. Archer's (1996) thesis on culture and agency considers structural and cultural domains as substantively different and relatively autonomous with an exchange relationship in relation to resources and legitimacy. Following this line of argument, Archer (1996, 2000) perceives individuals as rational actors pursuing material interests. Failing to appreciate this differentiation and

autonomy, for Archer, would lead to collapsing the two into each other which, on the other hand, would not allow understanding of social life 'as the interplay between interests and ideas' (M. S. Archer, 1996, p. xi).

Giddens (1984) attempts to find a way in between the structure and agency division, by combining philosophical hermeneutics and critical realism, resulting in his theory of structuration. These diverse perspectives concerning the debate around structure and agency, Giddens (1984) argues, are not merely epistemological but are also ontological. For Giddens (1984) structure and agency are a duality where, although divided, the lines of division remain fuzzy. Given this dialectical relationship, social scientists would not be able to control variables and test any innovative theories. This is partly due to the dynamic nature of the social life where appealing theories, hypotheses or research findings may be taken up in social life and, in some degree, become a part of the very social reality. For Giddens, social researchers are dealing with subjects who are thinking, feeling and reflexive about their own conditions. Thus, at the time of testing, the social reality would have already changed constituting within it those same theories about it. So, the difficulties inherent in controlling variables combined with the complexity of the dual feed-in process would not allow for exact replication of any previous observations (Giddens, 1984).

Similarly, in an attempt to overcome the dualism of subjectivity and objectivity in theory, Giddens (1993) rejects the view of paradigms being closed entities, separate and self-enclosed. Instead, he (Giddens, 1993) believes that:

> *[A]ll paradigms* (read 'language-games', etc.) *are mediated by others.* This is so on the level both of the successive development of paradigms within science, and of the actor's learning to 'find his or her way about' within a paradigm. (p. 151, emphasis in original)

Hence, Giddens (1993) regards the process of learning about any certain paradigm to involve learning in a contrasting way of what it is and what it is not. For him (Giddens, 1993, p. 151), the different interpretations that result from such an exercise indicate 'the frangibility of the boundaries' and 'the internal fragmentation of frames of meaning' over what is 'internal' or 'external' to the frame. Moreover, Giddens (1993, p. 151) believes that the emphasis upon the discrete categorisation of paradigms as separate 'universes of meaning' can lead to an inability to tackle problems of meaning-variance. It is my position, along with Giddens (1993, p. 23), that such a tendency will permit the principle of '*relativity'* of meaning and experience to become '*relativism'.* Accordingly, he

(Giddens, 1993, p. 23) rejects relativism emphasising the importance of sustaining relativity by treating universes of meaning as mediated rather than 'self-contained'. It is this view that this research takes on board.

This theory of Giddens is not without critics. Archer (1996) rejects the duality view and warns against what she describes as the confusion of epistemological and ontological issues. In this respect, Archer (1996), believes that Giddens' theory of structuration does not give enough examination to the relative autonomy of culture from both perspectives of structure and agency. However, King (1999) strongly rejects Archer's claim of the autonomy of structure from individual actions describing it as a mere conversion of 'the temporal priority of other people's actions into the ontological priority and autonomy of structure' (1999, p. 10). This, King (1999) rightly argues, is due to her ontologisation of time where the individual actions of people in the past are suddenly presented as structural and irreducible to those individuals once they become history.

In regard to this study, most of the Muslim population in Britain originates from former British colonial territories where there was a long-lasting interaction with their colonies; their own educational structures have been shaped by the present British structures in different ways and, therefore, are no longer completely autonomous from them. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 3, the charitable trust of England that led to the setting up of the first college foundations in Oxford traces its roots back to the tenth century Muslim *waqf* system that also underpinned the establishing and consequent flourishing of madrassas (Makdisi, 1981).

In this regard, the prominent poet and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1999) denounces the view that regards Islamic and European cultures as completely alien to one another. On the one hand, Iqbal (1999, p. 3) appreciates the Greek influence on Muslim thought in terms of being 'a great cultural force in the history of Islam'. Such a cultural force, Iqbal (1999) argues, influenced the various schools of scholastic theology that arose under its inspiration disclosing 'the remarkable fact that while Greek philosophy very much broadened the outlook of Muslim thinkers, it, on the whole, obscured their vision of the Quran' (1999, p. 3). Iqbal (1999) further argues that modern European culture was not immune from Muslim intellectual heritage, influence and inspiration. In light of such an historical basis, Iqbal (1999, p. 7) examines what he describes as 'the enormous rapidity with which the world of Islam is spiritually moving towards the West'. For him (Iqbal, 1999), such a movement is not a matter of concern

because the two worlds are not mutually exclusive 'for European culture, on its intellectual side, is only a further development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam' (p. 7). The central concern that Iqbal (1999, p. 8) raised was related to what he described as 'the anti-religious and especially anti-Islamic propaganda' that was growing within Turkey and around Indian Muslims during his time. This, he (Iqbal, 1999) suggests, was due to the 'the dazzling exterior of European culture [that] may arrest [Muslims'] movement and [they] may fail to reach the true inwardness of that culture' (p. 7). Hence, Iqbal (1999) finds it necessary for Muslims in their relation to European culture to:

> …examine, in an independent spirit, what Europe has thought and how far the conclusions reached by her can help [Muslims] in the revision and, if necessary, reconstruction, of theological thought in Islam. (p. 8)

It is in light of these perspectives that Muslim schools in Britain are navigating their way to link their past with their present in a spatial relationship to its different contexts. Thus, it is only new geographies combined with the relevant socio-political milieu and interaction of time-space with those same individuals and structures that are different:

> This conscious mixing of traditions and crossing of boundaries highlights the ways in which the rest, now so obviously visible in the West, have always been a part of the West. This destroys the unitary clean and coherent images of modernity that have been projected out of the Western centres. (Featherstone, 1995, p. 11)

For such a background, I found Giddens' analysis of the relation between structure and agency relevant to answering the research questions. In his elucidation of 'agency', Giddens (1984) places this concept within its historical particular modes of activity. The recursive and continuous nature of the relationship between structure and agency in Giddens' notion of the 'double hermeneutic' can permit the incorporation of Islamic schools' institutionalisation through time and space with the research participants' current narrations and social constructions of Islamic schooling. Therefore, the analysis and implications of this research need to be understood and evaluated within the temporal context in which they occur.

4.1.2 Islamic schools as subjective and objective social reality

Answering the study questions about the ways Islamic education is perceived in the case-study schools, parental expectations and ways in which schools deal with diversity cannot be detached from the ontological and epistemological stances that, as a researcher, I have taken in relation to the research. My position on such philosophical discussions will not only influence my interpretation of the definition of Islamic schooling but also the nature of my data and its analysis process. In this respect, the ontological/epistemological questions concern whether Islamic schools can and should be regarded as objective bodies that have a reality external to the individuals who inhabit them, or whether they can and should be dealt with as social constructions developed from the perceptions and actions of social actors.

Assuming a position of objectivism implies that the social phenomenon at hand is beyond my influence as a researcher (Bryman, 2008). So, my autobiographical background would not be relevant to this study. Moreover, the meanings of Islamic schooling and Muslim culture/s would have an independent existence outside of this study's participants. Thus, the categories participants use in their discourses such as 'practising Islam', 'cultural values', 'Islamicity' and 'Islamness' concepts would have well-defined meanings separate from these social actors and their contextual influences.

Although Islamic schools having similar mission statements may have some degree of difference, thinking in terms of objectivism 'Islamic education' would have a precise definition to which all their educators would have to conform, at least within the same organisation. These schools, therefore, are expected to retain a high degree of constancy across time and space. Moreover, pupils within these organisations will have to learn and apply these rules and objective meanings that shape their organisation (Bryman, 2008). Similarly, the growing number of Muslim state schools would have to be viewed as being completely restricted by the system in which they are developing and growing; because the established British structure they are surrounded by has its own almost tangible reality that is separate from the influence of the new entities incorporated into it. So, the assumption that social reality is objective requires the definition of the various components comprising these schools' lives, and analysing the relationships and regularities between these components. It is about focusing on these schools' properties and their influence on the actions of social actors and

the way they shape social relationships over time. A precise definition of Islamic educational practice would be essential for developing a unified model of Islamic schooling divorced of its contextual input.

A key observation from Chapter 3 shows that the different practical interpretations of Islamic education were all based on a holistic approach to schooling where Quran learning forms the bedrock. Therefore, one of the core concerns of Islamic education, as Iqbal (1999) puts it, is that:

> The Ultimate Reality, according to the Qur'an, is spiritual, and its life consists in its temporal activity. The spirit finds its opportunities in the natural, the material, the secular. All that is secular is, therefore, sacred in the roots of its being … There is no such thing as a profane world. All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self-realization of spirit. (p. 155)

It is this outlook that Zine (2008) regards as a holistic view where the physical, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of identity and identification are intrinsically connected as essential aspects of Muslim ontology. Appreciating this faith-centred perception would allow a better grasp of participants' views surrounding their understandings of religious texts. Accordingly, the main traditional approaches to Islamic education discussed in Chapter 3 are incorporated in understanding participants' perspectives from within their religious framework. Nevertheless, based on the literature review that discusses the evolutionary path that Muslim schools have taken through different contexts via time and space (see pp. 33-43 in Chapter 3), it becomes evident that there does not exist any precise accepted definition of Islamic schooling. Such a path shows the way Islamic educational structure and content were being shaped by the different contexts through which its practice was embedded.

Given this background, I argue that a position predicated on objectivism does not serve the goals of this study or help answer its research questions (see p.2). Hence, it was not a goal for this study to try and discover and theorise precise definitions for certain concepts with the purpose of measurement amongst the different case-study schools because, as I have argued, these schools, as social organisations with the various cultural backgrounds that are incorporated into their fabric, are not static or self-bounded. As a researcher, I may try to seek to define the meaning of some of the used concepts based on participants' accounts, for instance, to facilitate understanding of the phenomenon. However, the research participants 'regularly appropriate themes and concepts of social science within their behaviour, thus potentially changing its character' (Giddens,

1984, p. 31). The discourses prevalent within these schools may move on along with any future emerging educational policies, national or even global discussions in relation to Muslim schools in areas of faith or otherwise. Muslim schools, being rooted in their history, would be better understood using an approach that takes this aspect into consideration. This is because during the process of change, social actors are self-conscious and cannot afford to reject their past completely; because it acts as a restraining force. Yet, they have the spirit and energy for forward movement (Iqbal, 1999).

In light of this, the notion of a 'double hermeneutic' offers the study a way to examine actors' verbal expressions about their social conditions within which they are taking their actions and the expressed reasons for such actions. This also implies that in producing knowledge about social phenomena, researchers do influence what they examine, and thus reflexivity of what this 'slippage' implies regarding my pursuit of knowledge about these schools becomes essential. It is here where I argue that my autobiographical elements related to this study are relevant and necessary and constitute an important part of researcher's transparency. In this regard, ontological and epistemological questions are interlinked. I further discuss this notion of 'double hermeneutic' in the next section.

4.2 Relationship to social research

This section presents the theoretical concepts that underlie this study's data analysis. It also discusses my position relative to the participants in this study.

4.2.1 The double hermeneutic

I utilise Giddens' notion of 'double hermeneutics' to explain the field of Islamic education in Britain and the ways in which discourses in Muslim schools are being shaped by their context.

In Giddens' (1984) attempt to bridge the conceptual gaps related to meaning, action and subjectivity and the notions of structure and its constraints, he argues that human social activities are of a recursive nature. So, reflexive monitoring constitutes part of the knowledge production. Giddens (1984) conceptualises this process as the 'double hermeneutic' in which concerning:

> …the meaningful social world as constituted by lay actors and the metalanguages invented by social scientists; there is

> constant slippage from one to the other involved in the practice of the social sciences. (p. 374)

In his explanation of the 'double hermeneutic', Giddens (1993) incorporates Gadamer's ontological view of understanding. Those involved in Islamic schooling engage with their contexts within a framework of underlying pre-understanding. The responses they get from such engagement form a new moment of understanding that itself loops back to modify that pre-knowledge for future action. In this research this has three main areas of application. The first is in terms of exploring Islamic school heritage and recognising the pre-knowledge that has gone into its development and formation up to present day Britain. The second is in relation to this research process and the way it unfolds in a type of spiral action in which the knowledge produced by one phase becomes the pre-knowledge for the next. The third is in relation to the way research participants interpret Islamic education within their present British context.

The theoretical approach I employ maintains the following assumptions that underpin this notion of 'double hermeneutic':

Firstly, this study adopts Giddens' (1984) view of the knowledgeability of social actors which partly constitutes social practices. So, participants in this research are seen as purposive agents who have the competence to explain most of what they do, if asked. Moreover, participants are continuously and routinely monitoring their activities within the social and physical contexts in which their actions are occurring. Thus, their actions are not separated from the influences of the body's mediations with the social and physical surrounding world, including the contextuality of time-space. Participants, as social actors, are involved in a continuous and routine flow of intentional actions that inevitably have some unintended consequences which also feedback 'to be the unacknowledged conditions of further acts' (Giddens, 1984, p. 8). In this regard Giddens (1984) differentiates between intentional acts and unintentional consequences. So, although participants in this study, including educationalists, parents and children, will have intentions for their routine flow of actions, they may not be aware of or pleased about the consequences of those acts. The essential outcome of their acts as agents needs to be separated from their individual intentions for the fragmented individual actions (Giddens, 1984).

Secondly, for Giddens, 'reflexivity' goes beyond the 'self-consciousness' to have more of a monitored character that contributes to the reproduction of social

practices. So, participants are involved in a process of 'reflexivity' over their actions and are continuously and routinely monitoring its outcomes and deciding on future actions that occur as a 'durée' (Giddens, 1984). Accordingly, participants are constantly involved into a reflexive monitoring and rationalisation of their actions, wherein they 'maintain a continuing "theoretical understanding" of the grounds of their activity' (Giddens, 1984, p. 5, quotes in original). Through this process of reflexivity, participants take account of their contextual conditions to incorporate new cultural and social experiences into their identity. This leads to gradually changing their previous cultural practices.

In sum, the notion of 'double hermeneutic' is about the interpretative interplay between social scientific knowledge and human activities. By this I mean that participants in this research are continuously engaged in interpreting the world around them, including my presence as a researcher. Hence, the central concern for this research is the exploration of participants' interpretations of their diverse lived experiences of Islamic schooling. During such a process I am also involved in a systematic interpretative activity. Participants, as social actors, are interpreting their world expressing it through their discursive accounts and I am trying, as a researcher, to make sense of their discourses. New knowledge about these schools is also fed back into participants' consciousness of their conditions and can be used to alter their future course of action. This makes this research an active process in which my role as a researcher is dynamic. In this sense, I recognise the crucial role language plays in such a process of dual interpretation. However, I question the view of reality as solely or primarily being constructed through language.

4.2.2 Islamic schooling: practice within the contextual present

As discussed in Chapter 3, the purpose of Islamic education is not knowledge per se; its purpose is to produce the person who worships God. To achieve such an aim, Islamic education aims to train the spiritual, the physical and the mental spheres of learners. Although the Quran is the book that Muslims believe to be the Word of God, it is not the sole source of Islamic thought. The Prophet Muhammad's life is seen as the practical interpretation of the Quran. His move from Mecca to Medina exposed the early Muslim community to a diverse and more complex socio-political context than that found in Mecca (Ramadan, 2008; Salahi, 2002). The Prophet's relationship with the surrounding cultures, religions, local customs and social practices of Medina was different from how it had been

in Mecca. This reflects the Prophet's consideration of the different realities through time and space. In many traditions of the Prophet the cultural diversity of the Medina context is mentioned and considered either explicitly or implicitly (Salahi, 2002). This has given rise to the consideration of common good (masalih an-nas) and local custom ('urf) when using analogical reasoning (qiyas) and, more broadly, the implementation of legal preference (istihsan) by later Muslim religious scholars (Hallaq, 2005; Philips, 2007; Ramadan, 2009). In doing so, there is always a need to understand those customs, analyse Islamic principles and find 'the right measure' in application (Ramadan, 2009). In the midst of such processes are the attempts of Muslim schools to create an institutional space for themselves within their British context and meet its demands and challenges. Teachers' conduct in these schools, especially Islamic studies teachers, is perceived as particularly crucial in the translation of their subjects into practice. In this regard the teacher is seen by the Director of Karimia Institute (M. Hussain, 2010, p. 1), for instance, as '… a role model who make the content of the National Curriculum relevant to a Muslim child by contextualising it and Islamising it'. Thus, during that process of translation into practice of what is considered to be Islamic, teachers are acting as thinkers, interpreters and inquirers in their own right.

It is within this context that participants' perspectives of 'practice' must be understood. In their paths to becoming devout British Muslim citizens, children need not only to develop a body of theoretical knowledge about Islam, but also place this knowledge into practice in their everyday activities and ethical decisions. If that is the principle aim towards which Muslim schools in Britain are working, as announced by the Association of Muslim Schools (n.p-a), then there will be a need for pupils to gain a sophisticated understanding not only of their Islamic ethical codes but also of their application in context. Accordingly, learners need to develop understanding of Islamic sources, deliberation on contextual circumstances and wise application of texts to contexts. This is because 'practising' Muslim learners need to make sound judgements about life and are requested to live wisely within their contexts. Training for occupation and learning technical skills is part of Islamic education but certainly not at its core (Al-Attas, 1979, 1991; Al-Ghazali, 1904, 2005; Badawi, 1979). As for learners to become 'practising Muslims', they would always have to be vigilant in exercising critical judgment in order to remain true to their religious values, especially when faced with contexts that radically challenge their moral principles.

During the pilot phase, participants were using concepts of 'practising Muslim' or a 'good Muslim' to convey their perspectives and what they meant (see Chapter 8). Hence, my first task as a researcher is to understand their concepts. It is about knowing their world, what their considerations are and on which basis they make those daily choices. For example, if some parents opting for Islamic schools are looking for their children to become 'practising Muslims' or they want their children to 'practice Islam', then the question is at which level of practice, for what purpose and how judgements are reached? Moreover, as individuals are trying to become practising Muslims, so do the schools as institutions. However, challenges arising from cultivating Islamic schools within a Western context are not yet viewed as a philosophical field where the relation between theory and practice can be further explored. Theoretically, these schools are dedicated to promoting Islamic values, but achieving this goal in school life requires a practical interpretation of issues that are evolving day-by-day in order to arrive at the 'right measure' of 'the Islamic'. The diverse views on this practical translation may be expressed through silence, anger, setting up a new school or otherwise, but up to now it had not made its way through into the critical theoretical discussions, because practitioners cannot easily translate their problems into that discourse.

It is here where I see the centrality of Aristotle's concept of 'practical wisdom', phronesis, which involves the activity of making choices (Carr, 2000, p. 75). In Gadamer's appropriation of practical wisdom, he (Gadamer, 1989) argues that every citizen has a role to exercise practical judgment. This exercise of judgment takes place in the everyday social realm, without specialised knowledge. In an attempt to capture the hermeneutical process between theory and application and to seek a more adequate understanding of Islamic education, I have borrowed Gadamer's (1989, 2007) philosophy of practice, especially his interpretation of Aristotle's practical wisdom. Drawing on Aristotle, Gadamer (2007) employs the ancient Greek distinctions between technical knowledge (techne) and ethical knowledge:

> ...so practical philosophy is determined by the line drawn between the practical knowledge of the person who chooses freely and the acquired skill of the expert that Aristotle names techne. Practical philosophy, then has to do not with the learnable crafts and skills, however essential this dimension of human ability too is for the communal life of humanity. Rather it has to do with what is each individual's due as a citizen and what constitutes his arete or excellence. Hence, practical philosophy needs to raise to the level of reflective awareness the distinctively human trait of having prohairesis [the activity of making choices]. (p. 231)

Here the concept of 'practical wisdom' plays an important role. Seeking wisdom from whatever source is an Islamic Prophetic teaching, which, I would argue, demands critical reflexive dialogue with the other. Rejecting that other as a whole would undermine any possibility of finding any wisdom except from within the Muslim heritage and would contradict the historical journey of Muslim civilisation. But while this relationship to the other needs to be open, one must also realise that wisdom does not come with passive imitation. In this regard Gadamer (1989) notes, 'the claim to understand the other person in advance functions to keep the other person's claim at a distance' (p. 360). Thus for Gadamer (1989), in order to engage in an authentic dialogue that has the potential to produce understanding, one needs to be open to the other. This openness, however, 'does not exist only for the person who speaks; rather, anyone who listens is fundamentally open' (Gadamer, 1989, p. 361). Moreover, this openness 'does not mean that we do blindly what the other desires' (Gadamer, 1989, p. 361). Easy imitations or exclusion would only work as barriers to that fusion of horizons and, therefore, prevent seeing the wisdom presented in the other's sayings. This demands critical reflexive dialogical understanding, not only between Muslims and their Western contexts, but also between the diverse groups of Muslims. There is also a need for a critical revision on the implications this understanding might have for the development of Islamic educational aims and curriculum resources in the contemporary British milieu. Such a process involves knowledge, critical reflection and a balance between preservation and change. From this perspective reflexivity on oneself and the context becomes an essential part in coming to that 'right measure' (Gadamer, 2007, p. 115).

Educationalists provide certain forms of Islamic schooling based on their pre-knowledge of educational theories and practices, Islamic educational heritage and community needs. Parents and children, as primary users of Islamic schooling provision, express their expectations, views and concerns formally or informally to educationalists through the day-to-day interactions of school life. This is combined with the feedback these schools are receiving from the contextual socio-political structures including Ofsted, training providers and the media. In this regard, each school's experience of practice is unique and contextual. These schools' interpretations of their provisions and the consequently raised issues may, in turn, result in revisions of the educational priorities and practices in an unfolding process over time. Thus, schools' practice is seen as a spiral movement driven on by the feedback loops from the different interactions that take place inward and outward of these schools' contexts and

the diverse interpretations given to such experiences through the process of reflection. Figure 4.1 shows the following two interacting loops where each is influencing the other and where each moves in continuous feedback looped action.

Loop one: 'Experiencing in context' is related to the practice of Islamic schooling through its various interactions and experiences.

Loop two: 'Reflecting about' the practice of these schools as individuals as well as a community.

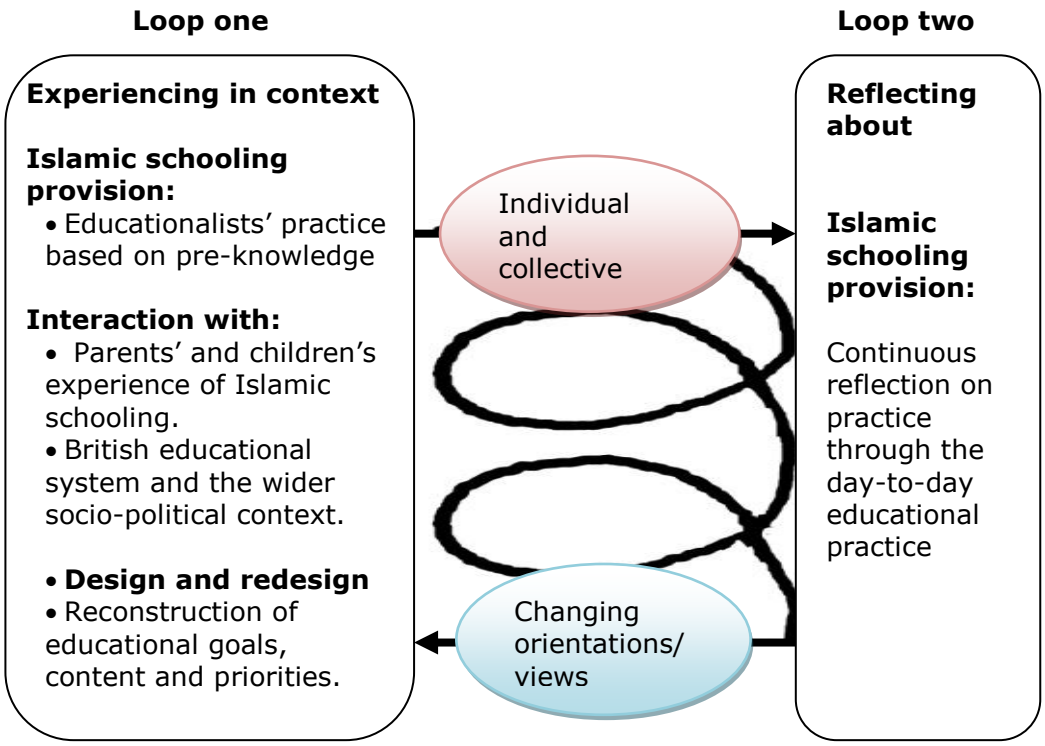

Figure 4.1: Experiencing Islamic schooling
Source: Adapted from Bednar and Welch (2007)

This framework embodies my belief that understanding Islamic schools in Britain demands reading their discourses in light of their past and contextual present. This approach places Muslim schools within a socio-political context that includes a variety of contributors beyond the persons who initiated them. In appreciating the power of individual actors and yet not underestimating the structural constraints, incorporating the 'double hermeneutic' concept offers a philosophical framework within which the discourses in Muslim schools can be explored. Furthermore, as my study aims to uncover and bring to visibility the diverse Muslim marginalised voices encountered in everyday educational practice, this concept will be useful in better understanding change and the relationship

between educational structures and individual actors within Muslim schools. This also positions me as a researcher in a subjective-subjective relation with the participants in this study.

4.2.3 Insider vs. outsider

In this section I explore in some depth the possible ways my Mediterranean complexion as a female researcher in my late thirties, my adoption of hijab dress and Arab background may have their influence on this study's results. Since all my interviews were conducted within a mainly Muslim environment, my focus will particularly be on questioning the notion of 'insider vs. outsider' in research and the opportunities and challenges that may face an insider researcher.

The debate over the insider/outsider dichotomy is not divorced from discussions over objectivity/subjectivity in relation to research. In this respect, there are various questions that may be raised around insider/outsider in relation to this study, especially when religion constitutes an important part of participants' discourses. For example, are researchers more objective studying their religious communities or does their position as insiders completely obliterate their objectivity? If they approach their communities as outsiders, does that make their study more objective or does it confuse the conclusions they report? More important still, when participants read the study's report, will they regret having participated in a study in which a researcher reduced their religious accounts to political, economic, or cultural social constructions?

In this respect, Griffiths (1998) elaborates on the insider/outsider status in terms of tacit knowledge that an insider might have due to their lived familiarity with the group being researched. This, she (Griffiths, 1998) argues, makes an insider's produced knowledge different from that of an outsider who lacks such intimate knowledge. Schwandt (2007) describes the differences between insider and outsider from a different perspective focusing on the nature of knowledge, stating that:

> [an] internalist or insider perspective holds that knowledge of the social world must start from the insider or social actor's account of what social life means. To know the world of human action is to understand the subjective meanings of that action to the actors. In contrast, an externalist or outsider perspective argues that knowledge of the social world consists in causal explanations of human behaviour. (p. 152)

Yet, from a post-structuralist perspective, researchers might argue that the insider vs. outsider dichotomy needs deconstructing rather than solving (Haw, 1995). According to this approach, objectivity is an elusive construction that generates authority and academic power through an artificial detachment from the social actors (Haw, 1995; Naples, 2003). In Merton's (1973) sociological perspective, boundaries separating insiders from outsiders are changeable in accordance to the different activated statuses where different values arise. Merton (1973) considers the insider/outsider debate as 'the problem of patterned differentials among social groups and strata in access to certain types of knowledge' (p. 120). He (Merton, 1973) argues that since we each hold several statuses, 'we are all, of course, both Insiders and Outsiders, members of some groups and, sometimes derivatively, not of others' (p. 113).

Throughout the study phases I was critically reflecting upon my role/s and identity/ies as a researcher. During my interactions with participants, I have been given different hats, at times I was dealt with as the University of Nottingham student, as a Muslim sister, as an Arab, as an African, as a white convert, as an expert and as a learner. Being aware of all these different hats at the different positions was essential. It is here where I realised that my insider status was not fixed and I have never been fully an insider or a complete outsider of these communities and their schools. My access to participants, whether headteachers, teachers, parents or children was not gained merely through being a Muslim, it was rather as Naples (2003) rightly argues: 'constantly being negotiated and renegotiated in particular, everyday interactions; and these interactions as themselves enacted in shifting relationships among community residents' (p. 49). Although the majority of my interviews were with Muslim female participants, there are still six adult male participants (two parents, a teacher, two headteachers and a deputy head teacher) and four non-Muslim female teachers (a young Asian Sikh teacher, a middle-aged Asian Christian teacher, a middle-aged black African teacher and a young white British teacher). In this case, my position as a religious insider is questioned even within a Muslim school and from different aspects. Interestingly with the two Asian non-Muslim teachers my position in the school was both as an insider and an outsider. The teachers had seen themselves as cultural insiders within the majority of South Asian pupils. In such cases I was unable to understand some of the terms expressed in the Punjabi language in their class narrative during interviews and they had to be translated to me. Based on the shared educational goals, the Christian teachers had perceived themselves as spiritual insiders regardless of the religious difference. However, some non-Asian

Muslim pupils interviewed saw themselves as religious insiders but cultural outsiders. Moreover, some non-Muslim teachers had been working for their schools for nearly a decade, knowing the specific culture of the school more than I did as a Muslim school visitor. All this raises the question of where shall I stand? Assuming a taken-for-granted insider position would certainly need deeper critical reflection.

Researching a complex issue within one's own community presented me with many challenges. Firstly, it became clear during the process of the study that I was both an insider and an outsider within the case-study schools. This duality produced opportunities and challenges. The opportunities arose from my intimate knowledge of Islamic schooling and its history, Islamic scholarship and Arabic language access to original sources. Moreover, I am a parent myself who shares some parental anxieties about the religious identity of their youngsters in mainstream schools and, as discussed in Chapter 1, I am also a former teacher in a Muslim school and can relate to the struggle of Muslim educators with change and resourcing. Yet, while I was in a unique position to listen to the perspectives and narrations of participants from the inside and to investigate a process of education that will probably have a crucial influence on the British Muslim community in the future, I was not observing it from a position of detachment. As a researcher, I mediate between the everyday language of participants and social scientific or academic reporting language (Gadamer, 1989; Giddens, 1993). My construction of this research report involved interpretation of the accounts of participants where personal experiences, interests and assumptions have a bearing on my own understanding of those narrations. Moreover, I had an interest in the way the process of Islamic schooling in Britain would unfold. This raised a strong potential for bias which I tried to neutralise by self-questioning, by reflecting on my motives and assumptions in my personal research journal, by using multiple data methods, participants and schools and by continuous searching for disconfirming evidence.

In this regard, Skeggs (1997) distinguished meanings of 'objectivity' in two ways. The first is about objectivity that is related to the 'practical adequacy' of accounts and their degree of rigour and completeness. The second is to do with the researcher's values about their study subject. Skeggs (1997) argues that it is impossible for researchers to insulate their research from any influence of their values. This happens at the different stages of the research process starting from the topic selection to the writing of the analysis. But:

> [j]ust because we value something does not mean that we cannot come up with an objective (in the first sense) account. Also, values may enable us to recognise things that others would prefer to overlook (gender, race, class, etc.). (Skeggs, 1997, p. 33, quotes in original)

Thus, reflexivity permeates every aspect of this research process, challenging me to be more fully conscious of my own biases as well as of the interests, cultures and politics of participants. In this respect, Etherington (2004) argues that reflexivity is more than self-awareness in that it 'creates a dynamic process of interaction within and between our selves (sic) and our participants, and the data that inform decisions, actions and interpretations at all stages of research' (p. 36). Reflexivity in this research connotes understanding the processes of data collection and interpretation in a critical and detached manner 'through internal dialogue and constant (and intensive) scrutiny of "what I know" and "how I know it'" (Hertz, 1997, pp. vii-viii, quotations in original). My adoption and valuing of researcher reflexivity has its roots in a complex mix of religious values of accountability, cultural and social changes (Giddens, 1991) and philosophical critique (Gadamer, 1982, 1986, 1989). In this respect, I have also been influenced by feminist thinking in regard to the importance given to reflexivity in feminist methodologies and increasingly adopted by other methodologies as well, for example, action research. Following are some areas of such a process of reflexivity and their accompanied intellectual and moral dilemmas.

Firstly, my lens of religious insider meant it was essential to critically consider previous research in the area. This was not only because the literature contributes to the scholarly background knowledge of this study, but further to facilitate questioning my own assumptions concerning the subject of study. This helps in distinguishing many areas of the study which otherwise would be taken for granted as familiar. It helps using the lenses of others to visualise some issues differently and examine the evidence provided in the diverse educational literature. Although my BA degree was in Islamic Studies I had not experienced the primary, secondary or college education in an Islamic environment and ethos because, as previously stated in Chapter 1, it was rather a post-colonial secular system of education. I used the critical incidents regarding my personal religious needs during early education, raised in Chapter 1, as a reflexive point to make the familiar Islamic school environment strange.

Secondly, being a member of the Muslim community exposed me to the dilemma of the extent to which I would like to expose the 'inside' accounts of my

community to outside public scrutiny. Such dilemma occurs in light of the political climate of the global War on Terror which calls upon Said's (1978, 1997) perspectives to make some sense of the weight of Orientalist's representation in the press. Accordingly, Muslim schools form an exotic closed world within the Western context which justifies fears of children being taught to 'despise' the Western culture (Hickley, 2009). In this context, I considered whether analysing data through a religious outsider would be more objective or whether such a perspective would rather be laden with oriental bias, with an objective Western outsider approach being more 'scientific' than a Muslim insider one. In this respect, I also had to confront my worries of whether disseminating the research conclusions would mean I was being disloyal to the community, exploiting the trust I was given, and whether those who had a less favourable view of the community could exploit the participants' accounts. I ultimately reached a conviction that being loyal to the community requires truthfulness to its diverse members, to respect their diverse perspectives and to review the process into which the community is heading. At the same time, it was essential to acknowledge the uncertainties, anxieties and challenges that Muslim educators are facing while trying to adapt to rapid changes in transitional contextual pressures.

Thirdly, during that journey of critical reflexivity I was also faced with another intellectual hurdle. It was about the use of Western conventions and concepts of research for a non-Western, Islamic phenomenon. Yet, as argued in Chapters 2 and 3 and section 4.1.2 of this Chapter, the British Western context and the social phenomenon of Islamic schooling are not mutually exclusive worlds. But there was the concern of closing my mind off to Western intellectual debates, as a means to protect my own Islamic thought and, therefore, place barriers on my creativity and originality. Conversely, there was the concern of underestimating the value of the Islamic scholarship and, therefore, of easily dissolving into the contextual Westernised philosophical frameworks. This dilemma demonstrates an attempt to reach a "right measure" by examining the similarities and differences of both philosophical frameworks. As discussed in section 4.2.2 of this chapter, it is about seeking wisdom (*hikma*) without passive imitation or inferior status through a reflexive dialogue (*tafakkur*) along the different sources of human intellectual heritage. However, this was a process that required risk taking, both in terms of being open to what is other, and in terms of putting my tradition, in a sense, to question (Gadamer, 1989). This personal dilemma is not detached from the research topic. The hybrid status of Muslim schools in Britain, and in the Western context in general, demands new theoretical frameworks that would

enable capturing participants' contextual and theoretical complexities. Without a serious consideration of Islamic philosophy in researching Muslim schools' development, a genuine aspect in understanding the complexities around their emergence and change will inevitably remain missing. Having said that, parental choices and Muslim school development is not to be solely read within the 'religious' tag. A broad array of literature in the field of schooling within the British context is also relevant and necessary. It is in light of these potential self-biases and dimensions of self-reflexivity that my vision of myself as a scholar has emerged. Originality in my thinking demands criticality to both Muslim and Western thought without discrediting either of them of the possible scholarship that they hold.

In summary, in order to reduce the impact of the researcher's subjectivity in this study a triangulation of resources and participants and a constant searching for disconfirming evidence was employed during both data collection and analysis. Moreover, exploring and questioning my own assumptions was an essential element throughout this process. This self-reflexivity was crucial while trying to blur out the familiar to be able to see any other pattern that might emerge. Being aware of the different lenses through which an issue might be seen helps to tackle various challenges associated with this type of study. I do not claim that this study is completely objective; because I regard myself as being in a subject-subject relation with this study's participants. In this respect, researcher's values do influence the type of data received whether being an insider or an outsider; because participants are reflexive beings (Giddens, 1984). Hence, pure objectivity is not possible in both cases. In this sense, this study makes an interpretation of participants' interpretations and discursive accounts of their own world, a process referred to by Giddens (1984) as 'double hermeneutics'. Social scientists have the task, first of all, of 'entering and grasping the frames of meaning involved in the production of social life by lay actors' (Giddens, 1993, p. 86) as well as the subsequent task of 'reconstituting these within the new frames of meaning involved in technical conceptual schemes' (Giddens, 1993, p. 86). This means that understanding the social phenomena involves two types of knowledge: knowledge of the way participants interpret their own experiences, and knowledge that researchers use to analyse and explain their participants' discourses. Accordingly, the 'outsider' is no more able to offer value-free or neutral knowledge than the 'insider'; rather, they speak from different positions. Critical reflexivity is necessary for both of them supported with an adequate foundation of participants' theoretical frames of meaning. Moreover, this double interpretation makes the story of this thesis

ultimately mine in relation to either the questions I raised throughout the study or the restructuring of participants' experiences and views. Nevertheless, like Skeggs (1997), I also proceeded with the utmost care and critical attention as I generated my data, analysed them and wrote them up. Throughout this process I endeavoured to remain faithful to the experiences and perspectives of the various participants involved in this research. Hence, it was essential to use the rigorous and systematic procedures throughout the research process that will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained why for me the study's questions suggested a hermeneutical framework that combined the notions of Giddens' 'double hermeneutic' and Gadamer's interpretation of 'practical wisdom'. The theoretical framework for this research has evolved and developed through a dual interpretation process.

In contributing to the topic of 'Islamic education and its contexts', I was aiming to explore Muslims' various meanings, experiences and inspirations for 'Islamic education' within their British context and the role of individuals, as agents, in the diverse provision of such education. By focusing intently upon the meanings and experiences of participants towards Islamic schooling and its context, I plunged into a diverse array of stories, narratives and concepts. So, Gadamer's (1989, 2007) concept of 'practical wisdom' became a useful tool for analysing these perspectives and ways in which Islamic theoretical knowledge translates, or is expected to translate, into school practice.

The notion of the 'double hermeneutic' is applicable in the case of this research as it is a social work of reflexivity which may, in turn, reorient the actions of its participants. This research adopts that social practices contain ontology of time-space where the reflexive monitoring, rationalisation and motivation of action are seen as embedded sets of processes in the acting self. Hence, Gidden's notion of the 'double hermeneutic' permits, I have argued, for an understanding of the history of Muslim educational institutions in Britain without ignoring the role of individuals as agents for that change. It provides the possibility of understanding and considering the power of structures and the role of individuals with a consideration of the past and its links to the present in a coherent way. Participants in this study are not objects but reflexive beings that are involved in a process of interpretation of their own context, previous studies, researchers'

interests, the study questions, and the possible implications of the study both within the school and within the wider context.

I drew on this theoretical lens to examine issues of similarities and differences amongst participants' perspectives of Islamic schooling in Britain. The next chapter therefore presents an explication of how these conceptual theoretical frameworks influenced and shaped the process and design of this research.

Chapter 5. Methodology

Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 present the demographics of Muslims settling in Britain and show features of diversity in their ethnic and religious backgrounds, experiences and educational thought through time and space. The research, as noted in Chapter 4, draws upon Giddens' methodological conception of the 'double hermeneutic' that forms a key component of the theoretical research framework that gives agency a central place in social analysis. The research is exploratory, aiming at:

- Exploring discourses in Muslim schools about the ways these schools are perceived to deal with tensions arising from existing diversity presented to them by the same religious group.

This general objective is broken down into a number of more specific goals, namely:

- Exploring schools interpretations of Islamic education
- Understanding parents' needs and priorities of Islamic schooling
- Working out what tensions arise from the existing diversity within Muslim schools
- Understanding Muslim school orientations in dealing with such tensions

In light of such a background, a multiple qualitative case-study approach is used to enable the exploration of participants' different kinds of experiences and meanings of Islamic schooling that are contextualised within the British socio-economic milieu. In this chapter I argue that the validity of the research lies in the richness and depth of insights around diversity in Islamic schooling. These insights cannot be obtained by a structured means of data gathering; they come from rich data through methods that enable participants to dig deep through the process of reflection to provide accounts about their motives, experiences and meanings.

The chapter consists of three sections. The first section introduces broad methodological concerns related to the study design by discussing the qualitative case-study approach, the quality of the research and ethical concerns. The second section details the data gathering tools and procedures arguing for their fitness for the purposes of this research and highlighting their limitations. The

third section gives a detailed account of the data analysis process and discusses concerns arising from the use of computer software to analyse qualitative data.

5.1 Research design

5.1.1 Qualitative case-study approach

Rationale

Focusing on the study questions is regarded as being the clue for deciding on the most appropriate research strategy to be adopted (Bryman, 2008; Yin, 2009). The topic of Islamic schooling in Britain is broad and highly complex; is still under-researched and the context remains crucial to the understanding of participants' accounts. In this regard, Yin (2009, p. 4) argues that from 'the desire to understand complex social phenomena' arises the 'distinctive need' for case-study research suggesting that the case-study strategy is particularly useful in answering 'how' and 'why' questions. Hence, Yin (2009) outlines exploring, describing or explaining a phenomenon as the main reasons for adopting a case study. I would argue, therefore, that a qualitative multi-case research design better suits the nature of the questions driving this research because answering those questions requires an in-depth understanding of the social phenomenon at hand. The questions of this research constitute an important part of the debate about the nature and direction of Muslims' presence in Western Europe at large.

Nevertheless, case studies remain challenging to conduct, demanding careful planning and implementation. A number of criticisms have been directed to case studies including lack of rigour (Yin, 2009) and the temporal dimension (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). Yet, Yin (2009) has argued that such problems are to do with the way case studies are generally conducted but they are not limited to case studies. Hence, he (Yin, 2009, p. 17) calls on researchers to distinguish ethnography and participant observation, as data collection methods, from case study as being 'a form of inquiry'. In saying so, Yin (2009) argues that a high-quality case study is neither solely dependent on these two methods of data collection nor limited to them. To overcome such threats to the quality of the research the criterion 'trustworthiness' needs to be taken into consideration.

Trustworthiness of the study

The quality criteria for qualitative research are open to debate (Kirk & Miller, 1986; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). As discussed

in Chapter 4, participants' perspectives and actions are not static because they are continuously interpreting the world around them. This makes the notion of reliability problematic because it would not be possible to produce similar results to this study through replication. The question of reliability as understood in quantitative research is, therefore, irrelevant to this research. Instead, the concept of trustworthiness is seen as more applicable. The credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability criteria that Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose as respectively substituting for internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity are adopted. Table 5.1 summarises the main steps taken to ensure quality in study data and analysis.

Table 5.1: Methods to ensure quality of the study

Qualitative inquiry criteria	Methods to ensure quality
Credibility	Member checks, multiple sources of data and multiple theoretical lenses
Transferability	Thick description of settings
Dependability	Audit – researcher's documentation of data, methods and decisions
Confirmability	Audit and reflexivity

Source: Adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985)

Credibility

Credibility concerns were regarded during the different stages of the study. To help deepen and enrich understanding of the different schools' settings, this research uses multiple sources of data, including interviews, documents and questionnaire as well as different types of schools, participants and places. I also combined the three types of theoretical perspectives discussed in Chapter 4 to gain a deeper understanding of the data than I would get from any single type of theoretical lens. Nevertheless, the discourse on triangulation has become quite complex and is not detached from the epistemological and ontological discussions in relation to research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Seale, 1999). The use of multiple sources of data in this research is understood in light of the theoretical research framework discussed in Chapter 4. It aims to take account of the richness of the context and the diverse interpretations participants make of their world through the process of reflexivity.

In terms of member checks, it was not pragmatically possible to return all interview scripts to the participants for checking because of the busy school schedules that meant extra-work for headteachers and teachers alike. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that member checks are 'the most crucial technique for establishing credibility' (p. 314) in qualitative research. Yet, this can take various forms (Seale, 1999). In this study member checking took the form of debriefing sessions with interviewees immediately following interviews to check my initial understanding of their accounts. Also, during the interview process I followed participants' perspectives with some probes for clarification or with summarisations of their accounts for confirmation.

Although I could not keep in contact with all participants in this study, I managed to keep links with all headteachers, a number of teachers and three parents that enabled checking emerging themes and initial dissemination of the research. Informal meetings with educators within Muslim schools were also held during three subsequent AMS-UK (2010, 2011 and 2012) annual conferences of Muslim schools discussing a summary of the emerging interpretations and conclusions. Their perspectives were important in asking further questions from the data for example what meanings educators assign to "tarbiyah" and "empowerment" for the 21st century Britain. Although there is some debate about whether such practice is desirable in theory (Seale, 1999), I argue that the findings of this research do

> …have to be defended vis-à-vis those whose activities they cover, and others also; but this is primarily an ethical/political issue, because of the claim to 'know better' than lay agents themselves why things happen as they do. (Giddens, 1993, p. 14)

The data were interpreted and analysed through the lenses of Gadamer's interpretation of 'practical wisdom' notion, the double hermeneutical cycle of Giddens and the theoretical approaches to Islamic education discussed in Chapter 3. This enabled me to see some changes in the perspectives of participants either towards preservation or change; the diversity of views and the tensions then began emerging as a result. Furthermore, using the lens of Giddens' double hermeneutics helps in observing the influence of the public discourses into the schools' intra-discourses. The interpretation of the data draws on all parts of interviews, questionnaire and focus groups texts.

Transferability

In case-study research in particular, there is a need that the cases explored be useful to others in similar situations, those with similar research questions or problems of practice (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The generalisability considerations in this study are viewed in terms of transferring findings from a particular case study that is regarded as 'the sending context' to a new setting which presents the 'receiving context' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Consequently, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that '[t]ransferability inferences cannot be made by an investigator who knows only the sending context' (p. 297). As a researcher, I am placed at the end of the sending context and cannot transfer this research's inferences to some other unknown contexts. The findings of this research, however, may be of interest to other researchers in Western countries in which Muslim schools are growing. Different readers may find emerging aspects of the case-study schools transferable to their own settings. The study may provide some important insights that can be consulted and open up avenues for future discussion and research in the field of Islamic education in new contexts. In this regard, Wellington (2000) argues that the rich data provided would relate to wider readers and, therefore, more interpretations can be generated according to their experiences.

So, in this write up I provide a detailed description of the context but in a way that does not invalidate the participants' confidentiality. This is to assist the reader to determine whether or not transferability from this case study to their specific school context is possible. Moreover, the use of multiple cases can add to the level of transferability as the reader can decide if the study themes have been presented across other cases located within different settings (Yin, 2009, 2012). Accordingly, Chapters 2 and 3 located these schools in their context through time and space and Chapter 6 presents a detailed account of each case-study school. The goal is to provide what has been called 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973, p. 7), in which Muslim schools and participants' accounts are placed within the structures that give them meaning.

I acknowledge, though, that different theoretical perspectives will illuminate different problems; because the sort of questions I asked about the data during my analysis are shaped by my theoretical starting points. Hence, while the concepts of 'double hermeneutics' and 'practical wisdom' and Islamic educational approaches helped in asking significant questions about the data, the same data can be read differently using different underlying theory/ies. This, however, also

means bringing the various perspectives into critical reflexive dialogue about the issues raised in relation to Muslim schooling. It is something that the debate needs.

Dependability and Confirmability

In order to establish confirmability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested three techniques: the confirmability audit, triangulation, and the keeping of a reflexive journal. In Chapters 1 and 4 I have proffered a critical reflexive account of my background as a researcher, the possible biases, the way research is done and my role in the research. Moreover, in order to achieve dependability for this research, a research journal was kept throughout the process of this research to help track the procedures and processes I utilised in data generation and analysis. Detailed explanation of the research process is provided in this chapter within the space limitations of the thesis along with various quotations of data in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 for further review by the reader.

5.1.2 Designing multiple case-study research

Inevitably, there are different approaches to case studies. Yet, deciding on the number and type of case studies relies upon the purpose of the study (Stake, 2006, 2008; Yin, 2012). The case-study approach in this research is bound on a qualitative multiple-case study design because this allows the selection of data from various sources and provides a basis for making comparisons across multiple cases (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2012). Hence, six Muslim schools were selected from different contexts. The individual schools were studied to learn about their complexity and situational uniqueness (Stake, 2006). Figure 5.1 summarises this study data generation phase

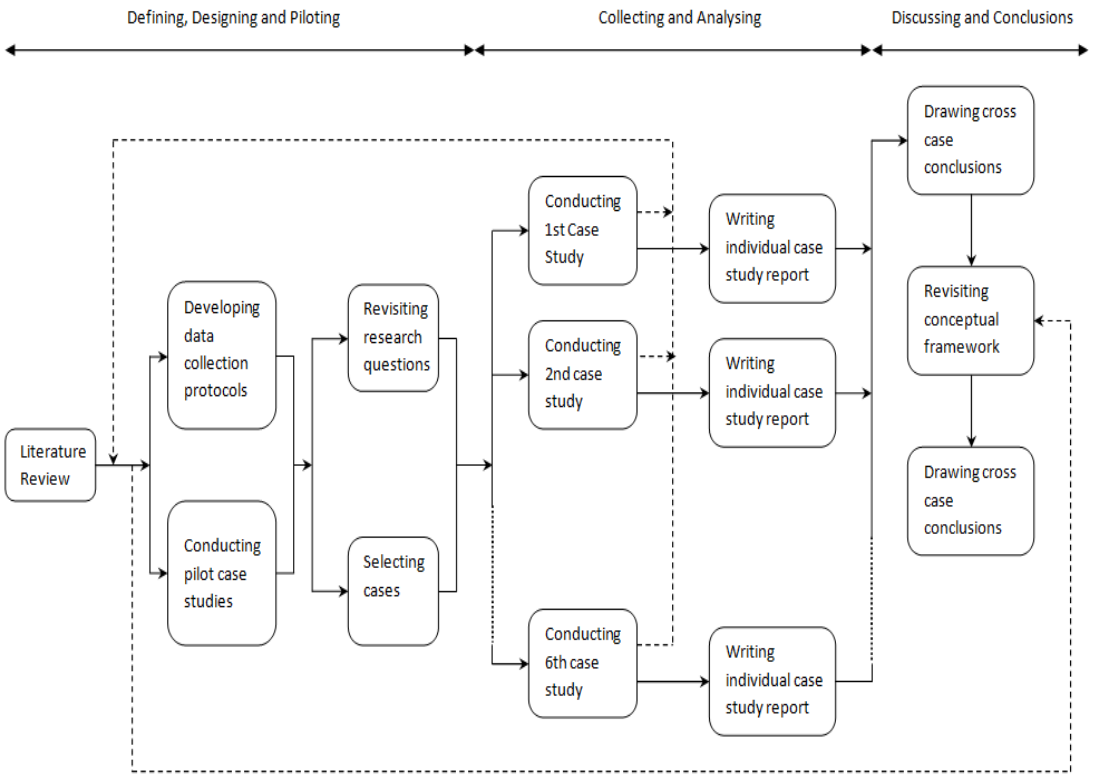

Figure 5.1: Chronology of data generation procedure

Source: Adapted from Yin (2009)

There are multiple definitions and understandings for the term case study (Merriam, 2009; Robson, 2002; Treece & Treece, 1986; Yin, 2012). The examination of these different definitions shows the influence of the researcher's worldview concerning how case study is perceived (Berg, 2011; Mitchell, 1984; Stake, 2008). These definitions share, to different extents, the importance of details of the context, understanding of the phenomenon or event and the importance of evidence. Taken together, these various definitions of case study suggest that it is possible for a case-study approach to be used in examining simple or complex phenomena where units of analysis could vary from single persons to large organisations (Berg, 2011). Moreover, it involves various data-gathering segments and can meaningfully utilise theory and contribute to its application (Berg, 2011). I found Yin's (2009) definition of case study to be particularly fitting to this research:

> …an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and

> context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. (p. 18)

The participants' meanings and experiences are perceived as partly constructed and shaped through each school's particular environment through the process of reflexivity. So, to be able to understand the current discourses in dealing with existing diversity in Muslim schools means knowing what parents, children, teachers and school leaders themselves know, and apply, in the constitution of choices they are making within everyday actions. Hence, the school, as a unit of analysis, becomes crucial in understanding such perspectives.

Sampling

Sampling in this study is based on appropriateness, purpose, and access to good information as considerations to allow learning (Stake, 2006, 2008). A crucial step in doing case-study research is deciding on the level of complexity of the case and the degree of understanding sought (Stake, 2006, 2008). Hence, it was necessary to set some boundaries for this case study (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Stake, 2006, 2008; Yin, 2009).

The principle criterion in selecting the research sites was 'what type of schools will better serve understanding of Muslims' perspectives on what Islamic education really means within a British context and how this is translated into practice?'. It is, however, less focused on the mere representation of the British Muslim population at large. For such a criterion, different types of schools were needed. So, schools that offered a wide range of backgrounds in their population were targeted as having the potential to capture the variety of views within the community. The same criteria were adopted in sampling within each school where the choice was on the basis of assuring variety and willingness to contribute and share rather than representativeness. However, as highlighted by Yin (2009), the researcher has no control over the situation and therefore boundaries between the case and its context remain relatively blurred.

Site selection was primarily based on the following two criteria:

- A school must be a full-time primary or secondary adopting both the National Curriculum and Islamic Studies as core subjects.
- A school must have had its most recent inspection in 2005 or later, and must have been inspected at least once.

Firstly, with a focus on full-time primary and secondary schools adopting an Islamic curriculum, I excluded supplementary weekend and after school Islamic and community languages classes and home-schooling.

Secondly, being inspected means exclusion to new schools that may be still struggling to meet registration criteria or have not yet received any Ofsted inspections and therefore are not fully experienced as a full-time school within the British educational context. The main question to be considered was 'after at least three years of operating as fully registered schools within the British context, what this experience brings at these schools' sites regarding perspectives of Islamic education and their dealing with diversity?'

Thirdly, all schools in this study are allied to the Sunni Muslim group. This is due partly to the fact that the Muslim Sunni population in Britain is larger than other Muslim groups and this is reflected in the number of schools (Parker-Jenkins, 2008). I approached two Shiite schools but I could not gain access. Due to ethical considerations and limitations in time available for this research, it was not possible to keep following these schools where indirect refusal became apparent through no signs of any positive response. Another limitation to this study is related to participants' gender, especially teachers and pupils. Although there are male participants, due to access limitations more female voices are present. Consequently, secondary school pupils were all females and it would be interesting to explore the perspectives of boys around similar issues in Muslim secondary schools. Initially two focus groups of boys were scheduled in Andalusia-SS but were cancelled by the school because of pragmatic constraints on their timetable.

Thus, what can be learnt is limited to this kind of schools (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Table 5.2 shows the six schools identified. The detailed description of each school is provided in Chapter 6.

Table 5.2: Case-study schools

Case-study schools	Type of school	Level	Code
Andalusia	Voluntary-aided	Secondary	Andalusia-SS
Iqra	Independent	Secondary	Iqra-SS
London	Independent	Primary	London-PS
Message	Voluntary-aided	Primary	Message-PS
Olive	Independent	Primary	Olive-PS
Vision	Independent	Secondary	Vision-SS

Although, with this number of schools, it might be argued that the depth of case study might have been lost, the interest in this study is not in a single Muslim school but rather in the diverse meanings and experiences of parents, teachers, children and stakeholders within diverse schools in relation to Islamic education and dealing with diversity. Hence, the variation in participants including school leaders, teachers, children and parents has given an important counterpoint.

Access issues

The first task in my case-study research was choosing, getting in and maintaining access. After deciding on the type of schools that were best fitted to answer my research questions, the previously expected challenges of access become clearer. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) discuss the difficulty of identifying the relevant gatekeeper even in formal bureaucratic organisations, and that was found to be the case in this study. The first challenge, therefore, was of whom to approach or identifying the decision maker within the approached school and how to secure a meeting. To overcome this challenge, schools were approached via three main routes.

Firstly, through cold calls and emails using the contact details published on their websites, the Association of Muslim Schools website or in the Muslim directory. In most attempts it was not possible to overcome secretaries' barriers and most of the contacted schools denied access citing busy schedules. However, cold calls did not always lead to dead ends: in the case of Vision-SS at the first attempt of

a cold phone call I managed to arrange an initial meeting with the headteacher. She welcomed the research over the phone but needed to meet face-to-face to discuss the research information letters, consent forms, questionnaire, to ensure my CRB disclosure and to arrange further dates for data collection.

The second way was through attending the Association of Muslim Schools' conference, where it was possible to come close to school gatekeepers and talk directly to those involved. The environment was ideal for networking and communicating my research interests in a more informal and relaxed manner. It was also a time saving exercise, where it was possible to speak to many headteachers from different parts of the country in the same day. In addition it made it easier to speak to the key people in the field of Muslim education in the UK whom I had thought it would be too hard to reach and whom I found to be co-operative and helpful.

The third route taken was through personal networks. My reliance on personal and occupational networks, however, was not very fruitful and only one school was accessed using this route albeit with many delays, which meant rescheduling some of my data collection plans.

Although the researcher's identity, gender and competency are all parts that may play some role in access negotiations (Aroian, Katz, & Kulwicki, 2006), I found experience, persistence and trustworthiness to be the most important aspects through this process. In scheduling data collection, I was careful in respecting ethics and regulations of the schools and to minimise any disruption to the school day. Throughout the course of access negotiations, I found that having a balance of respecting the professional expectations of the researcher and ethical codes of the participants was crucial in building trust and sustaining it. So, this experience also confirmed that patience, diplomacy and at times boldness were all crucial for the continuous negotiation of access (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Moreover, I found access negotiations a continuous and dynamic process where every individual relationship in the field deserved its unique attention when getting in or out. It was about building rapport with people behind doors and learning from them (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003). In this way, access concerns constitute part of the research process rather than a step in its ladder because knowledge of the context of research setting is essential for data

interpretation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). I kept contact with the school gatekeepers to seek further clarifications whenever needed during data analysis and the dissemination process.

Ethical considerations

Prior to starting any data gathering, a Research Ethics Proposal was completed and approved by both my supervisor and the School of Education Research Ethics Committee at the University of Nottingham. The research was carried out in accordance with the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004) that the School of Education at the University of Nottingham has adopted. Moreover, because this research involves children under sixteen who are regarded as vulnerable, I was required to complete a criminal record check. So, an Enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) Certificate was requested through the University of Nottingham.

It was explained to all participants in this study that their participation was voluntary. Moreover, all participants were informed in both written and verbal form of their right to withdraw from the study for any or no reason at any time. They were also informed of their right to decline to answer any particular questions with which they felt uncomfortable (see Appendix 1). To ensure such understanding, participants, even those who signed the form through the school prior to my meeting with them, were reminded of the process in which they were going to take part. This included emphasis on their voluntary participation, the way data were going to be used and the possible future publications where their quotations might be employed. The audio recording was also discussed and the way it was going to be transcribed, monitored and analysed for this research.

Issues of confidentiality to all participants were discussed with the gatekeepers of each school during access negotiations. Confidentiality and anonymity issues were discussed with all participants. Hence, all interviews were held in rooms that provided privacy to interviewees. The participants involved in focus groups were assured of their anonymity from my side but were made aware of the importance of respecting the confidentiality of their peers as a shared responsibility. All participants were informed that their recordings were to be stored in password-protected computers and would be transcribed by myself and deleted after this research was finished.

From this point, further questions arise about using pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and protect schools and individuals within them. How well do they balance between the need for anonymity and the desire to be known for what these schools stand for as expressed through their real names? To overcome this dilemma I opted for pseudonyms that would be related to the original names or the message that appeared to be prevalent through each school's discourses. For example, Andalusia-SS was named in relation to its message of establishing a state of the art institution that incorporates Islamic philosophy and values within its Western context and Vision-SS was named in relation to prevalent discourse within the school of empowering Muslim girls for their future roles within society. In the case of London-PS the geographical location was chosen to reflect their emphasis on social cohesion in Britain and show the geographical diversity of schools within this research. Due to the large number of primary schools in the London area compared to other locations, it was still possible for the school identity to be hidden despite exposing the school's geographical area. All headteachers were informed, either during the data gathering stage or afterwards, of pseudonyms attached to their schools before their usage in any publication as an outcome of this research. Moreover, these headteachers were offered the option of selecting their own names in case the pseudonym was perceived as not reflecting what their school stood for. None of them showed objections to the chosen pseudonym of their school or suggested a different one and some expressed their contentment at their new names as protective and yet meaningful to them. All other participants were also given my contact details if they wished to have further information about the pseudonym attached to their individual accounts or to find out about the progress of the research.

Pupils taking part in this research were between 10 and 16 years of age. So, the children's consent form was written in suitable language to facilitate their understanding of their rights and the nature of their contributions to this study (see Appendix 1). Due to their young ages, I also asked for the approval of their parents or guardians. However, it was made clear to every child that they should not feel forced in any way to take part in the research. I also emphasised the fact that the focus groups were not forms of exams or school evaluations. Children found it exciting to participate. Participation certificates were used with pupils as incentives. However, it was emphasised to them prior to the group discussion that certificates were an appreciation to their time commitment. I also

emphasised to all participants the importance of their honest views, agreements and disagreements to this study.

Although the nature of the topic of this study is generally about school experiences, there were some occasions where participants recalled incidents of violent racism outside their schools. During the process of research I was conscious of any possible distress that participants might experience due to their narration of certain painful incidents so that I could change to a more relaxing subject if necessary. In all these cases, participants were approaching it as voicing their worries with someone they perceived as an insider who might have experienced similar situations to theirs. None of the participants' accounts demanded disclosure or taking any further action.

Social class

In addition to ethnic, linguistic and national variety, Muslim communities are also diverse at levels of income, wealth and education. This would suggest a refocused attention on social class as a key determinant in parents' choices of their children's schools. Yet, the meaning of "class" is complex (Giddens & Held, 1982; Marx, 2007; Weber, 1978; Wright, 1989). Measuring social class based on aspects of socio-economic position (e.g. income, poverty, deprivation, wealth, education) in a diverse Muslim community is not without its complexities. Theoretically, Muslim schools are functioning within the Islamic concept of "*ummah*" in which the different community members are bound by the Islamic faith as brothers and sisters irrespective of race, wealth, national origin, or religious affiliation before accepting Islam. This is based on the following two verses:

> The believers are nothing else than brothers (in Islamic religion). So make reconciliation between your brothers, and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy. (Quran 49: 10)
>
> O Mankind, We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you. (Quran 49:13)

In light of this universal understanding of the Muslim community "*ummah*", the essence of social excellence is based on religious piety which only God knows.

Yet the way to achieving piety is believed to be through the acquisition of knowledge in general and religious knowledge in particular:

> It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah. Verily, Allah is All-Mighty, Oft-Forgiving. (Quran 35: 28)
>
> Allah will exalt in degree those of you who believe, and those who have been granted knowledge. And Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do. (Quran 58: 11)

It is through this underpinning religious understanding of social bounds that religious knowledge also has the potential to be constructed as one aspect of the social class within any particular Muslim community.

In real situations, however, as discussed in Chapter 2, the Muslim community in Britain is also divided into a collection of nationalities. This was due to the fact that they hale from across the globe and not from any single state regime but remain pre-dominantly from the South-Asian population which is also divided along economic, political, family cast, sect and religious knowledge boundaries. So, how am I to understand the socially ranked hierarchies according to these different Muslim communities' social constructs? This raises questions on how the transition of Muslim communities from different political regimes, modes of production and cultural backgrounds influence their perceptions of social class within their own sub-communities and across communities. Are these communities developing any new social classes on the basis of their shared lived experience under the British national socio-economic and political environment?; and how do these constructs compare to their old social classes. Answering these questions needs further research into the diverse Muslim communities in Britain that share Islamic religious principles but their values of social hierarchy have been constructed in relation to different socio-political and economic contexts. Due to such complexity I found that conceptualising social class based on the British socio-economic context and applying such conceptualisation across various Muslim communities was problematic in answering this research question. It is due to this complexity that social class was not a significant consideration in this research design.

Moreover, while this research hints to the possible implications of parental social class, in terms of educational and economic backgrounds, on choices parents make regarding their children's schooling, there was little evidence to indicate

that social class was a determinant factor in those choices. Yet, given the potential future establishment and expansion of Muslim schools in Britain, it could develop as a significant element in the framing of parental choices. However, in light of the current limited provision of Islamic schooling, parents still have little choice about the quality of schooling and the Islamic ethos. It is in light of this background that social class does not explain differentiations amongst parents about the "Islamness" of their selected schools. Moreover, it does not help clarifying parents' understandings of Islamic religious devotion as inherent to the schools of Islamic jurisprudence across the diverse Muslim communities in Britain and their important implications for Islamic education. Hence, the recognition of Islamic jurisprudence schools of thought and typologies presented in Chapter 3, as analytical categories inherent in Muslim communities' social contexts, would provide greater clarity to analysis in this research about Islamic schooling and to dealing with diversity from within. These schools of thought and typologies can reveal the way religiosity is constructed across different parents as well as schools and show how choices of Islamic schooling are opted for in light of the British Western socio-political context. The underlying characteristics of communities within these Islamic schools, where jurisprudence discourses on its day-to-day activities define questions of religious devotion and degree of "Islamness", required taking these aspects to the forefront. Analyses about diversity of communities within Islamic schools that do not recognise the intrinsic nature of these "Islamness" discourses and the constraints they impose on choice processes across the different socio-economic classes of these schools' populations will remain limited.

5.2 Data gathering tools and procedures

As discussed in Chapter 4, the theoretical framework of this research shapes and frames the choices taken regarding methods and the data analysis. Figure 5.2 presents the various data collection methods utilised in this study.

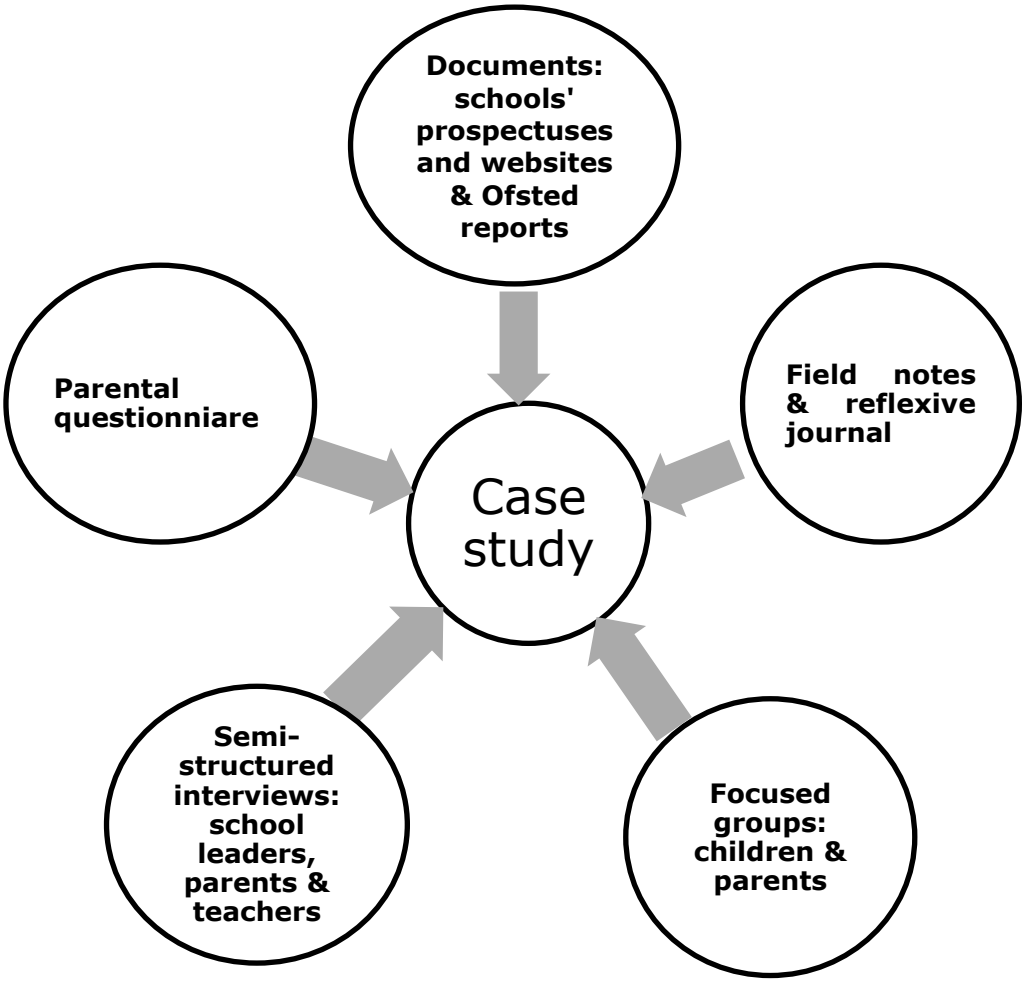

Figure 5.2: Methods for data collection

Table 5.3 summarises the desired level of knowledge, information source, and data collection method for each main question of the study.

Table 5.3: Knowledge sought by each study phase

Desired knowledge	**Information source**	**Data Collection Method**
Developing understanding of: • the social and historical context of UK Muslims and Muslim education • the history of UK faith-based schools and debates surrounding them	Research literature	Document review
• recognition of the broad types of diversities regarding backgrounds, educational expectations, interests and experiences of Muslim schools' parents. (Q2 and partly 3)	Muslim parents within the different accessed Islamic schools	Written questionnaire
Understanding: • how experiences within Muslim schools are interpreted by Muslim pupils • how pupils in Muslim schools see themselves within their wider British context? (Q3) • how pupils in Muslim schools perceive the way their schools are dealing with their diverse backgrounds.	Muslim pupils from different types of Islamic schools	Children's focus groups
Multi-dimensional understanding of: • the rationale and nature of Muslim schools in UK • desires and expectations Muslim pupils and parents have from their Muslim schools • Muslim schools dealing with diversity within the same religious group.	• Muslim parents in these schools, • children, • teachers, • headteachers	Face-to–face interviews and focus groups school prospectuses, websites & Ofsted reports

The analysis in this research is based on data derived from a total of 157 returned questionnaires (23.8 percent response rate), 9 focus groups of children, 1 focus group of parents, 22 individual interviews with teachers, 9 individual interviews with parents, 11 individual interviews with school managers and the consultancy of the prospectus, website and Ofsted report of each case-study school. However, as might be expected, the study produced a large amount of data: recording of 24 hours of individual interviews, 8 hours of focus group data, questionnaire responses and field notes. Table 5.4 gives a detailed view of these sources of data in each school.

Table 5.4: Sources of data

School name	Parental Questio-nnaire (PQ)	Focus groups		Semi-structured individual interviews			Documents
		Children	Parents	Parents	Teachers	Senior Managers	
Andalusia-SS	✓	2	-	-	5	2	Prospectus, website & Ofsted report
Iqra-SS	No access	1	-	-	3	1	Prospectus, website & Ofsted report
London-PS	✓	2	1	4	5	2	Prospectus, website & Ofsted report
Message-PS	No access	1	-	-	4	2	Prospectus, website & Ofsted report
Olive-PS	✓	-	-	1	-	2	Prospectus, website & Ofsted report
Vision-SS	✓	3	-	4	5	2	Prospectus, website & Ofsted report
Total	-	**9**	**1**	**9**	**22**	**11**	

Table 5.5 shows details of the questionnaire distribution across the four schools in which access was gained.

Table 5.5: Distributed and received questionnaires

	Distributed Questionnaires	**Returned questionnaires**	**Response rate %**
Andalusia-SS	200	34	17
London-PS	110	39	35.4
Olive-PS	150	34	22.7
Vision-SS	200	50	25
Total	**660**	**157**	**23.8**

Table 5.6 shows further details of the focus groups conducted and their composition across the six schools.

Table 5.6: Composition of focus groups in the case-study schools

Average time for each group: 50 minutes	**Children's focus groups**				**Parents' focus groups**
	Number of groups	School years	Number of participants	Gender composition	
Andalusia-SS	2	7 & 11	12 (6x2)	All females	0
Iqra-SS	1	11	5	All females	0
London-PS	2	5 & 6	10 (5x2)	Mixed gender	1 (3 females + 2 males) Composed of parents who were also members of staff
Message-PS	1	6	5	Mixed gender	-
Olive-PS	0	-	-	-	0
Vision-SS	3	7, 10 & 11	18 (6x3)	All females	0
Total	**9**	**-**	**50**	**-**	**1**

The focus groups were selected from different year groups within the same schools to be able to capture the different experiences of children with Islamic schooling and the possible change in their perspectives or in schools' practices through time. In primary schools only years 5 and 6 were selected due to the demands that interviews place on discursive expression and my limited experience in interviewing children in their very early years of primary schooling. Further details about conducting those interviews are presented in the following parts of this section. To distinguish parents' interview accounts from those of the questionnaire, the code "PQ" is assigned to the questionnaire written quotations and in the case of an interview account a word "interview" or "focus group" is added to the reference of the quotation.

5.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

Rationale

One of the study objectives was about exploring participants' in-depth accounts of experiences and perspectives around their selected Muslim schools. Although the questionnaire was used in this study to provide a background overview and as an information gathering exercise, it lacks the flexibility that is required to capture the subtle and complex character of the meaning and experience of 'Islamic schooling' in a Western context. At the same time, the double hermeneutic approach for this study meant I adopted a probing stance towards participants' interpretations of their world to help produce a meaningful theoretical and conceptual account of Muslim schooling. This dual focus requires the semi-structured interview because it provides some flexibility to the natural flow of the interview talk, adaptability to what is being said and also (where necessary) questioning.

Thus, during the process of interviewing I could provide interviewees with an open space to follow their thoughts around some pre-set themes that were used to guide rather than to dictate the course of the interview (see the interview schedule Appendices 1-3). In this regard, Merriam (2009, p. 90) believes that this type of interviewing 'allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic'. The interview remained flexible in terms of the wording and ordering of the questions. This flexibility permitted elaboration, clarification and the emergence of some unexpected threads which appeared relevant to answering

the questions of the present research. The relatively open course of the discussion in the semi-structured interviews allowed scope to pursue areas of particular interest to parents, teachers and schools' leaders that required further deepening.

Moreover, the need for this method is especially true when concepts such as 'Islamic' and 'Islamism' are often associated with risk within the public domain (Anon, 2011). So, to achieve more openness, there was a need for methods of data gathering that would allow rapport building between interviewees and interviewer. A face-to-face semi-structured interview method was seen to fit that purpose as well since it allowed probing of thoughts, values, views and experiences, which were not observable in a less structured approach (Denscombe, 2010; Wellington, 2000). In addition, this interview method allowed more space for comparability of responses compared to the unstructured interview and facilitated data organisation and analysis (Cohen, et al., 2011).

Development of interview guidelines

At a superficial level interviews may seem easy to conduct due to their similarities with ordinary conversations (Denscombe, 2010). Accordingly, Denscombe (2010, p. 173) warns researchers against what he describes as 'an illusion of simplicity' that can result in a lack of preparation and planning:

> [Interview method] is fraught with hidden dangers and can fail miserably unless there is good planning, proper preparation and a sensitivity to the complex nature of interaction during the interview itself. (p. 173)

Taking such warnings into consideration, the development and planning of the interview schedules employed in the main study were developed through various stages of piloting.

Firstly, an introductory unstructured interview was conducted with a mainstream school headteacher in Nottingham. The interview aimed at exploring her experiences of the type of diversities that exist within the Muslim population in the school and any emerging challenges in dealing with them. Secondly, an initial schedule was designed based on issues emerging from the headteacher's discussion, the literature review and my previous professional experience in Muslim schools. Thirdly, the developed interview schedules were piloted in two Muslim schools. The pilot study involved interviews with parents and

headteachers, children's focus groups and questionnaires to parents and teachers. This third phase resulted in the composition of three cross-sectional sets of interview questions, respectively one for educators, one for parents and one for children's focus groups (see Appendices 2-4).

Conducting interviews

All interview with parents and teachers were between 25 and 40 minutes in length. Interviews with management team members of the case-study schools were approximately 50 minutes long. The difference in time-span between the two groups' interviews was due to the number of areas which were needed for discussion and the free time available for interviewees. All participants, except in one case, agreed to be audio recorded. All interviews were conducted in the case-study schools except two; one with a parent and another was a second phase interview with a headteacher. The parent's interview was carried out, as she preferred, at her home due to her family commitments. The headteacher's interview was conducted during a Muslim schools conference meeting because it was convenient for both of us. While most interviews involved one-time meetings with subjects, there were two multiple interviews with Message-PS and Vision-SS headteachers. The second phase of these two headteachers' interviews was a follow-up on issues emerging from the analysis of data generated in their schools. Previous responses were revisited and deepened. All interview questions were asked and answered in English as participants preferred.

All interviews started with an open question about interviewee demographic background information relevant to the study such as 'Can you tell me a bit about your professional self?' for educators. Patton (2002) recommends starting with such questions due to their descriptive and non-threatening nature. To fill out the descriptive picture, I focused the initial probes on eliciting more descriptive detail (Patton, 2002). This was followed by some general questions and then by more focused open-ended ones, such as:

- Can you tell me why you have chosen this school in particular for your child?
- How do you see the school is performing compared to your expectations?

The flexibility of the semi-structured interview allowed me both to ask some of the same questions, permitting comparisons across interviews, and to pursue

issues which spontaneously emerged during the discussion. In doing so, it was necessary to strike a balance between keeping focus on the research objective and questions that need to be tackled, and yet to ensure enough openness that would allow interviewees perspectives to be followed (Bryman, 2008). Accordingly, despite the pre-planned interview schedule, interviews were not strictly run in accordance to the script. The open-ended nature of the interview questions lend itself to a flow of responses. I found that many perspectives were often more fully elaborated after being asked an unscheduled probe. In such cases I had to overcome the preset order of questions and probe far beyond the initial responses of participants. As noted in Chapter 4, this dynamic of the interview reflects "the double hermeneutic" of the social research in which both me, as a researcher, and the participants were involved. In describing the views of participants in this research I had the task of mediating the frames of meaning within which participants are making their choices (Giddens, 1984) and, therefore, I needed to know what participants already knew. This is because the social phenomenon of Muslim schooling that I sought to explore in this research is already constituted as meaningful to participants as social actors. This did not make the interview conversation a neat process because in each interview I conducted there was a demand on an interactive approach to help maintaining rapport, addressing unexpected emerging themes and clarifying ambiguities in my interpretation of the views and interpretations of participants.

In this respect, individual interviews generated relevant details about the diverse meanings and experiences of Islamic schooling in Britain through the perceptions and stories participants told. Yet, these interviews did not provide a space for debate, challenge, or change of views about the raised issues in anything like the form I encountered in focus group discussions. Moreover, the one-to-one conversation with me as a researcher provides a particular context to those individual interviews accounts. The participants I interviewed were constructing their accounts in a conversation with a female, a North African Arab, a Muslim, a sister, an Islamic Studies graduate, a parent, a PhD student, a British citizen, a teacher, a "hijabi", and else and interviewees made sense of this specific researcher in their particular ways. Therefore, my identity and self-representation are central to the data produced. It is against this background of data gathering that I see my autobiography presented in Chapter 1 and my positionality as a researcher discussed in Chapter 4 to be necessary for understanding the perspectives of participants within their context.

5.2.2 Focus groups

I argue that interviews of groups in this study are focus groups rather than merely group interviews. According to Morgan (1996), a focus group is 'a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher' (p. 130). This definition excludes group interviews for three reasons: purpose, dynamic, and management. Hence, groups set for other than research data collection purposes, those that do not have group interaction and those that take place spontaneously without any direction are excluded from this definition. I regard Interviews of groups in this research as focus groups because they were set for the purpose of answering the research questions and interviewees were interacting and probing each other throughout the discussion around some guideline themes related to shared interests and lived experiences of Islamic schooling (see Appendix 4 for children interview schedule). Moreover, there was more focus and emphasis placed on a certain area of interest to the group members compared to what a group interview would do (Bryman, 2008).

Rationale for focus groups

This study is interested in exploring the common issues and everyday experiences of Muslim parents and children regarding Islamic schooling. There was a need to examine the meaning that Islamic schooling holds for pupils and parents alike. There was a need to understand parental educational priorities and their expectations from their selected Islamic schools. More importantly, there was a need to have an insight into how pupils experience this type of schooling and how they perceive and deal with diversity within their Muslim schools. The focus groups allowed for these needs to be addressed by 'listening' to the voices of pupils and 'hearing' what they have to say in this regard. Of course, the notion of 'voice' and the way it is 'listened to' and 'heard' is not without its own complexities (Haw & Hadfield, 2011). As discussed in Chapter 4, as I was moving as a researcher across different schools and diverse backgrounds of participants I was not a fully insider or a complete outsider. It is in this respect that Haw and Hadfield (2011) discuss some complexities of 'voice' and key assumptions underlying 'listening' to young people in research such as this present study. In so doing they (Haw & Hadfield, 2011) raise crucial questions about 'who is heard and what is heard, what is listened to and how it is listened to' (p. 114). The perspectives of pupils in this research are raised as part of their group members,

in combination with other groups of young people across five case-study schools, and along other members of their community within Muslim schools. The extent to which the power relationship shift in the process of interviewing is managed (Haw & Hadfield, 2011) are discussed in part two of this section describing the way focus groups are conducted in this research. Focus groups also helped in bringing the individual parental perspectives into dialogue within the environment of a group discussion.

The goal for employing focus groups, therefore, was to permit internal discourses amongst the Muslim community to be presented through a reflexive process. The method allows the combination between structure and spontaneity in data generation and permits participants to defend, change and justify their accounts as part of the group dynamics (Berg, 2011). Such discursive information about self, school, community and the wider context is constitutive of what people do and how they do it. This brings the discussion back to the theoretical framework of the research and specifically to the notion of 'double hermeneutics'. This is because

> [i]n late-modern societies where identity is reflexive but behaviour remains normative, albeit subject to a widening range of influences, focus groups provide a valuable resource for documenting the complex and varying processes through which group norms and meanings are shaped, elaborated and applied. In the access they provide to norms and meaning, focus groups are not just the time-pressed researcher's poor substitute for ethnographic fieldwork, they are a mainstream method to address those study topics in increasingly privatized societies which are less open to observational methods. (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001, p. 17)

The topic of discussion across the focus groups in this research was about the group perceptions and experiences that have the possibility of resulting in collective social action of Islamic educational provision in Britain. Although the individual views were clear in the discussion, the group interaction enabled participants to examine more deeply their own perspectives and the diverse perspectives of other group members. The environment that a focus group provides for interviewees, Desai & Potter (2006) argue, helps understanding 'collective social action and accessing group beliefs, understandings, behaviours and attitudes that might be overlooked in in-depth interviews' (p. 154). It is within this similar research goals that Fern (2001) prefers members in focus groups to be relatively homogenous. All members in the different groups knew each other, and this helped with evoking some shared experiences, challenging

each other's perspectives at various times and reminding each other of some details. So, something that is specific to focus groups is that they allow participants to react to and build upon the responses of other group members (Bryman, 2008). This enhances the richness of the generated data and helps in answering the research questions.

Focus groups are also perceived to provide data from a group of people much more quickly and at a lesser cost compared to individual interviews (Stewart, Shamdsani, & Rook, 2007). Based on the experience in this research I would question this assumption. It is as Kidd and Parshall (2000) argue, such presumed savings may be deceiving. This is partly due to alternative demands on time in recruitment, logistics, and the complexity involved in the analysis of a messy type of data (Kidd & Parshall, 2000). Arranging focus groups in some schools was time consuming and complex because it required collecting consent forms, finding a shared time slot for all the children involved and ensuring the appropriate planning for the sessions. In some cases I had to visit one of the schools on various occasions to rearrange the previously cancelled sessions. This was not an economical process both in time and finances.

Conducting focus groups

Recruitment

In terms of parental focus groups, many parents showed an interest in taking part in focus groups across the schools but the practicalities of getting them together proved to be very difficult. So, only one group was feasibly possible and it was unique in that it was composed of parents who were also teachers in the school. This yielded its own perspective that I return to in the analysis in Chapter 8.

Regarding pupils' group composition, based on the pilot study experience, I found that the number of 5 to 6 children was manageable but more than 6 was difficult for one moderator to handle effectively. Accordingly, groups were of no more than 5-6 members. A large number of pupils showed interest in taking part and signed their consent forms; in such cases I had to select on a first come first served basis.

Recruitment of children to groups was through class teachers. The strategy to sample pupils for the focus groups required at least some of the children to be

articulate in the presence of an adult. It is here where class teachers were involved in the pre-selection of some pupils who fitted this category. Furthermore, as I was new to the schools, I specified some other criteria for the pupils' selection including that pupils needed to be from the same year group, to have as different backgrounds as possible and to be comfortable with each other. The similar age range was important to keep a balance of power relations in the group dynamics (Morgan, 1997). This was something that emerged from the pilot study where some pupils from lower age groups were silenced by older pupils. Accordingly, all pupils' groups were diverse in aspects of ethnicity, language and jurisprudence backgrounds but homogenous in terms of school, year group, and religion. Moreover, I was sensitive to the characteristics of participants to ensure I could intervene in situations where individuals might experience discomfort or distress (Bloor, et al., 2001).

The parental focus group was limited to parents working as teachers. Their discussion revealed a number of issues that were not accessed in individual interviews with parents or school staff. The group was not without possible complications regarding gender mix and power relations that may have resulted in silencing some views (Bloor, et al., 2001). Due to access limitations, parents' different suitable times, the busy schedules of teachers and my own physical distance from the school, the group was arranged with the help of the school secretary, who was very cooperative throughout the research process in the school. When I raised the worry about gender discomfort I was assured that participants worked comfortably together and the issue of discussion did not impinge on the notion of 'Islamic modesty'. This was further discussed with members who felt that the issue was like a normal meeting in which they would express their views. In this respect, Kitzinger (1994, p. 105) argues that employing friendship groups may enable the researcher to tap into interaction that is closer to 'naturally occurring' data. This familiarity enabled participants in the different groups to relate each other's accounts to actual events in their shared daily lives. It is this aspect that Kitzinger (1994) argues can facilitate participants' challenging each other on aspects of theoretical perspectives and actual practice. Although the two male teachers were relatively more active in the discussion than the female teachers, their perspectives were challenged by the female teachers on a number of occasions for example in their views on the role of ethnic insider school staff. Also as with female participants, the two male teachers held different opinions and perspectives for instance in their

perspectives on ability groups. Throughout the discussion, teachers were using 'brother' and 'sister' titles, terms commonly used amongst the Muslim community to help overcome ethnic and national divide. In this respect I was also called a 'sister' across the six schools.

In addition to the nature of the topic, this openness in a mixed-gender Muslim group needs to be read in light of the members' professional background as qualified teachers. The school itself is mixed gender where the headteacher is a female and the deputy headteacher is a male. So, the group members were accustomed to a school culture where they could challenge each other's views on professional grounds regardless of gender. My presence as a female Muslim researcher might have had its influence on empowering female members to take an active part in the discussion.

While pre-existing groups offer familiarity and group cohesiveness, they run a higher risk regarding confidentiality and positive and negative consequences on group relations beyond the discussion boundaries (Bloor, et al., 2001). Also the particular group norms may result into the reproduction of normative discourses. In light of these challenges I had to emphasise issues of confidentiality and discuss some rules for the group conversation at the outset of each group discussion. These ground rules aim at showing respect for diversity of perspectives and for the worth of each viewpoint from each member of the group as an important part of encouraging active contribution from all members of the group. As a result participants were actively taking part in the discussion showing disagreements within normative discourses of Muslim schooling. For example, the parental focus group members had a serious debate about having teaching staff from the same ethnic group of pupils' backgrounds, Islamic faith-based schools that derive their pupils from a single ethnic group and the espousal of ability groups within an Islamic school. In pupils focus groups the debate raised various issues including social segregation, extremism, marginalisation, and visibility within the public space. In both groups of parents and pupils the opinions of members were dynamic where some members changed their initial stances through negotiations and justifications. This resulted into a depth of discussion that might not be possible to achieve in individual interviews.

Interviewing children

The collective nature of focus groups suits children who may not be able to articulate their thoughts easily in individual interviews providing them with collective power (Liamputtong, 2011; Madriz, 2003). Elbers (2004) argues that group discussions are an appropriate method of collecting information from children because they often find it easy to relax in the company of those they know and have the support of friends who encourage each other to take part. It is this aspect of focus group use that drives my interest in using this method with pupils.

However, interviewing children is not without its own complexities. In this regard, Clark (2011) raises many questions that were considered in the planning stage of this study. These are linked to the suitable age, language, culture, the type of information to be shared, rules governing the discussion, power relations and the way questions are posed. When the objective of the conversation is not clarified to children at the start of the conversation it increases the possibility of what Elbers (2004, p. 202) conceptualises as the 'conversational asymmetry' regarding the aim and nature of the discussion. So, it was important to clarify to children what was expected of them in order to overcome discrepancy between the expectation of me as an adult researcher and the expectation of the child. Failing to do so would run the risk of children entering the conversation with expectations that did not conform to the study's goals, such as assuming it was a test for example. In such a case, children may focus on thinking of the 'correct' answers rather than valuing and discussing their own perspectives. I was also conscious that children might enter the interaction with various other assumptions, for example, showing their discursive abilities, religious knowledge and practice, intellectual competence, essential agreement or disagreement. To create a shared context for their interaction (Elbers, 2004), I began discussing some rules that would guide the discussion. I made it clear to each group of pupils that the goal of the discussion was not to test their competences or religiosity or inspect the school, like Ofsted, but I was simply interested in their own views and experiences of Islamic schooling. What I also did at the start of each group was to inform pupils about the rules of how to take part and explain reasons for asking questions emphasising that 'there is no right or wrong answers'. I also made it clear to them that I would not interrupt the discussion and would prefer them to take turns amongst themselves, listen to each other and agree or disagree whenever necessary and even ask questions themselves if

they were unclear about what someone had said. Similar rules were also discussed with the adult group, but the rules were adapted for pupils. As part of an introduction, I let children discuss these rules amongst themselves and with me. Issues of confidentiality were also emphasised.

Bryman (2008) discusses the context in which focus groups are conducted as being important to their success. The place where focus groups are conducted is an important consideration to their success. All focus groups were conducted within the schools because they were in a familiar environment. In this respect, headteachers were very cooperative in arranging rooms so that confidentiality could be ensured as well as a lack of interruption taking into account respect for the school schedule of activities.

Three places were used for different focus groups, meeting rooms, classrooms and prayer halls outside the scheduled prayer times. While pupils found classrooms and prayer halls informal and familiar places, I realised they were initially uncomfortable in the meeting rooms. Hence, I had to facilitate some informal conversations before starting the interviews to alleviate this. Also, their first impression of me in the corridors was of a new teacher, but then they discovered I was the researcher for whom they had signed the consent forms, so it was crucial to have some introductory activities. Utilising some introductory sentences in Urdu, for example, created a quick informal environment. Pupils, even non-Urdu speakers, appreciated the fact that I was a learner as they were and not afraid of pronouncing new sentences suggested by them in a foreign language. This activity helped mitigate issues around power relations, placing pupils as teachers rather than me as the teacher. I also found that talking about ethical consent and discussion rules were good ways to start those conversations because pupils were interested to know more about the way the data were going to be analysed and published and discovering their views were listened to motivated them to take part. Answering their questions in a relaxed manner helped ease the formality of the procedure.

Although it is the moderator's role to focus the discussion on things that need to be learnt, Morgan suggests (1997) that it must not be too controlling arguing that as every group has its own dynamics, moderators need to acknowledge the participants' priorities if they want to hear their thoughts and ideas. My previous teaching experience in primary, secondary and post-sixteen phases was invaluable in this respect helping me to feel at ease working with the different

groups. This helped in planning the discussion and gaining the primary children's attention with different activities. For example, presenting pupils with different kinds of fruits to eat at the beginning of interviews worked as an ice breaker and further facilitated discussion around diversities that exist in their schools. It also helped in developing rapport by creating a non-class environment and making pupils feel at ease. Moreover, to explore the perspectives and experiences of participants about Islamic educational goals and priorities photos of two contrasting Muslim schools buildings, in terms of resources, were also employed as vignettes. The photos offered a way of broadening the focus of discussion from personal experiences of participants in their specific schools to their broader perspectives around Islamic education in Britain. Questions were varied according to the different age groups.

The beginning of the interview was about settling the tone. I tried to maximise the interaction, making sure that everyone was taking part, especially the quiet ones. Hence, my role was a facilitator in leading the discussion, assisting and observing group dynamics so that when I felt that group members had exhausted discussion of a certain point with no new insights I moved the discussion on to a different aspect.

5.2.3 Recording and transcription

All focus groups and semi-structured interviews were audio recorded except for one participant's interview. The recordings were then organised under each school and transcribed verbatim before being submitted to a process of thematic analysis. In the case where one of the participants refused to be audio recorded, verbatim notes were taken. At the end of the interview I read to her for her confirmation of points covered in the transcription, which she confirmed.

The recording helped ease the natural flow of the conversation in the focus groups (Barbour, 2007; Kitzinger, 1994) by permitting me as the moderator to focus on what was said, who said what and how it was said. Taking notes would have affected the natural flow and if the natural flow was lost the dynamics of the focus group itself would also be affected as a result. In this sense, therefore, the raison d'être for adopting this method would be lost, as would the meanings that evolve through the discussion (Barbour, 2007).

Yet, it was essential to care for the quality of transcription during this production phase. Some of the challenges that focus groups pose are the difficulty in transcription and the amount of time needed for such a process due to the nature of the discussion (Kidd & Parshall, 2000). Recognising individual voices throughout the discussion was challenging due to their similarity at times, talking over each other or talking in a low voice. Although it was not possible to overcome all transcription challenges and there remain a few missing parts not transcribed, certain measures were taken to keep that to the minimum. In terms of equipment, the discussions were recorded using a high-quality digital recorder that could pick up quite faint voices. In terms of conduction, such difficulties were discussed with participants at the start. In doing so, participants agreed that they would wear labels with their names and would name each other during the discussion or mention their names at the beginning of each statement they made. Although this was not always feasible, especially when the discussion was heated, it certainly helped a lot in giving an ample sign posting for participants' names and a further training on their voices. In this way, it was possible to trace their perspectives when their names were not stated. The digital audio recorder was placed in the middle of the group to pick up the different voices. However, primary children in particular showed a clear consciousness of the recorder's presence right at the start of the conversation. Nevertheless, the problem was surpassed as they became more engaged with the discussion.

Although the transcription process was laborious, it brought each interview to life again and helped in building some links with the different sources of data as well as with the literature. Throughout this process I was making relevant notes and recording any questions arising from the data using Microsoft Word's review facilities.

5.2.4 Questionnaire

Rationale for the questionnaire

The questionnaire obtained demographic information about parents, including ethnicity and education as well as other closed and open-ended questions regarding expectations and evaluations of their chosen Muslim schools (see Appendix 5). These data were used to draw a broad overview of parental backgrounds and perspectives within the four schools. The initial design of the research aimed at employing the questionnaire during the elementary stage, so

its data could provide insights to possible key issues in parental backgrounds and interests along with some notice of what I might need to follow during the impending interviews. Due to pragmatic access limitations, this plan was slightly adjusted where only questionnaire data from one school was possible to collect and analyse before subsequent interviews. Despite its limited scope, this initial group of questionnaires combined with the pilot study data helped in highlighting some key issues that needed to be followed across the schools. For example, the concept of 'good/practising Muslim' and the way it is linked to ways in which schools balance their educational priorities and parental expectations.

There are various advantages to using a questionnaire. In the case of the present research, I had to travel to dispersed geographical locations, so questionnaires were time-effective during data gathering and cheaper to administer compared to interviews. It was possible to arrange for the distribution and following up reminders in some cases through the schools' administration. Given that questionnaires can be completed in the time that most suits the respondent, they were less intrusive and more convenient to respondents (Bryman, 2008; Cohen, et al., 2011). Moreover, the questionnaire was quicker to administer and easier to analyse, given the many computer software packages available, compared to the messy interview data.

However, questionnaires are not without their limitations as well. There was no chance to prompt respondents if they were having difficulty answering a question. Some parents' responses needed further elaboration and it was not possible to probe. It is possible that some questions were not interesting to the respondents. Moreover, there was no certainty about the person responding – it could have been any member of the family. In a few cases questions were skipped resulting in partially answered questionnaires which it is believed to most likely be linked to the lack of prompting or supervision (Bryman, 2008). Also questionnaires are not suited to people with limited literacy or whose written English is restricted (Bryman, 2008). Although four languages were offered for respondents to select expressing their views as a way to overcome any language barrier, only one questionnaire was answered in French and all the remaining were in English. In the case of French responses I translated the responses to English and requested another colleague with a professional level of French to also translate it after which the two translations were compared and confirmed each other. There was also the dilemma of asking many questions and keeping the questionnaire short to encourage response. All the previous

drawbacks of self-completed questionnaires might have contributed to the low response rate in this research (see Table 5.5, p.91)

Despite these disadvantages, the wide range of parents' perspectives and experiences expressed through the open responses of the questionnaire were not possible to access using face-to-face interviews.

Questionnaire design

In accordance with the purpose of this research, a semi-structured type of questionnaire was selected (see Appendix 5) to allow further elaboration of perspectives because of the sample size making it possible to manage the qualitative data available (Cohen, et al., 2011). Hence, the structure and contents of the questionnaire follow from the research goals discussed in Chapter 1 and sought to obtain information about three main areas relevant to this research, demographics, expectations and school culture. Accordingly, the questionnaire is divided into three sections:
The first section aims at exploring diversity that exists within each case-study school to help locate the perspectives of participants within their background context. With this reason in mind, the first part of the questionnaire contains the demographic questions including gender, education, ethnicity, religious affiliation, finances and language background. The question regarding ethnicity (question 1.2, see Appendix 5) is left open for respondents to describe in their own terms. Although, coding such data was time consuming, given the various answers received, the data remains helpful in understanding the way respondents describe themselves and reflect the diversity of their backgrounds. In the religious affiliation question (question 1.4, see Appendix 5) the option of 'non-Muslim' category is excluded because I was informed by the four schools in which the questionnaire was distributed that they did not have any child coming from a non-Muslim family.

The second section contains substantive questions that address the research objectives by exploring parental expectations, experiences of, and involvement with, their chosen Muslim schools. By examining parental expectations of these schools the questionnaire responses could inform the discussion in answering this research subordinate question of, 'what are the expectations that Muslim parents have from their Islamic schools?'

The third section is dedicated to school culture and diversity (questions A-O) in which a Likert scale of a vertical format was used. The section aims at exploring the parents' evaluation of their Muslim schools and the way they perceive them dealing with diversity. The provided comments are divided into the following themes (see Table 5.7).

Table 5.7: Parents and schools' cultures

Comment	Diversity of backgrounds	School programme	Parents-school relation	Child development	Child wellbeing
Number on schedule statement	E, F, K, O	A, B, D	C, G, H	M, N	I, J, L

Likert scales are discerned to allow the researcher to obtain more information on the opinions or feelings of respondents on a particular topic that is beyond simply asking a Disagree/Agree or Yes/No response (Bryman, 2008; Oppenheim, 1992). The questions were framed in terms of six-point rating scales as follows: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and Don't know. Using such a scale allows a gradation of views where 'Neutral' is placed in the middle and the 'Don't know' category at the end (see Appendix 5). The reason for including the 'Neutral' and 'Don't know' options, regardless of the controversy (Babbie, 2010; Lam, Allen, & Green, 2010; Neuman, 2011), is that many parents may have their children for less than a year in the school and may not be informed about some of the statements. In this context, Lam, Allen, & Green (Lam, et al., 2010) recommend that when 'Neutral' option is used that a 'Don't know' option is also added to the list of response alternatives and be placed at the end of the scale. So, the 'Neutral' was seen as important to give parents an option to choose 'Neutral', to avoid pushing them for an answer they do not feel comfortable with. Similarly, the 'Don't know' response option was provided additionally for every statement for the same reason. Moreover, the 'Don't know' category was aimed at distinguishing between 'Neutral' as being undecided or having a middle stand and that of uninformed responses. The goal here was to illuminate the qualitative data analysis and not to measure concepts as such.

Piloting the questionnaire

During the pilot phase, the initial version was distributed to all parents (n=65) in one Muslim school that was not included in the main research. Twenty-two

surveys of parents were returned. The questionnaire sent to parents during the pilot study ended with an open question requesting feedback on the questionnaire design and content. Consequently, careful considerations have been given to questionnaire layout, content, wording, form of response expected, sequence of questions and finally to data analysis (Bryman, 2008). Through this process the questions and layout were thoroughly revised. For example, in the pilot study few converts raised their objection of categorising themselves as 'converts', a concept that I utilised in the initial questionnaire. In doing so, they considered themselves born monotheists and, therefore, are 'reverts' to the belief of the One only God after they have lost it through the social environment in which they developed their concepts about life. This understanding is based on the Islamic notion of '*fitrah*' (natural instinct) discussed in Chapter 3. Hence, the concept 'convert' that was used as one of the options about religious affiliation in the initial questionnaire was changed to 'revert'. Voicing their concern was based on their expectation of me as a Muslim insider to know such detail and to respect it.

Also, as no definition of 'major impact of fees', 'being a better practising Muslim' or 'bullying and racism' were offered to respondents, they would have different interpretations of them in mind. Although this might be seen as a problem of validity in terms of what constitutes these concepts, it is important to remember that the goal of the research is not about measuring such terms to discover any causal relationships but to explore the different interpretations that participants may attach to them. The term "practising" was deliberately left open as it is widely used amongst the Muslim community to indicate devotion to Islamic principles and that was reflected in its appearance again and again in the pilot study interviews. The different connotations and interpretations that participants assign to this notion of "practising Muslim" were further explored using individual interviews and focus groups. Moreover, a direct question of financial circumstances caused a lot of sensitivity in the pilot study phase and therefore the aim here was just to have a sense of the general family financial circumstances in order to see the importance of such educational provision for them.

Although the questionnaire was thoroughly piloted, it was not without limitations. Question 2.1 about parental priorities could be developed into a Likert scale format that would require parents to reflect upon each option and decide on the level of its importance to them. This will not only provide a general

view of parental priorities within any particular school, as the present format provides, but will also permit observing the importance of each option to individual parents. Yet, the current format of the question allows more space for parents to add their own priorities which were not listed and that was necessary for achieving the goal of this research in finding out what the expectations of parents were from their chosen schools. The Likert scale section could be improved by reducing the number of statements to allow space for readers which may contribute to increasing the response rate. It could also be improved by including a mix of positive and negative statements to require respondents to consider each statement separately instead of opting for pattern answering and which may better help in identifying conflicting responses (Brace, 2008).

Questionnaire management and response rate

The advantages of survey research make it a valuable addition to the methods used in this study as it enriches the other interview data from children, teachers and schools' managers with parental backgrounds, choices and justifications. To encourage response, attention was paid to the design of the questionnaire (short, attractive and simple to complete), the quality of printing and the enclosed quality envelopes. The information letters accompanying the questionnaire, in three of the schools, were individually signed with individual handwritten thanks. The questionnaires were handed over to class teachers and distributed and sent to all families through their children. Parents filled in the questionnaires in their own leisure time. Two follow up reminders were sent to parents, the first was sent after ten days and a second one a week later. A face-to-face reminder was also done in two schools by speaking to parents at the time of picking up their children from school. This was successful in yielding a few more questionnaire returns. Instructions on the front page made it clear that parents having more than one child in the school were only to fill in one questionnaire. To further assist with that the schools agreed to give a copy only to the eldest child in the school. This was aiming at reducing the burden on parents and preventing duplicate voices for the same individuals which could be misleading.

The response of 157 parents across the four schools reflected a reasonable parental sample, yet with its overall low response rate of 23.8 percent (see Table 5.5), it was not possible to generalise from such data. Moreover, a swift comparison of the different schools' populations might suggest that the very low

response rate in Andalusia-SS (17 percent) compared to that in London-PS (35.4 percent) was due to differences in the educational profile of the parents in both schools. Hence, this suggested a risk of over representation of qualified parents that may potentially result from the nature of the written questionnaire and literacy limitations of parents with low educational levels.

Consequently, it was worthwhile to assess the degree to which the high non-response rate is likely to have distorted data from any particular school. One approach to doing so involved comparing the population data profile as presented by senior managers and teachers against that which emerged from the questionnaire data. I also compared the demographic questionnaire data of each school with that of its Muslim neighbourhood's national data. This assessment showed that the respondents' demographic backgrounds and educational interests across the four schools corresponded with the characteristics of parental population within each school as described in interview data with managers and teachers in these schools. For example, the parental educational priorities as they emerged from the questionnaire data in each school were all confirming the earlier senior managers' perspectives of their school's parental interests. Moreover, the demographic questionnaire data within each school yield a profile that also corresponds with its neighbourhood Muslim community. These indications minimise the possibility of the overrepresentation of any particular group of parents.

A second strategy rested on comparing the responses of parents who were immediately willing to participate with those of parents who had to be reminded and persuaded to participate. Hence, it is worthwhile mentioning here that as part of the questionnaire management process across the four schools, questionnaires returned after the first and second reminders were marked with the date of return to be distinguished from those returned early. This allowed a further comparison and assessment for any patterns in the nature of respondents in terms of their demographic backgrounds and expectations. Yet, no particular pattern was observed as late respondents were mixed in their backgrounds and perspectives. In this regard, a number of parents apologised for their late response, for example:

> *Sorry for the delay. Thank you so much and good luck.*
> *(Parent 119, degree level, PQ, Vision-SS)*

Others apologised for not being able to fill in all categories in the Likert scale question by opting for the "don't know" category:

> *Sorry I could not answer all the questions above, because we are new here and I cannot fairly judge all the things asked. Success with your research. (Parent 34, degree level, PQ, Olive-PS)*

> *My child had not been for long in this school, so I am sorry cannot answer about how the school is doing. Thank you. (Parent 110, no response for educational level question, PQ, Vision-SS)*

These types of response suggest the importance of including "don't know" as part of the scale to make the questionnaire more inclusive to parents of various degrees of experience with the school. But these responses from late parents with a degree-level education also indicate that the high non-response rate is not necessarily a result of literacy limitations.

A third approach involved informal contact with some parents from these schools asking them whether they had replied to the questionnaire and if not why. This strategy was not possible to implement systematically due to the confidential nature of responses in which names of respondents were not requested but also due to the limited access to parents themselves. In this regard, some parents that I informally came to know during the data analysis period apologised for not replying to the survey. When asked about their reasons for not responding, their justifications were simply about the amount of paperwork they have to regularly fill in. Yet, they expressed their feelings of guilt and regret after getting in touch with the researcher personally. Given the sensitive socio-political context in which these schools are functioning, the evaluative nature of the Likert scale might have contributed to resentment from some parents across different backgrounds to responding to the questionnaire as a whole. This is combined with the nature of the self-completion survey in which I was not able, as a researcher, to establish rapport with respondents and motivate them to respond.

It is this personal direct contact with parents during the questionnaire management period that was not possible in both Andalusia-SS and Vision-SS and minimal in Olive-PS. Yet, in London-PS I was able to contact some parents on the school premises twice in which cases many were willing to contribute as

an act of sympathy after they knew about my journey from Nottingham to their school specifically seeking their perspectives. Moreover, the amount of collaboration from school administration in effectively managing the questionnaire was not the same across the four schools. Although all schools helped in managing the questionnaire, I had the least amount of assistance from the Andalusia-SS office secretary compared to the other schools. In contrast, London-PS and Vision-SS showed a high level of cooperation in the process. In the voluntary-aided Andalusia-SS, for instance, secretaries dealing with this research were not always the same people and were also too occupied with their own paperwork load. In contrast, the London-PS' secretary was very cooperative acting on my behalf in the following-up process of the survey by sending reminders at the specific time, reminding parents directly and informing me of the progress.

Yet, respondents in the four schools show difference of backgrounds and educational interests. In this regard Visser, Krosnick, and Lavrakas (2000) argue that simply having a low response rate does not necessarily mean that a survey suffers from a large amount of non-response error. Similarly, increasing the survey response rates might not translate into higher data quality because even with high response rates there are potentially significant biases in the demographic composition of samples. In the case of this research, it is important to remember that the question of reliability as understood in quantitative research is irrelevant. Instead, the concept of trustworthiness is seen as more applicable. As discussed in section 5.1, the generalisability considerations in this study are viewed in terms of transferring findings from this case study to other new settings. Thus, access to a diverse population of parents was especially useful as I moved into developing in-case and cross-case comparison analyses. It was important to understand the nature of the backgrounds and views of parents within each school and in comparison with other schools and that was not possible without the questionnaire data. The open-ended responses proved to be particularly informative of parental perspectives and justifications for the educational choices they make in regard to their children's schooling. The key issue, therefore, in the use of this questionnaire data is how these data are adding comprehensiveness and complex information to a field-based research that aims at enriching and deepening understanding of Muslim schools' orientations in dealing with tensions arising from the existing diversity within

them rather than generalising about Muslim parents attitudes towards Islamic schooling.

5.2.5 Documents

Ofsted reports, printed and digital prospectuses and the websites of the case-study schools were used in this study to provide some demographic background and to offer secondary data to support or raise questions about emerging themes from the main data. These documents were not without their advantages and disadvantages for the research.

With regard to the documents produced by these schools, Atkinson and Coffey (2004) argue that for qualitative researchers to do justice to the literate social settings they claim to describe, they need to consider self-descriptive written documents such as prospectuses and digital resources about those organisations 'if only for the sake of completeness and fidelity to the settings of social research' (p. 56). This is also needed '[i]f we wish to understand how such organizations work and how people work with/in them, then we cannot afford to ignore their various activities as readers and writers' (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p. 57). This use, of course, needs to be taken with a close scrutiny because those documentations constitute certain types of representations, as are Ofsted reports, and not surrogate to other types of data. Although self-descriptive documents of schools are not transparent descriptions of the day-to-day school routines, they represent their interactions with parents and the wider context through publicising and justifying themselves and, therefore, cannot be ignored.

As discussed in Chapter 2, in 1992 the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) emerged as a quasi-governmental body to inspect schools against specified criteria. Under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 from January 2012 the statutory basis for inspection entails paying particular attention to four major areas: the quality of the education provided; the educational standards achieved; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils; and how well schools are lead and resources are effectively and efficiently managed (Ofsted, 2012). Hence, the overarching aim is that inspection should lead to improvement of individual schools and the education system as a whole (Matthews, 1995; Ofsted, 2012). Inspectors are required to judge the success of schools in terms of the expected 'standards of performance and effectiveness' (Ofsted, 2012, p. 4). The inspection process produces evaluative reports that are

rooted in data gathered from various sources, including classroom observation, interviews with different participants as well as the examination of management documents produced by the school (Ofsted, 2012).

However, the reports produced are not without controversy as some of Ofsted critics have raised questions about the credibility of their findings and the nature of such discourse (Montgomery, 1996; Slee, Weiner, & Tomlinson, 2003; Wragg, 1996). Ofsted reports present perceptions of inspectors who are involved in generating the data, interpreting it and communicating it to readers in published reports. Thus they are not immune to the complications inherent in social research (Wallace & Poulson, 2003). Moreover, the similarities between Ofsted reports and official government policy are highlighted, for instance, Peter et al. (2000) argue that:

> …the whole OFSTED apparatus itself is little more than a grand political cipher created and maintained to satisfy the imagined scrutinising gaze of a wider public. In short, OFSTED is stage-managed public 'accountability'. (p. 605)

Similarly, by using discourse analysis based mainly on the works of Foucault, Scott (2000) explores the construction and reading of policy texts, including inspection reports, through considerations of the notion of 'official writing'. Adopting Burton and Carlen's (1979) notion of official discourse as 'a technology of ideological closure' (1979, p. 13), Scott (2000) argues that policy texts, such as that of Ofsted reports, are typically represented as the 'truth' rather than a particular perspective on it and are constructed to impress the reader of their authoritative status. In such discourse counter arguments are excluded or ridiculed and language is carefully selected to project authority, conceal its ideological foundation and leave little room to readers to interpret its messages in ways that are not intended. Scott (2000) exemplifies his point by an analysis of the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools produced in 1998 that was sent to every maintained school in England. In doing so, he (Scott, 2000) argues that the document primarily aimed at reasserting Ofsted's mission statement and affirming the new policy on inspection, despite its imperfections, as necessarily leading to improvements in the quality of education in institutions which are subject to the authority of the Chief Inspector.

In Official Discourse, Burton and Carlen (1979) explore just such questions. They (Burton & Carlen, 1979) theoretically investigated the connection between knowledge and power relation as presented in official discourses arguing that '[t]he function of official statements is primarily to allay, suspend and close off popular doubt through an ideal and discursive appropriation of a material problem' (pp. 13-14). In light of this ideological closure, Scott (2000) argues that another purpose of these documents lies in the goal of official discourse 'to change the specific setting of practical action and in the process change the way policy is received by practitioners' (p. 19). This refers back to the role of Ofsted itself and the way that role has been constructed through their produced reports. It was with these criticisms in mind that Ofsted reports of the case-study schools are consulted.

Despite these complexities, Ofsted reports constitute part of the self-evaluation of case-study schools and the context in which they exist and plan for future actions. Also, while the purpose of this research is not to investigate policy discourses and their influence on Muslim schools, Ofsted inspection reports contribute to the ways in which these schools are represented to the British Muslim parental community and to the British society at large. Moreover, due to the Ofsted power as a government agency, their documents provide further descriptive demographic data to some of which I could not gain access, particularly the detailed reports in the case of state-funded schools. These include for example the number of pupils with Special Educational Needs; parental ethnic backgrounds and the number of pupils in receipt of free school meals. It enables comparison with descriptive data generated through this research.

5.3 Process for data analysis

Interpretation of data is rooted into the topic selection, question formulation and methods used to inform the study (Denscombe, 2010; Silverman, 2011). The case-study design offers this study the opportunity to pursue the research questions in three simultaneous areas: (a) conceptually, by investigating the diverse perspectives of Islamic education; (b) at the focus level, by exploring experiences around the implementation of Islamic schooling within a British context; (c) at the cross-field level, by investigating how understanding the history of Islamic educational theory and practice might be relevant to

understanding its current meanings and practices within a Western British context. However, as previously presented in Section 5.2, the research produced a large amount of data which were further complemented by Ofsted reports and school prospectuses. All this information presented me with a particularly challenging analytical task. The following parts of this section clarify the way I handled the analysis process and its links to the raw data.

5.3.1 Analysis of quantitative data

I analysed the closed responses of the questionnaire by SPSS software for data analysis (see Figure 5.3). Prior to any data entry, each questionnaire was given an ID number for future reference and consultations. The closed questions were pre-coded based on piloting results and the data were entered manually.

In terms of coding, while most of the closed questions in the questionnaire demand only one response, questions 2.1 and 2.6 allowed parents to provide more than one answer. Both questions offered a blank space for alternative answers that were not provided in the list. In coding their multiple responses a multiple-dichotomy method was used (De Vaus, 2002). This involves creating a separate variable for each of the ten categories of this question. The selected answers were coded as 'yes' and the non-selected ones were coded as 'no'. In cases where no option was selected and no write in data was provided, the variables were coded as missing data. The question 1.3 requesting the parental educational level was left open and the different levels that participants provided were coded based on the General Household Survey's (GHS) 2005 (Fido, Gibbins, Hurt, Matthews, & Thomas, 2006) definition for qualification levels. In the third section, each of the response categories in the Likert scale question is given a score from 1 to 5. While the 'Don't know' category is scored as zero, the 'Strongly agree' response category is scored '5' and 'Strongly disagree' is scored '1'. I interpret the 'neutral' position in this case as a 'middle-position' and it is placed in the middle of the scale where it is given a value of '3'. There were 8 cases in which respondents gave the same rating to all statements by agreeing or strongly agreeing with every statement. Such cases were separately coded as missing data because of error of leniency and omitted from all analysis of the Likert scale.

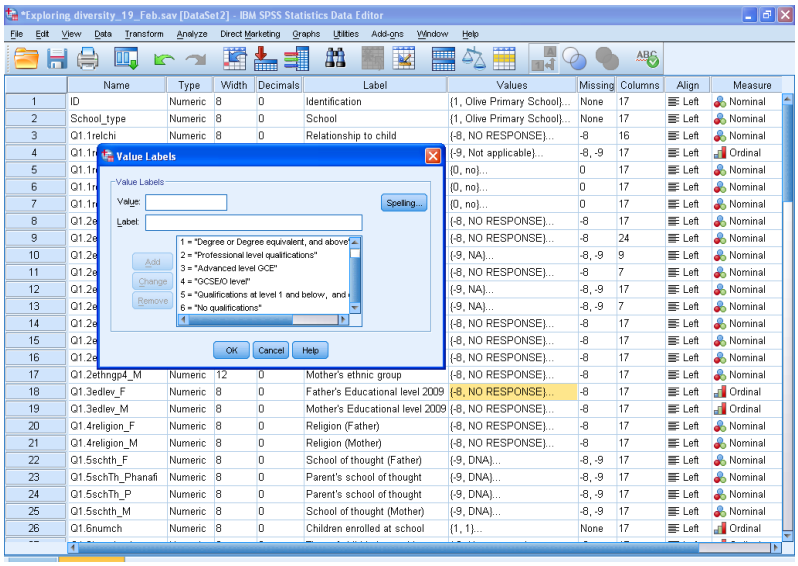

Figure 5.3: Variable view of the research database (showing Value Labels box)

Before any analysis it was essential to check the accuracy of responses, completeness and consistency considering the questions asked and the answers provided within each questionnaire. This was followed by revising my pre-coding for any errors in coding. Subsequently, once I entered the data into the SPSS software I checked the data again for any errors during feeding in, inconsistent or illogical answers, missing values and incorrect coding. This was done by going back to the questionnaires as raw data and through the use of frequency tables for each variable. Various trial analyses were performed to familiarise myself with the data, to check accuracy and to find the best ways to do the final analysis and presentations.

Although the programme provides some complex statistical analyses, I found that most of them were not relevant to the purpose of this study. Accordingly, I only used cross tabulation and frequency descriptive analyses. The third section of Likert scales question is analysed using the cross tabulation analysis to compare similarities and differences of the four case-study schools. This was used in combination with analysis of the main qualitative data. I examined results of this Likert question in three ways. Firstly by coding 'Don't know' category as zero and then observe the frequency of parents opting for 'Don't know' category across the schools and ask questions for the qualitative data analysis. Secondly, by coding the 'Don't know' category as a missing data and examine the participants responses as individual categories in the five-scale

output. Thirdly, by aggregating results and grouping data in a more meaningful way. Hence, three categories were created in which 'Neutral' remains as a separate category, 'strongly Agree' and 'Agree' were aggregated and 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Disagree' were grouped together to give a clearer view of the data (see Appendix 6). Yet, due to the low response rate and the small number of respondents in each school the SPSS tests of significance were not relied upon. The Pearson Chi-Square test results are attached to the data output in Appendix 6 just as an indication of possible difference between schools with no attempts to generalise from them as the expected frequencies cells were too low. Where percentages are given these relate, unless otherwise stated, to parents who answered the specific question.

As previously stated, my goal in conducting this questionnaire was not to produce statistically significant trends or patterns, but rather to gain a substantive introduction to parental educational priorities and perceptions of Islamic schooling. So, further investigations were done using the rich amount of qualitative data. I worked to remain conscious, in the analysis process, of the main purpose of the questionnaire instrument. In doing so, I had to resist placing too much weight on the quantitative results that in this case were derived from a relatively small group of parents due to the low response rate in the individual case-study schools. From this standpoint, although the quantitative comparisons provided interesting starting points for discussion, the open-ended responses of the questionnaire proved to be of arguably greater value. This is because the accounts of participants pushed me to nuance my conceptual analyses and also to hold myself accountable to the various perspectives reflected therein. It was possible during the early data gathering phase to analyse London-PS questionnaire and ask questions regarding parental backgrounds and expectations that fed-back into the subsequent interviews in other schools.

5.3.2 Analysis of qualitative data

Using computer software to manage the data

The transcribed textual data were easier to review and analyse than the audio recording in its original form. However, these raw filed notes and verbatim transcripts resulted in a huge amount of text that was difficult to keep track of, either in printed forms or Word document files reflecting what Patton (2002)

describes as 'the undigested complexity of reality' (p. 463). There was a clear need for classification to help in making sense of them and bringing some order out of the chaos. In this respect, Tesch (1991) divides the qualitative analysis process into two main simultaneous activities: the management of data through mechanical tasks in conjunction with or before conceptual operations. It was at this point where the computer was a useful tool in managing the technical tasks in a more efficient manner than handling them manually.

The main advantages of using computer software rest in its data management facilities in terms of storage, coding and retrieval of data (Denscombe, 2010). My pilot study experience suggests the need for using more robust software for data management than Microsoft Word documents. In this research NVivo 9 was used based on its appropriateness to manage qualitative data, and the availability of professional training I received to use the software. The sources of textual data were kept as a whole, indexing activities of the data were facilitated and the search functions of the software helped in locating any specific part of the data for further scrutiny. In this regard, Fielding and Lee (1998) argue that 'the advent of software packages for qualitative analysis has been important in moving analysis issues to the forefront of concern' (p. 2) because it speeds up the data retrieval process providing the researcher more time for the intellectual tasks of data analysis by reducing the time spent on routine activities (Fielding & Lee, 1998; Silverman, 2010). This process also helped in keeping track of the progress of the analysis in an audit trail.

Nevertheless, using computer software to analyse qualitative data is not without its limitations. As Denscombe (2010) notes, it is time consuming because regardless of the training received, time was needed to prepare and input the data, get to know the package and to see its potential for the type of analytic strategy suitable to this study. Moreover, while using such software to arrange, classify and explore data enhances levels of technical sophistication and quantification, its effectiveness to produce sophisticated qualitative analysis is open to question (Fielding & Lee, 1998; Tesch, 1991). Distancing researchers from the data is one of those concerns (Fielding & Lee, 1998). Yet, in this research the easy access to the whole transcripts within the same project facilitated the continuous shift between the different parts and the whole of participants' accounts which gave me closeness to the data.

Moreover, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) warn researchers against the danger of treating coding and analysis as synonymous by unthinkingly focusing on the technical procedures that many computer-software programs facilitate. In using NVivo software in this research I was conscious that:

> [t]he importance of the work lies in how we use the codings and concepts, not in whether we use computer software to record them or rely on manual ways of marking and manipulating the data. (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 27)

While using NVivo for the analysis of data, charts, work frequency and search functions were utilised as means of exploring the data. The links provided to data sources helped in following up the different meanings that participants attach to certain concepts. The analysis process requires creativity, comprehension, a systematic approach to textual data (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007) and robust theoretical and conceptual analysis. It is as Tesch (1991) argues '[t]he computer does not make conceptual decisions, such as which words or themes are important to focus on, or which analytic step to take next' (pp. 25-26). In this sense, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that analysis is more than coding because the work is primarily concerned with establishing and thinking about such linkages rather than the mechanical processes of coding. NVivo software, therefore, is only as effective as the researchers who apply it; I was still in charge of all the analytical intellectual tasks of thinking, judging and interpreting. This is because meanings, as they are produced by lay actors:

> …cannot be grasped simply in terms of a lexicon, any more than it can be transcribed within frameworks of formal logic that pay no attention to context-dependence. (Giddens, 1993, p. 25)

Analysis procedures and coding process

In order to help with data analysis, shortly after each interview practical details about time, place, participants and other information for any emerging themes and observations were recorded in a data collection journal (see Appendix 7). Since the data were rich and large, the process of analysis was guided by the research questions I have in Chapter 1. Hence, some issues which emerged but that were not seen as relevant to the questions the study was designed to answer were not followed up on. The data were then coded thematically through various stages. In doing so, the data analysis was not a clean tidy process but

rather it involved moving back and forth between different steps. I found this process of qualitative data analysis 'messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating. It [did] not proceed in a linear fashion; it [was] not neat' (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 154). The following paragraphs present a narrative account of the main steps of this process but the different stages were not mutually exclusive.

Firstly, during the preparation stage of building this research project within NVivo, it was essential to facilitate access to all data through the process of coding in a manner that did not fragment its whole and yet permitted exploration and easy access to its minor parts. So, data were arranged in two ways: document sources and nodes. Sources contained all study documents including questionnaire open responses, interviews and focus group transcripts, schools' prospectuses and Ofsted reports. Nodes are containers that permitted me to gather source content relating to certain categories in one place through the process of coding.

Secondly, all the questionnaire qualitative data, other than ethnicity, jurisprudence school of thought and language, were arranged together under its separate questions and fed into NVivo software. Organising the data by question within each school facilitated looking across all participants' responses, comparing them and identifying consistencies and differences. The answer of each participant was given the same ID number that it had in the SPSS quantitative data. This enabled me to examine responses in light of participants' backgrounds and their other answers whenever needed. It also enabled easy access to the original responses in the original printed questionnaires.

To bring meaning to the large volume of textual data, I further coded the questionnaire data of each open-ended question into relevant themes. The categorization process involved both pre-set themes that emerged from both the literature review and the pilot study, which were employed in the questionnaire; and emergent themes that emerged from the data of this main study. So, the created nodes had names that I assigned and others were of participants' texts using the 'In Vivo' coding facility. The free coding revealed that some areas were more visible, such as 'Islamic environment', 'religious practice and observance' and 'discipline' but some others were less frequent. The initial long list of themes which emerged from the initial questionnaire data served as a platform for

further coding to other data derived from interviews and focus groups. At this stage all the questionnaire data were analysed both by question and by school.

Thirdly, all the interviews transcribed for each school at a time. This was followed by reading each full transcript, listening back to it after transcription, and outlining summaries of any arising issues. Noting comments on similarities or differences with data from the same group or other groups from within each school provided an in-depth review of participants' accounts. In doing so, a close contact and familiarity with the raw data from each school separately was achieved. During this process any noticed similarities or differences with other schools were also inserted as comments on the specific data using a Word document.

Each interview transcription was then formatted and fed into the NVivo software. The interview and focus group data were more complex. The earlier recorded comments in Word were transformed into annotations that could be easily accessed along with their specific document or within nodes. Yet others were more useful in the form of memos. The related parts of the data were coded in nodes. This allowed the assembling of all the data pertaining to the particular theme without losing its flow in the source because each coded part had its direct hyperlink to the source and could also be read in a customised context or as a whole document. Each category was then explored looking for areas of similarities, differences and any contradictions that might appear. For example, a node labelled 'Islamic environment' as a distinct category was created in which I coded the related data as a theme to facilitate future analysis. This node also held other related information such as memos that described the data plus my ongoing thoughts and observations.

Fourthly, a cross-case comparison was used in order to yield any overarching patterns regarding emerging issues in the study. Moving simultaneously between the different types of data and looking for similarities or patterns within sub-samples of data resulted in identifying extra sub-themes and cross-cutting themes (Boyatzis, 1998). During this categorisation, every part of the texts was examined but parts not relevant to this study's research questions were excluded allowing for greater differentiation and focus in building some links between the different data. For example, with further examination to the initial free coding themes, a group of issues became more visible as main themes whereas others as sub-themes.

This might be seen for instance in the notions of 'Islamic environment' and 'practising Islam' which became conceptually significant because they were discussed by the majority of parents in the open-ended questionnaire responses and in all interviews and focus groups. Whereas religious observance aspects regularly exemplified by prayer, fasting, zakat (charity) and dress-code – *hijab* - formed part of the description of participants to the 'Islamic environment' or their expectation of the 'good/practising Muslim'. During this stage relevant quotations for the study report were highlighted for future use.

To avoid distancing myself from the data through the process of coding, it was essential to always re-read the codes into their larger context and refer back to the whole transcript or audio recording whenever needed.

Conclusion

This Chapter provides the background information regarding the methodology issues and reasons justifying those choices. Hence, I explored the methodological approaches used and focused on the role of 'double hermeneutics' in generating data. In doing so, I argue that the qualitative multiple case-study approach was the most suitable design to answer the type of questions this research poses. I also argue that the validity of this research rests not on representativeness and generalisation, but rather on transferability. Hence, the chapter provides a descriptive account of the ways data were generated using semi-structured interviews, focus groups and the parental semi-structured questionnaire. It outlines the analytical process which served to understand how diverse individual participants and schools interpret Islamic schooling and make choices accordingly on the day-to-day school life.

In the next four chapters I detail the data analysis in an attempt to draw out the complexities of this social phenomenon, the diverse experiences and perspectives around Islamic schooling, tensions arising from such diversity and the everyday choices made in dealing with them.

Chapter 6. The case-study schools in context

Introduction

Exploring diversity within Muslim schools and ways in which Muslim educators deal with such diversity is inseparable from these schools' orientation, development and social context. This recalls Yin's (2009) description of the key aspects of case studies discussed in Chapter 5 and particularly the blurred boundaries between the investigated phenomenon and the context. I have already discussed the rationale behind my choice of each case-study school but to reiterate in exploring how they deal with diversity. The schools have different characteristics, as they include state funded and independent, mixed and single gender, and primary and secondary. They are placed within different social contexts and physical localities, which means diverse experiences. Moreover, these schools were established at different times and the key agents in their establishment are still acting as headteachers or principals having reflexive surveillance of these schools developments over long spans of time-space. Due to their demographic richness, the schools also appeared relevant for exploring the parents' expectations and educational priorities that underlie their choices in Islamic schooling.

Hence, this chapter aims at setting an appropriate context for the following analysis chapters by providing part of the "rich, 'thick' description" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43, quotation in original) of the case-study schools. Understanding the context of these schools is crucial in making sense of what participants refer to or mean through their accounts as well as helping readers to evaluate the degree of transferability to their own settings. The pen portraits of these schools are based on data generated from questions listed in interview schedules of headteachers (see Appendix 2) and teachers (see Appendix 3) and from the first and second sections of the parental questionnaire (see Appendix 5). These data were also supplemented, when needed, with schools' prospectuses, websites and Ofsted school reports. As access to parents was not possible in two of the schools, the level of richness regarding parents' backgrounds and the views that the questionnaire could provide was not the same across the schools.

The chapter is divided into two main sections. As it was necessary to boundary the case (Yin, 2009), the first section provides a brief descriptive account of each case-study school in five areas: establishment, ethos and curriculum and parental population background in terms of ethnic, jurisprudential, educational and economic features. The second section presents a cross-case analysis exploring the similarities and differences among the six schools. This analysis is shaped by two main themes: ethos and curriculum and schools' parental demographic backgrounds. This section helps in understanding the ways in which the social phenomenon expresses itself within the boundaries of each school as well as the way it compares to other settings, raising further questions arising from the emergent dilemmas of diversity which become the basis for explanation in Chapter 7.

6.1 The case-study schools in context

6.1.1 London Primary School (London-PS)

Establishment

Table 6.1: London-PS at a glance

School	London-PS/2009-2010
Type	Independent
Level	Primary
Gender	Mixed
Age range	4-11
Number on roll (2010)	179 (Females: 105; Males: 74)
Staff	Mixed gender/all Muslims
Annual fees (2010)	£2,750
Association	AMS-UK

London Primary School is an independent Muslim mixed gender day school located in an affluent area on the outskirts of London. The school was opened in 2002 and registered in 2003 as a result of some individual initiatives by parents dedicated to Islamic educational provision for their local Muslim community. In

national assessments and tests, the school scores higher than the national average. The school is oversubscribed and has a long waiting list, but is limited by the size of its current accommodation. According to the accounts of parents, children and school staff, continuous change has been taking place since the school started in terms of resources, curriculum and training.

The school has built various links with other faith-based schools. All school management and teachers are of the Muslim faith. The school has chosen to remain independent with no interest, at the time of research, in applying for state funding.

Ethos and curriculum

The school places strong emphasis on the development of a rich spiritual "Godliness" in the pupils as well as on educational standards and professional training for staff. Its curriculum includes all the National Curriculum subjects, except for music, supplemented with Quranic, Arabic and Islamic Studies subjects.

There is a special focus on Quran and Arabic learning not only for school children but also for the neighbourhood community. The leadership team believe that the school teaches respect for all of the jurisprudence schools without being restricted to one. These aspects that the school claims to offer were strongly reflected in parental questionnaires, and interviews repeated the positive responses.

Parental background

According to the headteacher, the school has a wide mix of backgrounds, but the majority remains South Asian with 40 percent of children coming from the neighbouring boroughs. This reflects the area's population, of which the Asian ethnic group constitutes 39.33 percent (Office for National Statistics, 2004b). Muslims form the second largest religious group with 16.17 percent of the school area's population and 11.9 percent within the borough (Office for National Statistics, 2004b). The school location is surrounded by some other neighbourhoods in which Muslims constitute over 30 percent of the population, mainly from Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic backgrounds. This demographic portrait, combined with the community's young profile may shed some light on the long waiting list for the school.

The questionnaire data (see Figure 6.1) seem to reflect the majority Pakistani ethnic group in the Muslim community in the area and in the neighbouring boroughs.

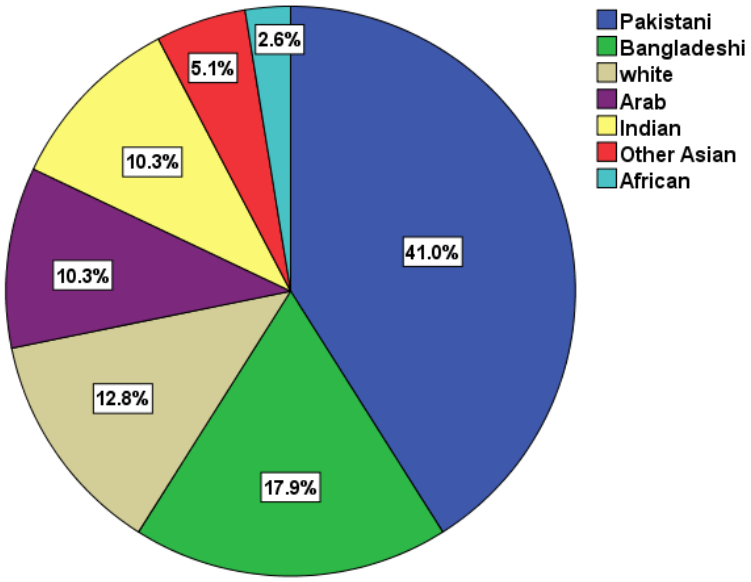

Figure 6.1: Parents' questionnaire respondents (n=39), London-PS

Consequently, a large proportion of the school intake has a language other than English spoken at home. What is of interest here, as in the other schools, is not the sample representation in terms of ratio but the access to the different parents' cultural backgrounds within the school.

All pupils come from families of Sunni background, but the school population remains diverse in terms of Islamic jurisprudence. While the majority of respondents were from a South Asian background, that traditionally follows the Hanafi school of thought, Table 6.2 reflects a process of change in this area. The nature of the population in Table 6.2 corresponds with the school's stand on this issue where nearly half of respondents are not following any particular jurisprudence school of thought.

Table 6.2: Parents' jurisprudence diversity, London-PS

N= 37	**Hanafi**	**Hanbali**	**Maliki**	**Shafi'i**	**None**
Frequency	11	2	3	5	16
Percentage	29.7	5.4	8.1	13.5	43.2

Source: Parents' questionnaire

In terms of education, based on the school's leaders' accounts, the parental population has a privileged educational profile with a large number of them having Higher Education Degrees is reflected in the questionnaire data in which the majority of respondents as well as their spouses had a university degree (see Figure 6.2).

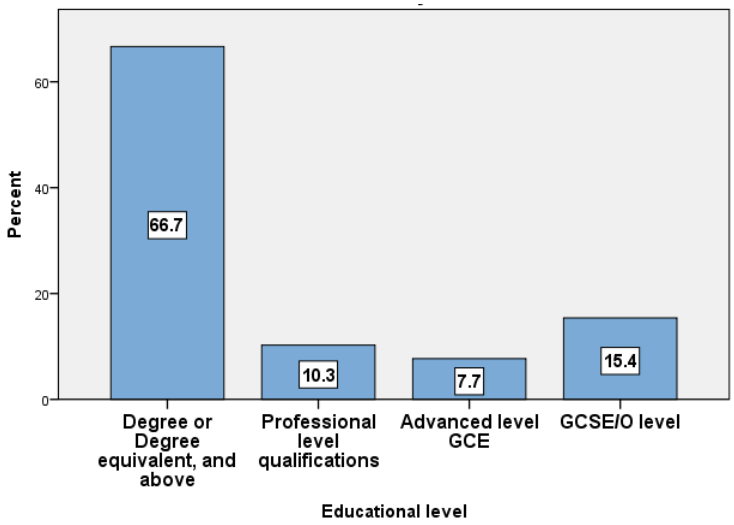

Figure 6.2: Parent respondents' educational levels, London-PS (n=39)

One aspect that emerged strongly in this school is its community empowerment and parents' support. Parents feel that they have the knowledge and confidence

to pursue their children's education and build links with the school in a co-operative and trusting relationship. Many parents in their open answers pointed to what they see as the strengths of the school in terms of "the good communication" with parents and "close community role and involvement of parents".

In summary, there are three areas that specifically distinguish this school from the other schools in this research. The first is related to its strong emphasis on an Islamic ethos and the spiritual grounding of pupils along with an academic profile which is above average in the league tables. The second is to do with the high academic background of parents, highlighted in the school's leaders' discussion of parental expectations and involvement (see Chapter 8). The third is related to the large number of parents within the school who do not affiliate themselves to any specific jurisprudence school of thought.

6.1.2 Message Primary School (Message-PS) and Iqra Secondary School (Iqra-SS)

Establishment

Message-PS and Iqra-SS are both located on the same site but in two separate buildings. The two schools are located in a city in which Muslims constitute 14 percent of the population with lower than average economic activity rates, particularly for females, and a youthful age profile (Office for National Statistics, 2004b).

The two schools are run under the same Muslim charity. They were first started in 1989 by the current Message-PS' headteacher because of her decision to home-school her own child. This was expanded to other parents with similar concerns about state school provision. With their support and that of the local Muslim community, the study group quickly grew into a primary school provision for girls. Community pressure meant that the school opened its doors to boys as well. In 1992 the Message-PS took its current name and was established as an independent Muslim school with what the headteacher describes as a "massive waiting list". In this same year, Iqra-SS was established as an extension of the growing Message-PS and in 1996 the two schools were separated. Later the primary school gained state funding and was established as a maintained school. In 2010, the Message-PS had a long waiting list with a minority of non-Muslim

pupils as well. Iqra-SS has chosen to remain independent and in September 2003 was re-located to an independent purpose-built building. The Message-PS headteacher did not initially intend to establish either of the two schools but they were gradually developed as a response to demands from the local Muslim community. The largest ethnic group within both Irqa-SS and Message-PS is that of Pakistani heritage, reflecting their surrounding area.

I could not gain access to parents in both schools, as explained in Chapter 5, so the information in this part is based on staff and pupil accounts, school prospectuses and Ofsted's most current report.

Shared ethos

Through a close reading and analysis of the school prospectus, the two interviews with the founder, the interview with the senior manager and pupils' focus group perspectives, the ethos of both schools focuses on two main areas. Firstly, on developing rational independent enquiry for its pupils; and secondly, helping pupils adapt to the British contextual milieu.

Both schools focus on academic achievement and on providing an enjoyable educational experience. The founder's view is integral to the schools' development plans. The Iqra-SS prospectus clearly states that her vision as a school founder remains present through her contribution in the school's strategic development. The Iqra-SS principal's stress on the rational autonomy of pupils in the school prospectus is partly echoed in the vision of the Message-PS headteacher.

The two schools do not strictly follow any jurisprudence schools of thought. To inform the schools' choices, they constituted a board of scholars from different backgrounds to discuss emerging and controversial issues taking into account a broad Islamic framework, their population needs and the specific British context. The Iqra-SS prospectus emphasises that the school's teaching takes into consideration the qualities that pupils from a variety of ethnic groups bring. This is aiming at the promotion of respect through understanding and enhancing the individual self-esteem of pupils. Similarly the Message-PS leadership team stressed their respect and provision for the different jurisprudence choices that parents may make.

Both schools believe that their educational practice is aimed at stressing the shared values that are grounded in the Islamic teachings. Both schools offer pupils free access to counselling within an Islamic framework as part of caring for their emotional well-being.

Message-PS

Table 6.3: Message-PS at a glance

School	Message-PS/2009-2010
Type	Voluntary-aided
Level	Primary
Gender	Mixed
Age range	4-11
Number on roll (2010)	289
Staff	Mixed gender and religious backgrounds
Association	AMS-UK

Ethos and curriculum

One of the Message-PS's objectives is to enhance teaching and learning with consideration of Islamic requirements (prospectus, Message-PS, p.1). According to the 2010 Ofsted report, children in the school from a Pakistani ethnic background do better than their peers nationally. See Table 6.4 for the Key Stage 2 national results.

Table 6.4: Percentage achieving Level 4 or above in both English and Mathematics at Key Stage 2 SATS, Message-PS

Message-PS 2008	Message-PS 2009	Message-PS 2010	LA Average (2010)	Maintained Schools National Average (2010)	National Average (2010)
72%	82%	90%	68%	73%	73%

Source: (Department for Education, 2011)

In terms of curriculum, Message-PS follows the National Curriculum with the aims of embedding an Islamic ethos into it. In addition, the school provides classes in Islamic Studies to include Quran recitation (tajweed), Prophetic traditions (Hadith), Prophet Muhammad's biography (Seerah) and Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh).

There is a special focus on arts and they also offer Music, including musical instruments, as a subject. Furthermore, the school has allocated a whole week annually for teaching about other faiths and visiting different places of worship.

Children's focus groups reflect the importance the school gives to community cohesion discourses. The latest Ofsted (2011, p.1) inspection regarding the citizenship programme evaluated the school's achievement in this area as "good with outstanding elements". The Ofsted report (2010) evaluates children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as "outstanding". As part of this development, the same report believes that the school ensures that children have opportunities to explore the way people from around the world live, create art and get on together.

Parental background

Message-PS serves a heavily populated South Asian area of the city. All the pupils were from minority ethnic groups. According to the headteacher, pupils came from a diverse range of backgrounds but are predominantly Pakistani, specifically Kashmiri. Some other backgrounds include Indian, Somali, Bengali, Arab, Chinese and afro-Caribbean. The headteacher believes that the majority of

children come from overcrowded households. The majority of parents have a low educational level, and very few have a university degree. Consequently, children joining the school have a poor level of literacy and come from homes where reading is not the norm. According to the teachers, the leadership team and the school's Ofsted report (2010), a very high proportion of pupils (83.4 percent) do not speak English as their first language (Department for Education, 2010). The school has a Special Education and Needs Coordinator (SENCO). The Ofsted 2010 report evaluated this provision as "good".

The school's teachers are also ethnically and religiously diverse. The majority of teachers are from a Muslim faith background but there were five members of staff of Christian and Hindu backgrounds. The school policies allow up to 50 percent of school staff to be of a non-Muslim background. The restriction is believed to be a way of keeping the school ethos alive through role modelling by Muslim staff and to provide children with a lived experience of faith practice within a Muslim community. Yet, the non-Muslim members of staff are seen as enriching school life by exposing children to people different from them in belief and as opening a space for non-Muslim children to join the school when possible.

The school provides parents with diverse workshops including numeracy, literacy, homework, Quran, ICT, food, and health and safety topics. Moreover, the school is building links with parents in a number of ways: through its interactive website; by talking to parents in the morning and afternoon when they pick up their children; at parents' evenings, in assemblies, clubs and play group sessions; and through booked appointments for longer consultations with school staff. In this regard, the Ofsted report (2010, p.9) suggested that parents and carers were "overwhelmingly positive about the school."

In summary, there are three areas that specifically distinguish this school from the other schools in this research. Firstly, the school achieves above average SATs results. Secondly, its parental population has a low educational and economic profile. Thirdly, it is restricted in its Islamic curriculum provision by its voluntary-aided status which means limited space for Islamic Studies and offering the full National Curriculum including Music.

Iqra Secondary School (Iqra-SS)

Table 6.5: Iqra-SS at a glance

School	Iqra-SS/2009-2010
Type	Independent
Level	Secondary
Gender	Girls
Age range	11-16
Number on roll	128
Staff	Mixed gender and religious backgrounds
Fees	£4,500
Association	AMS-UK

Ethos and curriculum

Iqra-SS is a non-selective day school. An aspect of the school vision was their stress on helping pupils "develop and adapt in today's society" (school prospectus, p.1). In this regard, the Iqra-SS senior manager believes that linking children to their context and weaving that with their Islamic studies is at the heart of what an Islamic education stands for (see Chapter 7). In this endeavour, Iqra-SS believes that it prepares pupils to become "model citizens" and "law abiding citizens" (Iqra-SS website). In order to build links with the local community, the school has organised different activities as part of the Citizenship programme.

The school believes that it is important for pupils to explore diverse beliefs, cultures and identities as both UK and global citizens. This includes hosting faith and political leaders from the local community for discussions and debates with pupils, taking part in sports competitions against local schools and communicating to the local community through radio programmes.

Iqra-SS follows the National Curriculum, except for "design and technology" and "music", supplemented with an Islamic Curriculum. Figure 6.3 illustrates the distribution of taught subjects in terms of the time allocated to each one at Key Stage 4. Religious education focuses on the study of Islam and in KS4 includes an overview of the world's major religions.

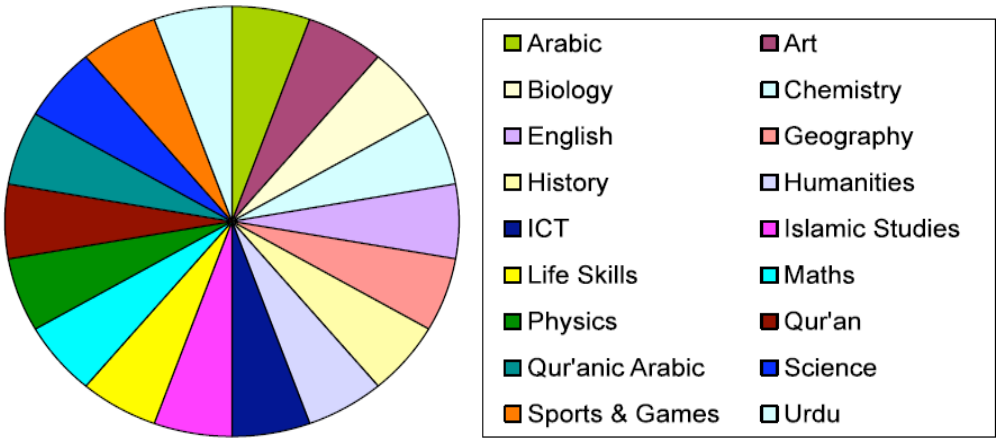

Figure 6.3: Iqra-SS school curriculum at KS3 & 4, Iqra-SS prospectus

The school places a special emphasis on academic achievement for all children (see Figure 6.4). Due to the school's small capacity, each year they only have one class that goes through GCSE exams.

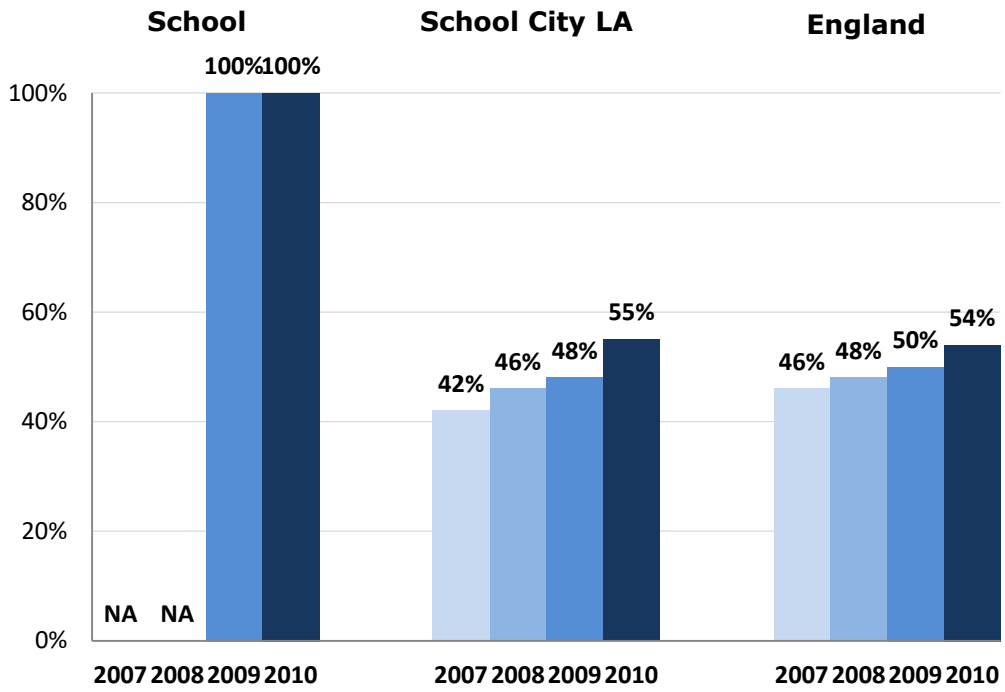

Figure 6.4: Iqra-SS, 5+A*-C (and equivalent) including English and Maths GCSE results over time

Source: (Department for Education, 2011)

This school does not use ability selection entry. In 2010 most of pupils had English as an additional language (EAL). The Ofsted (2010) report stated that the school provides a strong support to pupils who have special educational needs, including those with English as an additional language. The careers guidance is also evaluated as "very strong and successfully raises students' ambitions so that most move on to further education" (Ofsted, 2010).

Parental background

Iqra-SS is located within the same area as Message-PS. So, similarly, pupils are ethnically diverse but the majority of them have a Pakistani Kashmiri heritage. All pupils are from a Muslim faith background. The school's teachers are ethnically and religiously diverse but the majority are of Muslim faith.

In terms of parental involvement, according to the Ofsted (2010) report parents feel well informed about their children's progress and are highly supportive of the school. Parents' evenings, where parents can discuss their child's progress with individual subject teachers, are held twice a year. Otherwise, parents are expected to book separate appointments to discuss any raised concerns in greater depth with the relevant member of staff.

In summary, there are three areas that specifically distinguish this school from the other schools in this research. Firstly, Iqra-SS is an academically focused independent school that offers a full National Curriculum with limited space for Islamic Studies subjects. Its GCSE results are well above the national average. Secondly, the school annual charge is the highest amongst the case-study schools. Thirdly, it draws on a parental population with a wide range of socio-economic levels.

6.1.3 Andalusia Secondary School (Andalusia-SS)

Establishment

Table 6.6: Andalusia-SS at a glance

School	Andalusia-SS/2009-2010
Type	Voluntary-aided
Level	Secondary
Gender	Mixed
Age range	11-16
Number on roll (2010)	592
Staff	Mixed gender and religious backgrounds
Association	AMS-UK

Andalusia-SS is a voluntary-aided secondary day school located in a vibrant city in which Muslims formed 11.03% of the population in 2001 (Office for National Statistics, 2004b). In 1981 the school was first established as a girls' independent secondary school in mosque premises. With the support of the local community, the school quickly grew and in 1991 moved to a more suitable building. It was further expanded to incorporate co-primary school provision. In

2007 the secondary section moved to new purpose built premises and gained state funding.

The purpose-built Andalusia-SS represents an approach to using visual forms that combines the traditional with the contemporary and binds it in an urban landscape. The school is built in an architectural style that matches the modernist aesthetic while also recalling some traditional Andalusian style features. The building is inviting and open. It is very well equipped with technology and in every classroom there is an interactive whiteboard. Although the outside of the school building does not strongly present its Islamic identity, the main entrance opens on to an Andalusian-style garden that can also be seen from the outside. There are separate sections for boys and girls.

According to the school management, Andalusia has one of the highest waiting lists in the city. In the event that the number of applications exceeds the number of places, the school has its oversubscription admission criteria that give first priority to Muslim children who meet the school's religious practice criteria.

Ethos and curriculum

The school considers itself a centre of educational excellence. Building children's self-confidence as British Muslims without feeling inferior to the wider society comes as one of the school's core values. This includes performing their religious duties with an enduring desire, living in harmony with wider British society and contributing positively to their country's social, political and economic well-being. In order to be widely inclusive for Muslim children, the school does not formally adopt any of the traditional Muslim jurisprudence schools of thought.

Although the school is mixed gender, it is organised to educate boys and girls separately and the school timetable is set to respect this gender segregation. The building's architecture facilitates this with its mirror division into two sides for boys and girls. The staff may work in the two school sides whenever needed but the teaching is done by the same gender. This gender segregation aims at respecting the Islamic ethos of the school and serving the needs of traditional Muslim parents.

Plasma screens in the different corridors are intended to motivate pupils for achievement with messages that reinforce Islamic values and academic

achievement. Pupils attend daily spiritual lessons and congregational prayers in the school's mosque.

The curriculum at Andalusia-SS incorporates the National Curriculum subjects "enriched with aspects of Islamic culture" (School homepage). The full subjects of the National Curriculum are taught. At Key Stage 4, all pupils take part in Careers Education and complete a work experience placement. The previous Ofsted report (2009) described the curriculum as satisfactory with some limitations, such as a small provision for music. Music is taught through the Islamic melodies, known as nasheeds, without use of any musical instruments apart from the drum.

The school places a strong emphasis on academic results. GCSE exam results were well above the national average for five A* to C grades (see Figure 6.5). Pupils enter school with attainment that is broadly in line with national expectations.

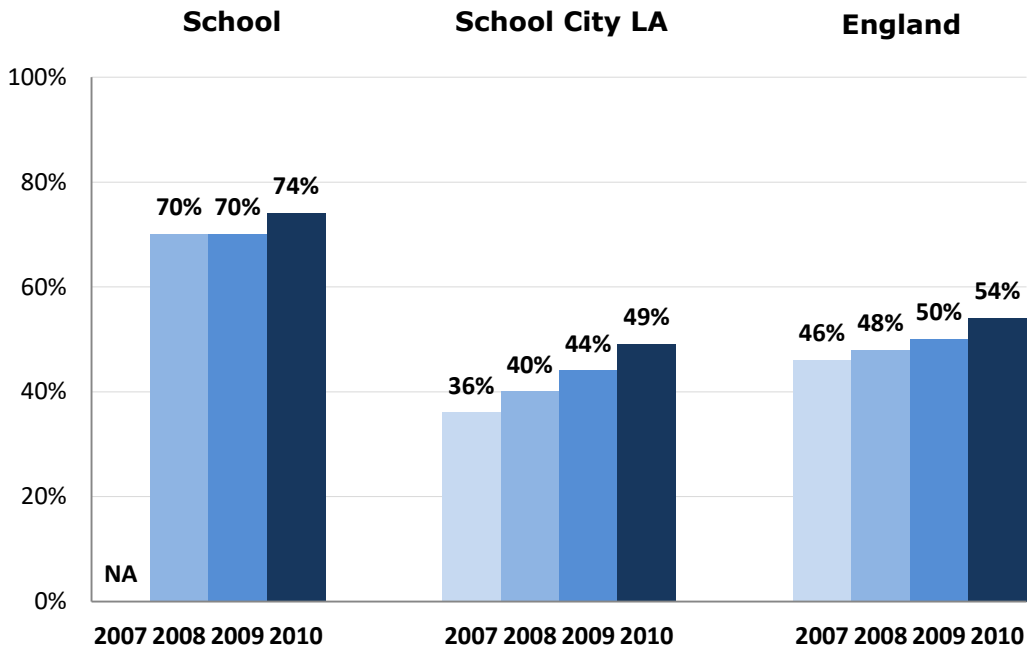

Figure 6.5: Andalusia-SS, 5+A*-C (and equivalent) including English and Maths GCSE results over time

Source: (Department for Education, 2011)

Parental background

All pupils were of the Muslim faith. They come from a diverse range of social, economic and ethnic groups living in and around the city. The Asian community in the city is mainly Indian, constituting 25.73% of the city population with a small minority of other Asian (1.97%), Pakistani (1.53%), Black African, Bangladeshi (0.69%), and other black minorities (Office for National Statistics, 2004b). Reflecting the city's Muslim population, the majority of pupils are of Indian heritage with a small number of Pakistani and African/Black British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Similarly, the majority of respondents come predominantly from a South Asian background, and more specifically are of Indian heritage (see Figure 6.6). This ethnically diverse background is also reflected in the diversity of languages within the school.

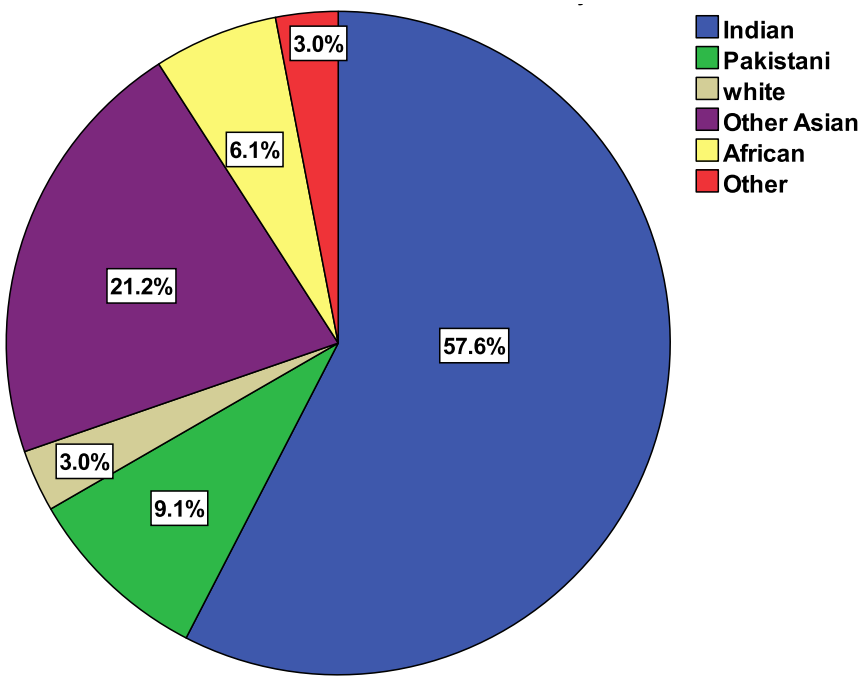

Figure 6.6: Parents' questionnaire respondents, Andalusia-SS

The vast majority of parent respondents were brought up as Muslims with a small minority of white converts. Unlike London-PS respondents, the majority of Andalusia-SS respondents were following the Hanafi school (see Table 6.7). The majority of those Hanafis are from a Deobandi background with a number of Barelwi members (see Chapter 2).

Table 6.7: Parents' jurisprudence diversity, Andalusia-SS

N= 28	Hanafi	Maliki	Shafi'i	Ja'ffery (Shiite)	None
Frequency	24	1	1	1	1
Percentage	85.7	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6

In terms of education, parents having a GCSE educational level were highest, followed by those of degree level (see Figure 6.7).

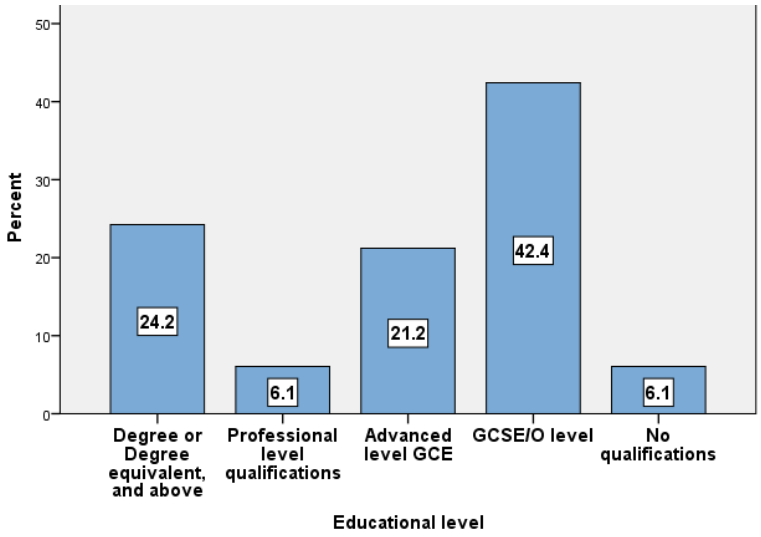

Figure 6.7: Parent respondents' educational level, Andalusia-SS (n=33)

The school principal believes that the school has managed to build a strong relationship with parents. For him, the majority of parents are very interested in their children's academic success, which he believes to be reflected in the 70 percent turnout in parents' evenings. This relationship is achieved via non-formal community links, the pupils' school planner, emails, text messages, school reports, phone calls, newsletters, parents' evenings and booked appointments when needed.

At a glance Andalusia-SS is distinguished, uniquely among the case-study schools, by its state of the art building and technology resources. The school is state funded, teaching a full National Curriculum with a limited provision of Islamic Studies. There is a special focus on academic achievement in GCSE exams in which the school is achieving well above the national average. Its population is socio-economically varied but has a high proportion of pupils from a low economic background. The largest ethnic group is of Indian background.

6.1.4 Olive Primary School (Olive-PS)

Establishment

Table 6.8: Olive-PS at a glance

School	**Olive-PS/2009-2010**
Type	Independent
Level	Primary
Gender	Mixed
Age range	3-11
Number on roll	210 Full-time: 71 boys, 101 girls Part-time: 19 boys, 19 girls
Staff	Mixed gender All Muslims
Annual fees	£1,500
Association	AMS-UK

Olive Primary School is an independent, non-selective Muslim day school that also has a state funded nursery. It is located in the same city as Andalusia-SS. The school started in 1998 as a family response to their religious need to provide their children with an educational setting that was embedded in Islamic spiritual practice. The Principal in this case is the founder of the school along with his wife. It started with four children in small rented accommodation, and it progressively grew. With further expansions, the school moved to an infants' school site that was further extended by converting some neighbouring buildings. The transformed school building has a multi-purpose mosque/hall and ICT suite.

According to the Ofsted report (2010) the school still faces building limitations that restrict the development of the PE activities. This is something that the school leadership team raised in interviews and which they were hoping to

develop in the future, given more financial support from the community and collaboration from the City Council. The school has chosen to remain independent with no interest, at the time of research, in applying for state funding.

Ethos and curriculum

The mission of the school is to help pupils develop their Islamic personality through having awareness and understanding of the role of Islam in their lives based on the notion of "Tawheed" (oneness of God) at the core. The ethos specifically emphasises spirituality, with Quranic and Prophetic teachings as the framework through which a positive British citizenship is understood. This is believed to be achievable through providing an environment for teaching and learning that promotes an ethos of understanding of, and respect for, differences in the plural British context and positive dialogue with and within society at large. The school further stressed that its aim is to promote tolerance for all people in Britain, and encourage pupils to develop a sense of global citizenship. The school does not strictly follow any of the traditional schools of thought but stated clearly on its website that it teaches respect for all those schools and opens its doors to pupils of all backgrounds and schools of thought.

The school provides regular congregational prayers, assemblies and daily spiritual study circles in the prayer hall. The activities include supplications, talks and children's singing and plays. This programme is backed up by daily morning spiritual sessions in classes aiming at developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. The latest Ofsted report (2010) evaluated the school's spiritual provision as "outstanding".

The leadership team expressed the school was striving towards the development of a broad and balanced holistic curriculum that integrated Islamic perspectives throughout all academic subject areas, with a focus on the Quran and character development. For this reason, in its prospectus, the school places a high priority on establishing and maintaining an innovative curriculum where personalised learning would be a target.

The school was working in partnership with other faith-based schools, such as Roman Catholic, in the area. Units on Judaism and Christianity are included as part of the Islamic Studies curriculum with the aim of increasing knowledge and encouraging respect for other religions. Members of the other faith communities such as Hindu and Sikh were welcomed into the school to share their religious perspectives with pupils.

In September 2010, the school underwent a change of headteacher and curriculum. Hence, the latest Olive-PS Ofsted report (2010) showed that the school was developing its own syllabus from an eclectic range of source material based on a mixture of Islamic, Montessori and National Curriculum principles. In this regard, the school is reported to be using British and American teaching materials to underpin its programmes of study and to support the teachers. The Montessori Curriculum is perceived by the school's new headteacher as being closer to the Islamic view of education. However, the school faces challenges with high turnover of teaching staff. In 2011, as the new headteacher left the school, the Montessori Curriculum was discarded and the school went back to the National Curriculum supplemented with Islamic Studies.

Parental background

At the time of my data collection, 2009-2010, the great majority of pupils came from minority ethnic groups, the largest being those of South Asian background. The majority of questionnaire respondents were from South Asian backgrounds and mainly of Indian heritage with some families of Somali, North African and White British and European backgrounds (see Figure 6.8). In terms of language,

a high proportion of the school's pupils have English as an additional language or are multi-lingual.

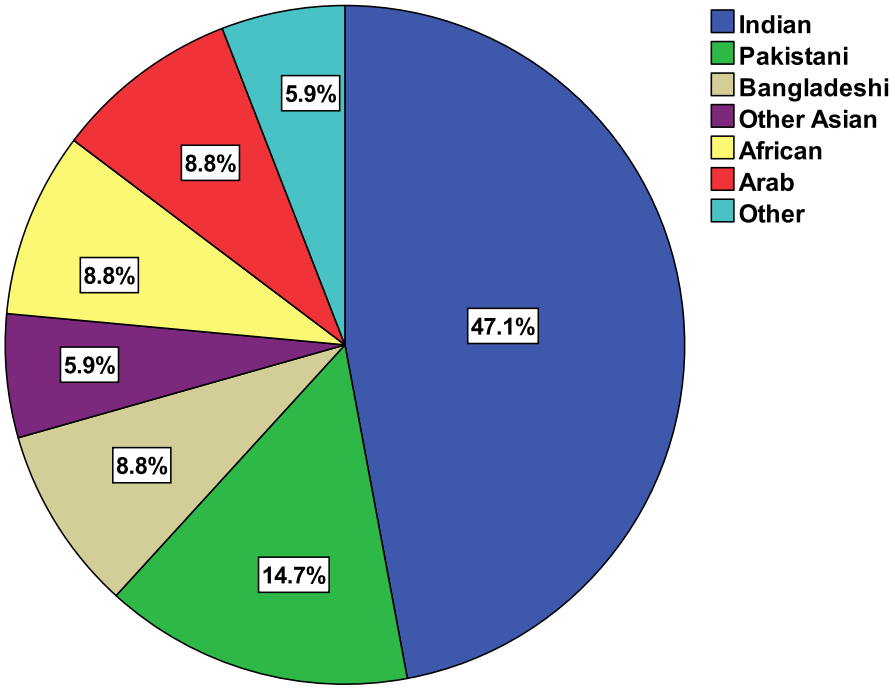

Figure 6.8: Parents' questionnaire respondents, Olive-PS (N=34)

However, both the headteacher and the principal pointed out that the school demography was not static and it had witnessed some changes since its start. The school's pupils come from a wide catchment area across the city and beyond.

All pupils derive from families of a Muslim Sunni background. Similarly to Andalusia-SS, the Hanafi school of thought was the most popular amongst the questionnaire respondents, reflecting a traditional South Asian Muslim community's jurisprudence profile (see Table 6.9). The majority of the Hanafis come from a Deobandi group.

Table 6.9: Parents' jurisprudence diversity, Olive-PS

N= 31	**Hanafi**	**Maliki**	**Shafi'i**	**None**
Frequency	22	3	3	3
Percentage	70.9	9.7	9.7	9.7

Source: Parents' questionnaire

In terms of education, parent respondents varied between the different levels. Parents with a degree and GCSE levels appear to be similar in number of respondents.

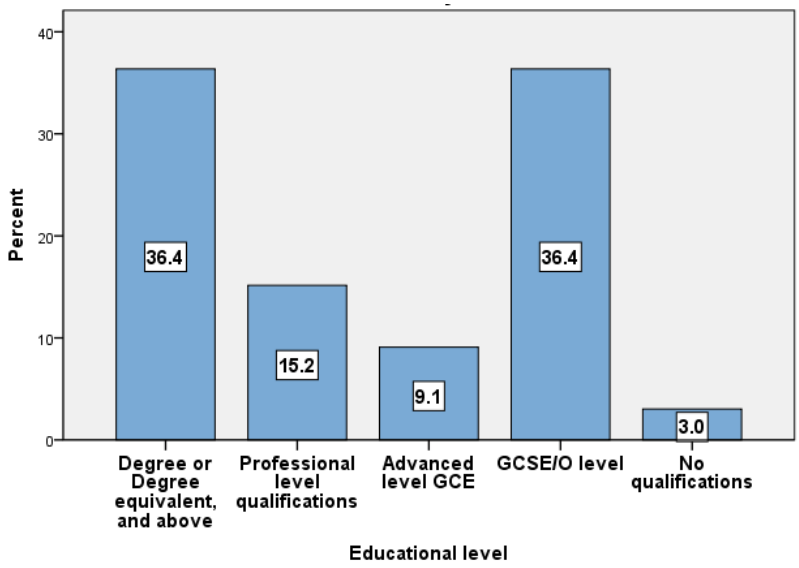

Figure 6.9: Parent respondents' educational level, Olive-PS (N=33)
Source: Questionnaire data

According to the school, a large number of parents come from deprived backgrounds with a low level of education, which may explain the low response rate to the questionnaire. This parental educational profile stands in contrast to that of London-PS.

In brief, this school is distinguished by: its strong emphasis on Quran learning and the spiritual development of pupils; its respondents' traditional jurisprudence profile; its low fees and; strong parental support regarding its ethos (see Chapter 8).

6.1.5 Vision Secondary School (Vision-SS)

Establishment

Table 6.10: Vision-SS at a glance

School	Vision-SS/2009-2010
Type	Independent
Level	Secondary
Gender	Girls
Age range	11-16
Number on roll	225
Staff	• All females • Mixed religious backgrounds
Annual fees	£ 4,260
Association	AMS-UK

Vision-SS is an independent Muslim day school for girls located in a relatively affluent part of a city in which Muslims form the largest non-Christian religious group constituting 9.1 percent of the its population (Office for National Statistics, 2004b).

The school, the first one of its kind in the city, started in 1991 with an initial intake of fourteen girls. The building is a large converted Victorian house that has been further extended by a single-storey extension. Continuous refurbishments have been made, but most parents indicated in the questionnaire that they considered the school building and facilities to be areas for further development.

There is a strong demand from the Muslim community for places at the school. Consequently, new pupils are required to sit an entrance test and only those with average and above average levels of ability are offered a place. The majority of teachers are from a Muslim Sunni background, but there are teachers of Shiite background, non-Muslim faiths and of no faith.

Although the school is for girls only, it is not strictly segregated, male visitors and fathers are welcomed into the school.

Ethos and curriculum

The school aims for the child "to leave as a well-rounded British Muslim Citizen" (Vision-SS prospectus, p.1). An important focus of the school is fostering and affirming girls' self-esteem as British citizens as a means of enabling them to reach their full potential in spiritual, social, economic and even political spheres with respect to their Islamic ethical values. As a symbolic message of their view of the school as a catalyst for social change for the British Muslim community, the first page of the 2010 school prospectus quotes and highlights Nelson Mandela's statement that: "Education is the most powerful tool which you can use to change the world". Hence, the school's goal has two main focuses, spiritual and social empowerment. The school does not follow any specific jurisprudence school of thought and emerging issues are discussed within the school.

There was a special emphasis on academic achievement. Despite the limitations associated with its old building the school has an excellent academic record (see Table 6.11).

Table 6.11: Percentage of pupils achieving A*-C in both GCSE English and Mathematics, Vision-SS

Vision-SS 2010	LA Average (2010)	Maintained Schools National Average (2010)	National Average (2010)
94%	46%	55.7%	54%

Source: (Department for Education, 2011)

The school celebrates pupils' achievements through organised prize-giving evenings and end of year achievement assemblies.

The school leadership emphasised that the curriculum is designed to prepare the girls for adulthood in a "knowledge-based economy". For this reason, they stressed that the curriculum is regularly revised. Hence, the school organises work experience placements with different community civil services and businesses such as hospitals and local media organisations. This has included work placement with the local Member of Parliament. The school also provides a careers advice programme that starts in Year 9. Extra-curricular activities are also planned to help develop the girls' economic skills.

School visits are organised to support the curriculum including visits to Parliament, the Jewish Museum and Bradford Theatre. Other visits that were very popular at the time of my study were trips abroad including visits to Saudi Arabia for the minor pilgrimage and to France as a language support.

The school offers a full National Curriculum, except for Music, combined with that of Islamic Studies. The Islamic Studies curriculum includes Quran memorisation and meanings; fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence); tajweed (Quran recitation); and a selection from the traditions of the Prophet. Pupils are offered GCSE classes for both Arabic and Urdu languages.

Parental background

Pupils are drawn from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds from around the city, but the largest group was of the Pakistani ethnic group. This reflects the city's demographic composition where people of Pakistani ethnic origin constitute around three quarters (76.6%) of the city's Asian Muslim population. The 2009-2010 city's report shows a growth in the Somali and Arab ethnic groups in the city and they are also present in the school's population. The school sees this diversity as an opportunity for learning and enriching its environment. Questionnaire respondents cut across the school's demographic context and give a sense of parents' interests and priorities (see Figure 6.10).

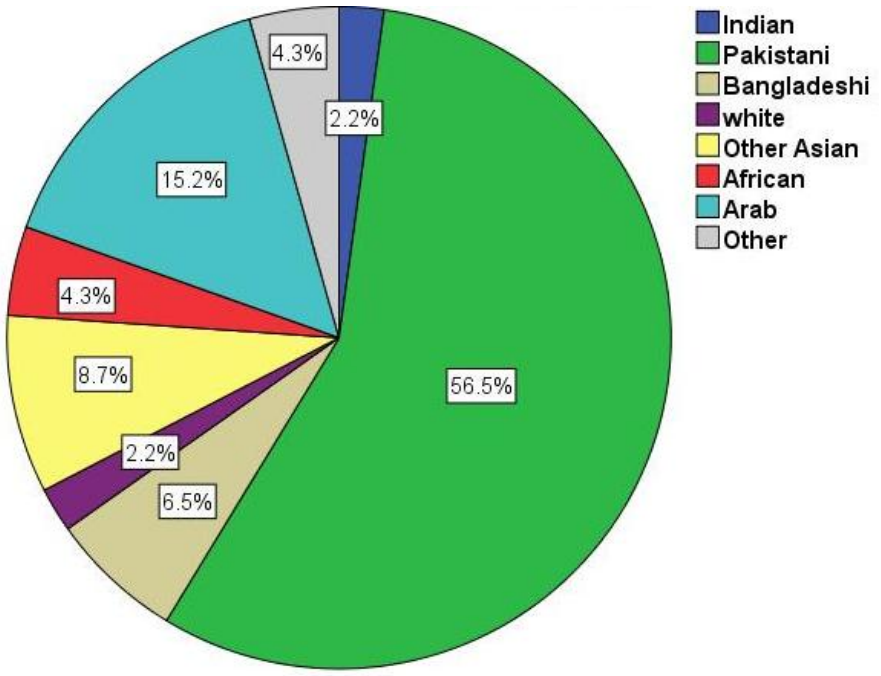

Figure 6.10: Parents' questionnaire respondents (n= 46), Vision-SS

Linguistically parents are projecting their ethnic diversity. Most parents do not speak English as their native language. However, according to the 2011 Ofsted school report the school had no pupils who are at the early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language.

Respondents show a non-traditional parental jurisprudence profile: a third (34.7 percent, n=46) followed the Hanafi school, but nearly half (47.9 percent, n=46) of them did not adhere to any specific school of thought. The rest were equally

divided between Maliki and Shafi'i. The educational background of respondents shows variation but nearly half of them were degree level (see Figure 6.11).

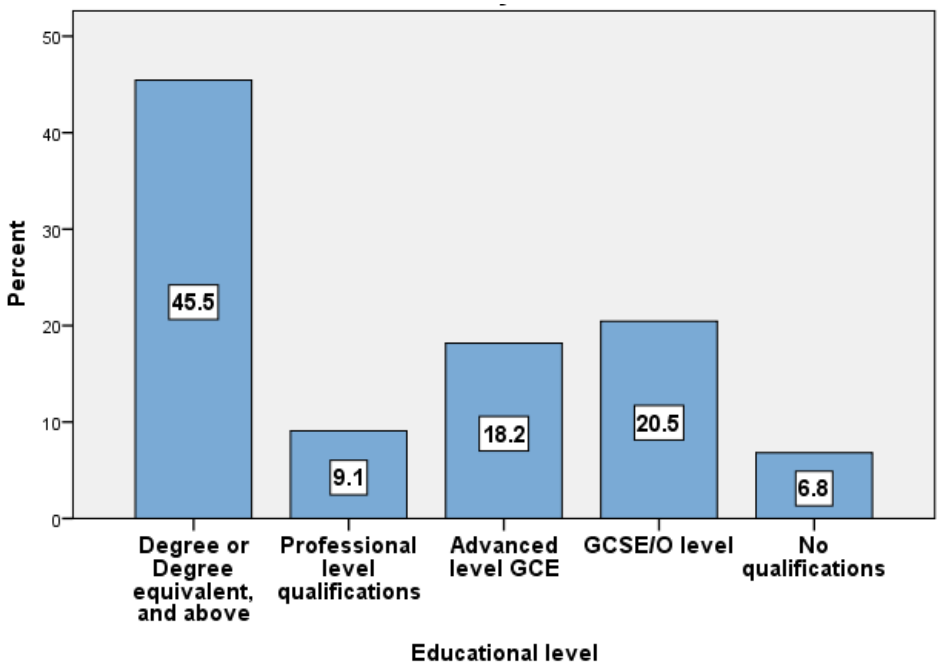

Figure 6.11: Parent respondents' educational level, Vision Secondary School (n=44)

In terms of communication, the school builds contact with parents through phone calls, the school website, newsletters, pupils' planners, the annual pupils' progress reports, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) events, informal meetings at the end of the school day and pre-booked appointments whenever needed.

In summary, the Vision-SS is an academically focused Muslim school that derives its pupils from a wide range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. The largest ethnic group within the school is Pakistani. The school offers a full National Curriculum, except for Music, and places a special emphasis on empowering pupils with skills that are seen to be necessary for them to fit in within the British socio-economic context. The Islamic Studies curriculum is limited due to restrictions on the school timetable, but this is supplemented by some extra-curricular activities including international spiritual trips. The jurisprudence profile of respondents does not reflect a traditional picture of the South Asian community (see Chapter 2).

In the next section, I will look closely at the similarities and differences between the case-study schools.

6.2 Similarities and differences between schools

These multiple schools include some similar and different conditions. Since no class observations or curriculum examinations were held, the analysis in this section is based on headteachers' and teachers' interview data and school prospectuses and websites. The aim in this section is to compare these schools by raising questions about their similarities and differences in three main areas, namely: school status, demographic composition and the ethos of each school. The latter point, particularly, raises the question of what are the goals that educators in any specific school hold to be the most important. Table 6.12 lays out the details of the case-study schools to facilitate comparison.

I want to make it clear; the analysis in this research is not intended to compare primary and secondary stages of education. It is not that primary and secondary schools have no differences, they do; it is not that that those differences are not significant, they are. Much has been written about similarities and differences between primary and secondary schools. Accordingly, Day et al. (2011) suggest that:

> [D]ifferences in school size, curriculum, organizational structures, conditions and culture, as well as head's values, qualities and educational ideals contribute to some distinctive as well as similar practices in primary and secondary schools. (p. 63)

But to reiterate, this research focuses upon diversity amongst the case-study schools and their Islamic ethos because, as an emergent area, has received relatively little attention in the extant literature, as can be seen in the review in Chapter 3. Therefore, the difference between primary and secondary schools, which is another area of investigation, is overridden by this research concern.

Table 6.12: Cross-case comparison

School	Andalusia-SS	Vision-SS	Iqra-SS	Message-PS	Olive- PS	London-PS
Founded	1981	1991	1992	1989	1998	2002
Fees	Free	£ 4,260	£4,500	Free	£1,500	£2,750
Pupils' ethnic backgrounds	Wide range, but a large number of Indian	Diverse, but a large proportion of Pakistani	Diverse, but a large proportion of Pakistani Kashmiri heritage		Wide range, but a large number of Indian	Wide range of backgrounds, but a large number of Pakistani
Curriculum emphasis	National Curriculum	National Curriculum	National Curriculum	National Curriculum	Quran & Arabic (4.5 hours per week)	Quran & Arabic (1/3 of the weekly sessions)
Ofsted	Good (2009)	Outstanding (2011)	Outstanding (2010)	Satisfactory (2010)	'Good' with some 'outstanding' features (2010)	'Good' with some 'outstanding' features (2010)
Socio-economic background of pupils	Proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average	Mixed	Mixed	Proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average	Mixed	Majority of professional backgrounds

6.2.1 Ethos and curriculum

The case-study schools operate to both resist the loss of pupils' religious identity through complete assimilation into the British mainstream while also focusing upon the inclusion of those pupils within British society. Each school's ethos might seem to be very similar, but a close examination of leaders' perspectives, school prospectuses and websites shows different priorities and focuses. The choices different schools take influence the type of educational provision that each school offers.

All Muslim school leaders in this research accept that Islamic education encompasses the holistic, ecological and intellectual aspects. Daily life at these schools is characterised by many practices, namely: daily prayers, Islamic greeting etiquettes and supplications, weekly assemblies, Ramadan spiritual programmes, Eid celebrations and end of year school activities. These practices aim at helping pupils forge a sense of community and belonging. Moreover, all the leadership teams and the prospectuses for the case-study schools emphasise their support for citizenship education and the need for their pupils to get into contact with society outside the schools. They find it important that pupils meet people from other, different, backgrounds with mutual respect. So, all of them invited guest speakers from other faith-based schools or from different civic sectors as part of the school programme. Moreover, all school leaders in this research aspire to an outstanding Ofsted report.

However, despite the spiritual goal, which underpins all the case-study schools' very existences, this goal is not manifested at a similar level across the six schools in the areas of curriculum composition, prospectus focus, school activities and staff discourses. A diversity of provision emerged between schools in the area of curriculum as they attempt to balance academic and religious knowledge manifesting through whether they were primary or secondary and state-funded or independent.

Teaching in London-PS and Olive-PS is primarily concerned with nurturing faith and building a moral character. So, Quran and Arabic learning in both schools stand at the heart of their timetables:

> *The first thing that we put into our timetable for every class is Quran, and nothing else goes on the timetable until Quran goes*

> *on and Arabic. So they're the two most important because the Quran lessons are the most important. We also start every morning with halaqa [study circle] in each class. (Headteacher, Olive-PS)*

This view was strongly reflected in parents' perspectives of these two schools. Conversely, Andalusia-SS, Iqra-SS, Message-PS and Vision-SS, were not dedicating as much time to the Islamic Studies curriculum; instead a great weight was placed on the National Curriculum. In particular, the educational choices of both Andalusia-SS and Message-PS in areas of curriculum and espoused pedagogies were restricted by the state imposed conditions on voluntary-aided schools:

> *The National Curriculum is exactly the same, so we teach **exactly** what state schools teach but we have Arabic and Quran, half an hour a day for each class. (RE teacher, Message-PS, emphasis in original)*

In secondary schools discourses, specifically, there was a clear stress on preparing their pupils for future careers and building their confidence as British citizens. Consequently, they all have limited provision for Islamic Studies and place more emphasis on academic achievement through the National Curriculum subjects and GCSE exam results. It is worth noting here that Vision-SS, in particular, follows an ability selection procedure for new pupils by requiring an entrance examination. In doing so, the school selects pupils from those with average and above average levels of ability. This is not the case for any of the other schools in this study.

This variation raises questions about the meaning of "Islamic education" in the multi-cultural and multi-religious context underpinning choices that individual schools make. Moreover, it also poses further questions about the way Muslim educators in these different settings handle diverse parental expectations of what an "Islamic school" stands for.

6.2.2 Academic success versus educational resources

I found strong emphasis among all the case-study school leaders and teachers on academic achievement in the national exams. In secondary schools in particular, there was a strong emphasis on gaining standards as a way to combat the stereotype of what a Muslim woman could do and achieve. As

previously presented in this chapter, Vision-SS, for example, attracts its pupils based on academic ability level. Moreover, some extra support is given to pupils to reach their full potential of academic achievement, including special educational needs provision and after school classes. Those schools perceive their academic success as essential in various ways, including changing the perceived inferior status of the British Muslim community profile, communicating their worth to the Muslim community and, crucially, gaining the trust of wider British society:

> *We're a new phenomenon- Muslim schools- people are very mistrusting, so we have to use measures that people will understand to* ***show them****. In order to get to a position of sort of confidence and respect in society and with people, we have to do all these key performance indicators and have all of these sort of SATs [The Standard Assessment Tasks] results, and then you build the trust upon which you can then go on experiment and do other fantastic things! To turn the tables round for the way that we're perceived as Muslims, and the schools and the institutions. It's a big job! (Headteacher, London-PS, emphasis in original)*

Nevertheless, this orientation towards academic achievement demands more extracurricular activities and members of staff that are regarded as both professional educators and Islamic role models. Hence, this is not without consequences on the budgets of each school. The financial choices these schools make are not the same, which influences affordability and inclusion for the different socio-economic backgrounds. The annual fees for Vision-SS and Iqra-SS, for example, are above four thousand pounds, which although still relatively low for an independent school, may not be within the reach of many families. This shows a move in girls' Muslim school provision; from an affordable charge that just allows the school to run within a tight budget and which does not permit extra-curricular activities in the case of Haw's (1995) study; to a relatively higher budget, which would help in raising standards and in affording some fun learning. The first aimed at reaching a wide range of girls of different abilities, needs and backgrounds. Moreover, it was also about offering an educational opportunity for some of the most vulnerable Muslim families with hard financial circumstances within the school area and who would otherwise send their daughters abroad (Haw, 1995). This was certainly not the case for Vision-SS with its selective approach based on ability, competing with the city's grammar school. Although Iqra-SS school is open to pupils regardless of their ability, its fees (£4,500), the highest of all the schools in this study, may mean

exclusion for some financially deprived families. It is an educational provision for academic achievement within an Islamic environment and in a fun way.

Thus, the case study schools that might serve a similar community of pupils to those of the Old Town High Muslim School targeted in Haw's study (1995) are Andalusia-SS, Message-PS state funded schools or Olive-PS. In this respect, Olive-PS has chosen to keep its fees low (£1,500) in order to stay within reach of low-income families. The school also chose to remain inclusive to children with different academic abilities. It is something that the school Ofsted report highlights, describing the school as "an inclusive school that supports pupils with a wide range of needs, including some with considerable learning difficulties, enabling all to thrive and make progress in their learning" (Ofsted, 2010, p. 2). However, such a choice is not without consequences including the high turnover of teachers and the dissatisfaction of some parents looking for better academic standards (see Chapter 7).

This shows the dilemma that Muslim schools are facing between educational autonomy and financial affordability versus educational quality. On the one hand, accessing state funding means being subject to the conditions of "maintained status" imposed by accepting state financing (Parker-Jenkins, et al., 2005). On the other, choosing to remain independent faces these schools with the further dilemma of educational quality versus socio-economic inclusivity.

In sum, there are many trade-offs and a careful balancing up of issues for schools to reach their perceived "right measure", including Islamic knowledge versus National Curriculum; affordability versus quality; pupils' academic achievement versus educational enjoyment; school autonomy versus state financial support. The different choices that the case-study schools made diversified them along different aspects. Financially the case-study schools are of three different categories: voluntary-aided schools such as Andalusia-SS and Message-PS; independent schools with very low fees such as Olive-PS and independent schools that charge relatively higher fees such as London-PS, Iqra-SS and Vision-SS. The financial choices have their influence on the available curriculum options. For example, voluntary-aided schools, due to their full provision of the National Curriculum, have less space for Islamic Studies compared to independent Muslim schools. Schools also show three different emphases on Islamic ethos, for example, London-PS and Olive-PS emphasised spiritual enrichment in their approach to Islamic knowledge and educational

practice; Message-PS and Iqra-SS placed particular focus on rational development and Andalusia-SS and Vision-SS emphasised building pupils' self-esteem as a mean to social empowerment. This provides more Islamic school choices to parents to 'opt in' and 'opt out' of Islamic schools for several reasons (see Chapter 7). In this regard, understanding parental demographic background is necessary for understanding ways in which Muslim schools provision is shaped through a double hermeneutic feeding-in process.

6.2.3 Schools' demographic backgrounds

The demographic composition of schools feeds back into parental educational priorities. The jurisprudence background, for example, is directly related to the religious choices of parents on issues of food, dress, rituals and some curriculum options such as music and trips (see Chapter 8). Hence, the school parental religious orientation presents a potential pressure on the case-study schools in shaping their construction of "Islamness" through considerations they make on the Islamic Studies and other educational provision. Similarly, the parental educational backgrounds have the potential to influence the expectations parents have from their chosen Muslim schools. This creates diversity within and between schools along ethnic, religious and academic lines to which these schools need to respond. It is in this context that the demographic background of each case-study school is regarded as important in understanding similarities and differences between them.

Ethnic and jurisprudence background

Despite the low response rate to the questionnaire, the backgrounds of respondents seem to reflect the diversity of the Muslim population within these schools. The questionnaire data were further confirmed by the data gathered from interviews with the leadership members of the case-study schools. This diversity will need certain considerations when setting the Islamic Studies curriculum and also in some areas of religious practice and will require schools to make choices upon strategies to deal with possible issues that might emerge in the day-to-day school life (see Chapter 8).

The vast majority of the case-study school parents were brought up as Muslims, with a small minority of converts. In terms of ethnicity, all the case-study schools derive their pupils from a wide range of ethnic and linguistic

backgrounds. Yet, Andalusia-SS and Olive-PS populations, with the largest ethnic group being of Indian heritage, give a different picture from that of London-PS, Vision-SS, Message-PS and Iqra-SS where the largest ethnic group of pupils were from a Pakistani background. In both Message-PS and Iqra-SS parents were predominantly Pakistani, specifically of a Kashmiri heritage. This ethnic disparity is partly due to the different geographic contexts within which the case-study schools are placed. As discussed in Chapter 2, due to the 'chain migration' process, many of early Muslim migrants relied upon already existing kin networks within Britain to acquire information and opportunities within the different cities prior to migration. Hussain (2008) argues that, as a result, it is 'not uncommon to find communities who resided in the same villages re-established in neighbourhoods within the UK' (p. 166). Consequently, 'pockets' of Muslim communities have gradually developed along ethnic lines that have come to be concentrated in different parts of Britain (Ballard, 2004).

Another aspect that directly influences the school demographic context is the school status and the accompanying financial differences. The independent Muslim schools vary in the amount of fees they charge; Iqra-SS, London-PS and Vision-SS's fees are well above those of Olive-PS, which give way to socio-economic exclusivity to some groups of the community compared to state funded schools. Table 6.13 shows that nearly three quarters of respondents across the three independent schools felt that the school fees had a major impact on their family budgets.

Table 6.13: Financial difficulties

			Financial difficulties		
			No	**Yes**	Total
School	**Olive Primary School**	Count	10	23	33
		% within School	30.3%	69.7%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	11	28	39
		% within School	28.2%	71.8%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	14	35	49
		% within School	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	35	86	121
		% within School	28.9%	71.1%	100.0%

Accordingly, a number of parents had children in other schools, explaining their reasons in light of financial burdens. Those parents send their other children to different schools, including mainstream schools or other Muslim independent schools with lower annual fees than those of London-PS or Vision-SS.

In contrast, the voluntary-aided Andalusia-SS and Message-PS schools are free education providers where admission priority is given to children living closer to the school. In both schools the proportion of pupils coming from deprived backgrounds was above the national average. Although some other criteria are applied for the selection related to religious practice, the populations of these two schools are better placed (than are other independent case-study schools) to represent their area's socio-economic Muslim communities with their wider diverse ethnic backgrounds, needs and educational priorities.

Besides the diversity between parental backgrounds in the case-study schools along ethnic lines, they also show some variation in their Islamic jurisprudence school of thought backgrounds. This parental jurisprudence diversity cannot be understood in isolation of the ethnic composition of each school. As presented in Chapter 2, the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali, and the Shiite legal schools still characterise the Islamic landscape worldwide. Muslims generally follow the interpretations of the school of jurisprudence established in the geographic area from which they derive (Hallaq, 2005; Philips, 2007). For example, the jurisprudence backgrounds of respondents in both Andalusia-SS and Olive-PS

reflect the traditional picture of the Hanafi School's influence within the South Asian community. More specifically, the majority of those Hanafis are from the Deobandi School (discussed in Chapters 2 and 3) of the South Asian Sunni Muslims. Similarly the Hanafi respondents in London-PS were mainly following the Deobandi School but the Vision-SS Hanafi's were distributed between Deobandi and Barelwi affiliations.

What is also noticeable is the low proportion of respondents in Andalusia-SS and Olive-PS opting to the "none" category. In contrast, the London-PS and Vision-SS respondents, also mainly from a South Asian heritage, show less attachment to Hanafi as the inherited jurisprudence school of thought (see Table 6.14). Although parents in both London-PS and Vision-SS show a privileged educational profile compared to Andalusia-SS and Olive-PS, the questionnaire data show no association between parents' educational level and their jurisprudence affiliation. Hence, this jurisprudence and sectarian difference could be due to various reasons including the way each school presents itself through its leading members and its Islamic educational provision, the concentration of any certain Muslim community in the neighbouring area and the options of Islamic schooling available within the locality of each school.

Table 6.14: Parents' jurisprudence diversity, case study schools

	Andalusia-SS	**Olive-PS**	**London-PS**	**Vision-SS**
	% (N=28)	**% (N=31)**	**% (N=37)**	**% (N=46)**
Hanafi	85.7	71	29.7	34.8
Hanbali	0	0	5.4	0
Maliki	3.6	9.7	8.1	8.7
Shafii'	3.6	9.7	13.5	8.7
Ja'fari	3.6	0	0	0
None	3.6	9.7	43.2	47.8

Source: Parents' questionnaire

None of the schools gather formal data about the jurisprudence backgrounds of their populations. Nevertheless, all schools emphasise their respect and openness to the different jurisprudence schools of thought without espousing any specific one of them (see Chapter 8).

Parental educational background

Parents' educational backgrounds also vary across the case-study schools. In terms of parent respondents with degree level and above, the proportion was highest in independent schools namely, London-PS, then Vision-SS, followed by Olive-PS. According to the leadership accounts, the majority of parents in London-PS were from professional backgrounds with university degrees due to the dynamics of social mobility in this school area. Given this background, the London-PS believes that parents are a strong resource in running the school's extra-curricular activities and very ambitious in terms of academic achievement for their children. This is reflected in the questionnaire responses in which London-PS respondents showed a higher and wider involvement in school life compared to the other schools taking part in the questionnaire (see Table 6.15). Hence, their perspectives of religious practice are important for the development of the school in terms of its "Islamness".

Table 6.15: Parents' involvement in the case-study schools

	Andalusia-SS	London-PS	Olive-PS	Vision-SS
	% (N=33)	% (N=38)	% (N=34)	% (N=47)
Attend parents' meetings	97	100	97	100
Attend school events such as assemblies	45.5	73.7	69.7	53.2
Participate in fund-raising	21.2	68.4	27.3	34
Help out elsewhere in the school	9.1	39.5	15.2	0
Help out in child's class	6.1	18.4	3	2.1

Source: Parents' questionnaire

This parental educational profile and level of involvement is different in the two state funded schools, Andalusia-SS and Message-PS, as both headteachers pronounced:

> *Majority of our pupils come from households that would be over crowded, higher education is well below national level. So we haven't got many parents with higher qualifications in school. When children started school they're not pupils with whom books may have been shared before they've come to school. (Headteacher, Message-PS)*

The leaders of these two voluntary-aided schools explained parents' lack of involvement in light of parental educational background and socio-economic variations:

> *The school needs to be active in terms of getting the parents themselves interested in the children's education. Some [parents] just come because they've a natural interest. But because the school is a state school and it attracts from different economic backgrounds, the lower the economic the lesser the interest for various reasons. It's a national trend but the school does do a lot to make sure that those parents also come and take an active interest in their children's education and development. (Principal, Andalusia-SS)*

Andalusia-SS respondents, in particular, show the least number of parents with university degree compared to the other three independent schools. With the different parents' backgrounds, the case-study schools may not be able to receive the same level of support from the community. In this regard, both Andalusia-SS and Message-PS see themselves as a source of support to the community in terms of educational provision, not only for pupils but also for their parents:

> *We do work very hard with our parents […] it is our responsibility to educate and that is educating both parents and the child in a way as well. (Headteacher, Message-PS)*

The two schools provide different training courses to support parents in enhancing their Islamic knowledge, meeting parenting challenges and developing their employability skills. There also emerged a few requests from parents in Olive-PS to support parents with limited educational attainment in the process of educating their children; as a parent respondent suggested "more help for low educated parents" (Parent 31, PQ, Olive-PS).

This demographic disparity amongst the different schools raises further questions around the type of educational priorities that their parental populations aspire to, and ways in which educators deal with the possible tensions that might arise as a result. Issues of diversity implicit in this chapter are taken up more explicitly in Chapters 7 and 8.

Conclusion

To conclude, all the schools in this case-study whether primary or secondary aim at providing a secure Islamic environment in which children can thrive spiritually and academically. In their attempts to overcome constraints on resources, the leaders of these schools opt for different choices in areas of funding. Three main choices emerge in this chapter namely: seeking state funding, increasing fees, or acting within a tight budget. These choices have their influences on the demographic composition of those schools in the socio-economic and educational backgrounds of parents who send their children to these schools. All these diversities provide a demographic context within which these schools are negotiating their day-to-day educational practice and curriculum options.

The areas of jurisprudence choices, interpretations of Islamic schooling and academic interests are potential spheres for tension within those schools. This chapter also shows some difference amongst schools in terms of school knowledge and spirituality. While Andalusia-SS, Iqra-SS, Message-PS and Vision-SS were primarily driven by academic standards, giving limited time to Islamic Studies subjects, others adopt a more holistic approach by placing Quran learning at the heart of their school life, exemplified in London-PS and Olive-PS. This raises questions about the theoretical perspectives that underpin each school's practice and choices.

As described in Chapters 2 and 3, Islamic schooling in Britain can be understood through its past and contextual present, taking account of the dynamics that underlie their development. In order to help understand the choices made in each school, it is necessary to explore the leaders' theoretical perspectives about "Islamic education" underpinning those choices, particularly:

1. What meanings the leaders of these schools give to "Islamic education" within Britain

2. What the goals are that educators in Muslim schools hold to be most important

3. How they influence the educational provision within these schools

4. What desires and expectations Muslim parents have from their Islamic schools and why

5. How parents' educational priorities compare with those of the schools.

Chapter 7 follows these questions and explores further some of the similarities and differences between these schools which inform their approaches in dealing with diversity within them.

Chapter 7. Diversity between Muslim schools: Tensions in developing Islamic schooling in Britain

Introduction

There are two key analytical questions that emerged from the case-study schools portraits, it is now necessary to distinguish between them. The first is; what are the aspects of Islamic schooling which the leaders of the case-study schools hold to be the most important? The second is, in light of this diversity of Muslim schools, what are the parental educational priorities which govern their choices? To explore these questions, this chapter draws upon Giddens' (1984) notion of "double hermeneutic" as a sensitising lens through which change within Muslim schools can be better understood through processes of production and reproduction. It draws on data from the parental questionnaire and interviews with parents and the leaders of the case-study schools.

The chapter is divided into two main sections. In the first section, I discuss how the leaders of the case-study schools interpret Islamic education within Britain. Moral and social are the two main approaches to Islamic schooling emerged from those schools, which have their theoretical roots in the typologies presented in Chapter 3. These interpretations will necessarily impact on matters of curriculum composition and the general ethos of the school (see Chapter 8). In the second section, I draw a general overview of parental expectations and educational priorities across the case-study schools. This section also highlights some tensions that arise as each school attempts in balancing Islamic ethos as a school priority, and academic achievement as a popular parental goal. In doing so, this section points to the dynamics of the educational market that is emerging amongst Muslim schools.

7.1 Approaches to Islamic schooling: Diversity between Muslim schools

This section aims at exploring the first analytical question about the aspects of Islamic schooling which the leaders of the case-study schools hold to be the most important. All school leaders interviewed in this research are either the founders of their schools, such as Andalusia-SS, Iqra-SS, Message-PS and Olive-PS or are well established as headteachers for these schools since their early and critical stages of development such as London-PS and Vision-SS. Hence, their perspectives of Islamic schooling form an integral part of the direction through which these schools are developing. In Day, et al.'s (2011) research, based on head's perspectives of their leadership values, five categories were identified to have had a significant influence on the school's direction and development. These include moral/ethical responsibility; promoting and modelling respect and trust; passion and commitment in aspects of faith, religious values and promoting the enjoyment of teaching and learning; professionalism in terms of personal and professional practice; and raising standards. The same research suggests that primary and secondary heads demonstrated similar professional values which are essentially reflected in the organisational values and practices of the more effective and improving schools. All of these five categories are directly relevant to areas in which the perspectives of the case-study schools leaders are influencing the development of these schools through their attempts of finding the right measure in application.

In reviewing Islamic educational literature in Chapter 3, based on the focus and priorities of Muslim educational schooling, the jurists, the speculative, the philosophical and the sociological were identified as four main typologies. My analysis of data in this section is informed by my reading of those historical discussions. The approach is to explore the interrelated discourses through which Muslim educators in the case-study schools constitute their understanding of the goals and priorities of Islamic schooling.

7.1.1 The moral approach

Schools categorised within this approach focus on fostering pupils' religious identities by deepening awareness of God and love for their religious values. In doing so, the "*fitrah*" preservation and character formation come at the heart of

these schools' educational goals. The Islamic notion of "*fitrah*", which I introduced in Chapter 3, is based on the belief that knowledge of God's existence is contained in the innate nature of man (*fitrah*) (Al-Qabisi, 1986). This *fitrah* can be preserved or changed through education and the social context of individuals (Al-Attas, 1979). The moral approach is rooted in the pragmatic approach of jurists but derives heavily from al-Ghazali's theory of moral education, wherein the goal is to nurture the soul to know God and the mind to wonder, to know and understand (Al-Ghazali, 1904, 1964). As presented in Chapter 3, it is about bringing up individuals to be concerned for God, self, and others (Al-Ghazali, 1904). So, educational practice needs to focus on developing God's consciousness that encompasses the internal spheres of the self and enable learners to be illuminated by the internal meaning of the religious law rather than merely focusing on the external aspects of it (Al-Ghazali, 1964).

Both London-PS and Olive-PS's leaders believe that the set curriculum should be based on the goal of nurturing spiritual reflection to underpin all attitudes and outward behavioural actions. What is noticeable in London-PS, for example, is not only the amount of time given to Quran learning but also the emphasis the headteacher and the school prospectus place on what I conceptualise as the "inner Muslim". It is the emphasis on the spiritual and mystical experience of the child through reflection, which the headteacher described as "the main and most important". According to al-Ghazali (2005), the discipline of learners includes moral actions through individual personal refinement of character; because knowledge (*ilm*) and action (*amal*) are linked:

> *The first thing is that the child is encouraged to know Allah, become near to Allah, and know His messenger and learn more about him, come to love him, come to follow him. And get a secure identity as a Muslim, and for that child to become a very good positive wonderful person on this planet, who's doing good towards others and living a godly life themselves. So that's the first thing. Then obviously we need to give them the subject knowledge they need, to inform all of them. So there's the spiritual, the intellectual and the emotional side of all of that in Islamic Studies. On the emotional side, they're developing imaan, morality, boundaries of behaviour, and developing norms and habits and customs which are in conformance with Islam and benefit their lives. (Headteacher, London-PS)*

The focus on spiritual aspects and disciplining the soul through prayer, contemplation and Quran learning as a way to gaining the intuitive knowledge of God or to live a "godly life", as London-PS' headteacher expressed, is in line with

al-Ghazali's mystical views of education. The notion of *Taqwa* (God's consciousness) forms an important element in al-Ghazali's ethical theory of human conduct. The *Taqwa* could be achieved through the individual's striving to grow in the awareness of God's presence which needs persistence and focus besides nurturing physical and intellectual aspects (Al-Ghazali, 1904, 1964). According to the London-PS prospectus, all–round child development includes the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects that need to be cultivated in a caring and secure Islamic environment. This, the headteacher elaborated, meant that the school must have staff that act as role models, schedules that facilitate religious observance and warmth that can help children develop as happy individuals. This shows the way the Ofsted inspectorate criteria for the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development of pupils (DfES, 2003) are incorporated within the school's perspective of Islamic educational goals.

Similarly, Olive-PS focused on developing the sense of worship in all aspects of the child's actions through developing their rational reasoning within an Islamic framework. The entire undertaking of Islamic education, broadly conceived by the Olive-PS leadership team, is about education in faith and not about faith. According to this view, it is an education that develops pupils in ways that enable them to be conscious worshipers in everything they do. Hence, the Olive-PS Principal thinks that Islamic education should aim at encouraging children to overcome the jurisprudence discourse focus on detail, cross the boundaries set for the visible perception of worship and to engage instead in a process of reflection on a wider prospect:

> *We can worship Allah not just in the Musallah [prayer space] but in everything that we do. Animal welfare is such a part of Islam and yet all we hear about is Shariah, Shariah, Shariah [legal law] for bismillah [in the name of Allah] wallahuakbar [Allah is the greatest], for halal meat, that's all we hear about! I think, we're looking at too much of the nitty gritty and missing the bigger picture. I think that can sometimes be reflected in our attitudes towards education. (Principal, Olive-PS)*

In order to achieve such a goal, Olive-PS principal defines Islamic education in terms of the dynamic interplay of faith and reason. For him Islamic education needs to form pupils in the habit of reflection and reasoning as a way to strengthen their faith. While Olive-PS principal encouraged critical thinking in all aspects of life, he believes that fundamentals of belief need to be examined using the Quranic framework:

> *We need to have this open enquiring mind, and to question things but to use our logic and reason. […] When we talk about the existence of Allah, did Allah really create us? For that you look how does the Quran treat those questions? Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala[3] is telling us 'use your brains'! […] This, what I think, is to equip our children with that sort of skill and to be confident in who they are and where they've come from, what is their purpose in life? To worship Allah! (Principal, Olive-PS)*

The aim of Quran teaching, as stated in both schools' prospectuses and headteachers' perspectives, is to encourage understanding its meanings, examining its significance and relevance to children's lives to enable them to put what they learn from the Quran into practice. The school provides extra-curricular classes for primary and secondary age children and for adults who wish to learn to recite and memorise the Quran. Trained Quran teachers deliver this in purpose built classrooms.

Both London-PS and Olive-PS aim at preparing children to participate effectively and constructively as positive British citizens. In so doing, the Olive-PS school aims at developing an understanding of, and respect for, differences that exist in multi-cultural, multi-faith British society and prepare its pupils for that future. Hence, the school proposes to achieve this via "good example, discourse and effective communication". The children are aware of this:

> *Samia: our parents pay so much money to be here, so they expect us to be better Muslims everywhere we go. (Year 6, focus group, London Primary School)*

Similarly, the London-PS is informed by a vision of itself as a "community" committed to "the common good of society". So, the school aims to nurture and build strong, confident and emotionally mature pupils who are intended to become "informed active Muslim citizens". To have these aims is to set the suitable conditions for developing this type of character by building an environment that maintains Islamic moral guidelines and social relationships:

> *Developing well adjusted young Muslims who are an asset to all members of their community through positive role modelling and commitment to being valuable citizens. (Teacher, London-PS)*

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[3] Glory be to Him the Almighty

In this respect, both London-PS and Olive-PS headteachers believe that Islamic schooling should provide pupils with a lived experience that reflects the relevance of knowledge about Islam to the practical conduct of Muslim individuals within their social context. Figure 7.1 outlines the London-PS and Olive-PS areas of Islamic education and the way spirituality encompasses knowledge and action spheres. The National Curriculum and Citizenship are to be delivered within the spiritual sphere.

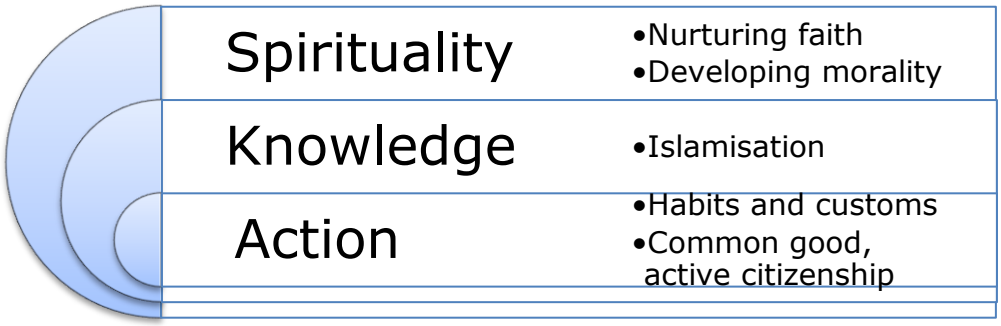

Figure 7.1: Islamic Education as a moral model of formation

This moral approach, seen at London-PS and Olive-PS, is likely to emphasise religious observance, put more emphasis on manners, spiritual experience, devote more time to Quran learning, Islamic knowledge and the common good discourse. So, the Islamic environment and Islamic role modelling from the staff are crucial aspects for this type of education. This role modelling of teachers is strongly emphasised in al-Ghazali's theory of education (Al-Ghazali, 2005).

7.1.2 The social approach

Three main perspectives about Islamic education emerged in this approach aiming at social empowerment, but focusing on various aspects: educational resources, skills development and contextualisation and rational deliberation.

For the first perspective the social status within which Islamic education is presented to learners constitutes an important part of the educating process. Hence, for this view the embodiment of an appropriate educational milieu which displays a favourable presentation of the Muslim faith becomes essential. This view is exemplified in the headteacher of Andalusia-SS's approach to Islamic schooling. For him, Islamic schooling is not simply about gaining Islamic knowledge within an Islamic setting; but it is also concerned with the physical

and professional environment that gives status to such education. The headteacher discusses Islamic education in light of ibn-Khaldun's sociological notion of the struggle between the dominator, as superior, and the dominated, as inferior (Ibn Khaldaun, 2005b). He argues that time and resources are the main shortcomings for madrasa educational provision because this restricts effectiveness in facing the secular outlook in which the child is embedded within the mainstream school environment:

> *The school plays a dominant part in fashioning the child's worldview, superior learning environment, qualified teachers, all the resources, professionalism ...etc. and majority of the time children go out by 8:30 and finish at 3:30. The school has a lion share in fashioning and developing the child's worldview. Compare that to the madrasa's inferior building, premises, no resources, cramped conditions, no trained experts and pedagogues...etc., sitting on the floor. So all the physical resources are inferior, conditions are inferior but also psychologically and mentally the child is tired. And majority of the state schools are unashamedly secular promoting the secular ideology which inevitably means that our children are developing very secular understanding or secular worldview which doesn't necessarily equate a Muslim worldview. (Headteacher, Andalusia-SS)*

All Muslim teachers in Andalusia-SS referred to quality facilities as important for children, so they would not feel inferior to their counterparts in mainstream schools. Moreover, teachers also hoped that the architecture of the building would invoke confidence in the children's Islamic belief and heritage. In that sense, the Andalusia-SS building with its architecture that combines traditional with contemporary features stands as a bold statement that Muslims are putting down roots and feeling a sense of belonging in their contemporary Western context. It also illustrates their search for a new visual identity that can communicate to the wider community their attempts to preserve tradition without ignoring their contextual changes through the process of education.

The second perspective is exemplified in Vision-SS and Iqra-SS and which is focusing on the social empowerment of pupils through skills development and contextualisation. According to Vision-SS' headteacher, Islamic education is about empowering pupils to live as confident practising Muslims and active British citizens. More specifically, this was taken further to empower those girls to face stereotypes not only as Muslim women, but more as visible Muslim women wearing the Hijab. In Vision-SS in particular the discourse takes a more political discursive form. In the three pupil focus groups within this school, pupils

reflected a strong sense of agency towards facing stereotypes about *"hijabi"* Muslim women. They saw themselves as future professionals and in some cases as political leaders. Assemblies and community events in the school are not only for celebrating pupils' achievements individually and collectively, but also for affirming a sense of community, challenging stereotypes and empowering girls to be proud of being "British devout Muslim women". Vision-SS explicitly stated in its spring 2011 newsletter, in part of the letter's career corner entitled "challenging stereotypes" which encouraged girls to consider seriously a wide variety of options including "electronic engineering, physiotherapy, computer graphics, retail and architecture" (Newsletter, Spring 2011, Vision-SS, p.9). This was delivered through discussions with some career women from different fields about the nature of their jobs and experiences as women. This "pioneering spirit", as Haw (1995, p. 259) conceptualised it, is aiming at gaining the trust of wider society and combating prejudice. It was strongly stressed in different Vision-SS participants' accounts:

> *So they leave the school and when they go for work experience masha'-Allah[4], they go to all different employers and the feedback we get! Beautiful feedback! When people see they help them to understand that Muslims are not what the media says about Muslim schools; "actually I had a young girl she was working in my firm for a couple of weeks, she was lovely, she was polite, she was well mannered, she was confident, she was helpful, she had a sense of humour". That all is not about that young lady, it is about that young lady who wears a scarf, who is a Muslim! "So, really this is what Muslims are, so why that negative image about Muslims?" (Headteacher, Vision-SS, emphasis in original)*

According to this approach, Islamic education also means living out Islamic values within the school as a community. So, the school becomes a place where pupils need to experience an Islamic lifestyle, to feel its accompanying effects, be empowered to challenge stereotyped images of Muslim women and feel themselves disposed to embody that which they have learned. It is an opportunity for pupils to explore their religion deeply with the goal of affirming their religious identity:

[4] Masha'-Allah: literally: whatever God Wills; equivalent to: Praise the Lord. It is often used to express exclamation at something good.

> *To understand how to be good moral, decent human being within the boundaries of Islam, to understand when you leave this institution, that the Islam you learned is who you are, it is not a thing that you have learned. (Deputy-headteacher, Vision-SS)*

Moreover, these schools believe that they have an obligation to develop the civic competence of pupils through the understanding of Islam within its British context, so they can participate effectively. Hence, Islamic education is defined in light of a contextualisation process:

> *The main purpose of Islamic schools is to make sure that the children within the schools have identity, have a good understanding of Islam then put that in practice inclusively, you can't do it isolated as you live and you exist as a Muslim. (Headteacher, Vision-SS)*

Definition of this kind provides a framework in which to anchor the "fitting in" process with a sense of religious belonging. Hence, Islamic education becomes a social and developmental process taking account of its context. In Iqra-SS Islamic education was perceived by the school as more about helping pupils to "fit in" as "model" or "law abiding" Muslim British citizens. Such an approach seems to perceive Islamic educational provision as a space for understanding the common ground between faith and social context:

> *Islamic education is knowing how your religion fits in with how you are living your life in Britain and how you can incorporate the two together. (Senior manager, Iqra-SS)*

The three case-study secondary schools emphasise the need to help their pupils raise their self-esteem, have appropriate assertiveness as young Muslim women who can positively contribute to their own families as future mothers, to the Muslim community and to the society at large as future professionals.

Another aspect of this social approach is presented in the view of the Message-PS's headteacher. In her definition of Islamic education, the headteacher focused on developing children's individual autonomy and rational deliberation. From her perspective, Islamic knowledge alone is not sufficient for bringing up a future Muslim generation who can effectively navigate through the contextual contradictions without losing their faith. She believes that to be able to achieve such a goal there would be a need to give priority to developing critical reflection over instructional learning. It is through the thinking process of knowing and the discursive contribution to such a process that children learn to act in accordance

with their own convictions. From this perspective, therefore, the challenge for Muslim educators becomes not the imparting of Islamic knowledge but rather helping pupils through a "journey" of exploration. This is to be done with the aim of helping pupils to own their faith and embody its teachings in their day-to-day life rather than passively inheriting it:

> *I wanted my child to have a good grounding in Islamic knowledge, so she understands what Quran and the Hadith is all about and to have an opportunity to talk about them, like or dislike them, debate them and have a go at putting them into practice. ... The supplementary school didn't give that opportunity; because it was very instructional ... it was about teaching and not about reflecting and wondering ....how this applied to my life there wasn't that sculpting for the thinking process and also the fact that there was no opportunity for debate; because how can you debate in an Islamic principle if it's haram (forbidden) it's haram, if it's halal (permissible) it's halal! For me it is ok for a child to question, [...] because to me that journey is very important and to me that is what Islamic studies was all about […] because that's how I always taught: debating! [...] So Islamic education for me was an opportunity to reflect over the teaching, was an opportunity to absorb, an opportunity to explore. (Headteacher, Message-PS)*

Her perspective on Islamic education is explained with reference to her own British mainstream school past experience in contrast to her Muslim kuttab or madarsa practice, "because that's how I always taught: debating!" She also called the jurisprudence language into question when it comes to instilling religious convictions; "... if it's haram it's haram, if it's halal it's halal! For me it is ok for a child to question". This perspective is focusing on children's rational faculty in building faith and developing understanding. In this regard, rote learning is disapproved as the main approach to Islamic studies subjects. Taking such a stand, Message-PS headteacher's approach resembles ibn-Khaldun's sociological approach discussed in Chapter 3. For the headteacher, the translation of the theoretical knowledge into children's practice requires teamwork where teachers, parents and Muslim scholars need to think about it in terms of a "journey" of "exploration", "questioning" and "debate", she insists. For such reasons the headteacher differentiates between the Muslim and Islamic school definitions considering the role of her school as teaching about faith:

> *I wouldn't like to call our Message-PS a Muslim school because our aim is not to make everyone practise the faith. Our role is to teach Islamic philosophy and encourage people to practise the faith; because to me the word Muslim means somebody who practises Islam...whereas Islamic on the other hand means*

to me a philosophy, certain rules and principles which people have an option to adopt if they make logical sense to them. (Headteacher, Message-PS)

Figure 7.2 outlines the way the Message-PS headteacher perceived "Islamic education" based on her personal experience of initiating and leading both Message-PS and Iqra-SS. For the headteacher, the questioning, exploring and debating form the interlocking aspects in the journey of Islamic education in its new context. Although that journey needs to be strongly based on the Islamic sources, Quran and scrutinised Hadith and Companions' traditions, it is important to take contextual circumstances into consideration.

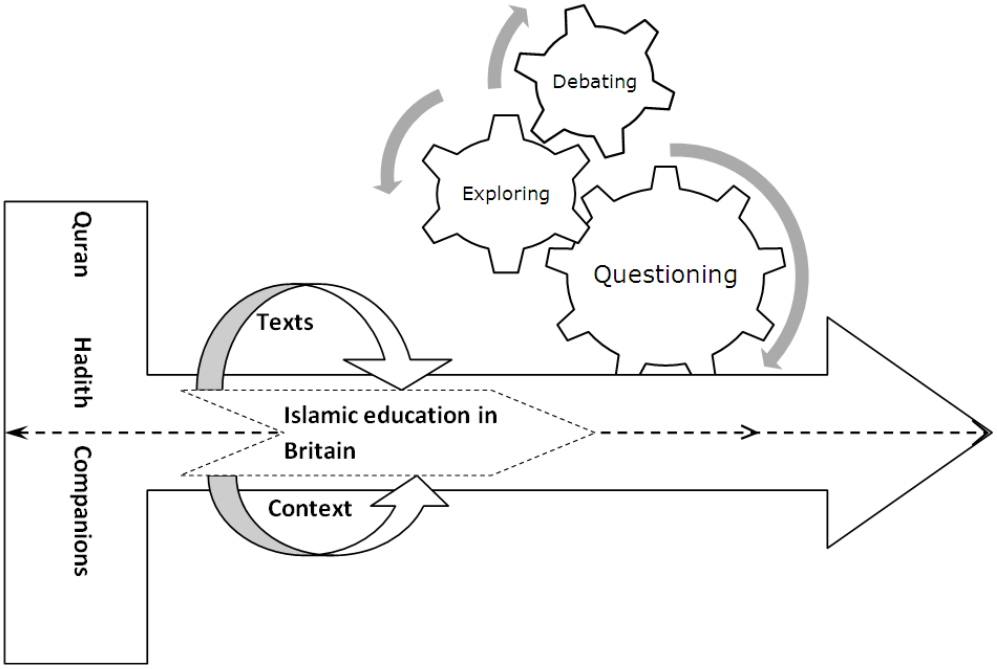

Figure 7.2: Islamic Education as a socio-philosophical model

With the incorporated critical approach to teaching, Message-PS aims to offer children an initial, firm conception of Islamic values. The goal of the school is to offer pupils a genuine Islamic experience that would inform their future choices:

It's just to bring them up with a good character, Islamic character. With manners, with respecting other faiths, tolerating one another and ensuring that they know the basics of salah, the wudu, faith in Allah, and respecting their parents, all those little aspects that we teach here, we hope that when they go, they'll take it with them even if they have a rough time in between growing up, they'll always have that inside them because that's how we brought them up. (Deputy-headteacher, Message-PS)

Such a critical approach coupled with a foundation of Islamic knowledge aims at forming children as moral thinkers who can own their beliefs and think in dialogue with others different from themselves. So, in order to be involved in conversation with others, they also need to know about their different worldviews. This was the task set for the RE part of the school curriculum. However, Message-PS headteacher felt challenged by what she perceived as habits deeply ingrained within the Muslim community regarding an approach to Islamic Studies teaching which depends on a particular instructional style.

This section shows that the visions of Islamic education amongst the case-study schools' leaders differ in outlook. Two broad approaches to Islamic education have emerged; "moral" and "social". One important difference in approach between schools with the moral and social focuses lies in the manner in which the balance is struck between spirituality and academic achievement, and this indeed is a crucial dilemma which lies at the heart of the "Islamicity/Islamness" and "practising Muslim" internal debate. Schools with a moral approach are placing greater weight on spirituality, Quran learning and Islamic Studies. Those categorised within the social approach are dedicating less time to Quran and Islamic Studies, focusing instead on National Curriculum and extra-curricular provision as a way to the social empowerment of pupils. In light of this diversity there was a need to have a better understanding of parents' expectations from their selected Muslim schools. This is a task set for the next section.

7.2 Parental expectations: Tensions from within

This section aims at exploring parental educational priorities which govern their choices of Muslim schools. In doing so, the first part draws a general picture of parental expectations and educational priorities across the case-study schools. The second part explores parents' attempts in reaching the resolution of "best of both worlds" and resolving the dilemma between academic standards and Islamic ethos based on their priorities and circumstances. It also highlights some tensions that arise as a result and points to the dynamics of the educational market that is emerging amongst Muslim schools.

7.2.1 A general picture

> *I think the main point of Islamic schools is what I have stated before: my child gets the 'best of both worlds', Islamically as*

well as the curriculum. It prepares my child for the future on how to balance her religion with the changing ways of the world today! Religion is the most important. (Parent 6, PQ, Olive-PS)

As a general outline, parents expected their children's schools to provide an educational programme based on Islamic religious beliefs, values and ethics, enabling children to grow in their confidence and understanding of themselves, their relationship with God and their relationship with others. There was a strong emphasis on behaviour standards.

Table 7.1 shows parents' top three priorities for selecting their child's Muslim school based on their questionnaire responses.

Table 7.1: Parents' top three reasons for enrolling their children

	Academic excellence in National Curriculum subjects	Achieving excellence in the Islamic Studies subjects	Appreciating Islamic values even when they are different from my cultural ones	High standard of behaviour	Practising Muslim
Andalusia-SS Voluntary-aided **(N=33)**	2nd (69.7%)			3rd (24.2%)	1st (72.7%)
Vision-SS Independent **(N=48)**	1st (77.1%)	3rd (47.9%)			2nd (72.9%)
London-PS Independent **(N=39)**	3rd (43.6%)	2nd (71.8%)			1st (87.2%)
Olive-PS Independent **(N=32)**			2nd (50%)	3rd (46.9%)	1st (87.5%)

This table shows diversity in parental educational priorities across the four schools above in regard to the school curriculum between the National Curriculum and Islamic Studies. Bringing up pupils as "practising Muslims" was at the top of parents' priorities. The majority of parents across the case-study schools felt that their expectations were met, but this varies amongst the schools (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2: Meeting parents' expectations

			Expectations are met		
			No	Yes	Total
School	**Olive-PS**	Count	8	21	29
		% within School	27.6%	72.4%	100.0%
	London-PS	Count	3	35	38
		% within School	7.9%	92.1%	100.0%
	Vision-SS	Count	6	34	40
		% within School	15.0%	85.0%	100.0%
	Andalusia-SS	Count	6	19	25
		% within School	24.0%	76.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	23	109	132
		% within School	17.4%	82.6%	100.0%

However, these tables do not show the whole picture. The qualitative data were essential here to understand such a pattern in the choices and priorities of parents. "Islamic environment" and "academic success", as two broad categories, have emerged from the qualitative data of parental responses regarding their expectations of their chosen Muslim schools. Figure 7.3 draws an overall picture of the emerged parental expectations of the case-study schools and shows the sub-themes within each broad category. It is then followed by further exploration of each broad theme separately.

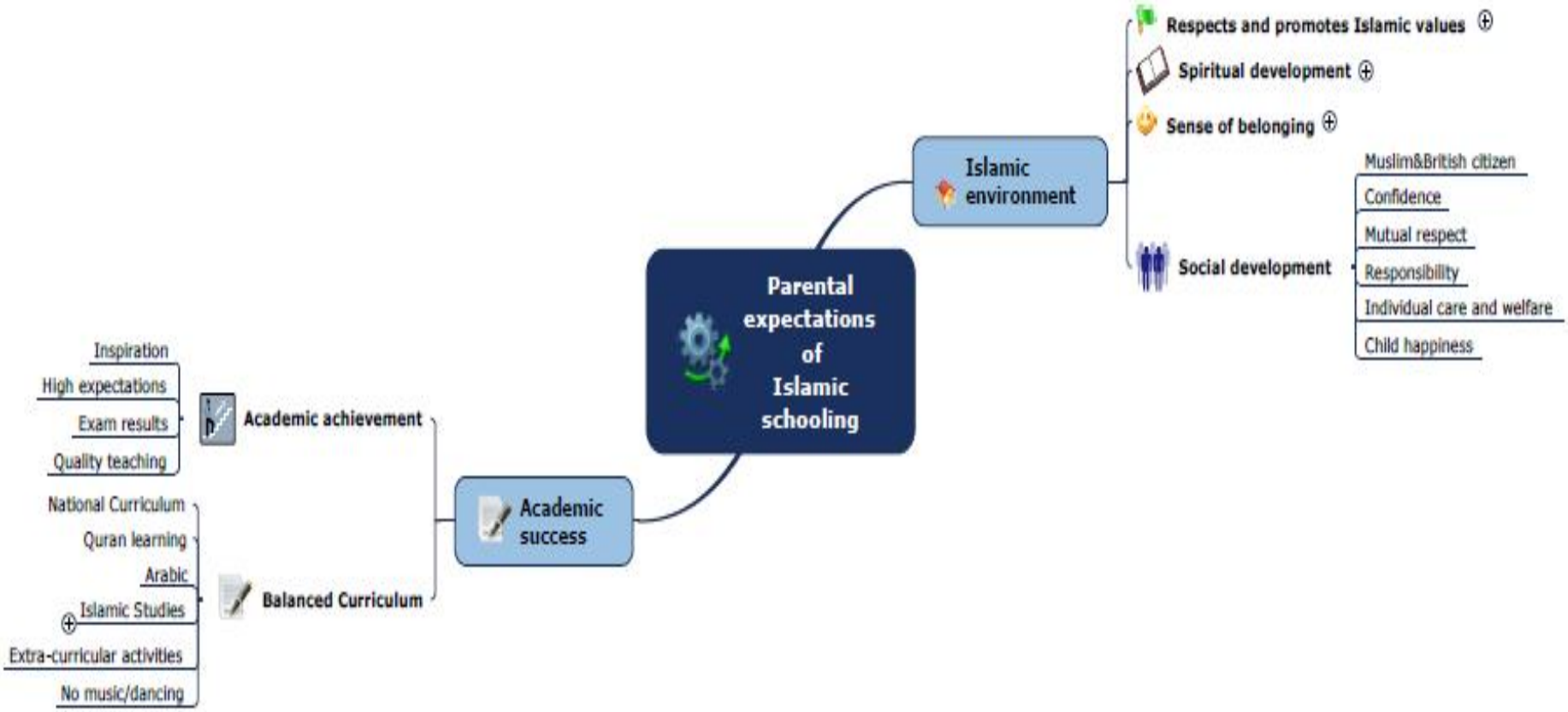

Figure 7.3: General parental expectations of the case-study schools

The school environment

Although "Islamic environment" was not listed as an option for parents in the questionnaire, it merged from the open responses as a popular reason for opting for Islamic schooling (see Figure 7.3). In Iqra-SS and Message-PS access to parents was denied, but the leadership members in both schools believed that "Islamic environment" was an important reason for parents selecting their schools because of their emphasis on behaviour. Two main themes emerged across the schools in relation to Islamic environment:

- Helping children to establish confidence in their Islamic way of life and to experience the sense of happiness stemming from their individual achievement and responsibility.
- Encouraging children to contribute to society and to assume future leadership roles within public domain.

Parents perceived an Islamic environment as a means to protect their children from what they believed to be the negative influences of wider secular society. Moreover, for most parents, an "Islamic environment" in which children can live experiences of the "Islamic" that is valued and celebrated was crucial for their children to grow in their confidence as Muslims. It was perceived this could be achieved with the help of school staff acting as Islamic role models to children through their conduct and the generation of a multi-cultural, warm, secure and homely atmosphere that would help the children grow in confidence as both devout Muslims and "good" British citizens.

Hence, the Islamic environment was not just about teaching Islamic subjects, but was more about the code of conduct in the school, role modelling, dress, greetings, and celebrations. Within such an environment, parents expected higher behavioural standards than those found in mainstream schools. The social and spiritual aspects of Islamic education were emphasised in the parents' interviews and questionnaire open responses. In addition to behavioural standards, fostering a sense of belonging developed as a theme across parents, pupils, teachers and headteachers' responses. Parents want their children, through the school social environment, to develop a sense of belonging to the Muslim community without being detached from their wider British society:

> *The [Olive-PS] environment is good; it has gone beyond my expectations of what I wanted. It gives me a lot of pleasure to hear Zeinab come home and pray salah, she's prayed there or even sort of tell us something that she has done, and just before they broke off for this Eid ..it was such a nice atmosphere in the school, everybody exited and stuff, we wouldn't guess otherwise. I think it teaches them lots of things but it still teaches them to be happy in their own religion, and that is nice, they have got a sense of belonging. For however long it lasts it will not last forever, they will have to move on, and will most likely work in a non-Muslim environment someday, but hopefully they will be well equipped to do that I hope. (Mother-2, interview, Olive-PS)*

For a number of parents, pupils need to feel comfortable and "normal" when they are practising their Islamic rituals, building love and confidence of their Islamic history and heritage and this demands a positive experience within their Islamic schooling. So, a number of parents perceived their schools as supporting their parental role in helping children to balance various values, achieving academically and fitting in as Muslims within the British context:

> *For me it's like a weight lifted off my shoulder that I know they're in a safe environment. I knew she is in a safe environment with people that understand, respect her religion, where she could feel proud of her religion and express herself, instead of feeling that she has to hide it away as something different. But then, you want your children to grow as good citizens and contribute to society and not get into any trouble. (Mother-2, interview, Vision-SS)*

These "good citizens" is what some other parents have referred to as "British Muslims", or as one of the parents wrote it "to be able to merge living/practising Islam and being a British citizen" (Parent 119, PQ, Vision-SS). Similarly, the Andalusia-SS, Iqra-SS, London-PS, Olive-PS and Vision-SS's headteachers argue that pupils in Muslim schools enjoy the sense of belonging to their historical community and the shared understandings and practices which their self refers to in constituting its identity and in making sense of its life.

The argument that faith-based schools help children develop a sense of identity and belonging, which in turn has its positive influence on their confidence and self-esteem, is not new (Parker-Jenkins, 2002; Short, 2002; Tinker, 2006; Valins, 2003) but it needs further exploration and a more sophisticated analysis that can adequately address the complex conceptual constructs that participants are adopting when they talk of self-esteem and identity. This is mainly possible through the analysis of the data generated by this research. In this research, the

"good/practising Muslim" emerges as a concept that needs further exploration with respect to identity and self-esteem because it is utilised by both Muslim educators and parents to discuss the Islamic ethos and school goals. Due to its importance, this concept is followed further in Chapter 8 which examines dealing with diversity from within the same religious group in the case-study schools.

Academic success

The second broad category of parental expectations was about the school academic achievement and curriculum provision (see Figure 7.3). The majority of parents wanted their children to excel in both academic and Islamic subjects. For many parents, such a goal is to be satisfied through the school's success in national exams and the provision of a solid base in Islamic knowledge. While the former would give children a head start for their future worldly success, the latter would help them strengthen their Islamic identity or what many parents termed "the best of both worlds." It is about offering a strong academic education in an Islamic environment structured to have a lifelong value. In this respect, most parents expected those schools to have high expectations of pupils and to promote their individual learning, so that they could reach their full potential.

Why another school?

Parents who had placed children in other Muslim or mainstream schools were asked in the questionnaire about their reasons for doing so. A variety of justifications were given namely, financial difficulties, special educational needs and standards of discipline.

In terms of financial difficulties, since Andalusia-SS was not previously state funded some parents stated that their older children were sent to mainstream schools because they could not afford the previous fees of the school. Such cases stand as examples to the socio-economic exclusion in the fee paying Muslim schools. Other parents across the four case-study schools were concerned that their Muslim schools could not address their children's special learning needs. The behaviour concern was raised in few responses across London-PS, Vision-SS and Olive-PS, but developed as an apparent theme in the Andalusia-SS' parental responses in particular. Some parents preferred to send their other children to different Muslim schools that were perceived to meet their

standards of discipline and in one case the child was sent back to the local mainstream school due to the same reason. The parental diversity in the state funded Andalusia-SS shows a thread of tension amongst parents regarding standards of discipline and between some parents and the school in terms of ethos and curriculum coverage.

Other parents referred to the long waiting lists or having children in a different phase of education from that of the school. In the area of school knowledge, some parents were interested that their children would receive a richer Islamic curriculum and the full memorisation of the Quran which their current child's school did not offer.

Although parent respondents may not be representative of these schools' populations, they help raise many questions regarding context. For example, if the majority of London-PS respondents are well qualified (see Figure 6.2), why did academic achievement appear as only the third priority? Why did Vision-SS parents appear to be primarily prioritising academic achievement (see Table 7.1)?

7.2.2 Parental choice: diversity within Muslim schools

Academic success and Islamic ethos

Beneath schools' reasons for academic standards discussed in Chapter 6, lies an underlying selective approach that is developing amongst parents. The closed questionnaire responses show that the schools' Islamic ethos was most popular amongst parents in Andalusia-SS, London-PS and Olive-PS. However, open questionnaire responses as well as interview accounts with different participants give a deeper view. Three types of parents emerged from the analysis of the data across the case-study schools, based on the dilemma between Islamic ethos and academic achievement within parental approaches to Islamic schooling.

Firstly, there were parents who were primarily driven by academic achievement, but would welcome a community environment. For this type of parent "a good environment" does not have to be an Islamic one, but one that respects the child's spiritual dimension and the parent's standards of discipline. The following

illustration shows the selective approach that is developing amongst Muslim parents in regard to their Islamic schools:

> *I need academic achievement and I need a good environment. These are the two things I need and it either had to be a very good grammar school or the Muslim school. Apart from that I would have home schooled them. Well obviously not any Muslim school; because it would have to be an established school, even within the city we have another two schools, but they are not very well established. So, I wouldn't have sent her to those. I would have home schooled her or I might have sent her maybe to a private school somewhere else, maybe in a Muslim country or something. I wouldn't probably even mind sending her to a Catholic School or a Jewish School; because I do believe that faith schools have good standards, and there's an environment where there is respect for religion and respect for rules. (Mother-4, interview, Vision-SS)*

But, while for this parent a "very good grammar school" might be the first option, for some other parents it comes second, given that there is a Muslim school that could serve their children's academic ambitions to similar standards.

Secondly are parents who are looking for both a rich Islamic ethos, such as those of London-PS and Olive-PS, but are equally concerned by the academic standards of the school. For this type of parent "Islamic environment" is their "top priority" but they are very keen on academic standards as well. Therefore, for these parents the "educational market" is restricted to within Muslim schools as one parent, who rejected the offer of a grammar school after her daughter was accepted in Vision-SS, puts it: "even from the Muslim schools, you have to put them in the best" (Mother-1, interview, Vision-SS). For example, Table 7.1 above shows academic achievement to be the third most popular priority for parents in London-PS. However, the majority of parents in their open questionnaire responses explained that they had selected the school because of its balanced curriculum, strong Islamic ethos and high academic achievement. These reasons were frequently summarised as the school "*[p]rovides the best of both worlds" (Parent 36, PQ, London-PS).*

The third type of parents is primarily driven by the type of Islamic ethos that the school offers. This group of parents is ready to compromise on standards, given a rich Islamic ethos. This is exemplified in parental responses in Olive-PS:

> *I would personally recommend the school to anyone interested but it depends on what criteria are important to the parents. I feel that the early morning Quran lessons which are an essential*

> *part of the day and the importance put on developing an **Islamic personality** is unique and, for me, more important than academic achievement. The environment is family orientated also and children feel secure and loved. (Mother-2, interview, Olive-PS, emphasis added)*

This prioritisation of a school environment that is "family oriented" in which "children feel secure and loved" over "academic achievement" could be due to the differences between the primary and secondary phases of education. Hence, further research is needed to better understand parental educational priorities and concerns between the two stages of Islamic schooling. Yet, the school environment came across strongly in Olive-PS parental responses as being the school's main strength along with being ready to co-operate with other challenges. For these parents it was about nurturing their children as "practising Muslims" or developing their "Islamic personality". Academically, the school is performing at the national average level for Key stage 2 SATs and has a "good" with some "outstanding" features grade in the Ofsted report. However, most parents' questionnaire responses highlighted the need to raise academic standards. As an example of parents' evaluation of the school, one states that the school has "[e]xcellence in Islamic morals, Islamic Studies, good behaviour [but] [a]cademically it needs to be improved, especially the literacy language" (Parent 15, PQ, Olive-PS). Many parents complained about the high turn-over of staff, the lack of teacher training and restrictions on educational facilities. They believe that Olive-PS is meeting their expectations and more regarding Islamic ethos and behaviour standards but not as much in terms of academic achievement. For some parents committed to the school's Islamic type of ethos, when there are not enough options provided within their context, a reasonable compromise on the academic side is considered to be extra support at home.

This shows a selective attitude that is developing amongst parents in opting for their Muslim schools. Some parents show readiness to compromise either on academic standards or Islamic curriculum provision based on their priorities and circumstances but often this is a dilemma and the resolution is "best of both worlds". The issue, however, is how do the schools do this (see Chapter 8)?

Positive experience

Muslim parents are no longer looking merely for the school Islamic ethos or academic standards. The Muslim school becomes the place in which parents wanted their children to have a positive experience of schooling while helping

them develop spiritually, intellectually and morally. A number of parents suggested that Muslim schools should become more "child-centred", "enjoyable" and have "'interactive" learning spaces for their children. This, some parents explained, is because "there seems to be a lack of fun activities in a halal [religiously permitted] way, available to the youth" (Mother PTA, interview, Vision-SS). Accordingly these areas form some selective criteria for certain parents. For example, London-PS's strengths were listed in writing as; "very child focused, very caring staff, very strong values" (Parent 44, PQ, London-PS). This was expressed in different ways by the majority of London-PS parent respondents.

The focus on fun and individual learning was not only about the National Curriculum but also areas of the Quran, Arabic and religious observance with a special emphasis on sports provision:

> *[Olive-PS] has got a reasonable good balance. I think they do just enough to give these kids a good, happy school life by making it fun but not forcing it down their throats. (Mother-1, interview, Olive-PS)*

In this regard, few parents discussed the problem of inclusivity of pupils with special educational needs. They requested Muslim schools to appoint teachers, not only qualified in the subject content of Quran reading but also trained in teaching and aware of different pupils' learning needs. The following mother had three children with dyslexia who had experienced different Muslim schools as well as madrasa classes; when asked about areas of development in the school, she stated:

> *I think the Quran! Definitely be improved on. […] Quran teachers don't tend to be qualified; they might have a qualification in Quran but not teaching it!*
>
> *But the other problem with my three children is that they're dyslexic, which means they have phonic problems, which means- relates back to problems with reading Quran because it's phonetical. In this school they do have a SENCO, which is a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, so they do oversee them but they don't have anyone that specialises in dyslexia. At the Vision-Prep School, they do now, they have a SENCO, and she does specialise in dyslexia, and she had to test every single pupil in the school. Those that need help are called out the classroom once a week and given an extra tuition, and they'll have learning aids in front of them, so that's brilliant now. It's really, really good! (Mother-2, interview, Vision-SS)*

The parental request for educational provision for children with special educational needs and/or those who are gifted emerged across the different case-study schools. In contrast, many teachers and schools' leaders pointed to the problem of what they described as the "unrealistic expectations" of some parents. Some parents were perceived as pushing their children beyond their ability in regard to Islamic Studies subjects. This shows some tension at the level of pedagogical practices regarding Islamic Studies teaching:

> *I think parents can be a little bit naive. We have different ability groups and, for example, if parents want their children to learn the surahs [Quran chapters], then children have to be split up according to their different abilities, and sometimes parents can't understand! [Some parents would complain]:"they've been here this long why haven't they learned this surah?" (Foundation teacher, Message-PS)*

The parental expectations of the quality of education also require those schools to think about economic resolutions and taking advantage of state funding. The choices they make in resolving this dilemma also contribute to changes in the demographic composition of those schools.

Schools' choices and the unexpected tensions

The case-study schools face a dilemma between the need to remain autonomous and yet provide a competitive quality of educational service that communicates their worth without compromising their Islamic ethos. These schools show three approaches to resolving this dilemma: state funding, increasing fees, and working with restricted budgets to remain faithful to their socio-economic inclusivity. Each of these options results in tensions that school leaders have to deal with in their day-to-day school life.

Firstly, state funding provides both Andalusia-SS and Message-PS with educational resources that permits socio-economic inclusivity of pupils, professional training and other educational resources. Nevertheless, these same outcomes give rise to some tensions within these schools. This is partly due to the constraints imposed by the acceptance of state aid in the provision of denominational education. By its very nature these schools have to serve a wider spectrum of Muslim parents giving priority to those closer to the school location. As a result, these schools attract growing numbers of parents with more diverse religious devotional backgrounds. Parents sought to ensure that their children's affiliation with the Muslim community was maintained, but what determined their

choice of an educational framework might not always be the Islamic ethos of the school. For some parents in Andalusia-SS, for example, what was more important was ensuring that their children could achieve academic success. In this regard, the Andalusia-SS headteacher confirms that the majority of school parents are primarily interested in the school ethos, but acknowledges an undercurrent of change in parental priorities and interests:

> *I think there is a **changing scenario** where parents are more worried about the academic development rather than the Islamic thing, it is a sad change but you begin to see that. […] I suspect that you'll find that **tension happening**. I have to acknowledge that things are changing, society is changing, the **influences of the society**, the wider society on some Muslim parents is having its effect and there are inevitably some parents who would send their kids because of **good academic results**. So that in fact explains the dynamics. (Headteacher, Andalusia-SS, emphasis added)*

In this "changing scenario" the case-study schools have started assessing their roles and responsibilities as implementing institutions of Islamic education within a changing socio-economic and political British context. Parental expectations from Islamic schooling are also developing along this changing process in which Muslim parents incorporate into their construction of Islamic schooling complex social influences pertaining to continuity and change in Islamic schooling goals and society's socio-economic changes. These parental expectations and understandings of what Islamic schooling stands for loop-back in a double hermeneutic process into their selected schools provision, especially if they are actively involved with those schools. Accordingly, a tension starts emerging within Muslim schools between some parents primarily driven by "good academic results" and the raison d'être of these schools in nurturing Islamic ethos. In the case of Andalusia-SS, the response to such development through state funding, which enables staff training and resources, creates further tension between parents regarding the "Islamness" of the school. For example, the concern about behaviour was particularly clear in the case of Andalusia-SS. Many parents expressed their dissatisfaction with the way the school was managing the challenge and with what they perceived as the lack of Islamic role modelling by some teachers. Few parents attribute this shortage to the nature of the state funding where a minority of teachers are attracted to the school based on material gains rather than spiritual role modelling, as one parent put it: "[r]eally disappointed with Andalusia, most of the teachers became more interested in the money aspect" (Parent 155, PQ, Andalusia-SS). This dissatisfaction is reflected

into parents' evaluation of the school's response to parents' expectations where Andalusia-SS scores the least compared to the other schools (see Table 7.3)

Table 7.3: The faculty and staff have been successful in balancing the schools aims and parents' expectations

			The faculty and staff have been successful in balancing the schools aims and parents' expectations			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	1	7	22	30
		% within School	3.3%	23.3%	73.3%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	0	9	28	37
		% within School	.0%	24.3%	75.7%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	2	6	**38**	46
		% within School	4.3%	13.0%	**82.6%**	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	7	8	**13**	28
		% within School	25.0%	28.6%	**46.4%**	100.0%
Total		Count	10	30	101	141
		% within School	7.1%	21.3%	71.6%	100.0%

From the perspective of the principal, teachers and pupils, this issue was mainly due to a lack of interest in the school's ethos stemming from some pupils' family backgrounds. In one case a parent suggested closer working with families in this regard:

> *Higher expectations of behaviour and mannerisms by working alongside families more closely, e.g. parenting classes, how to deal with behavioural issues. (Parent 126, PQ, Andalusia-SS)*

It is within Andalusia-SS and Message-PS voluntary-aided schools that educators noted that, in the background of this challenge, a few children may resist or destabilise a school's ethos and teachers' efforts for their spiritual development, such as by refusing to perform prayer, recite supplications, or adhere to standards of discipline. This is linked to the notions of "good Muslim" and "practising Muslim" and the way the case-study schools perceive themselves dealing with it, which are discussed in Chapter 8.

Gender segregation was also an issue that polarised some parents, in Andalusia-SS in particular. While the majority of parents saw the gender segregation of the school as a strength, in two cases parents decided to send their other daughters to different schools, in one instance because the parent believed school was not segregated enough, and in the other because it should not be segregated at all:

> *[Sent other daughter to a different school] because we wanted single sex school. (Parent 156, PQ, Andalusia-SS)*

> *I'd prefer my daughter to be in a mixed school so she can mix with boys and know how to behave in front of them so in future she has no problem working with boys. Girls and boys should have a chance to interact with each other. (Parent 151, PQ, Andalusia-SS)*

For this latter parent, the reason for opting for Andalusia-SS was not due to the school's Islamic ethos but because of personal convenience: "it was the closest or I don't mind sending my child to another school".

Secondly, raising school fees was another option that emerges from the case-study schools in resolving the dilemma of autonomy versus quality of education. The continuous growth of Muslim schools, including those with state funding, makes the market within which these schools are operating increasingly competitive regarding human resources from within the Muslim community. Those schools with special focus on academic achievement raise their fees to

reach a level that would allow them retain their trained staff members. This is exemplified by Iqra-SS, London-PS and Vision-SS schools. However, this choice creates diversity amongst parents based on their primary educational interests from an Islamic school. There is also a mixture of socio-economic issues among which these schools need to strike a balance.

In the Vision-SS the "academic excellence in the National Curriculum subjects" statement was the most popular as being a principle criterion for school selection amongst parent respondents. Parents show a general satisfaction about the way the school is taking their educational priorities into account with 82.6% of respondents agreeing that the school was successful in meeting their expectations (see Table 7.3). However, there emerges a tension about balancing academic and spiritual aspects, and for some the school's success is to be evaluated in terms of the development of students as "whole persons" rather than by national exam results:

> *... more spirituality...more spirituality...definitely much more spirituality, from day to day and educating the staff. One thing that is totally lacking here is an Islamic education of the staff, everybody has their own fix their own thoughts, their own things, now the school says we follow everything, but what is your direction? So again, it is not a negative thing, it is something that can be reviewed, something that can be seen, something that can be changed, but we are working with an organisation who* ***maybe doesn't value spirituality over academic achievement****! For me they should be on par, if you are going to have an Islamic organisation, you should value the spirituality as highly as you do the academic grades. (Pastoral co-ordinator, Vision-SS, emphasis added)*

Yet, the academic achievement of the school is stressed by many parents in their open-ended responses as an important aspect for selecting the school. The parents' open responses and interviews reflected strong support for the school programme and environment:

> *My first daughter went to [Vision-SS] and so is my second daughter. I have never had any regret of sending them to [Vision-SS]. I would -and have done to many friends and parents- always recommend this school* ***above any other*** *school without hesitations. (Mother 121, PQ, Vision-SS, emphasis in original)*

The Vision-SS headteacher was aware of this parental interest even before the questionnaire was sent to them. It was primarily about academic achievement

and then parents would "welcome the opportunity that there is an Islamic education as well":

> *You can go to many Muslim schools up and down the country and you will find that the backgrounds of parents are totally different for each of them. [This city] particularly have a very distinctive parents being very different from many parents in Muslim schools. Majority of them are from the Pakistani background and have very high ambitions about their children. Academic education is a priority, for the majority of them. I tell you! While you go to another school in [another city] or whatever, people would tell you: "Islamic education comes before, I don't care what my child achieves academically", but* ***parents in our school particularly, academic education is a priority to them and they welcome the opportunity that there is an Islamic education as well, but not to many of them is a priority.*** *(Headteacher, Vision-SS, emphasis added)*

This raises the question of whether the different Muslim schools start drawing from different pools of parents based on the way each school is perceived within the Muslim community. The inclination towards academic achievement presents the school with challenges due to what some of the school's educators believe to be the parents' lack of commitment to the school's Islamic ethos:

> *The big challenge that I feel is trying to adopt the whole Islamic way of life in the school where you have* ***a lot of parents are not practising*** *outside the school. What you teach inside the school is not really preached outside the school. What can be haram [forbidden] in the school may be halal [permissible] in their houses and that is a big challenge because it does not help the school to move forward and actually achieve from those girls what we are hoping to achieve from them. When you say to the child, the Muslim woman once she reaches her puberty she has to wear her hijab because of this, this, this, then the minute she goes in the car, her mum does not wear hijab, nobody wears hijab and the mum asked her to remove that piece of cloth and put it at the back of the car! What have we done then? (Headteacher, Vision-SS, emphasis added)*

Hence, raising fees and focusing on academic standards not only have the potential to select parents based on their socio-economic backgrounds but also creates variation along their religious devotion in which case "a lot of parents" are perceived by the headteacher as "not practising". One parent attributed the parents' academic orientation and lack of interest in the school Islamic ethos to a socio-economic binary divide between the "normal" and "wealthier" backgrounds within the school:

> *I feel children from wealthier backgrounds/other families are not disciplined within their home. Their behaviour/elaborate life style impacts on "normal" children? Teachers do not address this issue adequately. (Parent 103, PQ, Vision-SS, quotation in original)*

This demographic background has its influence on the nature of Islamic environment within the school. For example, the particular parental context of Vision-SS makes it challenging for the headteacher "to adopt the whole Islamic way of life in the school", as she perceives it.

In London-PS there was a special focus on nurturing spirituality, as previously discussed, which is valued as a point of strength for the school by the vast majority of respondents. However, for the school leadership team to be able to attract competent staff members and retain them it was necessary to provide sufficient incentives including competitive salaries and training opportunities. This would not be possible with very low annual school fees. The parental emphasis on the London-PS's Islamic ethos is clear, but what is also apparent in their evaluations of the school's strengths is their consistent stress on staff professionalism, individual focus on pupils, a balanced curriculum and preparing children for their future life as British citizens. According to the leadership team, and as discussed in Chapter 6, the majority of parents in the school are well qualified and very interested and involved in the academic side of their children's education. Moreover, the school SATs results were above the national average. It is about the best "value for money", as the London-PS deputy-headteacher expresses it:

> *So parents are now starting to see that the quality of education here is very good value for money, because comparatively to other independent schools our fees are very reasonable. So not only do they get the good quality education, but they also get the Islamic ethos which they want. (Deputy-headteacher, London-PS)*

Nevertheless, increasing the fees and enhancing the academic profile also attract parents with a wide range of interests and educational priorities. Although, London-PS's management saw themselves as privileged to have a strong support from a wide range of parents in all aspects of school life including academic, there appears a change that is developing in this respect. The change in the parental priorities within the school is not detached from its level of establishment and the dynamics taking place within the local socio-economic population:

> *I think when the parents come here, from my experience, you know, I've been here for two years, [the headteacher] says: "when we started a lot of them [parents]* ***were very practising*** *if you want to say, or very Islamically inclined, and they want that kind of Muslim school for their children", but as the school's grown, as it's developed, and the people and the socioeconomic groups around the school have increased, there is a lot of what we call* ***upwardly mobile Muslims****, reasonably affluent doctors, accountants, you know, and so on and so forth... a lot of the parents* ***have realised*** *and also* ***demand a very high quality education****. (Deputy-headteacher, London-PS)*

The school has a long waiting list which allows selection based on parental commitment to the rich Islamic ethos of the school or as the deputy-headteacher puts it "practising" Muslims. Nevertheless, with further extension of similar educational provision the parental demand may be reduced for any single school which would have the potential to affect the level of control the admissions policies may have on the parental demography in terms of religious devotion.

Thirdly, these are schools choosing to remain autonomous but charge very low tuition fees compared to other independent schools as a way to remain economically inclusive to parents interested in their Islamic ethos. Olive-PS stands as an example of this type. In this case, Olive-PS perceives itself as "blessed" with parents committed to its Islamic school ethos. This parental commitment is felt as a source of support to the school's leadership trying to compete with state schools in terms of national results with minimal financial resources. So, they felt that managing the school's financial resources effectively was crucial to whether they are able to succeed in meeting these challenges, raise standards, and yet remain independent and affordable to a wider range of parents:

> *Of course, with the credit crunch and the way things are going for funding, parents are finding it harder to pay fees that has a knock-on effect! So, it's a challenge to keep going and still offer a good education but Allah (SWT) is great! (Principal, Olive-PS)*

This tight budget is limiting the school's resources and physical capacity:

> *We have a nursery, which is state funded. We have morning and afternoon sessions; now that causes quite a dilemma because we can only take half of those children because we're only a one entry per year school, because of the actual physical size of us. If tomorrow the government stopped our nursery funding, we would be struggling. (Headteacher, Olive-PS)*

Nevertheless, not all parents are happy with such low school fees. The following mother with a degree level education was very keen for the school to raise its fees, so they could improve on their educational standards:

> *The fees are so cheap really! I think it must be 1600 pounds. In this day and age that is not a lot at all! It would be nice in some ways if we could raise the fees and raise the standards. (Mother-1, interview, Olive-PS)*

Although the parents in Olive-PS appear to be strongly committed to the school's ethos, there emerges a tension about educational resources and academic achievement versus socio-economic inclusivity. While Olive-PS parents' requests are about educational standards, one parent in Vision-SS was hoping for a further increase in fees to enable the school improve on facilities and extra-curricular provision:

> *Educational wise, I think I'm happy with them, but the extracurricular things from sports to other things this school does lack in, and the school knows itself. There's no after sport clubs; which my daughters both go to, but then you just have to do something extra in the weekend for the children to make them have their enough physical activity. But, if the fees increase… it's hard to blame the school for everything. So, you just have to sort that out yourself. We travel abroad a lot, you know, so they can broaden their thinking. (Mother-1, interview, Vision-SS)*

This shows a tension that starts emerging within independent Muslim schools in regard to the quality of provision versus families' financial abilities.

The data analysis of these schools' backgrounds and parents' expectations raised various tensions which shape the focus of the next chapter on how these schools are dealing with them.

Conclusion

The chapter explores the aspects of Islamic schooling which the leaders of the case-study schools hold to be the most important. It emerges from the data in this chapter that these schools are not homogeneous regarding their interpretations, priorities and focus of Islamic education in Britain. Beyond the principles of belief and the visible acts of worship, the form that an Islamic school may take is not fixed. For the case-study school leaders, there were two

main dilemmas that they have to resolve. Firstly, it was the dilemma between spirituality and academic standards. In examining the leaders' responses to such dilemma two main approaches emerged; the moral approach that places special focus on spirituality and the social approach that prioritises social empowerment through its particular focus on academic standards. Secondly, it was the dilemma between the quality of education that they all sought to offer and the subsequent economic demands. In resolving this latter dilemma schools are pushed to make choices regarding their financial arrangements between remaining autonomous, socio-economically inclusive and providing a competing quality educational service. Hence, various choices are being made through the day-to-day educational practical experiences which are embedded within the different local contexts of these schools. The choices that the leaders of those schools take in resolving these two dilemmas are creating diversity between and within these schools.

The chapter also addresses the second analytical question, presented in the introduction, by exploring the parental educational priorities which govern their choices. In doing so, it raises the issue of a developing consumerist approach amongst parents as customers looking for the best value for money within the Muslim schools sector. Parents remain the agents of continuity for Muslim schools and meeting their needs becomes essential. Nevertheless, the data in this research reveals that parental expectations are complex and multifaceted. Those expectations ranged from the majority who have chosen the secondary girls' school, for example, partly because it is segregated, to a few who found such an aspect a school limitation. In another respect, there are those who are strongly satisfied with the amount of Islamic curriculum provided within a voluntary-aided school, and those who are aspiring for their children to learn the whole Quran as part of the day school provision. Thus, none of the case-study schools would meet their expectations in this regard. Yet, the dilemma between Islamic ethos and academic achievement presents one important aspect through which parents form their choices about their children's schooling within the Muslim educational market. Hence, the school academic standard becomes an important parental concern besides that of the environment. It is about "the best of both worlds" and requires the *art* of educators in applying their Islamic values within the school context, the ability to find "the right measure" and appropriate mode of schooling that would fulfil those expectations.

As presented in Chapter 6, despite their continuous review and change, schools in this case-study are not providing the same level of academic achievement or quality of resources. So, state funded schools and those distinguished within the Muslim community by their academic achievement, such as Vision-SS, derive parents from a wide circle of interests and socio-economic backgrounds based on parents' personal values of quality education. Also schools emphasising Islamic ethos, such as London-SS and Olive-PS, are opting for different economic choices which result in different challenges that they have to resolve.

To sum up, this chapter shows the changing process through which parental educational priorities are constructed within Britain, and suggests that Muslim schools as they are responding to this change are facing various dilemmas. Chapter 8 follows these tensions by focusing on ways in which schools are dealing with diversity within them. Hence, the analysis in the next chapter will specifically focus on data related to how these schools perceive themselves resolving the dilemmas of:

- The need to achieve greater unity by overcoming inner divisions within the community and by celebrating pupils' diversity;
- The need to attend to diverse parental educational priorities and needs and yet remain faithful to the schools' promoted goals;
- The need to foster a sense of belonging to the Muslim community as well as to the wider British society.

But negotiating these dilemmas involves recognising and analysing participants' internal discourses about Islamic education. To reiterate my earlier point that Muslim schools in Britain demand new theoretical frameworks that would enable capturing participants' contextual and theoretical complexities. One important analytical concept which provides a mechanism for linking areas of school ethos, religious devotion, community belonging and citizenship, is that of "practising Muslim". Chapter 8 follows this concept through its complex understandings to enable exploring the different choices that both schools and parents are making.

Chapter 8. Dealing with diversity from within

Introduction

While Chapter 7 brings out the diversity between the six case-study schools in terms of approaches to Islamic education and funding and hints at a developing diversity within them, this chapter gives some substance to previous analysis through an exploration of specific dilemmas and how the case-study schools deal with diversity. In doing so, this chapter links the "school response", the response constructed by individual school leaders about the essence of Islamic schooling, with "parental expectations"; that is an anticipation based upon their diverse backgrounds and informed by a "jurisprudence code of conduct" and the "Ofsted discourse" of quality education. The analysis in this chapter draws mainly on questions listed in the interview schedules with parents, teachers and headteachers and pupils' focus groups (see Appendices 2-4). It also draws on Giddens' notion of "double hermeneutic" as a way of examining the change through which the six case-study schools are heading in their attempts to balance schools' promoted goals, parental expectations and the system pressures.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section focuses on the socio-cultural and jurisprudence diversity, and elaborates on how it affects schools' choices in critical areas such as school knowledge, Islamic Studies and National Curriculum, and extra-curricular activities, as hinted at in the previous chapter. In doing so, I make use of Gadamer's (1989) concept of "practical wisdom" to help understand the way schools are trying to reach "the right measure" in dealing with emergent issues during their educational practice within school life. In the second section, I develop a detailed theoretical analysis of the notion of "good/practising Muslim" and how it shapes schools' internal discourses and possible choices. This is because much of the rationale for parental choice of Muslim schools in this research lies in the basic interest of parents in bringing up their children in accordance with the Islamic faith or, as many parents expressed it, as "good/practising Muslims". What makes this latter concept so important is the recognition that Muslim schools do not, by any

means, offer a uniform embodiment of the way a "good/practising Muslim" is interpreted. I apply this analysis to the question of how Muslim schools perceive they are resolving the dilemma of promoting the "practising Muslim" who has strong religious identity without segregating pupils from the wider British context. In the third section, I follow an emergent trail of change in the goals of Muslim schools by setting out in broad terms some key features in the evolution of these schools and their process of change.

8.1 Dealing with diversity

This section explores in more depth some dilemmas that Chapter 7 dealt with fairly superficially. I use the same criteria as the ones that revealed developing diversity between them: ethnic, jurisprudence and parental expectations. The first criterion is about the way parents as well as educators approach ethnic diversity within Muslim schools. The second criterion is that of jurisprudence orientations. What kinds of choices do the case-study Muslim schools take for shaping their Islamic ethos and religious practice and whose interpretations are taken on board? The third criterion, parental expectations, is concerned with the way these schools are responding to the interests of parents in helping their children fit in within the British context as "good/practising Muslims".

8.1.1 Ethnic diversity

For many parents in this study there were additional reasons for opting for the case-study schools other than the Islamic ethos of the school or its academic achievement. Two main points emerged from the interviews and parents' questionnaire data. Some parents wanted a school that is: firstly, not strictly adhering to a certain jurisprudence school of thought and; secondly, has a good ethnic mix and is not led by certain cultural practices. For instance, words like "impartial", "not sectarian", "not cultural", "culturally independent" and "universal" are expressed as reasons that parents in London-PS and Olive-PS, in particular, looked at for selecting the school or as an evaluation of the school's strength. This was not apparent in either the parent responses from Andalusia-SS or Vision-SS. Instead, some parents in the latter two schools stated "teaching cultural values" or "meeting Muslims from different cultures" as strengths of these two schools but there was no mention of this notion of universality. The

headteachers and teachers, however, emphasised the importance of unity and overcoming problems of division.

This view of "unity" and "universality" is based on the idea of deconstructing the Islamic from the contextual cultural influences. It seems to be a way to redefine Muslim identity that may be able to encompass Muslims from diverse contextual backgrounds. However, it demands questioning the "Islamicity" or "Islamness" of some prevailing Muslim practices from within the Islamic framework. A Muslim school that is inclined to a certain cultural background is also described as problematic in terms of potential racial discrimination against children deriving from other Muslim ethnic minorities. Moreover, such a school environment is regarded by some parents as segregating Muslims from within by promoting a certain cultural interpretation of Islam. Additionally, children may not gain skills to deal with difference, even within the same religious group.

The multi-ethnic social context within these schools gives some pupils as well as Muslim teachers a new experience of being a Muslim within a diverse Muslim community:

> *We've got quite a diverse school and it sort of changes. It's quite interesting. We have quite a lot of Somalis, Asians, we have a lot of French Algerian, we have converts, and we have a lot of dual heritage children; so a big mix. […] When I came here I expected to see nothing but Pakistani children, and so that was quite an awakening for me. (Headteacher, Olive-PS)*

The following teacher also reflects on her first impression as a pupil of the Iqra-SS in which she was working at the time of this research:

> *Before I came to this school [as a pupil] I thought all Muslims are only Pakistanis, I didn't realise that if you aren't a Pakistani you could be a Muslim too! So, when I came here I saw all the different nationalities here […] For me, from a Pakistani background, the other Muslims out there in the world from every country and every place, corner of the earth,.. Wow! what's this? and it's something different than you knew .. And obviously different groups who have different beliefs. That's fine and you teach them tolerance. (School alumnus and current teacher, Iqra-SS)*

The London-PS focus group of parents who are also members of school staff explored the ethnic diversity in detail from both the parents' and the teachers' positions. They believed that ethnic Muslim schools need to be discouraged, because they may not be able to give children the skills to interact with people

different from themselves. This might sound similar to arguments against faith-based schools in the first place (R. Gardner, et al., 2005; Short, 2002), but those parents and educators believe the matter to be different. In their view, the mixed ethnic Muslim school provides children with a secure environment where they can nurture their confidence as Muslims, yet it also helps them to gain skills of dealing with difference. They believed that a Muslim school based on a single ethnic background would not be able to offer pupils those skills. The following account is a snapshot of the discussion:

> *Muhammad: me personally, I'll be very, very careful about sending my child, imagine that's 99.99% percent [certain nationality]. For example, I will be worried about sending my child there, simply because what you will find is that [certain] culture will be so strong and you might find that your child become discriminated against because you don't know in that school, how things work and how they manage the differences. I think this school manage it very well! I think the children feel that they're together. It's a shame still that many Muslim communities are categorised by ethnic groups! (Father & teacher, focus group, London-PS)*

Moreover, in other parts of the discussion nationalism was described as a "disease" which is affecting the unity of British Muslim community. From their perspectives, the different cultures are to be celebrated as part of the Muslim heritage and ethnic identities that are part of the Muslim united "ummah". Many teachers believed that the way to building tolerance in future Muslim generations starts from finding the "common ground" from within the same community. In this regard a multi-cultural Muslim school is seen to offer a safe environment for the Muslim community to negotiate their commonalities and learn how to deal with differences:

> *Even in England here, close communities, the Pakistanis hang around together, the Arab hang around together, the Bengali together, the black Muslims together, they don't want to know each other! They see each other in the Eid and that's it, salam, salam [greetings]! In the school, they have to live with each other on a daily basis, nearly thirty two hours per week, and that's a huge opportunity to explore each other's cultures. Then that will benefit them; because it develops a respect for each other and an understanding for each other and if that happened, they develop a bit of an **ummah** within themselves, then they can be better citizens. But if we cannot, even get on with each other, how can we get on with the diverse world? We will never, and I truly believe that Muslim school give that opportunity [...] and, in my opinion, this is a big investment. (Headteacher, Vision-SS, emphasis added)*

The rejected division is not only on lines of nationalism and jurisprudence, but also along tribal ones within some communities. This is an issue that one London-PS parent respondent believed was the reason for selecting the school as a space in which community bonds were not based on nationalistic stands. For this reason, a parent critically questioned "why Muslims are trapped under nationalism even though Islam disowns nationalism/tribalism?" Although the vast majority of parents pointed to the friendly and safe London-PS atmosphere, in one case a mother was critical of the tribal challenge, writing that "racism still exists. Not intentional but it manifests itself in tribalism" (mother 73, PQ, London-PS).

Interestingly the tribal and caste community problems that may find their way to the school space were also pointed out in my initial pilot study interview with a mainstream school headteacher as being experienced by a few parents from the South Asian community, without pointing out any religious background. The Message-PS deputy headteacher also raised this matter of tribal division as a possible threat to pupils' sense of unity when, in a few cases, parents brought it up in the school life. However, there appear to be two different approaches followed in dealing with such an issue when it is brought up in school life. In the pilot study interview with the mainstream school headteacher, the problem was seen as beyond her professional role and, therefore, parents were asked to solve it outside the school gates. In the case of the Message-PS headteacher, settling these disputes or at least stopping them spreading down to children is taken as part of her educational and Islamic ethical role. Overcoming these lines of division and protecting children from their negative effects is seen in terms of the "*ummah* [community] unity".

While the majority of children in this study expressed their feeling of comfort, unity and belonging within their Muslim school environment, in the Andalusia-SS year seven focus group two pupils expressed their feeling of being an ethnic minority. They felt they were being distinguished as a minority by their skin colour, the community languages and even the type of food they shared at school. In this regard, in their first arrival at the school they felt they fitted in better with the majority in the community state school. This feeling changed with more time in the school:

> *Touta: when we started, I always felt as if I won't fit in. But like what Hadya said partly because of my skin colour [white] and, you know, the majority of the people here is that Asian, but*

now it's like a second home. (Year 7, focus group, Andalusia-SS)

Some older pupils in the different schools recalled some similar first year impressions due to various causes, which they believed disappeared over time:

Many students say that it's not really a school; it's like a home now; because we are so close to each other. (Habiba, Year 10 focus group, Iqra-SS)

The approach of spiritual unification of the school population appeared across the case-study schools under the banner of "*ummah*" as a way to overcome different lines of division. Hence, in addition to legal ways of handling issues of discrimination, schools believe in educating parents as well as pupils about Islamic values of equality with the aim of creating a spiritual bond within the school population to tackle any potential problems of racial discrimination. A number of pupils across the different schools believed that their learning about Islam had an impact on their families in terms of knowledge and practice. It is this religious knowledge and the way of expressing it into practice that forms an important part of the jurisprudence diversity within the case-study schools. The next part follows this thread and explores how schools are handling tensions that arise from jurisprudence restrictions on curriculum.

8.1.2 Jurisprudence diversity and school "Islamness"

All Muslim participants saw Islam as "a way of life" that encompasses inner thought and outer action. However, the jurisprudence diversity is exemplified in the case-study schools' parental backgrounds presented in Chapters 6 and 7. Parent and pupil respondents in this research appear to measure their schools' "Islamness" or the level of "practice" within the school environment according to their stances on and perceptions of the discussions concerning jurisprudence schools of thought. On the other hand, all the case-study schools see themselves as "*ummah* spaces" in which those different perspectives can come into interaction and dialogue. Hence, none of the schools categorised themselves as followers of any of the specific schools of thought discussed in Chapter 2. Instead, they hoped that a unification approach would be more inclusive to Muslim children from different backgrounds. Moreover, the schools' leaders perceived this approach as a way to facilitate a multi-cultural learning context

that would help to develop pupils' skills in dealing with difference. This stance exemplifies the emerging approach to Islamic jurisprudence in multi-cultural contexts such as that of Britain (Philips, 2007). It is about the reunification of the different schools of thought. The suggestion is to place the work of these schools in a suitable perspective without disregarding its scholarly heritage. This resolution is proposed with the hope of helping the multi-cultural Muslim community overcome the perceived divisive effects of factionalism resulting from the different jurisprudence schools of thought (Philips, 2007).

Nevertheless, the discussion amongst these school populations about the teaching of Music and Art demonstrates that Muslim educators, in their encounter with emerging challenges, continuously having to juggle and use their ethical judgments. Hence, the notion of "practical wisdom" discussed in Chapter 4 is a useful lens through which the choices that educators make in their attempts to deal with this jurisprudence diversity can be better understood. In this sense, "practical wisdom" is not merely about taking a theoretical stand on controversial issues in the school life, but it is about the sensitive implementation of those choices as determined in particular social contexts. In this sense, the *techne* for the case-study schools' educators could not replace phronesis. This recalls Gadamer's (1979) statement that:

> …we can "lose" a skill. But ethical "reason" can neither be learned not forgotten…By contrast, the subject of ethical reason, of *phronesis*, man always finds himself in an "acting situation" and he is always obliged to use ethical knowledge and apply it according to the exigencies of his concrete situation. *(p. 140, emphasis in original)*

In making those choices in the process of dealing with jurisprudence diversity two broad approaches, that I term as "deliberation" and "piousness", emerge amongst the case-study schools. Yet, the case-study schools categorised within the "deliberate" way used two different strategies in handling the arising tensions. This results into three main strategies employed across the schools in this research:

Firstly, a school might prefer to respond to the structural demands, such as the full provision of music and art, and support its choices with debates from within Islamic scholarship (Al-Ghazali, 1982; Al-Juzeiri, n.p; Al-Qaradawi, 2011; Ghazali, 2001). It is an approach which I term as "**rational deliberation**" in dealing with tensions related to religious concerns. This case is demonstrated in

the Message-PS specialisation in Art and its decision to introduce teaching music with controversial instruments as part of the Key Stage Two Curriculum. This provision needs to be read in light of the school's voluntary-aided status and, therefore, raises the question of how might responses to state funding measures shape educators' interpretations of their Islamic heritage in relation to emergent issues within the school. The Message-PS headteacher believes in taking a critical approach to emerging issues where a group of different scholars have to debate on those issues and then the school would go for the one that best suits the situation at hand:

> *I was always trying to meet different scholars from different schools of thought, from different communities; because at first I didn't want to be only a reflection of the Islamic culture and the Islamic educational way from my community.* ***I wanted*** *to make sure that* ***the school took on an identity which was much broader*** *... the way we're speaking that to embrace everything, so our community can remain inconceivably diverse. (Headteacher, Message-PS, emphasis added)*

Hence, based on the founder's vision, it is about creating a school identity that is "much broader". Nevertheless, the choices that the school takes on some of the emerging issues create tension between parents and the school:

> *We do work very hard with our parents, we have good partnerships of course sometimes what the parents want and what the school is there for not always much up, and therefore partnership is a very delicate balance. It is a very, very difficult balance. Sometimes we're very popular and sometimes they dump us [laughter]. Depends upon what is happened and what is it that we're trying to do! (Headteacher, Message-PS)*

Some parental concerns that appeared through school staff interviews were related to jurisprudence issues like music and art and RE provision and girls' congregational prayers. Within the social approach, the Message-PS headteacher believes that these issues are to be solved through transparency on 'entry', mutual respect, offering choices and through continuous dialogue. In this regard, the school perceives itself as one of the various options for which different parents may opt. For the school headteacher, the choices that the school make are discussed with parents at the time when they show interest in admitting their children:

> *At the time before we admit a child, we would be actually talking about the fact this is what the school stands for does it meet to your requirements? Of course they've got many of other options and one of the options that we do support, if they*

> *didn't even want any other school is home schooling for example. We're quite happy to do that. We provide all the books, we send our tutors once a week...there're many options but it's important then if you send your child here at least broadly is in line with our vision. That's the first thing. Then the second thing that we tried; because we're broadly together* ***and there're going to be minor differences and with those minor differences with everything and anything we do we provide the option of withdraw****. (Headteacher, Message-PS, emphasis added)*

Accordingly, it is not for the school to adopt the Islamic interpretation that individual parents would come with, but to be clear about its vision and philosophy and to respect the choices of individual parents concerning controversial issues. Hence, accommodating different pupils' religious needs means for the leadership team that pupils would not have to engage in activities that violate their jurisprudence beliefs, as the headteacher believes, that "for every activity […] there is an alternative activity planned" along with providing the option of withdrawn. Another accommodation the headteacher proposed is that these minority parents can turn to other types of Muslim schools or home-schooling to have their children taught within the environment they prefer.

Parents who object to this provision, and who believe the role of the school Islamic environment to be crucial and want their children to be brought up within a certain degree of "Islamness", might not be satisfied with what this type of school had to offer:

> *Sometimes of course despite the withdrawn bit, do you know that we have parents who get very upset;* ***"why do you do that in the first place within an Islamic school?"*** *But that's not for them to say! Each parent can ever be concerned about their own personal child and if they don't want their child to take part then they don't have to take part. […] We would be happy to give you the opportunities of withdrawn all the way through. Those are for me, there're everyday conversations and discussions we have and at the end of the day. That is why we share our aim and objective and* ***that's why we take so much time to have that conversation at the beginning****. (Headteacher, Message-PS, emphasis added)*

This parental objection is not merely about their children studying "music" as a subject, but about it being in a "*halal*" (permissible) environment "within an Islamic school". It is worth noting here that none of the 157 parents who responded to the questionnaire raised the restriction on musical provision as a concern. Instead, many parents across the four schools regarded such a

restriction as an indicator of the school's "Islamness" and its being a trusted environment for their children's upbringing.

So, it is about the school vision of itself and the type of interpretations that the leadership members or school initiators would take. In this case state funding allows the school to develop in terms of resources and professionalism, but places restrictions on the type of identity the school needs to adopt. To use the rules and resources that accompany state funding in serving the school's goals, as Islamic, demands discursive dialogue both within the system and within the Muslim community. However, this dialogical process does not always result in satisfying both parties and in the case of Message-PS, there emerged from the different staff interviews that some parents were not pleased or as the headteacher expressed "get very upset" with the compromise the school opted for.

Secondly, other schools within the social approach, Andalusia-SS, Iqra-SS and Vision-SS discussed in Chapter 7, prefer to be selective in their choices depending on the background of their parental population and the school's underpinning vision of Islamic schooling. It is about **"deliberation"** based on social empowerment as a goal for the Muslim schooling where strategic decisions might be taken. Due to the fact that the use of other musical instruments such as the guitar or piano, for example, contradicts many parents' beliefs, those schools endeavoured to find a different approach or a "*halal*" way of doing it. Although those schools could opt to provide choices about Music such as that of Message-PS, they have to face the dilemma amongst students of what is really "Islamic" and the questioning of those schools' Islamic legitimacy and "*halal"* status. Not offering musical instruments means leaving the decision regarding this controversy to parents themselves rather than formally adopting a negotiated permissible view. Participants' accounts show that this stand is taken in Andalusia-SS, Iqra-SS and Vision-SS schools. However, while Iqra-SS and Vision-SS are independent schools and consequently have more control over what goes into the curriculum, Andalusia-SS is a state funded school and has to comply with the compulsory National Curriculum subjects including the teaching of Music. For the head of the Art department in Andalusia-SS, being part of the British educational system demands developing new ways that would permit Muslim educators to retain their beliefs, serve students' educational needs and meet the system's requirements. Moreover, the school Ofsted report highlights one such contentious area between the school's Islamic ethos and the system's

requirements, stating that "the leadership team acknowledges that there are a number of limitations in the current provision regarding music". In their choices of the ways to meet both parents' expectations and the Ofsted measures, some educators emphasise the need to consider the debate within Islamic scholarship as well as "the bulk of parents'" perspectives within the school, as the Art teacher in Andalusia-SS puts it.

There are other issues that also emerge within schools including long distance school trips for secondary school female pupils, and leading female congregational prayers within the school. According to the Vision-SS headteacher, the school does not gather any formal data related to pupils' jurisprudence backgrounds. In Vision-SS, international trips to France and Saudi Arabia were very popular amongst pupils. To secure a place for their daughters, parents had to pay a non-refundable early booking deposit. Despite the costs, at the time of my fieldwork in the school, the trips were fully booked well ahead of the deadline for reservations. As presented in Chapter 6, the case-study school populations were mainly from a South-Asian background and were traditionally Hanafi followers. However, if parents adhering to the Hanafi school of thought were the majority within the school, international residential trips in safe company would not be viable as they would require the company of a non-marital male relative (*mahrem*). This is partly due to the controversial nature of this issue amongst the different schools of thought. Moreover, the nearly half of parent respondents in Vision-SS not committed to any school of thought might explain their support for these international visits. Similarly, Iqra-SS had arranged some residential trips that were popular among parents, as the headteacher and pupils reported. Although I did not have access to parents in Iqra-SS, the accounts that pupils offered about the popularity of some long distance trips arranged by the school did not reflect a strict adherence amongst parents to the Hanafi view on this issue.

Female congregational prayers present another example of jurisprudence diversity regarding some day-to-day school activities. The established view in the Hanafi school of thought does not recommend women to lead congregational prayers for other women because it is regarded as Makruh (disliked) (Al-Juzeiri, n.p). Yet, both Iqra-SS and Vision-SS arrange congregational prayers to female pupils led by a female. This shows that the opinion of the Hanafi school of thought on this matter was questioned by practice. Such background may also reflect a gap between espoused jurisprudence views and actual practice amongst

some parents. Nevertheless, a minority of parents in Vision-SS show a strict adherence to the Hanafi school of thought in this matter:

> *The school follows the Sunni school of thought without a certain madhhab (school of thought) but we have certain rules and regulations regarding certain things. Here in the school we do pray jamaa' (congregation), so, sometimes even to make a minority of parents understand why we do it is a challenge because they only want their daughters to follow their madhhab (jurisprudence school of thought). (Headteacher, Vision-SS)*

In contrast, Andalusia-SS placed restriction upon school trips, which might be due to its social context and parental backgrounds. As presented in Chapter 6, the majority of respondents in Andalusia-SS were Hanafi followers:

> *Farida: I think sometimes our school is slightly strict when it comes to things like trips. So, we have obviously the fiqh ruling where you have to have mahrem to travel away with you when you go camping and things like that. (Year 11, focus group, Andalusia-SS)*

In this sense, the Muslim school becomes a space where the different interpretations and educational experiences of parents interact with those of the new generation of educators trained within the British context. Such an interaction contributes to constructing intersections of old and new meanings of Islamic educational practice in an ongoing quest for authenticity and development of understanding and practice.

Thirdly, schools within the moral approach, London-PS and Olive-PS, base their choices on what I term as the **"piousness"** approach. In doing so, they prefer to have their own religious jurist as a reference, who would be a prominent scholar within the community, to discuss with them any concerns raised. In this way the schools believe they promote respect for the different viewpoints amongst their pupils, but would then formally adopt an option that is less controversial within the Muslim community supported by religious texts:

> *Within the school environment, obviously we follow the Hadiths, we follow the Quran, we follow Shariaa', but what the parents do when the children go home, we have no control over. There are times on the playground when one child will say 'oh, is this haram [forbidden]? and that you're doing that! and what we say to them: 'look, Islam is very broad, it comes from many countries. You can't be standing there and imposing your beliefs on others.* ***I'm not a scholar****, and whenever I've got a dilemma about something,* ***I always double-check it****. So, if we have a dilemma, I mean, for example music, some people*

> *are okay, with music, other people aren't.* ***So what we do, we don't have music.*** *That way nobody's offended. We use the drum, but that's all we have. So, we have nasheeds but no music with it.* ***So it's just singing****. (Headteacher, Olive-PS, emphasis added)*

Having adopted the non-controversial stand, Olive-PS's leaders believe that pupils within the school have to maintain that "Islam is very broad" and those holding a different view deserve mutual respect. Similarly in introducing Art the school's leadership adopts a stand that is based on careful application respecting the majority of their parental views on this matter, but supported by the school's scholarly reference:

> *The children do art. What we don't do, obviously, is that we don't put anything up in the masjid [mosque] that is human form. Children are very expressive, so it's the teachers use their discretion when they're doing art with the children. (Headteacher, Olive-PS)*

Hence, it was not just about finding that "local mufti [jurist] who is well respected" within the community, as the school's principal states, but also to keep the implementation sensitive to others' choices. This approach is reflected in the reliance on teachers' individual moral judgments regarding the nature of the drawings, which need to be in accordance with the Islamic worldview of the good life, and also by not displaying anything in a public place of worship. It is about finding that "right measure" of showing respect to the controversy and yet developing children's artistic skills. It is about "following the Quran and following the Hadith", which would help build the trust of the school's parents in the Islamic ethos of the school and its "*halal"* status. With a "*halal"* status I mean to adopt a community's trusted religious view which is part of evaluating the school's "Islamness":

> *[Islamic schools] have varying degrees of Islam and "Islamness" within them. I'm not saying every school's like ours in many ways. I think we're perhaps in a minority, and I often wonder then why set up the other schools? (Principal, Olive-PS)*

This Olive-PS stand on Music and Art and their stress on "*halal"* and "Islamness" concepts, based on moral approach, need to be read in light of the interests of the Olive-PS parental population and the type of education they are expecting. It is about the provision of an environment that nurtures children as "practising Muslims". Similar choices are expressed in London-PS discussions. Therefore, I would argue that those decisions are taken in order to increase Islamic

authenticity, or what the Olive-PS principal has termed as the *"Islamness"* of these schools.

Another source of division amongst the Muslim community is sectarian. All case-study schools follow a Sunni Islamic curriculum and believe that pupils are taught to respect Muslim pupils following other sects. In this research, no sectarian issues emerged from the data except in two cases, one in the pupils' focus group at Andalusia-SS and another in a teacher interview at Vision-SS. Although the vast majority of pupils in these schools are Sunnis, one pupil in Andalusia-SS was of a Shiite background. This Shiite pupil preferred to keep her religious orientation hidden for nearly a year because she felt challenged to learn about Shiite beliefs herself from home and also to get enough background knowledge of the commonalities and differences between the two sects. She considered the experience rewarding because she could correct her family's perceptions of Sunni beliefs and her peers' prejudices about the Shiite group:

> *Zeena: I am a Shiite for example and it's helped to like understand other people's point of view and it's helped me to become open to different opinions. Maybe before, if I didn't come to this school I wouldn't be as educated in other areas in the same way. My friends are more aware of what Shiites believe in because of me. (Year 11, focus group, Andalusia-SS)*

In this discussion pupils narrated the way this experience made them revisit their own pre-judgments about members of the Shiite group and distinguish some differences amongst the Shiites themselves. However, while the pupils' discussion shows an open exploratory approach to these differences, one teacher at Vision-SS, in an off the record comment, showed that staff members prefer not to focus on differences and instead discuss their commonalities to keep their professional relationships stable and avoid any possible tensions. This includes differences with members of staff of a non-Muslim or a Shiite background.

Regardless of this jurisprudence or sectarian division, the case-study schools aim at providing pupils with a sense of unity as one "*ummah*" without detaching them from the wider society. It is within this type of environment that parents aspire to provide their children with a sense of belonging to the Muslim community, build their confidence in their religious identity and nurture them as "good/practising Muslims", as discussed in Chapter 7. But how are the notions of "good Muslim" and "practising Muslim" defined within the spaces of the case-

study schools? The next section provides a further elaboration on these concepts.

8.2 Good and practising Muslim in Britain

As presented in Chapter 7, the majority of parents in the study reported that the first priority for opting for a Muslim school was for their children to be "practising Muslims" and some emphasised their choices within their open responses using terms of "good Muslims" or "practising Muslims". The decision to opt for an independent Islamic school represents a commitment on a family's part, in terms of values and resources. Hence, parents primarily interested in their children being "practising Muslims", as presented in Chapter 7, might be largely drawn towards the school environment that most reflects their measure of "practice". From their side, children were aware that the reason for their being in the school was that their parents wanted them to be "good Muslims" or "practising Muslims"; "because it's a Muslim school and it helps to become a good Muslim, it helps you practise your religion" (Year 6 pupil, London-PS). The question that might be raised at this point, however, is how a "good Muslim" relates to a "practising Muslim". At first glance there seems to be no nuances to the terms "practising Muslim" and "good Muslim" as they were apparently used interchangeably by most Muslim participants in this research. Yet, a closer examination of the usage of participants to these two terms has shown some differences. So, in an attempt to understand parental expectations, schools' provisions and pupils' perspectives, this section explores different perspectives of participants around these two concepts.

The last section demonstrates how important jurisprudence discourse is in the everyday choices that the case-study schools have to make. This section supplements such analysis but it focuses on the notions of "good Muslims" and "practising Muslims", that is, the interpretations through which choices are made by both parents and schools, and the modifications that subsequently occur through the feedback loops discussed in Chapter 4 (see Figure 4.1, p.63). In doing so, it discusses the relationship between the two concepts and reveals how these concepts emerge from interaction with the British context showing flexibility and multidimensional interpretations.

8.2.1 Practising Muslim

The definition of the "practising Muslim", towards which most parents are aiming by sending their children to Islamic schools, is not constructed in detachment from its socio-political and economic context. There are certainly religious principles and a general religious outlook, but there are also interpretations of the way to balance religious identity and demands of the British wider context. For example, in response to the question "what does practising Muslim mean to you?" a teacher illustrated the construction of the concept "practising" and the different interpretations that it might hold. This can vary depending on which sphere of the self it encompasses; from taking it to include the inner-self or to focus more on the visible actions of the person:

> *The term "practising" is quite a modern sort of, it's kind of come up here in the UK; it's used a lot now. We never used to use it before. When you say the word "practising" it's kind of saying: "oh it's just like an exercise!" It's not an exercise; it's a way of life! It's the way of thinking; it's the way of believing; the way of acting every day. It's perfection of character on the daily basis and trying to do things the right way. So, it's not just about reading your salah [prayer]. It's about how you greet someone; how you treat your neighbours or, you know, smiling at someone; because smiling is charity. So for me the answer to practising is everything, it's not just the one salah and Quran. (English teacher, Iqra-SS)*

She explains how the formation of this commonly used concept is linked to certain time and space boundaries because it "is quite a modern sort of, it's kind of come up here in the UK." Moreover, this teacher is criticising what she perceives as a restrictive interpretation of religious practice within the *techne* sphere of rituals. Instead she takes a wider approach aimed at placing religious practice within the reflexive-self through "thinking" that needs to reflect upon actions towards "perfection of character". Hence, it is about the continuous change of conduct during the routine actions through "the daily basis". This practice, therefore, is a process of change rather than a state of visible action. It is here where the "inner" and "outer" spheres of the self are perceived as continuously in a state of interaction through evaluation of self-conduct or as she expressed "the way of acting every day". Yet, because "it's a way of life" the emerging issues from previous conduct, as the 'experiencing in context' loop discussed in Chapter 4 (see Figure 4.1, p.63), feed back into such a process of evaluation and interpretation, through the 'reflecting about' loop, to form a new

status of self in its attempt "to do things the right way". It is about finding that "right measure" of applying theoretical religious knowledge into the social life of the individual Muslim through a double hermeneutic process.

The predominant themes among the parents' descriptions of the way they perceived their children as "practising Muslims" were related to overt behaviours like dress, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and charity. The visible religious practice, as part of defining the "practising Muslim", is also reflected in perspectives that some leaders of the case-study schools expressed:

> *We have girls coming to the school who wear the hijab but if you see them over the weekends with their parents, they don't have the hijab, so they are not practising parents. (Headteacher, Andalusia-SS)*

But there was also clear emphasis on respect, care and confidence of one's religious identity. The parental concern about behaviour in Andalusia-SS, for instance, needs to be read in light of the popular parental expectation for their children to develop as "practising Muslims" and behaviour is regarded as the visible side of the spiritual development. Similarly, a minority of parents in Vision-SS were requesting better standards of behaviour through more spiritual provision.

From social empowerment approach, Visions-SS discussion of the "practising Muslim woman" is about the involvement and social change of the status and position of Muslim women. This process leads to questioning of the normative perception of "Muslim woman's role" and specifically the role of the "fully practising Muslim women" within the wider British context as merely being a housewife with no career profile:

> *How many Muslim female headteachers have you seen in a non-Muslim school wear hijab? How many business big managers have you seen in hijab? How many women have you seen in our local communities do a normal job who are* ***fully practising Muslim*** *women? My [relative] is an engineer for the ministry of defence, she is in full hijab, she has four children and is a manager, and she runs a team of 20 men, and they are astounded. But she is an example to our communities that this is somebody who has very good life skills, who is very intelligent. She is not someone who is forced to get married and stay home and have children; because, as women, we have a duty to make our own children progress. (Pastoral coordinator, Vision-SS, emphasis added)*

While the centrality of the motherhood role is not questioned, this perception of the "practising Muslim women" is challenging the association of hijab, as a visible symbol of religious practice, with notions of oppression, such as "forced" marriage. The practising in here is about the "outer" sphere of the Muslim, it is about the hijab that needs to represent career success by having "normal" jobs where a practising Muslim woman could lead a team of men, work in areas that are not related to her domestic role as a housewife, like engineering, and not restricted to traditional spheres but working for "the ministry of defence". This constructed representation that this pastoral coordinator aspires to achieve as part of bringing up "practising Muslim women" reflects the dilemma that Muslim schools are facing in their attempts to balance religious devotion with the social context expectations and concerns. On the one hand, it is about crossing the boundaries of cultural practice through the stripping of Islamic duties from cultural practices; because as she further clarifies "their culture is what keeps them back." On the other hand, it is about changing the negative depiction of "practising Muslim women" towards being perceived as women with "very good life skills" and who are "very intelligent". It is as Brown (2006) points out that:

> [T]he formation of an articulated "Islamic" identity in the public and private spheres by some Muslim women enables them to negotiate and acquire rights in new and transformative ways. (p. 428)

The role of the school in nurturing "practising Muslim women" resembles the feminist notion of women's empowerment but from within an Islamic framework:

> *The experience I've had in this school makes me want to work with the **young Muslim female ummah**. […] The Muslim woman's voice needs to be heard, they need to be seen. It needs to be understood by the wider British community that wearing hijab is something that allows you to progress. They're intelligent young women who have so much to offer the world but for some reason they step back, and for me that is a duty I have on my shoulders. I have to help these people, these young women become better. (Pastoral coordinator, Vision-SS, emphasis added)*

This educator is inspired by past professional training while working within the state sector about empowering ethnic minority groups. Sometimes, the concept of "practising" in participants' accounts focuses on the visible differences of the "practising Muslim" that might be perceived as anti-British:

> *The whole debate [about Muslim schools] has been skewed to one side, they think a strong, practising sister with hijab or*

> *niqab [face veil], or brother with a beard, that means that this person is anti-British but it's much more complicated than that! My sister always says: "oh I am a British Muslim" because if we go back to Pakistan, we're considered outsiders of Pakistan. So really, our whole culture, our whole upbringing has been British, English if you want to call it that, but at the same time I am a Muslim. (Deputy-headteacher, London-PS)*

This account points out to the complexity of contemporary identities in which religious, racial and ethnic aspects are intertwined. The visible difference is perceived as part of being Muslim and which intersects with being British or even more specifically with being English. This shows a self-reflexivity process on public identity in which participants expressed a sense of consciousness of their identity as Muslims and their reflection on that identity (Brown, 2006; Haw, 2009). It also shows the complex relationship between the diasporic Muslim community and their host British context and the influence of this interaction on representations. This is directly related to the way these Muslim schools position themselves and their goals. In this respect, some other participants drew on public discourses about "Islamic extremism" to create definitions of "practising Muslims" positioning Muslim schools against those images:

> *I'm afraid the term "extremism" is something that is new terminology and is something that is used against Islam. This is just a simple school where the children are in a learning environment that is based on Islam as with a Jewish school or a Catholic school. So, they're not preparing the children in any way to any type of extremism, they are preparing them to be "good practising Muslims", and there is nothing extreme about that and that is their right. (PTA parent, interview, Vision-SS)*

The concept of "practising Muslim" is a demonstration of concerns these schools are facing with the application of the abstract theory of Islamic education to the concrete situations of day-to-day school life. The choices are made in light of Islamic heritage and contextual conditions.

8.2.2 Good Muslim

Muslim school leaders defined a "good Muslim" from diverse angles, influenced by their previous perspectives, as discussed in Chapter 7, of what Islamic education in Britain stands for. In this regard, the Olive-PS principal, based on the moral approach to Islamic schooling in which nurturing spirituality comes at the heart of the school life (see Figure 7.1, p.172), defines the "good Muslim" that the school aims to foster as:

> *Someone who plays a full part, tries to fulfil their obligations to Allah and fulfils their obligations in society, whether that's the Muslim community or the wider community, fulfils their obligations and stands out as a person of honour and good character. (Principal, Olive-PS)*

Thus an education for a good Muslim encompasses education for nurturing spirituality and citizenship, because fulfilling their obligations in society is a religious requirement and part of fulfilling their obligations towards God, as the principal further elaborated. For him, such a definition "is not a dogmatic definition of being a "good Muslim", because good is very subjective." A similar view was also held by the London-PS leadership team in their emphasis on education for the common good. Similarly, a middle manager from Andalusia-SS, based on social approach, points to the subjective nature of what a "good Muslim" is. In doing so, he also highlights the general emphasis on character as an acceptable part of its definition amongst Muslim communities:

> *It's contextual, it's naive to behold, I guess, what someone deems is a good Muslim! [thinking] I think it's generally accepted [amongst Muslim communities] that someone who is respectful, who has good akhlaq [character], respect for his parents, respect for his elders, maintains his salah [prayer], maintains charitable work, helping the elderly, respect for the elderly and I think that's conducive to the aims of most schools. (Middle manager and a teacher, Andalusia-SS)*

Yet, it is this subjectivity which the Message-PS headteacher, based on a social approach, believes makes it difficult to measure whether the school has achieved this goal or not. So for her:

> *Progress has to be measured in terms of knowledge not.., you know, the concept of what a "good Muslim" or a "practising Muslim" is so different amongst different members of the community. (Headteacher, Message-PS)*

Progress in here is about the *techne* and not the application of this knowledge. This is because for the message-PS headteacher performing religious rituals such as prayer is part of being a Muslim and not a "good Muslim". This view of the Message-PS headteacher needs to be placed within the context of her philosophy of Islamic schooling as a space for questioning, exploration and debate, as discussed in Chapter 7 (see Figure 7.2, p.177). So, the goal for a Muslim school is not to make children "practising Muslims", as she stated, but to inform them of the Islamic worldview and provide them with an environment that promotes

those values. It is also about building bridges with the wider context by finding the shared values:

> *To be a Muslim means to be able to have that basic understanding, basic knowledge for example. This is what a Muslim is supposed to do in terms of the worship because worship is what puts us into that border, but then have the good qualities which all human beings have […]. From my point of view, it is very important that our children understand that there're certain values that are hold by the majority because certain values are human values. (Headteacher, Message-PS)*

Nevertheless, a crucial point here in defining the "good Muslim" and its social construction is the clear resistance from some participants to the outside specification of how "a good Muslim" should look. Some participants justified that as the histories, cultures and frames of meaning are not the same; the notion of "good" has to be studied from within each system of reference. It cannot be imposed from outside. The following illustration shows a dilemma of preserving self-definition and representation, rejecting prejudice and redefining religiosity through the prism of shared values:

> *A good Muslim in the British context may not necessarily mean the same thing. I think if you are a "good Muslim" in what **WE** understand to be a "good Muslim" there's no problem. I think it perfectly fuses with whatever expectations the wider community would have... we're not an oppressive religion. If I give you an example of the Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, we should be the leaders in the world on green issues, we should be the leaders in the world on child protection, we should be the leaders in the world in charity, no one should be teaching us how to do it. Other people do it because naturally as human beings, they have hearts, we should have that and we have the love and the fear of Allah and we should be doing it for that as well. We, I mean collectively and individually. (Middle manager and a teacher, Andalusia-SS, emphasis in original)*

The "good Muslim" in this example goes beyond the normative discourse of Islamic practice in which prayer; dress-code and Quran learning are the focus. Instead the notion of "good" is defined in relation to the wider British context. From this educator's perspective, the interpretation of a "good Muslim" is underpinned by an emphasis on recognition that is based on self-definition rather than an imposed version from outside. Also implicit in this account is the rejection of religious stereotypes of perceiving Islam as "an oppressive religion" and assumptions of the binary position between "good Muslim" and the wider community's expectations. A "good Muslim" according to this teacher does not have to choose between their religious beliefs and the society at large. The

question, therefore, should be what are the Islamic beliefs and practices that would fuse with what the public is expecting? For this teacher, the environment, child protection and charity work were a few examples of the areas of shared interest. The difference is about giving religious meaning to the issues of "environment", "child protection" and "world charity". It is about opening up to the expectations of the British context that "should" be motivated from within the "inner Muslim" through a sense of religious accountability based on both "love" and "fear" of God.

In different explorations of Muslim participants of the "good Muslim" concept little reference was made to regular mosque attendance. However, they placed a lot of emphasis on manners and social conduct. This is in accordance with other studies that show little correlation between conceptions of being a "good Muslim" and mosque attendance (Haddad & Lummis, 1987; Kroissenbrunner, 2002). For some parents, developing the character of pupils according to the Islamic values is the most important reason for opting for Muslim schooling even prior to Islamic knowledge and Quran memorisation:

> *A good Muslim to me is about good character, it's all about character. One thing I say to Ahmed [son] over and over again, is respect for your elders, to be humble, humility and humbleness, which we lack these days, and cleanliness. Those are three things for me; they are the most important things, and five times salah. I don't know, I like to send Maimona [daughter] to [alimah school], and Ahmed inshallah we want him to do hifz [memorization of Quran], but I think more than hifz, more than alimah [scholar] or anything, I want them to have good character and do five times salah, all the rest is extras. (Mother-1, interview, Olive-PS)*

Nurturing a "good Muslim" is also perceived to be the development of self-consciousness about action in light of Islamic values:

> *Fourzana: I think they expect me to be a good Muslim and everything. They probably expect me to have some form of conscience, a bit more conscience because I go to an Islamic school, so they expect them to at least teach me how to be a good person. (Year 11, focus group, Andalusia-SS)*

At times the parents and their chosen schools would have different perspectives of the "good Muslim" which opens an internal dialogue within the school space about defining this "good Muslim" and the way the school might achieve that:

> *I had asked a parent once, well not one but many times actually, when a parent says to me: "I want my child to become*

> *a good Muslim" and I said to them: "oh would you say that you're a good Muslim?" and they said: "yes", and I said: "so you would like us to bring the child as the same way as you, so what is it that you do that it makes you a good Muslim so we can actually do the same for the children?" Well, will be praying five times a day, and we often have had a conversation as to whether that is being a "good Muslim" or to pray means being a "Muslim"! Because the concept of "good" is very difficult one, faith and Iman [belief] varies every single day and varies from prayer to prayer. (Headteacher, Message-PS)*

In this account the headteacher is hinting that the "good" is to be measured from within the inner-self because it is about "faith and Iman" that is not fixed and continuously in change. This is linked to her emphasis on the importance of internalising religious knowledge through debate; exploration and questioning discussed in Chapter 7 (see Figure 7.2, p.177). However, some views of parents about the "good Muslim" are in disagreement with the school perception. It is in such cases that during the entry process, as discussed in the first section, dialogue with individual parents and transparency of what the school stands for are deemed as important to the school to communicate expectations. It also works as a filtering procedure to overcome further tensions that might arise from different interpretations of Islamic religiosity:

> *Whereas on the other hand some people some parents would say that: "I just want my child to be a good Muslim because I want them to listen" and which then wills out of the concept of having any conversation, any discussion, any disagreement! So it's very, very different from the school's concept of being a Muslim. But we can't argue for the good Muslim. (Headteacher, Message-PS)*

In such cases Muslim schools are not only faced with some parents less dedicated to the religious ethos of the school, but also with some parents who are having different interpretations of religious devotion.

8.2.3 Good Muslim and practising Muslim: the relationship

The "practising Muslim" and "good Muslim" concepts are used exchangeably depending on the context of the conversation. If it is about the wider context then the "good Muslim" is the one who shares the similarities with other members of the society and is a beneficial member of society. The notion of "good Muslim" is also used to refer to the inner motives and beliefs of a Muslim

whereas the "practising Muslim" is generally attached to the visible aspects of religious practice. In the following account of the deputy-headteacher there is an implicit clarification that a "good Muslim" is a "practising Muslim" and a "strong Muslim". However, a "good Muslim" is contrasted with a "good citizen", while "practising Muslim" is defended against stereotype and placed within the fear discourse:

> *The whole argument [about faith schools] is based on a false idea in the first place. The idea is that "by me being a good Muslim, a good Christian or a good Hindu, that means I am not very integrated." The whole premise is very, very narrow. So, Islam is used to somehow divide! I think it's more the fear of Islam really. It's the fact that they think that by someone being* ***"a practising Muslim" or being "a strong Muslim", that means that they gonna be divisive****! In fact, I think completely opposite because what does Islam teach? Islam teaches kindness to the neighbours, it doesn't say kindness to the Muslim neighbour, kindness to all the neighbours, kindness to the people, kindness to the elderly, kindness to the poor, kindness to the animals! All these things are generic; generally apply to everyone not if they're a Muslim.*
>
> *A lot of our children leave and go to state schools. Last year I think something like over fifty percent went to state schools and we prepare them for life in a multicultural, multiracial society. We have this clear appreciation of where we are and their role in society, but what we firmly believe is* ***a good Muslim is a good citizen****. All our boys, you know, love the different football teams they're like any other****, it's not like some sort of a mini-Taliban state in here****! (Deputy-headteacher, London-PS)*

The argument of social divisiveness against faith schooling is presented along the self-definition of what "good" stands for from within Islam, Christianity or Hinduism and which might be judged from outside as not good. It is noticeable here when the deputy-headteacher criticises the perceived stereotypical discourse his concepts have changed from using "a good Muslim" to using "a practising Muslim" or "a strong Muslim". In a previous account, his argument about "practising" has called upon representation aspects such as "beard", "hijab" and "niqab" as visible symbols of difference, fear and "anti-Britishness". This hints to the different spheres of suspicion within which Muslim schools are perceived to be placed. The first is about the shared sphere of faith schooling in bringing up "good believers" and its links to the social divisiveness discourse. The second sphere is about "the fear of Islam" and in which religious practice is redefined from within by focusing on similarities rather than differences and by distancing Muslim schools from the Taliban model.

From this discussion it emerges that the "practising Muslim" and "good Muslim" are located across four main spheres, knowledge, role modelling, school ethos and the wider British context. Pupils, based on the different accounts of participants, are perceived to need knowledge about their belief, role modelling and a nurturing context for religious values. The Muslim school aims at providing foundation knowledge of the Islamic sources, staff role models embodying what they preach and school environment that normalises Islamic values and becomes a breathing context for religious practice in the day-to-day school life:

> *…here in an Islamic school they know that they're around people who are **role models**. They're able to practise their religion more freely, there are prayer rooms, and we have the masjid [mosque]. They can fast and we understand. So, there's much **more understanding** there! So that's why parents would like to send their children. And of course for the **Islamic teaching**, the biggest thing as Muslim parents, I'm a parent, I want my son to have a good Islamic education, and that's what Islamic schools provide, better even than the home, you know, **at home it's not always the same**. (English teacher, Iqra-SS, emphasis added)*

The British context contributes to such construction of "practising Muslim" or "good Muslim". The reflection of "the inner" upon "the outer", gaining religious theoretical knowledge and the British milieu influences feed back into new understanding of religious practice located within its specific British context (see Figure 8.1). In this sense, the case-study schools are not in a static relation with the wider British milieu but in a continuous process of interaction in which responses to previous understandings of religious practice form a new pre-understanding for future conduct.

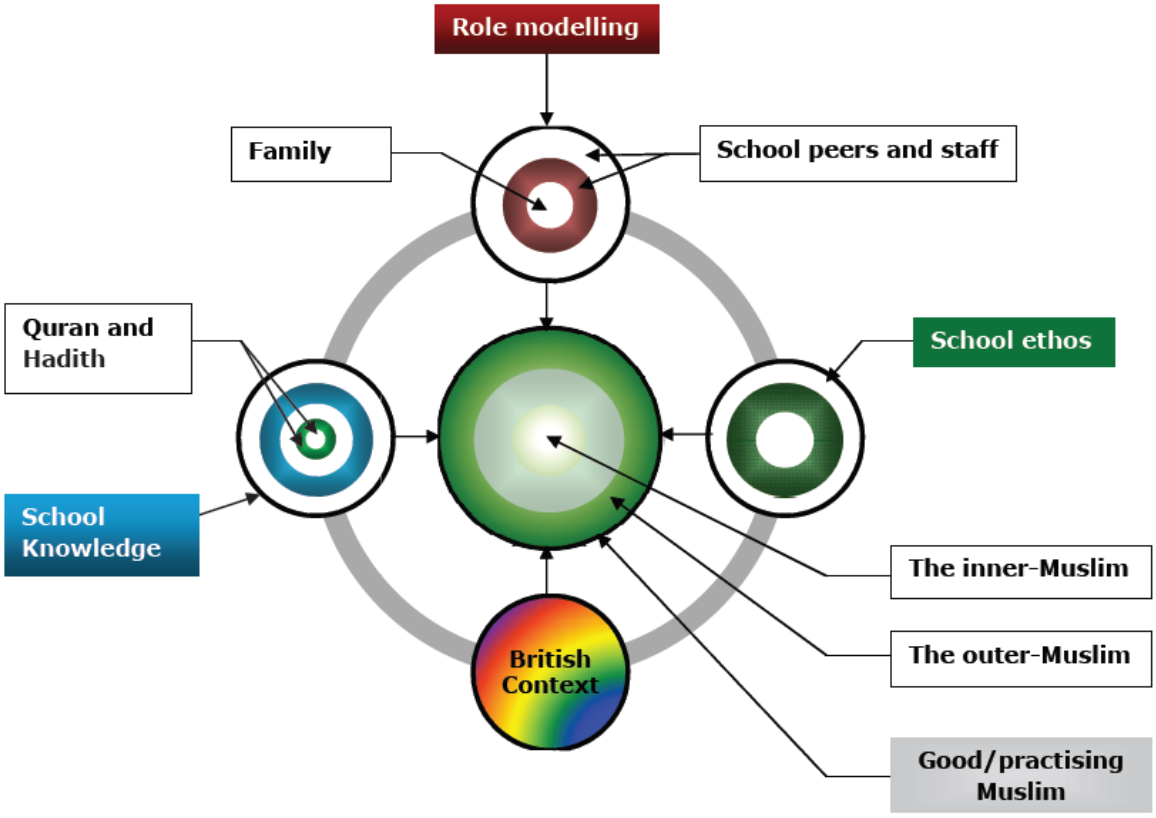

Figure 8.1: The good/practising Muslim

The outer-Muslim sphere is partly related to the jurisprudence convictions of participants and their school of thought orientations such as in dress-code and conduct. In this sense, the definition of a "good/practising Muslim" would be particularly relevant to the development of Muslim schools in areas of ethos, curriculum and extra-curricular activities (see Figure 8.1). It is related to the "Islamness" of the school in terms of staff conduct, type of knowledge and educational activities and which takes this discussion back to the "moral" and "social" typologies presented in Chapter 7.

However, different participants are still reflecting upon and developing the "good Muslim" and "practising Muslim" used concepts. As these concepts are not final or strictly defined, the school practice, environment and social interactions provide a space for reflection upon them:

> *An Islamic would be a school which outlines Islamic principles and it would be quite happy to have discussion and debate because we're talking about Islamic principles, we're talking about a way of life, we're talking about philosophy. Whereas Muslim is different because to me that is about making*

somebody obedient or submit, so you're talking about in some extent making it happen and that's where perhaps the concept of a "good Muslim" probably comes in. I don't know! (Headteacher, Message-PS)

This research is part of such constructing process because it provides a space for further reflection on practice as it requires participants to provide discursive expressions upon the choices they made. Giddens (1991) argues that traditional society does not have to be so reflexive on day-to-day actions and attitudes, because they are simply set by the dominant tradition. Although such an argument is partly true in the sense that many moral choices are already prescribed by tradition, this does not negate their reflexivity in accepting tradition in the first place. Moreover, the case-study Muslim schools as institutions following a certain tradition within a Western context, as well as individuals within them regularly reflect about their choices, analysing unintended consequences for their past actions and reading their contextual circumstances. In the case of Muslim pupils living in the West, such as in Britain, they are exposed to a wide range of choices. In this research pupils show that they are continuously analysing and making choices regarding their actions. This includes everyday questions about clothing, appearance and more important decisions about beliefs and occupations. They observe their own actions and tailor them to the way others would see them or react to them. Pupils' constructions of the "practising Muslim" concept show the interplay between the "inner" and the "outer" spheres, where actions within each sphere are perceived to have consequences on individuals, as social agents, and from there radiate on the wider community:

Ruqia: I think it's more important inside than what's your appearance on the outside; because you might wear the hijab and everything but you might have a really bad character and I think it's really important to work from the inside out, so I decided not to wear the jilbab just yet until I can do things like improving my character. ***I think you should really think before you wear a scarf*** *as well because if you're going to do something wrong while you're wearing the scarf* ***you're going to degrade Muslims*** *in the eyes of other people. So, first, I think, you should become a better person, better Muslim from within you and then show everyone with appearance by representing yourself in the scarf.*

Zeena: and sometimes like the inside of you is a lot harder than just putting on a piece of cloth but even just praying a namaz [prayer] that might be not as hard as like in your character from inside. It's about how you treat another person, that's your akhlaq [manners]. It's the way that we communicate with

> *other people and how we handle different situations. (Year 11, focus group, Andalusia-SS, emphasis added)*

This reflects what Giddens (1991) states:

> What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity - and ones which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behaviour. (p. 70)

So, the other question is of how participants perceive this "practising Muslim" fitting in within the wider British context? The next point explores the perspectives of participants on this issue.

8.2.4 Practising Muslim and British citizen

In the questionnaire parents were asked to describe their ethnic background; nearly a quarter (23.9 percent, n=155) of all respondents across the four schools attached British to their ethnic group. Religion was also attached to some of their descriptions. For example, five parents from an Indian background preferred to attach Muslim such as "British Indian Muslim" which might be due to the diversity of religions amongst the Indian population. Yet, in one case a parent preferred to describe herself as "British Muslim" and in a couple of cases was just "Muslim". Other descriptions were used such as Bangladeshi British, British Asian-Indian, British Asian and African British. In the 2001 Census data more than half of Muslims said that their religion was important to their self-identity and 93 per cent of UK-born Muslims gave a British national identity (Office for National Statistics, 2004a). Since the questionnaire did not ask about the place of birth or provide any certain categories it was not possible to compare these results with the national data. Moreover, in the 2001 official census the politics of respondents' self-representation might become more important in relation to Britishness than in an academic research such as this one. However, the diverse descriptions provided in responses to this study still hint to a dilemma within participants in regard to labelling their ethnicity in relation to race, nationalism, Britishness or Islamness.

Nevertheless, in the qualitative data some parents saw that it was with the help of the school that their children "are going to be British Muslims and are going to be able to communicate with the wider community" (Mother-1, Vision-SS). In this regard a mother in Vision-SS emphasised her trust in the school to prepare her child for the future, because, as she stated, the school promised to "prepare

a child to live as a British Muslim, not just a Muslim going into any country, but as a British Muslim, and I'm sure, they'll fit in" (Mother-3, Vision-SS). The following mother, who schooled three of her children in Muslim schools, states that:

> *My children view themselves as British Muslims; very British; to a certain extent, they don't recognise their Arabic background, even though they look Arab. Their humour is British, their interests and their likes and dislikes- they're completely different than their Arab cousins." (Mother-2, interview, Vision-SS)*

For the following parent, obedience to the law of the land is also part of being practising, something that was also raised in pupils' focus groups as well as in headteachers' and Muslim teachers' accounts:

> *When you are living in this country, you have an agreement with this government; you will follow the rules, and abide by the law. So, whoever is breaking that kind of agreement that is against the religion anyway! (Father-1, interview, London-PS)*

All the case-study schools, from different perspectives, wanted to ensure that pupils developed a strong Muslim identity that would help them build a sense of belonging to the wider British society. So, these schools perceive civic purposes as part of their Islamic education. As one headteacher stated:

> *It's to educate our young children to be part of society, to be proud of whom they are, not apologetic. To go out there and say 'I'm Muslim, I'm proud and I'm British and I have rights and responsibilities.' Not to be apologising for their religion and not to be isolated. I turned on the television the other day; there was a Muslim reporter- a female with hijab- on our local news, and I just said: 'mashallah[5]!' Unfortunately, you don't see that, you don't have it in [this city]. What would our children think? I thought I must record this somehow and bring it in and say: "look. Here is a woman who's gone out into society. She is proud of being a Muslim. She's got hijab on, and she's on the television. (Headteacher, Olive-PS)*

This headteacher's account, like some other similar accounts, begs recognition within the public sphere with their visible difference. It is an education that aims at encouraging children to take their roles as confident active citizens without

[5] Mashallah: literally: whatever God Wills; equivalent to: Praise the Lord. It is often used to express exclamation at something good.

hiding their religious identity, what I termed as the "outer-Muslim", or be segregated as a result of it. The Muslim television reporter, whose character or religious devotion were not known to the headteacher, forms an embodied message of religious practice and social presence within the public sphere that could be presented to children. It is about nurturing confidence in pupils about their "outer" representation of religious practice.

In Vision-SS and from a social empowerment approach, the three girls' focus group discussions drew mostly upon the political discourse; issues of civil and political rights were strongly brought to the fore. The school aims at building in pupils a sense of belonging to Britain by creating a discourse of them being contributors to the country's progress rather than visitors or consumers. From this civic discourse, part of defining Islamic education is the emphasis on the "fitting in" of children within the wider British society without losing their faith. Another part is to infuse those children with self-confidence in their Muslim heritage, its compatibility and contribution to current Western scientific advancement, and helping them deal with negative stereotypes:

> *Amarah: What is happening in the media and all the things that are happening, we discuss this in school...*
>
> *Maryam: helping us through it..[Sabah interrupted her]*
>
> *Sabah: I think it is important as well like living in Britain like in this day and age to know your past and everything and it's nice knowing what Muslims had contributed to our country as well. (Year 10, focus group, Vision-SS)*

As discussed in Chapter 6, Iqra-SS believes that it prepares pupils to be "model citizens" and that includes promoting respect, recognition of others' views, peaceful living and being "law abiding citizens". In social terms there were many common issues that were raised across the case-study schools: respect, voluntary contribution and care for the elderly or neighbours as religious duties. The common ground with wider society is seen in terms of moral values such as honesty, courtesy, tolerance and kindness towards others, which are also seen as part of being a "good Muslim". These aspects are regarded as behaviours that reflect inner beliefs, because they are actions that are learnt from the Prophet from "his character and his way of treating others", as one parent stated. Those aspects of religious practice, which the case-study schools agreed to promote, are believed to help generate a sense of community, belonging and social identity whether within the school or within the wider context. Moreover, they

are seen as ways that demonstrate a commitment to the social environment. For participants, part of practising is to hold those morals strongly with an implicit religiosity in Muslim everyday behaviour. In this regard, all the case-study schools found it necessary to teach about diversity and building pupils' sense of belonging to the wider British community. This, they believed, requires pupils to appreciate the importance of mutual respect and acceptance of difference.

As discussed in Chapter 6, all case-study schools, to different degrees, teach about other faiths while insisting on the importance of remaining distinct in their own Islamic ethos. For example, all the six schools built links with other faith schools but some of those links are more established than others. Olive-PS had exchanging visits with other local faith schools but the headteacher believes that the school was still developing further collaborations. But, as a well established school, the Message-PS believes to have developed a strong network with other faith schools and faith centres within their area. At the time of data gathering, the Message-PS school was dedicating a whole week for learning about other religions and visiting different places of worship.

From pupils' perspectives, a clear theme emerged across the different focus groups, especially those of secondary phase, that of being "British Muslims". They clearly emphasised what they perceived as a dual identity of "British citizens and practising Muslims", "Muslim British citizens" or "British Muslims". No contradiction was perceived between the two spheres:

> *Fatima: what I think is: British is not a religion, it is like a place you grow up and Islam is a religion, so it shouldn't clash, it doesn't really clash. (Year 10, focus groups, Vision-SS)*

Iqra-SS pupils put this incorporation of the Islamic and Britishness in the following way:

> *Husna: we are Muslim British that means that we incorporate our British side with the Islamic teaching; because we have two teachings. We can live our British life with the teachings of Islam!*
>
> *Radwa: yeah, we can live our British life and follow Islam that Allah has taught us in the Quran. So I think that's stronger; being both British and practising Muslims, but it is a bit challenging as well! (Year 10, focus group, Iqra-SS)*

Pupils are attempting to discover the common understanding between their Islamic faith and the British context. Finding "the right measure" in combining

the two aspects of being "both British and practising Muslims" was felt as strength but for some of them it was also a "challenging" task. As Haw's (1998) study found, these pupils were feeling more confident, open and supported within their secure Muslim school environment. Yet, pupils in this study also appeared very conscious of their image in public discourses as "visible Muslims". Secondary school pupils, for instance, repeatedly talked about the stereotype of Muslim women as foreigners, not educated and oppressed. In this respect, they believed that such a perceived image was a distorted one and felt challenged to prove otherwise. Vision-SS' pupils in particular debated the extent to which they could challenge such perceived public discourse or could be trusted as competent public figures. Nevertheless, they still aspired to some highly public jobs:

> *Sabah: it [the school] doesn't limit our hopes; I mean, there are still people in the school who want to be prime ministers,*
>
> *Fatima: I do want to be a member of Parliament, maybe a doctor, you know, it doesn't place any limits on it, it always makes us aim for the best and for the highest,*
>
> *Amarah: it doesn't have to be housewives or anything! (Year 10, focus group, Vision-SS)*

Hence, constructions that schools make of the "practising Muslim citizen" and the role of Islamic schooling in Britain need to be understood not only within the typologies presented in Chapter 3 about Islamic education, but also in light of the British structure within which these schools are functioning. In order to get registration, independent schools in England are required to satisfy a number of conditions and regulations set under the Education Act 2002. An essential aspect of these regulations was the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development of pupils. This area was detailed further in the 2003 regulations (DfES, 2003). Although the school is not obliged to provide religious education, there are five principles to the SMSC regulations that the school must promote:

> (a) enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
>
> (b) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the law;
>
> (c) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute to community life;

(d) provide pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England; and

(e) assist pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions (DfES, 2003, p. 4).

The registration can be removed in cases where the schools are reported to be failing to meet government standards without taking actions for improvement. Interestingly, the concept of "good Muslim" was used by Ofsted as part of measuring the spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements of the London-PS educational provision in 2007. As a result, the provision of the school was evaluated in 2007 as "good" due to their emphasis on the spiritual and moral aspects that were taught across the curriculum to help pupils understand how to live as "good Muslim[s]". In this latter Ofsted report, three aspects emerged in describing the SMSC provision of the school; behaviour of pupils, the role modelling of teachers and the school environment that emphasised the virtue of helping others through the nurturing of a sense of accountability to God. Hence, it is about "the outer Muslim" through visible actions of conduct, "the inner Muslim" through piousness and self-accountability and "the role modelling" that embodies the technical knowledge of religious values. Yet, the case-study schools are not merely aiming at fulfilling the minimum registry requirements, but are all aspiring to achieve an "outstanding" Ofsted report. For example, in 2010 Ofsted evaluated the quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the same London-PS as "outstanding". It is within this framework that their interpretations of the Islamic are developing through a dialogue that takes into consideration both structural conditions and parental expectations. However, the choices these schools make result in some unexpected tensions to which they have to respond, as discussed in Chapter 7, which leads to a gradual change and diversity of provision. The next section follows the trail of this change.

8.3 The process of change

8.3.1 Islamic education for a changing world

The initial notion that the Muslim school is a place of safe refuge from the influence of the mainstream school environment has been expanded to a more transitional role. In Haw's (1995) study, the Old Town Hall Muslim School aimed at empowering young Muslim women to face different contextual challenges. The present research reveals that this aim has moved forward to also become a parental demand. Mirroring changes in wider Muslim communities in their attempts to adapt to British context, most parents in this study, in all the four schools, find it important that the school prepares their children for "real life" after school. It is about helping these children understand their roles as "active" and "effective" British citizens from within an Islamic framework of practice:

> *School arranges a number of trips to churches and other places of other faith which is very important; we yet have to see how this generation of school does in practical life. (Parent 69, PQ, London-PS)*

Many parents also suggested that schools needed to prepare their children to accept difference and prepare them for what a parent termed "real life". The following is a mother's perspective of a "practising Muslim" towards which she strives to bring up her children:

> *Good practising Muslims learn about other faiths, and good practising Muslims have to believe in the bible and the torah. Our religion is not in isolation, we are part of the ahlu al-kitab, the people of the book, Christians and the Jews." (Mother-4, Vision-SS)*

The mother is regarding Islam as part of the Judeo-Christian group that is recognised as the main component of Europe's religions. So, based on the Muslim belief, Islam is not detached from such a heritage (Quran, 5:46). Moreover, based on this perspective, the "practising Muslim" in Britain relates to this heritage and needs to build bridges with the wider society.

All teachers and school leaders who took part in this research were conscious of the importance of building links with other non-Muslim schools, the local community and the larger society. Consequently, all the six case-study schools have developed links with other schools but at different levels. Some links are

more established than others. Olive-PS headteacher, for example, appreciates the need for such collaboration for pupils' development as future British citizens. Consequently, at the time of my data collection, the school had just started arranging some activities with other schools in the area and planning for further development of some stronger partnerships. Services in the community such as police and firemen are invited to the school as part of the curriculum delivery.

In this regard, London-PS had organised open days for its neighbourhood to visit the school. When this event grew, the school arranged an open exhibition of its work at the local town hall to inform its neighbouring population and to build links. Some parents in London-PS go as far as regarding interfaith activities as a point of strength for the school. Others request more exposure to the outside world. This parental consciousness of the importance of exposing their children to the outside world reoccurred with many parents in the different case-study schools. This was with the emphasis on building children's confidence in their own religious values and providing a supportive and secure school environment. Vision-SS also arranged similar activities within the school to combat what they perceived as a lack of understanding of what Muslim schools are doing or stand for:

> *We have an interfaith event and we invite people from all, from the Jewish community, from Christian, you name it everywhere! They come and we have an exhibition in the school. We show them a PowerPoint video on a day of a life in a Muslim school what is it like. So, we videoed a day of the whole life of the school, different events and that's a way of serving the community. We're educating them. We allow them to come and look, we are normal. (Headteacher, Vision-SS)*

While in Message-PS, according to staff accounts, a minority of parents were concerned about the RE lessons and visits to different places of worship, none of the parents in London-PS, Vision-SS, Olive-PS or Andalusia-SS raised such a concern in their questionnaire responses:

> *Most of parents are very supportive of all our activities where we try to involve the whole of the communities irrespective of who they are Muslims or not-Muslims. But there are a few parents who have very narrow views and again it's about being able to work in partnership together and trying to do what is the best for the child because sometimes you get it is very difficult to change attitudes of grownups but convince them that is a good thing for the child on the long term to have an idea of how things work and how other people live in a multi-faith Britain and Multicultural Britain. (Headteacher, Message-PS)*

The different schools perceive themselves as privileged as religious insiders to be able to challenge some parental views from within an Islamic framework through dialogue. The Vision-SS headteacher, for example, felt enabled to question some parents' objections to pupils being exposed to some other faiths. The school saw itself as being in a better position than that of mainstream schools to challenge parents' stereotypes about the other and help those parents distinguish between political ideological tensions and religious orientations:

> *We brought a Rabi, a while ago to come and talk to them in the school. A minority of parents were not happy. I said: look what is wrong with that? I am not bringing them a Zionist to school! We are bringing somebody from the Jewish faith. We have to live together but we can never live together until we have understanding. We are not against the Jews, we are not happy with the Zionists strategy. It is a political thing, it is nothing to do with the religion and this is something that has to be cleared. (Headteacher, Vision-SS)*

There were cases, however, where some teachers and school leaders in Andalusia-SS, London-PS, Message-PS, Olive-PS and Vision-SS believed that a minority of parents still expected these schools to shield their children. These school leaders considered such minority cases to have the wrong perception of what an Islamic schooling stands for. The following illustration confirms the tension between the Muslim school and a minority of parents that Haw (1995) highlighted in terms of gender issues:

> *Sometimes there are parents; but we know, particularly for the girls, that that child is not going to get much of an opportunity to go beyond formal education. I really do think it's criminal, it's against the spirit of the deen [religion], it's against the instructions from Rasulullah Sallallahu alayhi wa sallam [the Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him] about education for everybody being an obligation. So that is kind of cause some problems, and those in a few families where over the years we've basically come to an agreement that we disagree completely. We can't just have one size school fitting everybody. The school as an institution, we believe that all of our kids deserve the best possible chances in life, and education is one way of getting that. That's the only real problem we've had in terms of the different cultural approaches to education, but it hasn't been a huge issue. (Principal, Olive-PS)*

The case-study schools appeared to be in a good position to challenge some parental orientations towards isolating their children. This challenge is not solely at the level of physical presence but also at the intellectual one. As previous research has highlighted (Haw, 1995), pupils across the five schools felt more at

ease in voicing their religious and personal concerns in a confidential and understanding environment:

> *Maryam: I think you've got more of a choice at school, perhaps in a mosque sometimes you're kind of forced to pray because you feel guilty and you think: "oh everyone is praying and I have to pray as well", But in school you get the choice and you think: "ok, why am I praying? Why am I doing this?" Yeah, then it's me! You can relax in such an atmosphere and you can be yourself. If you have critical questions about your religion, you can talk to people about it and they help you. If you are fearing and even if you are being upset about something you know somebody is there for you.*
>
> *Fatima: I think also the confidentiality of school. If you've got a problem or something and then you tell your teacher and you tell them: "please can you keep it confidential", then they'll not tell anybody else.*
>
> *Maryam: yeah, they do well!*
>
> *Fatima: whereas in the mosque, if they're friends with your parents, they will just tell them,*
>
> *Girls: oh yeah! [Laughter] (Year 10, focus group, Vision-SS)*

The school environment provides a trustful and secure milieu for children to voice their concerns regarding different issues, including extremism, gender issues and some other global tensions. This was particularly evident in secondary school pupils' focus groups: they found their schools' spaces to be comforting and a place in which they could disclose their religious concerns. This, they explained, was due to the diversity of backgrounds existing in their school combined with the professional attitude to issues of confidentiality. Girls believed that they were able to abandon duality and just be themselves, with their loudness, their questionings, and their worries both personal and that of public discourse to be opened up and debated within an Islamic framework. It is this aspect that pupils believed neither the mosque nor the mainstream school could offer them. The lack of understanding in mainstream schools about their backgrounds meant inability to open up personal issues, and the close social networks in the mosque meant risking their confidentiality. Moreover, as the mainstream school was seen as a restricting space regarding exploring oneself, because of fears of misunderstanding, the mosque was also seen as "a moral authority space" where they had to join the crowd and pray, as a moral action, even if not asked to do so. It is meant to be a place for worship and not for questioning concerns regarding religion.

Hence, the environments of Muslim schools become, as some participants conceptualised it, "*ummah* spaces" in which the emerging religious issues could be re-examined in light of their new British context without being limited within the inherited perspectives that were developed through certain cultural contexts. It is about being both devout Muslims and British citizens. But this move consists in a struggle to intermingle the two worlds and making fitting action possible. During this process of change, the spaces of these schools form forums that facilitate community reflexivity and internal dialogue about the complexities presented to them by the wider socio-political context as well as by the inner diverse backgrounds and perspectives of the "Islamic" within a Western context in relation to education.

8.3.2 Muslim schools in Britain: the past and the future

As discussed in Chapter 3, the primary impetus for the growth in Muslim day school enrolment was parental dissatisfaction with the education provided by local state schools, and the sense that the Muslim day schools were a viable – indeed, preferable – alternative. However, there was not much planning in the initial development of this body of schooling within its new context:

> *Initially, 25-30 years ago, a lot of schools were established purely and simply to get secondary-age girls out of the state system. Very little thought, as far as I know, went into what we were going to do with them, what we were going to teach them. (Principal, Olive-PS)*

Individual agents were acting in a durée, a continuous flow of conduct, through a reflexive process upon their localised circumstances. It was about "a routine 'monitoring' of the grounds of conduct in the everyday enactment of social life" (Giddens, 1982a, p. 536, quotation in original). The Message-PS, for instance, initially started as a personal provision, expanded to home schooling group that was further developed into a girls' school. However, under parental pressure from the local community the school developed into a co-educational school and then gained state funding by using the rules and resources available. Later, the school expanded to also include separate independent secondary education provision for both genders. So, in that way the headteacher believes that "the school was never planned and was a response to my needs, then later became a response to the needs of the community." The school leaders' reflexive

monitoring upon the experience of state funding within the primary sector informed their decision regarding the secondary school, which they preferred to keep as an independent. A similar move was growing from individual parents as agents in different parts of England, as in the case of Vision-SS:

> *Basically my involvement with this particular school, dates back from 20 years; because, they had the first meeting about developing Muslim schools in [this city]. My father was in that meeting, so we were actually part of these schools from the beginning, as they were born, and as I was in the university as a student I used to go and help and volunteer. (PTA-Chair, Vision-SS)*

Thus, Muslims, as individuals and as collective agents, have begun to create some conditions that enable them to avoid assimilation yet at the same time find a space for themselves within the public arena (Nielsen, 2009). Education is one way through which they have taken an active role, have chosen to intervene and to change their present status, and are able to have a say about how they are positioned. The community's economic circumstances started to change and this contributed to the provision of schools:

> *A group of local Muslims from the [two] local boroughs, and they were active Muslims who did well in their employment, in business or industry, and they were community leaders type of people. They were all concerned about the behaviour and the academic progress of Muslim children in madrasas, and they were seeing madrasas weren't doing the trick of actual tarbiyah. They could also see there were rising rates of criminality, you know, mental health problems, drug problems, all sorts of problems in the Muslim community, the prison population, its huge disproportionate number of Muslims who're in there. So, all these issues were conspiring in their minds to make them think about how could they make a difference? How could they make a change? How could they be a solution to this? and they felt very, very strongly that we need a Muslim school. (Headteacher, London-PS)*

Hence, individual members of the Muslim community were not only concerned about the poor quality of madrasa provision and the practical religious needs of Muslim children in the state sector, but also of the national published data regarding the Muslim population in Britain. Social sciences research input is also taken by some parents to inform their decisions and change accordingly:

> *We consider the Islamic environment, that the teachers are practising Islam, […] and research show that, you know, the children of Islamic schools they're more confident in speaking about things like terrorism, things like covering up, they are so*

> *confident, whereas, Muslim children in the state schools, they are not very confident. (Mother-1, interview, London-PS)*

This shows the way social science is related to the lives of individuals or communities whose behaviour is analysed. This is an expression of what Giddens (1982b) calls the "double hermeneutic" which characterises social science:

> The double hermeneutic entails that these relations, as Gadamer insists, are dialogical. The fact that the "findings" of the social sciences can be taken up by those to whose behaviour they refer is not a phenomenon that can, or should, be marginalised, but is integral to their very nature. It is the hinge connecting two possible modes in which the social sciences connect to their involvement in society itself: as contributing to forms of exploitative domination, or as promoting emancipation. (p. 14)

Nevertheless, the aims for setting up those schools were not deeply developed. Now, a course of change appears to be underway informed by the reflexive evaluation of previous practice. The following headteacher's response to my probe, of whether Islamic education remains the goal for the school, illustrates such a process:

> *YES [time thinking]. Yes, I suppose many years ago I would have said that my aim is "Islamic education", but as you get older it becomes very hard because you begin to wonder what is Islamic education? The answers are not as easy as they were once upon a time. But yes, broadly, yes. (Headteacher, Message-PS)*

This account shows the process of reflexivity upon the goals of Islamic schooling which is involved in the questioning of the previously held understanding. If holistic Islamic education is these schools' goal, how can this goal be achieved? Since their establishment in the 1980s, and based on practical experience, these schools have been through a course of change in both goals and scale:

> *I've worked with Muslim schools for twenty five years. The parents' expectations have changed, I think, as have the schools when they were places of refuge from what was seen as an unresponsive state system, and that has changed. (Muslim faith schools inspector)*

These schools, similar to many other institutions, are placed within an era of unprecedented change (Gamage & Peng, 2003) and Muslim community, as the larger society, does not remain stagnant. The different choices made by schools and individuals within these schools, have influence upon each other, and cannot be understood separately. Moreover, in an information age, Islamic scholarship

is no longer limited to the geographical traditional schools or the learned authorities. With the growing internet provision, many religious authorities have e-spaces for interacting with people (Bunt, 2009; Linjakumpu, 2011) and traditional religious sources are also available online. Hence, the Islamness of the school and the notions of good/practising Muslim are constructed and interpreted in light of this openness. During their day-to-day educational practice, these schools are making choices for overcoming challenges arising from acting under these conditions of uncertainty. Consequently, the diversity between the case-study Muslim schools is developing through a process of change that emerges in terms of school goals and parental expectations. This diversity is providing various options to parents interested in Islamic schooling, but also creating diversity within each school by educational interests and socio-economic backgrounds.

Conclusion

This chapter shows an intimate relation between the interpretation process of texts and contextual changes where Muslim educators, through the process of ethical judgments, are trying to find the "right measure" in regard to application within school life. This has created diversity between Muslim schools and within them. The differences between Muslim schools in dealing with diversity within them is not only due to the different theories of education underlying the practices of these schools, as presented in Chapter 7, but also to the different contexts within which various choices are being made through the day-to-day practical educational experiences. The ways in which the case-study schools are dealing with jurisprudence diversity within them, for example, show a dynamic living process in which the identities of these schools are being formed through choices and tendencies made with the progress of experience. By this process, educators perceive dialogue as the main approach through which any emerging tensions between parents and the schools are negotiated.

Hence, Muslim school practice over two decades was not isolated from its British context. As they attempt to respond to challenges and contextualise themselves within their new space and time, these schools have witnessed a change. In identifying and making choices in dealing with emerging tensions, these schools are constantly shaped in their everyday social life. This change has transformed some typical closed and inadequate learning settings into some "good" to

"outstanding" multicultural educational provisions and relatively open spaces for resourceful learning, as presented in Chapter 6. This chapter also shows elements of hermeneutical tension related to schools' practice which raise the question: What implications do the dynamic tensions between structures, parents and Muslim schools have on shaping the social phenomenon of Islamic schooling in Britain?

This lays the ground for the next chapter in bringing the analyses of this research together by revisiting the research questions, the literature and the theoretical framework.

Chapter 9. Muslim schools and Islamic ethos: Context and diversity

Introduction

In this final chapter, I draw together the different threads of this thesis' argument and place the research analysis within certain aspects of schooling in Britain such as the influence of Ofsted. I specifically focus on the questions that the thesis seeks to answer and which are presented in Chapter 1. They are revisited here as a point of reference in the discussion of data analysis presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. The overall research question is:

- **How do Muslim schools perceive they are resolving the dilemmas that arise from dealing with the diversity presented to them by the same religious group?**

To be able to answer this question, it is broken down into a number of more specific questions, namely:

1. What are the goals that educators in Muslim schools hold to be most important?
2. What are the parents' expectations of and priorities for Islamic schooling?
3. How do these two sets of priorities compare? What orientations govern schools' choices as to educational goals?
4. How do Muslim schools perceive themselves dealing with possible tensions that arise from existing diversity?

Muslim schools are growing in number, securing state funding, developing their professional practice and gradually building their resources (Ansari, 2004; Association of Muslim Schools UK, n.p-a). However, these schools are standing within the multiple tensions raised in Chapters 3, 6, 7 and 8 between independence and state funding status, Islamic ethos and academic achievement, Britishness and Muslimness, religion and culture, integration and segregation, and Muslim unity and diversity. To answer the above questions and be able to make sense of the present state of Islamic schooling in Britain, there is a need to consider both continuity and change. In this regard, Said (1997) argues that a responsible discussion of Islam would include three levels or spheres of importance. Of primary importance is the Quran, which is the

"bedrock identity of Islamic faith" (Said, 1997, p. 57). Second are the various schools of Quranic interpretation, including "Islamic sects, jurisprudential schools, hermeneutic styles, linguistic theories, and the like" (Said, 1997, p. 57). Third are the various ideological contexts and practices that have influenced or inspired some interpretations of Islam or even, in some way, Islam is being linked to them. For Said (1997), a view that I adopt, it is of a crucial importance to distinguish the third level from the first two. Hence, to address the above questions, a hermeneutic theoretical framework is adopted to enable connecting the various elements of this research in an interlinked fashion.

As part of clarifying the issues involved in answering the main research question, this chapter examines the tradeoffs, or as I called it in Chapter 8 the "right measure", Muslim schools make to resolve the emerging dilemmas that arise from their practice. In doing so, there was a need to ground discussions of Islamic schooling with respect to the four theoretical approaches to Islamic education presented in Chapter 3. I particularly draw on al-Ghazali's educational perspectives due to his wide influence in the educational, theological, and philosophical aspects of Muslim thought. But, even more so, the debate needed to be anchored in participants' interpretations, about the realities of opportunities that Muslim schools have and constrained options and challenges that they face, the internal discourses in these schools as influenced by parental expectations and educational priorities, and ways in which these schools deal with possible tensions arising as a result. As explicitly discussed in Chapters 1 and 4, Giddens' (1984) notion of the "double hermeneutic" forms the basis for this thesis' assumptions about the relationship between structure and agency in understanding social phenomena. Analysing the internal discourses within the case-study schools through this particular lens allows a deeper understanding of the way these schools are taking account of both enablers and constraints within their contexts and the way participants are involved in a process of interpretation of both their past tradition and their current context. Another theoretical concept that this thesis draws on is Gadamer's (1982, 1989) interpretation of "practical wisdom" which helps explaining the ways Muslim educators in the case-study schools express their theoretical understanding of "Islamic education" in application through the choices they make in their attempts to find the "right measure" in practice.

In doing so, this thesis argues that Muslim schools in Britain are going through a continuous changing process and being diversified by the very choices they

make in dealing with dilemmas emerging from their practice within individual schools situated within their British environment. In such a process, Islamic education is thought about and shaped within the context of the competitive market pressures of schooling in Britain including parental needs, values and educational priorities and the system's requirements. While the raison d'être of Muslim schools, "Islamic ethos", remains important to the six case-study schools, the system's measures of academic success are being incorporated into the interpretations that these schools give to what "Islamic schooling" stands for. The options taken by leaders of Muslim schools in resolving the emerging dilemmas make each school unique in its own right.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section aims at embedding the current discourses within the case-study schools into their historical heritage and current market pressures. In doing so, it considers answering secondary questions 1-3 listed on page 243. The first part of this section explores the framing of Islamic education which emerges from these schools and draws out two main approaches based on typologies identified in Chapter 3. The second part of the section discusses parents' expectations and priorities of Islamic schooling and the different pressures within which Muslim schools in Britain are functioning and which have influenced their diversification which at the same time is creating diversity within them.

The second section considers answering secondary question 4 listed on page 243. It examines the way Muslim schools perceive themselves dealing with possible tensions that arise from the diversity existing within them in their attempts to balance "Islamic ethos" with institutional academic success. The section details some tensions that are more intimate to the internal pressures of school life and others related to the system and policy-driven forces, stressing the need for the shaping of Muslim schools to be seen within the dynamics of these different pressures and the schools' diverse responses to them. In doing so, this section explores how the case-study Muslim schools perceive that they are contextualising Islamic schooling, overcoming inner divisions and opening up spaces for their pupils to grow as active citizens of Britain.

Finally, the conclusion draws together the different threads of this analysis and, in light of the notion of the "double hermeneutic", discusses some implications of choices that these schools make in dealing with emerging dilemmas and internal tensions that impact on the possible direction a Muslim school may take.

9.1 Islamic schooling in Britain: Sources and resources

This section sets out the context and main arguments about the change process that the case-study Muslim schools are going through via the choices they take and which creates diversification between them and diversity within them. Two broad approaches to balancing between "Islamness" and Britishness in Islamic educational discussions within the case-study schools are identified. The commonality between these two different approaches call for nurturing pupils with a secure religious identity and also educating them for social inclusion within the wider British context. However, the choices each approach requires from schools regarding balancing the academic with the religious ethos are different.

9.1.1 Islamic schooling: common mission, diverse approaches

The diversity of approaches to Islamic schooling in the case-study schools is notable, given their apparent similarities. Revisiting the literature that theoretically examines the aims of Islamic education is necessary here to examine the typologies that emerged from data in previous chapters. In this regard, Qutb (1979) states that "[t]he object of religious education (Islamic education in particular) is to produce a Muslim man or woman" (p. 56, brackets in original). To do so, Badawi (1979) argues, Islamic education aims at blending the three types of education that Max Weber identified. These are "charismatic education" that focuses on the inner excellence of the learner, "education for culture" which emphasises social distinction, and "specialist education" which seeks to develop employability skills through its focus on the *techni* (Badawi, 1979, p. 105). The "inner purity", Badawi (1979) argues, is the prominent aspect that needs "to be manifested in social consciousness and idealistic endeavour towards the mastery of any skill to which the person has assigned himself" (p. 105). This takes the discussion back to the data analysis in Chapter 8 and specifically to the notion of "practising Muslim" as a goal that the majority of parent respondents expected their selected schools to achieve. It is the aspect of "inner purity", which I termed as the "inner Muslim", that emerged from the data analysis across the case-study schools as an important component of the discussion about Islamic education. Yet, these three educational types, which

Badawi (1979) listed, contribute to the diversity of the case-study Muslim schools depending on the ways these schools interpret each element and blend them together within the school life.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 show two broad typologies of Islamic education emerging from current perspectives within the six case-study schools and which I broadly categorised as "moral" and "social". Difference is presented between schools that are placing "spirituality" and "worship" at the heart of school life and those focusing in their practice on developing "rationality" and "social" aspects in their educational practice. Although these schools opted for three different funding options, their inclination towards "moral" or "social" approaches is not necessarily due to funding. This section, in briefly reviewing these emerging approaches to Islamic education, provides a background for discussion of the educational priorities that the case-study schools perceive in their dealing with diversity, and suggests the issues I will refer to as I analyse the choices of these schools.

Moral approach

The dominant discourse in London-PS and Olive-PS is an example of what I term the "moral" approach. This is due to their focus on preserving the Islamic notion of "*fitra"* and nurturing spirituality through individual reflection and collective practice. This approach can be traced back, within Muslim educational heritage, to al-Ghazali's writings and his philosophy of education. For al-Ghazali (1904), education is not limited to training the intellect and feeding it with theoretical knowledge, but also it involves the spiritual, moral and physical aspects of the learner's personality. These two schools see such aspects as being coherent with the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) components that schools need to fulfil. Yet, educating for the moral development of children remains the main goal in al-Ghazali's theory of education (1904, 2005; 1991). It emphasises the importance of spiritual development and child-centred learning with careful consideration to children's individual needs within each age group. It also emphasises the importance of early habit formation and the influence of tutors as role models upon learners (Al-Ghazali, 1904). It is for these reasons that London-PS and Olive-PS justify their emphasis on Quran learning, spiritual activities and the Islamic conduct of staff as role models. The vast majority of parents in both schools consider the spiritual provision of these schools and the level of discipline within them as main points of strength. The schools'

justification is as follows. It is important that the spiritual development of the "inner" Muslim be reflected in the visible behaviour of the "outer" Muslim. Hence, Islamic education needs to focus on both spheres but gives a specific emphasis on nurturing "piety" as the self-control for the outer behaviour. In al-Ghazali's (1964, 2005) view, moral education brings discipline and self-control to learners' lives in a developmental way. In this respect, al-Ghazali (1904, 2005) also believes that true learning must be translated into practice. Teaching for moral education, therefore, involves developing good habits. For al-Ghazali, building habits of doing "good" is important as part of personal development. This is to be achieved through the constant practice of these good deeds until they become second nature of an individual. Early childhood is perceived as an opportunity to build those good habits which then serve as a basis for the virtues of adult life. This clarifies the rich collective spiritual daily programme that both London-PS and Olive-PS provide. Moreover, this approach to Islamic education is about emphasising the nurturing of faith and cultivating virtues that will help children "fit in" as British citizens and work towards the "common good" of society. Thus, issues of citizenship are incorporated within the religious duties of the believer. The "Islamness" of schooling according to this approach is about taking Islamic education as a whole framework including the degree of integration of the Islamic worldview across the curriculum. However, it is this aspect that also creates tension regarding curriculum composition and time allocated to religious and academic sections of the curriculum because each section takes time that could be allocated elsewhere, especially as all the six case-study schools also aspire to academic success.

Social approach

For Andalusia-SS, Iqra-SS, Message-PS, and Vision-SS the emphasis is on "active participation", "fitting in" and "social empowerment" which I would broadly place within a "social approach". The discourses prevalent in the case-study girls' secondary schools in particular challenge the Swann Report (DFE, 1985) warnings of girls' Muslim schools as schools that would entail:

> … a far more central focus in the curriculum on education for marriage and motherhood in a particular Islamic sense, with other subjects receiving less attention and with the notion of careers education being seen as irrelevant to the pattern of adult life which the girls were likely to pursue. (p. 505)

At the heart of the secondary schools in particular are debates about how it is possible to live both as a devout Muslim and a loyal British citizen. While this approach can be linked back in parts to some Western theories, it has some of its roots in the Islamic philosophy of education, especially that of ibn-Khaldun's social theory. It could also be linked in some of its elements to the philosophical discourse of Islamic education, discussed in Chapter 3, and its emphasis on the importance of the rational faculty in the nurturing of faith. Accordingly, "deliberate" and strategic planning for the educational activities of the school, taking into regard the broad Islamic framework and the wider range of Islamic jurisprudence thought, is perceived as suitable in handling controversial issues within the school. This creates tension within the school in regard to its degree of "Islamness", the type of knowledge and the balance of academic with spirituality spheres within school life because schools may opt for jurisprudence views different from those well established within any certain Muslim community (see Chapter 2).

As presented in Chapter 7, I further classified the discourses in the four case-study schools within this approach into three different sub-typologies.

The first sub-type was primarily prevalent in the Andalusia-SS context. It arises from the emphasis on academic achievement for the Muslim community's social progress and on building pupils' confidence in their Islamic heritage through the provision of educational conditions competing with those of mainstream schools. Moreover, the discourse within this approach emphasised the physical environment of education and its impact on children's evaluation of themselves and their heritage, but has less focus on spirituality compared to schools with a moral approach. This perspective can be linked to some similar educational perspectives in both ibn-Khaldun and Dewey. Through the lens of Dewey (2010) education that includes the school community, curriculum, methods, and the relationship between the school and the larger life of the community regulates social progress. Chapter 3 discusses ibn-Khaldun's (2005b) analysis of the disparities between the Eastern and Western contexts of education in the Muslim world in his time during the fourteenth century and the impact it is thought to have on the level of educational achievement and social progress. This is because ibn-Khaldun, like Dewey, focused on the social nature of education. In this respect, ibn-Khaldun's (2005b) analysis concludes that education, as a craft, determines cultural prosperity and flourishes in a civilised context. In saying so, he (2005b) emphasised the role of material assistance to

students and teachers within a stable civil life in the progress of educational practice, skills and achievement within any given community. This emphasis on material resources in ibn-Khaldun's sociological theory of education is demonstrated in the state-of-the-art Andalusia-SS physical space and technology provision. According to Andalusia-SS' leaders' view, for Islamic education to be effective in shaping children's worldviews there will be a need for it to be presented to pupils in competitive terms with that of mainstream schools. This includes competitive resources and professional competence of staff. It is also about surpassing the "inferiority" complex so as to help pupils "fit in" as active British citizens without losing their religious identity. This also recalls ibn-Khaldun's (2005b) social analysis that, due to the inferiority complex, the vanquished will always seek to assimilate themselves with the victorious party in their distinctive characteristics and all life-style aspects due to the low value they give to their own. Adopting such a view to instilling religious identity without isolating children from their context poses a dilemma at the level of resources. The implementation of this vision requires substantial changes in the quality of provision that many independent Muslim schools may not be able to offer, given the general deprived economic status of the Muslim community in Britain. In their attempts to resolve the challenge of resources, educational leaders approaching the issue through this lens appear to incline towards socio-economic inclusivity through state funding. However, this choice also creates tension at the level of ethos and school knowledge because with funding comes restrictions.

The second sub-type of discourse was very much prevalent within Vision-SS and focuses on learners as social beings embedded within their socio-political context. It is an education for "social empowerment" but with the focus on developing discursive and employability skills which would enable pupils to "fit in", as "British practising Muslims", within the wider British context, face its challenges and contribute to the social mobility of their Muslim communities and to the wellbeing of wider society. The socio-political discourses were placed at the heart of the school life. Increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls as visible "practising Muslim women" with the *hijab* and active British citizens is of utmost importance within this discourse. The discussion in Visions-SS of the "practising Muslim woman" is about the career and social change of Muslim women's status and position without divorcing her from the motherhood role. It is about questioning the perceived normative perception of "Muslim woman's role" as merely being a house wife. The school provides a secure space for

questioning and reflecting on the self and the community concepts and vision of the "practising Muslim woman". Further, the school's discussions focus on ensuring the academic excellence that will enable girls to arrive at higher education with high self-esteem, a sense of empowerment to face stereotypes and the inspiration to take an active role within the public space. It is about the construction of a positive self-concept of a "practising Muslim woman" that her outer-Muslim is visible in "*hijab*" but not rooted in oppressed and domestic notions. This discourse supports earlier research which suggests that girls in Muslim schools are empowered to achieve academically and are potentially better placed to challenge the disempowered position of Muslim women as a minority group in Britain than their counterparts in mainstream schools (Haw, 1998). In this sense, the school's role in nurturing the "practising Muslim woman" resembles the feminist notion of women's empowerment, but from within an Islamic framework (Haw, 1998).

The third sub-type is focusing on the process of "rational deliberation" as a main goal to Islamic schooling, and that deliberation takes place not only in the relationship between pupils and their wider context, but also between the many perspectives within Islamic scholarship. In this approach, the population of schools should no longer be divided along the different schools of thought, but united in a common partnership to find out the credible sources and suitable religious interpretations that best suit the current socio-political context of their educational practice in the wider British society. It is about focusing on the role of rational judgment in building autonomous faithful individuals and stressing the significance of the linguistic development in learning. Questioning, exploring and debating, even about the main Islamic sources, are perceived as essential elements in developing learners' religious convictions and enabling them to pass through contradictions presented to them in the wider context. Hence, the Muslim school is not seen as a space for instilling faith, but rather as a secure place for negotiating this faith through a "journey" of exploration. This has emerged strongly in the perspectives of the leadership team in Message-PS, especially that of its headteacher who is also the founder of both Message-PS and Iqra-SS. Although what the Message-PS headteacher argues for in Chapters 6 and 7 is not a replica of some views of Muslim philosophers such as al-Farabi which give a higher status to reason compared to revelation (Al-Talbi, 2000), it relates to it in the part of openness to questioning the sacred as a means to building religious conviction. So, the Message-PS headteacher does not dwell on

that historical debate of reason versus revelation, but endeavours to place the issue of Islamic education squarely within the sociological and philosophical nexus that is at the heart of the dialogue between the Islamic and Western thought presented in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

As shown in Chapters 6, 7 and 8**,** each of these focal points has its influence on the curriculum, extra-curricular activities and the type of parents that a Muslim school might primarily attract. The next section discusses the way in which the case-study schools are diversified amongst themselves by the very choices they make to resolve different dilemmas and the dynamics this process creates within their populations.

9.1.2 Dilemmas of choice: diversity between Muslim schools

The schools are choosing to respond differently to their contextual demands, and their responses are progressing along different lines. This process of change in each of the case-study schools is unique, but is also characterised by similar underlying components, including: the theoretical perspective of Islamic education that underpins each school's practice and guides its educational priorities; parental expectations; the impact of policies on school levels of autonomy and; the market competition in the educational provision. The pressure of market competition prompts a conflict of values where commitment to inclusiveness is in tension with exclusiveness based on economic affordability, academic ability and/or religious devotion. During this process Muslim schools are shaped by the different choices they adopt in their attempts to resolve dilemmas presented to them and handle the unexpected tensions that result as a consequence.

So, how are these schools resolving the dilemma of school autonomy and economic inclusivity versus quality of education?

There was clear evidence of the pre-occupation of educators with national exam results in the case-study schools, as all these schools felt the pressure to perform academically. This pressure is not only from the British educational structure, but also from a large number of Muslim parents strongly inclined to academic achievement. The achievement of schools in the league tables makes their work in raising standards open to public inspection and debate. Market competition places pressure on leaders of Muslim schools to seriously consider

their results in national exams as well as the presentation of their schools by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) reports. The role that Ofsted plays in shaping the case-study schools' practices and curriculum planning through inspection is not to be underestimated. In this research, all case-study schools were striving to achieve an "outstanding" Ofsted report as a sign of academic success. Moreover, schools achieving this status were officially promoted and awarded in the AMS-UK annual conference. This focus is for communicating their worth to the wider society, to gather more support from the Muslim community and to attract qualified staff.

Yet, on the one hand, to provide a competing quality of education requires Muslim schools also to improve in material and human resources and still remain affordable to a community that holds a deprived national economic profile. On the other hand, the degree of autonomy over ethos and curriculum is critical for Muslim schools to look spiritually different from mainstream schools. The choices that each school opted for in resolving these dilemmas diversified them in a number of ways. The following three main choices arise from this research:

1. Schools compromising on the level of autonomy and applying for state funding, exemplified in Andalusia-SS and Message-PS;
2. Schools preferring to remain independent, but compromising on socio-economic inclusivity by increasing their fees, as with Iqra-SS, London-PS and Vision-SS;
3. Schools preferring independent status, keeping their fees very low to remain widely economically inclusive, but struggling with resources in their attempt to compete in academic standards, which is the case with Olive-PS.

Hence, the choices Muslim schools make create diversity between them as they are being driven into a new competitive environment over the available human resources within the Muslim community. It is here where independent Muslim schools who have chosen not to apply for state funding or those who are awaiting acceptance are faced with a dilemma regarding economic inclusivity versus resource availability. The increase of voluntary-aided Muslim schools, I would argue, has the potential to exacerbate the competition among Muslim schools in attracting qualified and experienced teachers from within a narrow pool of the Muslim community, if these schools are to keep most of their teaching staff as religious insiders. In light of the market competition, this would also place pressure on independent Muslim schools to increase their staff

incentives and enhance their working environment conditions to retain their professional staff. Additionally, the analysis of parental data in Chapter 7 in this research suggests that Muslim schools at different stages of establishment may draw on different types of parents depending on parental educational priorities and possible compromises.

Hence, choices that Muslim schools take contribute to certain dynamics within the type of population within each school, including teaching staff and parents, and poses different challenges to school leaders in dealing with diversity within them.

Parental choice and schools' Islamic ethos

Choices that Muslim schools make in their attempts to come to "the right measure" between Islamic ethos and academic achievement resulted in a diversity of provision. This diversity of schools creates a climate among parents of exercising choice which is reflected in the consumerist orientation of parents, as revealed through the analysis of the data in Chapter 7. The first and most important point to emerge is that parents gravitate to schools that they perceive to have a balance between "Islamic environment" and "academic quality". Many parents appear to be ready to make financial sacrifices, or even to overcome catchment area boundaries, in order to access this type of school as exemplified by the parental responses for both London-PS and Vision-SS. However, this choice is not always be possible due to the financial circumstances of individual families, the options available within their geographic locality, or the long waiting list and admission criteria of their targeted school.

When "the best of both worlds" of Islamic ethos and academic achievement, as parents frequently expressed, is not possible parents will make compromises concerning their educational priorities. In this respect, it is as Ball (1993) argues that "choice" is a socially and culturally constructed concept that parents negotiate differently in terms of meaning and scope. For some parents, the rich "Islamic" ethos of the school is their prime motivation with regard to education deserving of a reasonable compromise on academic standards if necessary. For them it is about Islamic role modelling to help their children embody theoretical religious learning as "practising Muslims" within its "inner" and "outer" spheres. This type of parent is exercising its choice within the internal market of Muslim schools and such an orientation emerged in Andalusia-SS, London-PS, Olive-PS

and Vision-SS. Yet, for some other parents what stands at the forefront of their educational priorities is academic achievement but within an environment that provides spiritual nurturing or has strict disciplinary standards, but is not necessarily 'Islamic'. However, such an environment needs to respect the basic religious needs of their children. This is well discussed in previous research (Anwar, 1982; Nielsen, 1986; Parker-Jenkins, 1995; Parker-Jenkins & Haw, 1998). This second type of parent is choosing within the wider circle of religion-based schools as well as grammar schools. A number of parents with university level education in both Vision-SS and Andalusia-SS show such a tendency.

Placing this discussion within the wider debate of parental choice in Britain, Ball and Vincent (Ball, 1993, 2003; Vincent & Ball, 2006) argue that families responding to the market situation of schooling are not equally benefiting from the diversity of provision. This is because parental conceptions of choice are informed by certain values that guide their decisions and which would place them into privileged or disadvantaged social positions. In this research, some parent participants justified their choice of Muslim schooling by referring back to what they believed to be research findings and arguments about faith-based schools. This demonstrates the double interpretative process and the intersection of parents as lay agents with the findings of social science researchers. The previously quoted statement by London-PS Mother-1 in Chapter 8; "research show that" illustrates the way some parents' reasons for opting for a Muslim school were not only based on religious needs but also on the interpretation of research in the area. This implies that participants in this research are not only objects in the social research interaction but they learn from research, such as this one, and tailor their actions and options accordingly in a "double hermeneutic" process.

In light of the market dynamics and its influence within the double hermeneutic process of Muslim schooling, choices taken by schools contribute to their internal diversity in different ways. In this process, the choices different Muslim schools make are reproducing the British educational marketplace which, according to Ball (1993), is predicated on a consumerist vision that is most likely to be embraced by the middle class. Some parents in this research, like the middle-class parents in Gill Crozier et al.'s (2008) study, were anxious about the type of educational experience that their children would have in their chosen Muslim schools, as presented in Chapter 8. In order to make up for the perceived missing provision, parents deployed different strategies to ensure a successful

educational experience for their children. This includes: extra academic support at home, as in the case of Olive-PS; being more involved with the school to raise standards, as in the case of professional parents in London-PS; and providing private extra-curricular sport and holiday activities by employing parents' socio-economic resources, as in the case of Mother-1 in Vision-SS (see Chapter 7, p.198). It is within this internal socio-economic diversity that some parents request their schools to further raise the annual fees to enhance educational provision, as in the cases of Olive-PS and Vision-SS presented in Chapter 7.

Moreover, the data of this research show that Muslim schools that are able to raise standards and attract and retain experienced qualified teachers draw parents with a variety of educational priorities. For example, independent Muslim schools choosing to raise fees to meet the challenge of resources, focusing on academic achievement and "outstanding" Ofsted evaluations face the challenge of preserving their religious ethos as a priority. Their development may have decreased the differences between mainstream and Muslim schools in terms of academic standards and quality of resources making them more attractive to some parents who are able to afford the fees, but who are not necessarily interested in the religious ethos of these schools. As discussed in Chapter 7, the academic achievement of some case-study schools attracts pupils from academically motivated families across the religious and socioeconomic spectrum of the Muslim community where some are interested in communal aspects of the school rather than its religious ones. This creates diversity within the parental population in terms of their educational priorities. Vision-SS stands as an example of such a development where the majority of parents are primarily attracted to the school due to its academic profile and a minority of them show less dedication to the school's distinctive Islamic ethos. Similarly, the free provision in the case of voluntary-aided schools means wider inclusivity of pupils across the socio-economic population than independent Muslim schools and it also results in a wider range of parental religious backgrounds in which a small, but emergent number of parents, appear to have less commitment to the religious ethos of these schools such as in the cases of Andalusia-SS and Message-PS. This dynamic of change within the internal population of Muslim schools is also contributing to the reviewing process of the goals of these schools and ways of being effective in meeting the different needs of parents, without compromising on religious ethos. It is within this internal dilemma that the above "moral" and "social" typologies of Islamic schooling in Britain emerge.

Nevertheless, due to the lack of free Islamic education provision in comparison to the young profile of the Muslim community in Britain, parents across socio-economic backgrounds interested in Islamic schooling still have limited choice within the state sector. Despite the growing number of Muslim schools in Britain, this research shows there remains a shortage of provision compared to parental interest. All the six case-study schools are facing strong parental demand which exceeds what they can meet. This gives space to the construction of admission policies that would enable Muslim schools to select their pupils based on the school vision and educational priorities, especially independent ones. To help in preserving the Islamic ethos of these schools, the level of religious practice is regarded as part of the admission criteria across the case-study schools. Additionally, Vision-SS adopts an academically selective approach to help maintain its academic standards. Yet, despite these selective admissions, small tensions that have the potential to further challenge the principle of "*ummah* unity" within these schools start arising as individual schools respond to the different dilemmas. The internal diversity within the case-study schools' population in relation to educational priorities, interpretations of the "Islamness" and curriculum composition present some principal emerging areas of tension.

It is with this backdrop of the different discourses, theoretical underpinnings and pressures within which Muslim schools in Britain are functioning, and which are diversifying them along various lines, that dealing with diversity within them can be better understood. Hence, the next section discusses the way the case-study Muslim schools deal with those tensions presented to them from the existing internal diversity.

9.2 "Islamness", diversity and the Muslim school

As shown in Chapter 6, pupils in the case-study schools originate from diverse backgrounds and their religious interpretations are rooted within different cultural practices. Their home milieus also vary in terms of religious devotion and commitment to the religious ethos of their chosen Muslim schools. This research shows that the majority of families, so far, are primarily attracted to these schools because of their Islamic ethos. So, aspects like prayer observance, emphasis on discipline and Quran learning are aspects of shared interest with home. Some pupils, however, are from backgrounds primarily drawn by academic standards, and the cultural dimension of the school's environment

rather than by its religious richness. So, some of these families are not necessarily interested in religious practice as such or encourage their children at home to practise. Instead, providing a community context in which their children's principles of Islamic belief are not questioned becomes more important than the detailed jurisprudence discussions regarding the "Islamness" of the school such as the "hijab", music or even prayer performance.

In this research, a range of diverse interests emerged as being more apparent within the state funded schools, such as Andalusia-SS, and also, but to a lesser extent, within independent Muslim schools that were well established within the Muslim community, as spaces for high academic achievement, such as Vision-SS. This poses to the leaders of Muslim schools the challenge of dealing with this existing internal diversity in three areas:

- Balancing the spiritual provision and academic achievement in their attempts to nurture the "inner" and "outer" spheres of a "practising Muslim"
- Overcoming internal lines of division while celebrating the diversity of pupils' backgrounds
- Fostering a sense of belonging to the Muslim community while preparing pupils to become active citizens within wider British society

Accordingly, three questions emerge for discussion within this section.

The first question is related to the influence of moral and social approaches to Islamic education, as discussed in the first section, on the curriculum composition of the case-study schools. It also follows the influence of parental jurisprudence backgrounds on the type of school knowledge, and how schools draw on jurisprudence discourses in their choices to preserve their distinctive Islamic ethos and respond to parental expectations. The second question deals with ethnic and national diversity, and how Muslim schools perceive that they are resolving the dilemma of overcoming inner community divisions while celebrating the diversity of pupils' backgrounds. The third question explores how Muslim schools perceive they are contextualising Islamic schooling and open spaces for their pupils to grow as active citizens of Britain.

9.2.1 Spirituality and the types of knowledge: finding the balance

> The spiritual force of Islam creates through intense activity a climate in the outer world, a climate which naturally attracts man towards meditation and contemplation, as is seen so clearly in the spirit of Islamic art. The outward opposition with which by definition the world of activity is concerned is resolved in an inner peace which is characteristic of the One, of the Centre. (S. H. Nasr, 1972, p. 170)

Of the various themes which the case-study schools are grappling with reflexivity, finding the balance between "Islamic" and "academic" spheres of school priorities was the most concrete. This tension was revealed in the different accounts of participants regarding school knowledge and its contribution to bringing up the "practising Muslim". Parents defined this latter concept with a list of behavioural actions and attitudes that their children were expected to develop. This included believing in the core Islamic principles, performing daily prayers, wearing "hijab" for girls, fasting at Ramadan and developing social skills based on the Prophet's character. Although all the six case-study schools in this research agreed on nurturing such aspects, they differed in how they strived to achieve them based on either their "moral" or "social" approach to Islamic schooling. Some Muslim educators, for example the Message-PS headteacher, preferred to problematise the definition of "good/practising Muslim" as a goal to Islamic schooling. Others defined the terms in light of the "inner" and "outer" spheres of the Muslim.

The different priorities that these schools considered in their attempts to balance the "spiritual" with the "academic" in terms of quality, scope and integration has led to diversity provision of Islamic schooling. In this process of deliberation, Muslim educators across the six schools are questioning the nature and scope of the relationship between the National Curriculum and the Islamic one. This is specifically in areas of the subjects offered, time allocated to National Curriculum versus Islamic Studies subjects and the extra-activities accompany the school programme.

Curriculum composition

The dilemma about school knowledge which the case-study schools are facing, is grounded in their attempts to resolve the tension between academic achievement and children's religious development while avoiding falling back into

a style of religious education more associated with madrasa or becoming duplicates of mainstream schools. All the case-study schools are still developing their curriculum as well as their teaching practice. The integration of the Islamic aspects, as the educators in these schools described, was more to do with adjusting the established National Curriculum to meet the goals that these schools set for themselves and building links with the Islamic part of the curriculum.

To offset the educational challenges, both Olive-PS and London-PS focus on nurturing spirituality by offering up to a third of the daytime school week to Islamic Studies and Quran learning supplemented with extra-curricular classes. In accordance with their moral approach these schools, as discussed in the previous section, placed Quran learning at the centre of school life combined with teaching the whole curriculum through an Islamic holistic lens. It is this aspect that majority of parents in both Olive-PS and London-PS regarded as a main strength of those two schools. Yet, in their implementation of a holistic curriculum, these two schools are further diversified through the way the school environment is viewed and the curriculum is delivered. As discussed in Chapter 6, at a later date to the research fieldwork Olive-PS, shifted to resolve this dilemma through adopting Montessori approach to education. This was not a shift resorted to by any of the other five schools. Moreover, after just one year of experimentation the school changed back to the accepted approach to teaching within the state sector. This shows the uncertainty that school leaders are facing in their attempts to implement their educational vision of Islamic education presented in Chapter 7. The Olive-PS experiment with the Montessori approach is not a one-off try but rather represents a line of development through which some Muslim schools beyond this study, from both Sunni and Shiite backgrounds, are starting to promote themselves (Alamiyah Pre-School, 2011; Ofsted, 2011). Muslim Montessori training providers have started to emerge promoting the Montessori approach as the most fitting to the Islamic holistic view of learning (D'Oyen, 2011; Manara Education, 2011). Moreover, some parents are sharing their experiences of the best Islamic school and the degree of "Islamness" within them in online forums. In so doing, some parents go beyond what they regard as "standard Islamic schools" to recommend what they evaluate to be "more Islamic", because of their implementation of a Montessori approach to learning (UmmSuhaib, 2011). In this regard, Lillard (2005)

describes Montessori education as a holistic approach to learning that emphasises the environment and that:

> … is designed to awaken interest and to allow children to pursue learning about issues that already personally interest them. This is a natural corollary to a system of education based on choice: one chooses to do what one is interested in doing. It is also necessary to a system that is based on intrinsic motivation, rather than on extrinsic motivators such as grades. (p. 114)

The choice that Olive-PS had taken to experiment with Montessori education needs to be analysed through the lens of its moral approach to Islamic schooling and the leaders emphasis on the spiritual development of pupils and nurturing the natural innate nature *(fitrah)* of learners (see Chapter 7). Moreover, as presented in Chapter 3, the traditional classes of Islamic schooling were based on the individual development of learners and not set by age or group ability. Students of different age groups pursue subjects that are of interest to them. The curriculum was open, and progress to the next stages was largely according to individual pace assessed through interaction and by contribution during lessons. In such a system, the social environment for learning is regarded as crucial (Badawi, 1979; Shalaby, 1954). It is those aspects of traditional Islamic education that go beyond subject content or formal standard examinations that the Montessori approach to education is perceived to fulfil (D'Oyen, 2011; Manara Education, 2011). Olive-PS' exploration of the Montessori approach exemplifies the ways some Muslim educationalists are questioning the "Islamness" of their schools and ways that would help them coherently integrate the Islamic worldview about human nature and goals with the National Curriculum guidelines.

Andalusia-SS, Iqra-SS, Message-PS and Vision-SS typifying the social approach give less space to Islamic subjects compared to those categorised within the moral approach. The focus in these schools is rather on compliance with the National Curriculum and academic standards. As discussed in Chapter 8, voluntary-aided schools do not work in a vacuum. The educational conditions that accompany government funding require great time dedicated to teaching National Curriculum subjects at the expense of the Islamic Studies curriculum, including Quran and Arabic classes. Thus, one challenge confronting state funded schools, exemplified by Andalusia-SS and Message-PS in this research, is that they are supposed to fulfil both their local goals and the mandatory National Curriculum objectives. Consequently, these two voluntary-aided case-study

schools are providing a full National Curriculum with limited Islamic Studies provision. In this sense, Muslim voluntary-aided schools have less space for choice in areas of time, depth of Islamic studies and methods of teaching compared to the independent Muslim schools in this research. They cannot opt, for example, for the Montessori approach as did some independent Muslim schools because it is not an option for them. Similarly, Iqra-SS and Vision-SS schools tend to supplement their programmes with extra-curricular activities aiming at helping pupils develop skills that will enable them to meet expected future challenges. These challenges are those related to helping pupils 'fit in' to wider British society as visible practising Muslims as well as active competent citizens. This includes developing their self-esteem as British Muslims and helping them face the perceived stereotypes of what a devout Muslim is about. It also focuses on the development of their employability skills. For secondary school girls it means encouraging them to consider a wide range of career options without disregarding their roles as mothers. In doing so, the leaders of these schools regard the development of the discursive skills of pupils as important to enable them take part in public debates as active British citizens. This was particularly apparent in Vision-SS where a "social empowerment" discourse about Muslim woman was both dominant and evident. Hence, girls are exposed to discussions with people of different perspectives around issues raised in the public arena related to the school curriculum.

Based on headteachers, teachers, parents and children's different perspectives, the curriculum across the case-study schools seems to be developing through evaluation and iteration involving dialogue and discussion. In this regard, the AMS-UK provides the forum within which different educational practitioners share their perspectives, experiences and suggestions. This takes place through: the annual conference for Muslim schools that started in 2009 and which is the largest meeting place for educators in Muslim schools in the UK (AMS-UK, 2012a); AMS-UK website resources; and AMS-UK and its partnership training providers (AMS-UK, n.p-d; Nida Trust, 2012).

Jurisprudence diversity

Jurisprudence discussions within the case-study schools around music and art provision demonstrate the tension between spirituality and the type of knowledge that can coherently constitute part of the school curriculum of an "Islamic" school. This debate is related to the construction of "practising Muslim"

and its relation to the hermeneutic jurisprudence perspectives on texts from the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet. The ambiguity that surrounds music (listening to it, creating it, or performing it) and figurative drawings in Islamic jurisprudence (Al-Ghazali, 1982; Al-Juzeiri, n.p; Al-Qaradawi, 2011; Ghazali, 2001) has a direct impact on the curriculum, parents' perspectives and teachers' choices. This tension is not restricted to the sphere of Islamic schools' but is a matter of debate in mainstream schools. The fact that some Muslim parents in the British mainstream schools withdraw their children from music lessons evoked a range of media reactions (BBC News, 2010; N.p, 2009). In this respect, MacEoin (2009) argues that restrictions on music and art in Muslim schools cause a threat to social cohesion. He (2009) further warns of what he perceives as religious fundamentalists who are leading these schools towards social segregation. Accordingly, he (MacEoin, 2009) stresses that:

> Muslim schools that espouse fundamentalism or allow themselves to be linked to it must be re-educated and brought in line with educational norms. Where schools refuse to dissociate themselves from these views [such as placing some restrictions on the provision of music and art], they should be closed. (p. xvi)

The generalisations made by MacEoin are the very ones that Said (1997), in his analysis of Islam and the politics of representation in the West, argues should be guarded against arguing that Islam is presented through the interrelated powers of a corporate-government-academic-media complex. For Said (1997), such representations are far from being accurate because they are more to do with the geopolitics of power. In this respect, he (Said, 1997) calls for a serious approach to studying Islamic societies in the West considering all the complexities and sophistications related to social structures, histories and cultural formations with the wide-ranging and complex analyses that would be expected in similar studies of Western societies. Some empirical studies in Muslim schools, however, have raised critical questions about restrictions on music and/or art provision (Halstead, 1994; McCreery, et al., 2007; Walford, 2002). In this regard McCreery, et al. (2007) question:

> Why do we educate children in certain ways and in certain subjects—why do we feel music and dance to be important aspects of children's education? We begin to recognise that it is our own cultural heritage that informs our choice of subjects, and we have to consider how valid this is for an education system that teaches children from other cultures. (p. 212)

The choices the case-study schools take on such jurisprudence issues are not detached from the underpinning philosophies of Islamic schooling, presented in the previous section of this chapter. Based on analysis of data presented in Chapter 8, two main perspectives which I termed "piousness" and "deliberate" are identified from participants' different perspectives on how schools deal with the tensions that arise from jurisprudence diversity within the schools' populations. These two options are directly linked to the previously identified "moral" and "social" typologies which I now go on to explain.

Firstly, schools adopting a moral approach to Islamic education are opting for what I termed the "piousness" option. Based on this perspective, Islamic schooling is about encouraging pupils to make choices based on purification and closeness to God. To exemplify this point, Olive-PS and London-PS, which are focusing on spirituality and piousness, would avoid using musical instruments other than the drum because the "practising Muslim" is better off following mainstream scholarly Islamic views on religious matters avoiding controversial scholarly perspectives of whatever direction. To do this, the two schools discuss the emerging religious issues with a selected religious jurist who would be a trusted scholar within the community. In this way the schools believe they promote respect for the different viewpoints amongst their pupils, but would formally adopt an option that is less controversial within Muslim scholarship and is well supported by Quran or Hadith texts.

Secondly, schools adopting a social approach are choosing what I term the "deliberate" resolution. Accordingly, these schools may make some choices that counter the established views within any certain community by backing up their choices of solution to the controversy in Islamic scholarly heritage. These "deliberate" choices could be made as a response to the pressures and demands of the diversity from within the school population or pressures from the system. Within this social approach, two further resolutions emerge in regard to the way the case-study schools are dealing with emerging issues related to details of jurisprudence**.**

The first resolution is the "**rational deliberation**" approach to Islamic education exemplified in Message-PS prefers to remain open in their choices of what goes in the curriculum within the broad framework of Islamic thought. Hence, not only does the school provide art as part of the curriculum, but takes it to the heart of their interest by specialising in it. As part of the Key Stage Two Curriculum,

music is also provided along with its controversial instruments. In this case the school believes in caring for diversity by opening spaces for different interests to be served and providing options for withdrawing in all subjects that may raise controversy within the parental community. Although this option may ease its relations to government inspectorate services through its fulfilment of funding constraints on curriculum provision, it raises tensions within parental community with regard to the "Islamness" of the school environment. The tension is about questioning the family's jurisprudence beliefs from within a Muslim environment and practice. It is related to the "role modelling" aspect that an "Islamic environment" is expected to provide which many parents in other schools perceive to be essential in bringing up their children as "practising Muslims". This dilemma confirms Parker-Jenkins' (2002) earlier question about government policy on awarding funds to Muslim schools and its possible influence on curriculum development and level of control; it also raises further questions. On the one hand, to what extent are Muslim schools expected to respond to parents' religious needs, for example, Islamic role modelling by staff. On the other, in what ways might responses to the state funding measures shape educators' interpretations of their Islamic heritage in relation to emergent issues within the school life? And is this accommodation of controversial provision, such as musical instruments, a matter of choice that state funded schools are willingly making? Or is it simply a sign of a process of conformity with the structural rules that these schools are going through to facilitate mainstream compliance? Is it about bringing these schools "in line with educational norms", whatever these "educational norms" are, as MacEoin (2009, p. xvi) requested the government to do? These questions increase in importance when analysis in Chapters 6 and 7 is taken into consideration. The Iqra-SS, which was founded by the same headteacher as Message-PS and is still being influenced by her vision, has chosen to remain independent and does not offer this controversial musical provision. To answer these questions there is a need for further research regarding curriculum development which is beyond the scope of the present research.

The second resolution for schools based on the "**social empowerment**" discourse, if an educational activity is perceived as empowering pupils to face life after school and there is a debate about its permissibility within the Islamic heritage, then a "strategic" decision may be taken on board. However, those choices need to be backed up by the majority of parents in these schools. Hence,

whether these schools prefer to be selective in their choices depends on the demographics of their individual institution and its socio-economic background. Participants' accounts show that this stand is taken in Andalusia-SS, Iqra-SS and Vision-SS. An example of this is the international trips of girls in Vision-SS without their individual male guardians, as long as they are with safe company, for the purposes of empowering them spiritually or in terms of enhancing their employability skills (see analysis data in Chapter 7). For example, due to the fact that the use of other musical instruments such as the guitar or piano contradicts many parents' beliefs, those schools endeavoured to find a different approach or a "halal" way of doing it like opting for "Islamic nasheeds". Nevertheless, despite such an option, Andalusia-SS faces pressure from the system to respond more to the inspection requirements of music provision in their curriculum. This was highlighted in the Ofsted report of the school as well as in the leadership accounts of challenges that they face, as previously discussed in Chapter 8. This confirms the questions raised about Message-PS choices.

9.2.2 Islamic ethos, cultural diversity and the "ummah space"

All Muslim participants saw Islam as "a way of life" encompassing inner thought and outer action. In Andalusia-SS, Olive-PS, London-PS and Vision-SS parent respondents regarded bringing up their children as "practising Muslims" as one of their three top goals for selecting a Muslim school (see Chapters 7 and 8).

The first point that emerges in bringing up this "practising Muslim" is about the role of the Muslim teacher in a Muslim school which emerges as a matter of concern for some parents in the voluntary-aided schools in particular. This relates to the tension between Islamic ethos as parents interpret it and the way it is delivered in the school. The majority of parents in this study show that they were looking for a school experience in which learning about faith is not only addressed through direct exposure to theoretical knowledge of Quran learning and the like, but such knowledge needs also to be embodied by Muslim school staff. Two orientations emerged from the perceptions of leaders and teachers concerning their attempts to deal with this tension.

Firstly, schools placing spirituality at the centre of school life emphasised the role of teachers as role models in character that went beyond their professional duties. So, the job is taken as a religious commitment as well as a professional

one; in this case all teachers were Muslims and no concerns were raised from parents about teachers' attitudes. Secondly, schools within the social approach also share a similar view to those with the moral approach regarding the role of the teacher as a "role model" for pupils' spiritual and social development. However, these schools' particular focus on academic standards also meant responding to the school market to retain their academic standards or, in the case of voluntary-aided schools, the need to respond to government constraints on teaching staff requirements. In Andalusia-SS and to lesser extent in Vision-SS, a number of parental concerns were raised about the attitudes and behaviour of some teachers not being Islamic enough. The materialistic incentives for teachers in voluntary-aided schools attract qualified teachers who have a wide range of interpretations about the "Islamness" of the school or what a "practising Muslim" stands for. This creates a tension between the school and some parents over the ethical role of the Muslim teacher in a Muslim school as a "pious" role model to pupils or merely a professional employee working for a "salary", as some parents expressed it. Hence, some parents in Andalusia-SS in particular called upon school educators to critically look at the religious conduct that directly contributes to their children's moral learning and school experiences and at the values these experiences communicate. On the other hand, school educators expected parents to also systematically reflect upon their own home environments which might not be supportive to children's spiritual development. It is interesting here to note that these parental comments were particularly targeting Muslim staff members but there was no single comment about non-Muslim staff. For Message-PS, which is also a voluntary-aided school employing staff from a wide range of backgrounds, resolving this tension is through implementing an inductive programme for both Muslim and non-Muslim teachers to help them understand the ethos of the school. Another way is through appointing a school adviser who deals with any challenges that may arise due to diversity of perspectives. No feedback from parents was possible in this case due to restrictions on access. This remains an interesting area of further exploration in future research.

Secondly, another point that emerges regarding Islamic ethos in the case-study is related to religious and cultural values. Many parents explicitly expressed that their religious values have priority over cultural ones. Nevertheless, separating culture from religion is not without its complications, especially as one of the sources for jurisprudence excises is related to the local customs of people

(Hallaq, 2005; Philips, 2007). In this regard Werbner (2009) raises an interesting question: if Islam is a whole way of life, then surely it refers to the customs and traditions of particular localities? To answer this question in relation to this study, it is important to explore the diversity of the jurisprudence schools of thought presented in Chapter 2 and their relation to participants' backgrounds. Although these schools -Maliki, Hanafi, Hanbali and Shafii'- all agree on the primacy of the four fundamental principles of Islamic law (*fiqh*), the Quran, the Sunnah, the Companions' collective opinion (*Ijmaa'*) and analogical deduction (*Qiyaas*), certain differences have occurred and still exist among the rulings of their schools. These differences arose for various reasons. For example, both Hanafi and Maliki schools held local customs (*'Urf*) to be sources of legal law as long as they did not contradict Islamic jurisprudence principles (Philips, 2007). While this gave some space for incorporating local cultures, it resulted in the reproduction of some cultural practices and the widening of gaps in day-to-day minor legal issues across the Muslim world. Bringing such differences within the same landscape raises some concerns for some Muslim youth born and bred in Britain and those new Muslims who are not rooted in certain imported Muslim cultural practices. Consequently, there are calls for revisiting some issues, such as gender and educational issues for example, in light of the Islamic sources and the Western context (European Council for Fatwa and Research, 2012; Ramadan, 1999, 2009).

In this research, the majority of participants in interviews perceived Islam as a "way of life" that shapes culture and not the other way round. Yet, many parents preferred to send their children to schools that are perceived as "universal" or "not sectarian" in their approach to Islam and not based on any certain cultural constructions. This notion of universality emerged strongly among both Olive-PS and London-PS parent respondents as a point of strength of those two schools. Yet, all of the case-study schools see themselves as "ummah spaces" in which the different jurisprudence perspectives can come into interaction and dialogue. As discussed in Chapter 8, none of the case-study schools formally adopt any specific jurisprudence school of thought**.** Instead, they espouse a unification approach, which they perceive to be more inclusive to Muslim pupils from different backgrounds. In this respect, culture is perceived and celebrated in relation to the diversity of languages, food, clothes and arts that pupils bring from their different backgrounds. Leaders across the case-study schools perceived this approach as a way to facilitate a multi-cultural context of learning

which helps in developing pupils' skills in dealing with difference within the wider context. Making the best of cultural diversity in the life of the school is an area that leaders of the six case-study schools' believe forms part of their plans for further developments. Yet, Thobani's (2010) research suggests that "identifying students on the basis of their different denominations and groups became a delicate issue in the classroom" (p. 187). This research shows that while educators openly discussed ethnic and jurisprudence diversity, sectarian differences form a sensitive area for them to tackle. In one school some staff members were from a Shiite sectarian background. To overcome discomfort, educators prefer to keep discussions on sameness at the surface level and avoid digging into differences which may cause conflict. However, children preferred to discuss those differences outside the classroom, perceiving them as spaces for dialogue, understanding and learning about their own sects. Nevertheless, as Thobani (2010) suggests, the denominational and ethnic differences form a challenging hurdle for educators towards realising the principle of "*ummah* unity" in practice. This was clearly apparent in the voluntary-aided Andalusia-SS discourses.

Yet, the case-study schools' focus on religious values meant deconstructing Muslim practices into religious obligations that needed to be promoted and cultural imports that could form a space for celebration or even possible change or challenge. For example, the minority views that some school leaders have chosen to challenge from within an Islamic framework are associated with gender roles and some parental interpretations of what a Muslim school is expected to do. All educational leaders in this study perceived themselves as promoters of gender equity in education respecting an Islamic ethos, while they make every effort to accommodate different beliefs on emerging issues, both Olive-PS' principal and Vision-SS' headteacher admit that they find a minority of parental gender expectations intolerable or as Olive-PS principal expressed it "criminal" (see Chapter 8, p. 236). These leaders felt that their inner understanding of Muslim cultural practices and Islamic scholarship helped them to resolve this dilemma, at least on a temporary basis, by challenging a minority of parents on claims of gender inequity being Islamic and clarifying the role of the Muslim school as an educational institute empowering both genders to acquire knowledge and seek God through an informed faith. This issue of gender roles comes through jurisprudence and socio-political discussions, but was not followed in depth in data analysis within this research due to its departure from

the main research questions and its need of a different theoretical conceptual framework that would permit further understanding of gender issues. It is worth noting here, however, that none of the case-study schools is strictly segregated, which reflects a demonstration to overcoming some jurisprudence interpretations regarding this matter.

To sum up, the priority for many educators across the case-study schools was overcoming the ethnic, tribal and national tensions which were approached by the dimension of a Quranic view of unity, and advanced by the "ummah" concept. So, the school becomes an "ummah space" which should reflect collaboration and the overcoming of the different lines of division. As discussed in Chapter 8, this call for universality is rather an attempt to re-examine their new contextual challenges from a broader Islamic framework by overcoming tunnelling Islam within a specific school of thought that has developed within the context of Muslim majority (Philips, 2007). This approach may be linked to a broader impetus developing within European Muslims towards helping the Muslim community in the West to revisit the Islamic heritage through the lenses of their new contexts. For this purpose the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) (2012) was launched in March 1997. The ECFR (2012) is aiming at contextualising Islamic religious jurisprudence within its new Western environment and attempting to overcome the jurisprudence divisions amongst the Muslim population in the West. The "*ummah*" unity goal remains elusive for Muslim educators in light of the ethnic, national and denominational divisions within Muslim communities in Britain. This takes the discussion forward to the third question posed at the start of this section related to "Islamness" and "Britishness" discourses within Muslim schools.

9.2.3 Britishness and "Islamness": the search for coherence

The majority of parents perceive the school environment as an important context for nurturing children as faithful/practising Muslims. This "practising Muslim" concept relates to the integration of knowing, being, and doing by encompassing the "inner" and "outer" spheres of self. Similarly, Muslim educators in the case-study schools espoused Islamic education as being about producing faithful individuals who can act as active citizens both in their Muslim community and in larger society. This seems to be a thread running through all six case-study schools. So, the question that arises here deals with texts and contexts; and

how Muslim schools perceive they are contextualising Islamic schooling and open spaces for their pupils to grow as active citizens of Britain.

In responding to this question, the discourses of leadership which are currently playing out across the case-study schools and which are presented in the first section of this chapter are important in two ways. Firstly, in their contribution to the construction of the contextualised meanings of Islamic schooling, particularly with the backdrop of the social and racial divisiveness threat within which these schools' emergence and flourishing is sometimes read (DFE, 1985; MacEoin, 2009). Secondly, those discourses are also important in providing discursive rationales upon Islamic educational practice based on educators' reflexivity, knowledgeability and awareness of the British social context in which these schools are situated. Since this analysis is based on a double hermeneutic loop this means that their visions and reviews of educational practice play a part in the construction of meanings to Islamic schooling within Britain which then feeds back into future practice. This contributes to creating unintended conditions for Muslim schools both within them and within their wider socio-political British context which in turn feeds back into new insights from Muslim educators as a response to the raised opportunities and challenges. It is through such a reviewing process that Islamic schooling in Britain is being shaped. For example, in order for these schools to have the "outstanding" Ofsted report they aspire to, their spiritual and social programmes need to meet Ofsted inspectorate criteria for the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development of pupils (DfES, 2003). There are five principles to the SMSC regulations that the school must promote, which were previously listed in Chapter 8. I restate them here due to their importance to the religious ethos in Muslim schools and the ways these points are incorporated into the case-study schools' understanding of the "practising Muslim" as a popular parental demand:

> (a) enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
>
> (b) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the law;
>
> (c) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute to community life;
>
> (d) provide pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England; and

> (e) assist pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions (DfES, 2003, p. 4).

In the case of the Muslim case-study schools, the provision of SMSC components was about balancing the Islamic expectations of parents and also attending to the Government rules assessed through Ofsted evaluation measures. So, in order to nurture "British practising Muslims", these schools are challenged to provide an education that is Islamically focused yet has a British orientation. In their attempts to come to the "right measure" in day-to-day school practice, the case-study schools incorporate their interpretations of the "practising Muslim" into their understanding of SMSC requirements taking into consideration the diverse expectations of parents. Educational practice in the case-study Muslim schools, therefore, becomes an embodiment and enactment of those regulations in a hermeneutic process with schools' individual interpretations of the "practising Muslim".

Nevertheless, in their interpretations of this area, the case-study schools show similarities and differences. In terms of similarities, all Muslim educators in the six case-study schools, from different perspectives, understand Islamic principles to be compatible with civic principles in a democratic plural British society. This view is similarly echoed in AMS-UK's statement (n.p-c) summarising their commitment to social cohesion. Based on their interpretation of the following Quranic verse:

> O Mankind, We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you. (Quran 49:13)

The AMS-UK (n.p-c) believe that "being a good Muslim requires being a good citizen." Such an interpretation is similar to al-Ghazali's theoretical perspective of the devout Muslim. According to al-Ghazali (1964, 1992), there are five necessary Islamic main principles which an Islamic education system needs to protect for the benefit of individual and social life. These are: *din* (religion-broadly defined), *nafs*, (life or soul), *nasl* (family or offspring), *mal* (property, resources or wealth), and *'aql* (intellect or reason). *Maslahah*, literally meaning public or social interest, requires the protection of these components, and *mafsadah*, corruption, includes anything that can destroy them. Al-Ghazali recognised that these concepts are humanistic foundations for all societies;

because they are found in every religion. In saying so, al-Ghazali (1964) emphasises that the key objective of Shariah[6] lies in achieving success in this life and in the hereafter. He further regards the noblest of all worships as being the promotion of society's wellbeing. Al-Ghazali (1964) supports this view by quoting one of the Prophet's sayings, "all creatures are dependents of Allah and the most beloved of them to Allah are those who are most beneficial to His dependents" (p. 383). A successful Islamic education in al-Ghazali's theory of education, therefore, is the one taking into consideration these five critical areas to ensure faithful individuals and responsible citizens. Thus, developing individuals that take responsible positions in society with conscious preparation for the afterlife became essential in his curricular proposal.

It is this view of al-Ghazali that was presented across the case-study schools in their discussion of their "social cohesion" programme and the notion of "practising Muslim" but their focuses in achieving this coherence are different. As presented in Chapters 7 and 8, the educational practice of the case-study schools is underpinned by different philosophical perceptions of Islamic schooling and the way "British practising Muslim" is constructed. It is within these different perspectives that SMSC requirements are also interpreted. Moreover, the way the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development can be assessed is problematic and open to interpretation through the view of various lenses. So, as an act of intervention, Muslim schools along with some other faith-based schools which have a distinctive ethos have requested more respect for the religious ethos of their schools and the need for this to be evaluated taking into account the religious distinctiveness of these schools. In the process, the Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) was established and approved by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). In September 2008 BSI began its work in inspecting schools affiliated to the Christian Schools' Trust and the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS-UK) throughout England (BSI, 2011). This arrangement aims at providing a specialised schools inspectorate which is sensitive to the tensions between secular and religious requirements and respects these schools' distinctive ethos (BSI, 2011). In order to fulfil the Ofsted success criteria, AMS-UK organises a variety of training as a support for Muslim schools, including some tailored sessions for achieving "outstanding" teaching quality. This shows

[6] Islamic Law

the way these schools are actively engaging, though not always at the level of discursive consciousness, with regulative measures to preserve some level of autonomy and construct their own social conditions. It is worth mentioning here that, among the contributors to this research are two BSI inspectors who are also staff members in some of the case-study Muslim schools and who are also involved in the AMS-UK training provisions. It is as Giddens (1984) puts it, "[a]ll forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinate can influence the activities of their superiors" (p. 16).

Nevertheless, between the period 25 April 2012 and 5 June 2012, the DfE (2012) proposed changes to the 2010 regulations for independent schools in England regarding the SMSC development of pupils, and the target date for amendments to come into force is 1 September 2012. The newly proposed regulations aim at preventing "extremism" in independent schools by representing further constraints of existing rules. These 'include promoting fundamental British values, respecting the civil and criminal law and presenting political issues in a balanced way' (DfE, 2012). These changes place further requirements on independent schools, including independent Muslim faith-based schools, to meet the inspectorate measures regarding the SMSC development of pupils 'by aligning the expectations placed on independent schools with those placed on maintained schools' (DfE, 2012). It, however, remains open to interpretation how these aspects are going to be measured and evaluated. It also poses further questions about whether this move towards tightening these schools' levels of autonomy regarding their educational provision is actually about the government attempts to gradually bring them into line with maintained schools regarding their religious ethos. It is as Scott (2000) argues, such official text 'has a history and is part of a complex web of power relations which it seeks to influence and change' (p. 29). But - in light of these possible changes and their influence on school levels of autonomy - are independent Muslim faith-based schools going to continue to perceive the worth of their financial struggle, or will reading these changes push more independent Muslim schools into considering some different options including more pressure on gaining state funding?

9.3 Conclusions

In this thesis I argue that Islamic schooling in Britain is ongoing, interacting with its surrounding changing socio-political context and attempting to deal with

emerging tensions and challenges without compromising on its Islamic ethos. During that process, Muslim schools are opting for different resolutions that create diversity within and between them. One main issue that emerges from this research is that Islamic education in the case-study Muslim schools is driven from within and without by the search for answers and solutions to emergent dilemmas. It is a pressured responsive activity seeking to ameliorate, quickly with observable results.

The summary in this concluding section is divided into three parts. The first part presents a snapshot of the main dilemmas that Muslim schools are facing in their development journey in Britain. The second part follows ways with which Muslim schools are differently choosing to resolve those dilemmas and deal with tensions emerging from diversity. The third part illustrates the changing process through which Muslim schools are being continuously made and remade as they individually respond to the emerging challenges of diversity. It also highlights some areas for further research that have emerged from this study.

9.3.1 A focus on development: transition and tensions

The main driving argument for Muslim schools from within the Muslim community is about preserving religious identity and avoiding assimilation. During the early stages of their establishment, Muslim schools were primarily concerned with providing basic religious needs, especially in terms of gender segregation, and proving their academic worth. The latter goal was less to do with the enjoyment of learning but more focused on performing well in national exam results (Haw, 1998). As schools were struggling with the high turnover of staff, lack of training and shortage of resources, issues like inclusivity, fun learning, personalised learning, and building partnerships were not priorities. Hence the concern for many of them was not the achievement of an "outstanding" Ofsted report, as such, but to remain open within the minimum statutory requirements. However, "...the lack of equipment, resources, subject options and extra-curricular activities [was] more than made up for by the value and experiences of sharing a common identity" (Haw, 1998, p. 390). This "common identity" and sense of belonging also strongly emerges in this research as well as empowering pupils to negotiate their career options.

Now, this research has shown a change in the aspirations of Muslim schools and their stages of development. On the one hand, parents show a consumerist

approach to school selection based on diverse parental values, educational priorities and the type of Muslim school provision. The values and expectations that the case-study school populations wish to achieve are complex. Many parents see these schools as a means to help with parenting by building pupils' sense of belonging to the Muslim community and also fitting in within the wider British social context as "British practising Muslims". Parental considerations which are observed in choosing their children's schools relate to the richness of Islamic school life, the quality of education, curriculum balance, inclusivity, economic costs and the level of openness to the wider context. Particularly, the prevailing parental discourse across the case-study schools in describing the criteria for a successful Muslim school concerns Islamic ethos, emphasising discipline, religious practice, and academic achievement.

On the other hand, this analysis reveals that all case-study schools are concerned with their Islamic ethos as well as academic achievement in the league tables, which presents these schools with a dilemma. The critical question that the school leaders are facing is: How can the right balance be struck between "Islamic ethos" and the market dynamics of quality schooling? What emerges to be shared amongst the case-study school Muslim educators regarding "Islamic education" are four dimensions: belief, meaning strength of religious belief or faith; practice, meaning level of ritual observance and character building; unity, meaning strength of one's sense of belonging/identification with the Muslim community; and fitting in, meaning the forming of persons who can move out beyond the confines of the school or the Muslim community's boundaries and live as confident devout Muslims and active British citizens. Hence, schools are working out the meaning of a "good/practising Muslim" in relation to its British context in order to enable suitable practice. Yet, they are also competing towards "outstanding" Ofsted inspectorate reports and quality of educational experience in terms of educational equipment and resources and the range of educational options and opportunities that they aspire to offer. In this regard, these schools are undergoing many changes in terms of form and content, but this development of the case-study schools poses another question: whether their "Islamic ethos" will remain a priority in light of the market values and government pressures.

9.3.2 Choices on the way: diversity of provision

Two main theoretical approaches to Islamic education emerged as underpinning the educational practice of the case-study schools and shaping the possible choices they take on the day-to-day school life, namely the moral and social discourses discussed in Chapter 7. Schools focusing on social empowerment discourses may compromise on school autonomy or socio-economic inclusivity opting for enhancing their educational resources. So, this type of school might opt for state funding, academic ability entry exams and/or economic exclusivity through raising the annual fees. Each of these options diversifies the schools and also creates different tensions between and within them.

The state funding option means wider socio-economic inclusivity and better educational resources but it also drives challenges to the "Islamness" of the school from within and from without. The British educational structure supports Muslim schools in terms of resources, but also places restrictions through rules and regulations that constrain choices that educators may take to preserve their schools' Islamic ethos in terms of pupil admissions and staff selection. For example, the availability of school staff who would meet both the educators' commitment to a religious ethos and the government standards for state schools is one area of challenge. Consequently, the affordability of materialistic resources creates diversity in school staff and parental backgrounds in terms of religious devotion and commitment to the Islamic ethos of the school.

Some case-study schools, however, prefer to remain outside the debate by maintaining the independent status and faith-based approach, but they have to face another moral dilemma. To retain their affordability and inclusivity across the socio-economic groups of the Muslim community means struggling with resources, making it especially difficult to retain qualified Muslim staff in light of the market competition between Muslim schools themselves. The inclination towards social empowerment and the response to market pressure means that some schools are heading towards economic exclusivity by charging higher fees. Such a move enables schools to provide better resources and enhance their promotional profile. However, it also means attracting parents who are often financially secure and/or highly qualified, who become a source of support to the school and not the other way round. In Vision-SS academic ability entry exams are also combined with raising the school fees, relatively, as ways to help advance their academic profile without making big compromises on their limited

economic resources. This strategy helps to construct an image for the school as '"successful" which is further strengthened through Ofsted reports and league table results. However, such a profile also becomes appealing to some parents who are not primarily attracted to those schools by their "religious ethos" but rather by their academic achievement and sense of community.

Schools with the moral approach also face some similar moral dilemmas. While these schools share their primary focus concerns Islamic ethos and their inspiration for high academic achievement, they differ in socio-economic inclusivity. So, some schools, like London-PS, opt to relatively raise their fees to cope with market pressure on maintaining their academic standards and appealing to a wider circle of parents and potential staff which gives them a better chance in terms of pupil intake. Other schools, like Olive-PS, prefer to remain economically inclusive, strong on Islamic ethos but face materialistic challenges to respond to the British educational structure conditions: the market pressure amongst Muslim schools on human resources, and the tension about academic expectations of parents from diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds.

Hence, the choices that Muslim schools make in resolving dilemmas emerging from their practice are creating diversity not only between them but also within them.

9.3.3 Dealing with diversity: the way forward

Conditions of self-expression

The case-study schools are facing the dilemma of constructing themselves as "academically successful institutions" without compromising on their "Islamic ethos", especially in areas of parental religious backgrounds, staff commitment, and the Ofsted evaluations of their SMSC provision.

In handling these areas schools use different strategies. In regard to parental backgrounds, this research shows that the case-study Muslim schools are involved in a reflexive monitoring of their past choices because of changing parental educational priorities and influenced by the wider British setting. In terms of the structural pressures, this research also suggests that Muslim schools are choosing to resolve them through the use of rules from within the same structure. The Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) is a demonstration of this

push and pull dynamic. Some Muslim schools are associating with other faith-based schools with similar values and sharing educational practice to make their needs recognised within the British educational structure. This collaboration is a way of resisting structural control; it is about preserving their distinctiveness while achieving recognition as part of the inspectorate scheme. Moreover, under the umbrella of the AMS-UK, affiliated Muslim schools are trying to build a supporting infrastructure between them to help with sharing expertise, developing resources, facing common challenges and discussing future broad visions. As presented in Chapter 3, initiatives are also taken to start self-evaluation of practice through research.

Hence, the rules and resources that shape the British educational structure form the conditions through which these schools are interacting, making choices and facing some unintended consequences of their previous interactions. It is important here to revisit the two loops, which I termed "experiencing in context" and "reflecting about", of the double hermeneutic process presented in Chapter 4 (see Figure 4.1, p.63). The different contextual feedback Muslim schools receive as a result of their previous practice, "experiencing in context", loops back through the "reflecting about" its suitability process to modify their pre-knowledge and current practice creating unintended conditions for their future educational practice. Figure 9.1 presents three aspects of "practice", "suitability" and "effectiveness" by which schools are interpreting and changing their practice along a spiral route.

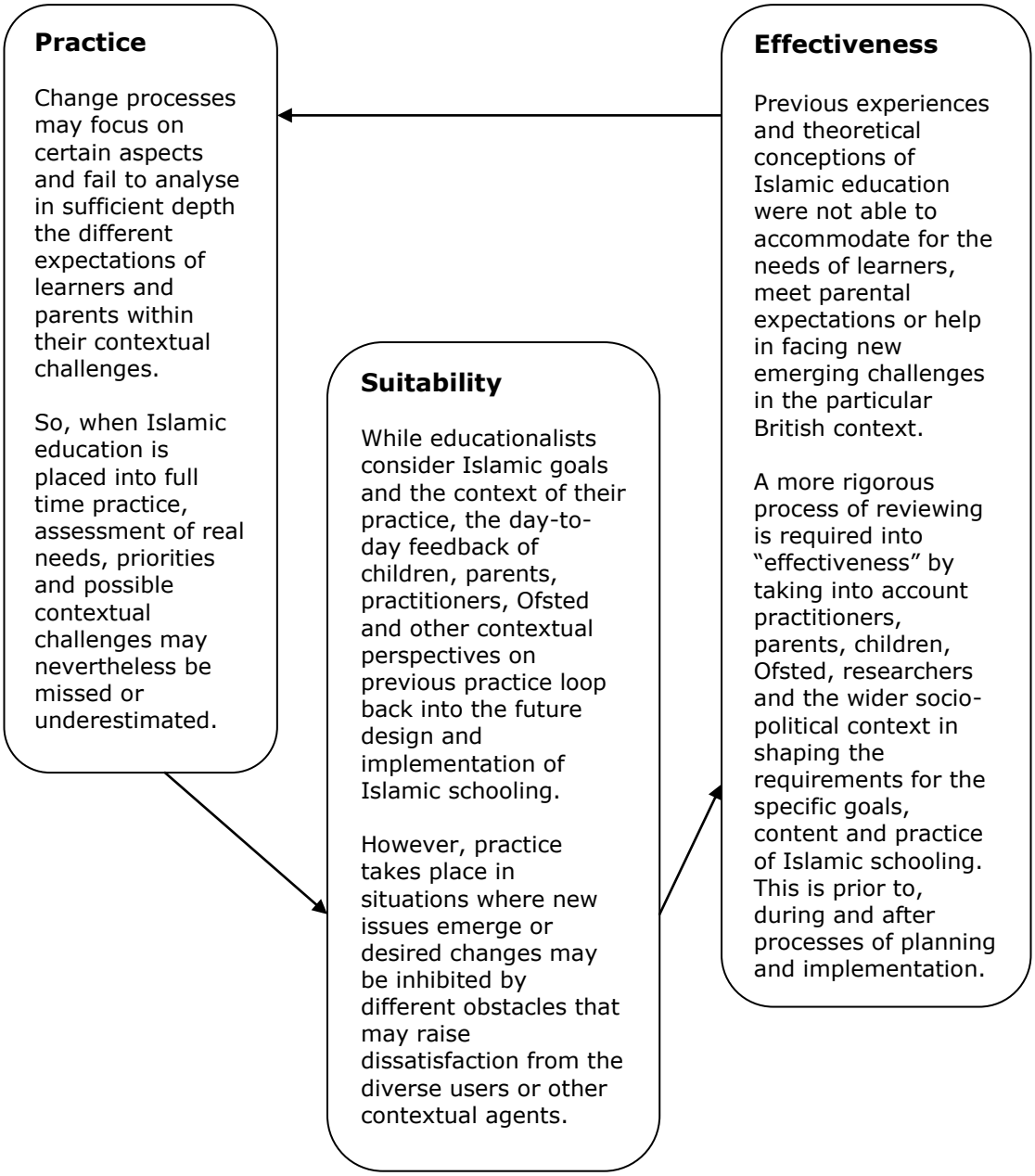

Figure 9.1: The double hermeneutic process of change

Source: Adapted from Bednar and Welch (2007)

Through the reviewing process of these two loops, Muslim educators in the case-study schools are facing challenges, but are also building competence in dealing with the system and with their wider context. During such a process, interpretations of schools' experiences and their "suitability" and "effectiveness" in meeting the different expectations drive on changes in provision along a spiral

route. Figure 9.2 summarises the following four main identified stages of the change process that Muslim schools, at different stages, are going through:

- Intervene: by acting to change the perceived Muslim community status through education that fits certain educational goals, respond to spiritual needs, and resist assimilation;
- Adapt: by revisiting those goals in response to the constraints or opportunities perceived to be available within the British socio-political context or based on the outcomes elicited from practice;
- Mature: by developing educational bodies to enable self-evaluation, recognise challenges, distinguish shared horizons, identify enablers, and adapt practice and future goals to the changed understanding;
- Inspire: by developing competencies to act more effectively in relation to constraints and enablers within their new British environment attuning to its continuous changes.

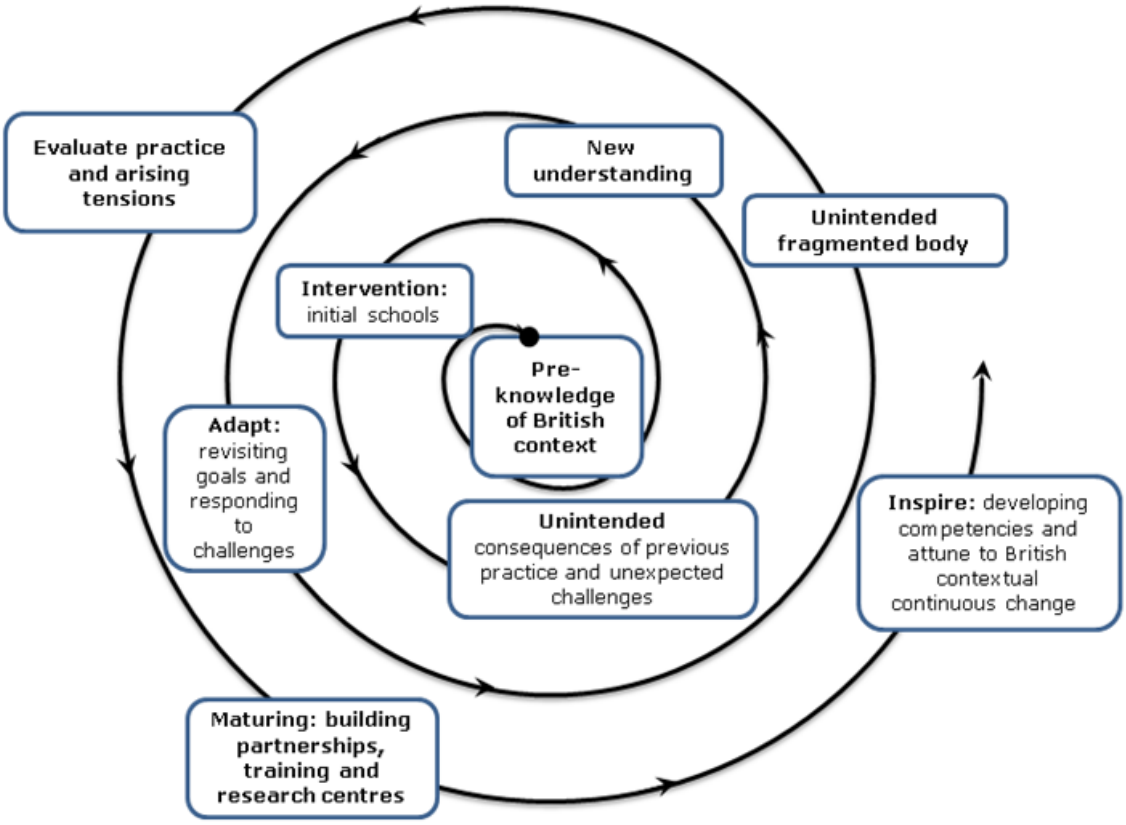

Figure 9.2: The double hermeneutic in Muslim schools' journey in Britain

The unexpected consequences that result from this spiralling process for agents in Muslim schools form the new conditions for their future actions. For example, the quick expansion of Muslim schools has the potential to widen the tension between the schools' prime goal of an Islamic ethos and the diverse parental educational interests. This is because increasing numbers of Muslim schools, both those with voluntary-aided or independent status, provide greater parental choice, which has the potential to reduce demand on any single school and create more competition among Muslim schools. Consequently, such expansion has pushed these schools to revise their current admission selection criteria resulting in wider religious population diversity within them. The data also reveals that parents are involved in continuous interpretation of their British context and the "Islamness" of Muslim schools in order to make choices that help them uphold the educational goals they set for their children. In this regard, these schools contribute to shaping pupils' lives but are also shaped by parental expectations and possibly by the variety of parents they target in the first place (see Chapter 7).

The raison d'être: refocusing on authentic-self

As presented in Chapter 8, the "Islamness" of the school is constructed around the notion of "good/practising Muslim". Yet, the complex process of defining the lifestyle of a "practising" or "good" Muslim in Britain involves exploration of identity which also implies a reflexive monitoring of the self. It is about continuously shaping and constructing a link between the Islamic sources and the present British context with all its effects in an attempt to gain a sense of continuity and meaning or which I shall describe as "the authenticity and validation of the new self" from within an Islamic frame of meaning. This new self is developing in relation to the British milieu. In this regard, the Muslim school forms a construction of a social and symbolic space of an Islamic lifestyle. This serves the purpose of examining the Muslim presence in Britain and its various and constant interactions with the wider social context. Giddens (1991) describes such a process as:

> A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor - important though this is - in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going.* The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self. (p. 54)

These schools have links with the history of madrasas, presented in Chapter 3, but they are also continually integrating events which take place in their British social context and sorting them into this "ongoing 'story' about the self". However, while individuals within Muslim communities as well as schools are continuously doing so, they are also changing through this process. The choices made by these schools and their discursive rationale suggest a process of reflection upon what Islamic schooling stands for in twenty-first century Britain. Questions of the following type are guiding this educational review: what do Muslim schools within Britain aim to achieve? What are they actually doing? Moreover, the questioning of culture and attempts at deconstructing its values from that of religious ones raises another question regarding the type of sources that these schools consider to be authoritative and legitimate to underpin their practice.

In this regard, Muslim schools in Britain stand at the intersection of the different Muslim backgrounds and experiences. They have become a space of dialogue

between Britishness (as a national concept) and Islam (as a lived religion). In dealing with diversity within them, these schools are attempting to go beyond the jurisprudence or traditional discourses of Islamic education with the aim of understanding how Islam fits with Britishness as part of their constructions of the "British practising Muslim". In preparing future citizens, Muslim educators in these schools are expected to serve society by critically understanding the nature and needs of their Muslim community, the nature and needs of the wider society to which they are contributing, and to respond to the different demands and pressures placed on them during the process. Moreover, in light of the extremist threats, Muslim educational leaders in these institutions are forced to publically define themselves and to interpret their varying religious understandings and cultural practices in relation to the dominant British socio-political context (AMS-UK, n.p-b).

While this research provides some important insights into the diversity of Muslim schools in Britain, it also raises many questions further study of which would be valuable to the field. In understanding how different Muslim schools define what Islamic schooling stands for, it becomes clear that some schools are going beyond the provision of children's basic religious needs within an Islamic environment. In doing so, they are seeking to provide a "Quran-centred" worldview in which the classroom itself should be structured following classical Islamic educational ways. Their educational practice involves the nurturing of Muslims with confident Islamic identity through *tarbiyah* (holistic upbringing) aiming at helping future Muslims in Britain to navigate the complexity of multiple identities and the challenges of modernity (Ahmed, 2012).

But while curriculum integration of Islamic and National Curriculum is a goal of all the schools in this research, its scope is an area that needs to be addressed further. The diverse definitions of the schools' Islamness necessarily impact how different Muslim schools view their curricula and how they translate their underpinning approaches to Islamic schooling for engaging in the classroom practice. Of value would be a deeper inquiry on the development of Montessori holistic Islamic schooling as part of the Islamness of the school. How does this approach compare with models prevalent in voluntary-aided schools in nurturing students who are able to integrate their dual Islamic and British background in meaningful ways as "British practising Muslims"? Specifically, additional research could examine how far the National and Islamic parts of the curriculum are incorporated within classroom educational practice to nurture the "inner" and

"outer" spheres of a "practising Muslim" within the British context. In addition, further research is needed to highlight the complexities of planning and integrating an Islamic worldview in classrooms across subjects and to clarify the challenges that teachers face.

Further research is also warranted on the role which the perceived school identity amongst the Muslim community plays in influencing the nature of its parental population based on the educational priorities of parents. The question of who is being attracted to any particular Muslim school, and with what consequences on the school's future direction, is certainly relevant here. On the one hand, to what extent are Muslim schools expected to respond to parents' religious needs, for example, Islamic role modelling by staff. On the other, in what ways might responses to the state funding measures shape educators' interpretations of their Islamic heritage in relation to emergent issues within the school life? And is this accommodation of controversial provision, such as musical instruments, a matter of choice that state funded schools are willingly making? Or is it simply a sign of a process of conformity with the structural rules that these schools are going through to facilitate mainstream compliance?

The issue of differences in parental educational priorities and concerns between the two stages of Islamic schooling is a potential area for future research. Moreover, the emerging tension between some Muslim schools and some parents over the ethical role of the Muslim teacher in a Muslim school reflects another complex question for further investigation. How are different understandings of a "good/practising Muslim" and teachers' own educational experiences going to shape their teaching practice? This leads on to further questions about the nature of teaching and learning about Islamic sources and scholarship. What is the relationship between the type of training that teachers have received and their approach to teaching Islamic Studies subjects or defining the goals of Islamic schooling? Finally – in light of the increasing constraints on independent schools (DfE, 2012) and their influence on school levels of autonomy – are independent Muslim faith-based schools going to continue to perceive the worth of their financial struggle, or will reading these changes push more independent Muslim schools into considering some different options including more pressure on gaining state funding?

To sum up, British Muslim schools are now tailoring their provision to suite their own contextual needs and challenges. This research reveals that as Islamic

schooling in Britain has matured, it is broadening its educational scope from focusing primarily on certain religious or cultural goals to working towards the provision of an enjoyable educational experience. In this process, Islamic schooling is being continuously made and remade across individual schools as they respond to the emerging challenges of diversity. Beyond the principles of Islamic belief, Islamic schooling is developing in an ongoing review and interactional relationship with its context rather than an imported fixed form of education. Moreover, a new line of practice beyond the individual schools has emerged in terms of training, networking, and research bodies (AMS-UK, 2012a; BSI, 2011; Nida Trust, 2012). Practice is being shaped, challenges beyond that of resources are being appreciated, new questions from practitioners are being raised, and shared goals with other faith-based schools have started to evolve. This is important because the evolution of common and proprietary resources, and discourses based on their specific British context is a sign of a growing integration into the new structure. Hence, this research suggests that debates about Muslim schools in Britain need to be aware of their unity as well as diversity and their complexity as a social phenomenon.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Information letters and consent forms

Information Letter to Parents

Research Title: Dealing with diversity in Muslim schools in Britain
Researcher: Fulla/Fella Lahmar

Dear Parent/Carer:

Assalamu aleykum wa Rahmatu Allah wa Barakatuh,

My name is Fella, or as pronounced in Arabic Fulla, I am presently a PhD student at the School of Education, University of Nottingham. I am doing research with people from different backgrounds in different types of Muslim schools in UK. As part of my efforts, I collect interview information from children on their experiences in Muslim schools. My aim is to improve our collective knowledge about diversity in Muslim schools in order to improve practice in these schools and better serve our children. This is where I need your help. I would like **your consent to interview your child in an audio-recorded group interview** which will consist of one session of approximately **50 minutes** and will take place at your child's school. As well as talking to the researcher and to each other, children might write their thoughts or play games related to the interview topic. All children and young people who take part will be given a participation certificate as a reward. The only personal information I need about your child is their year group and whether they have attended any state schools. This will allow a clearer picture concerning their thoughts and experiences.

I do not anticipate any risks to your child from participating in this study. Although interviews will be audio-recorded for research purposes, **children's names and personal details will not be revealed**. What each individual child or young person says will also **remain confidential**. All identifying information will be removed and all excerpts will be anonymised. The raw data will be held in a secure office in a locked filing cabinet. So, despite future use of quotations from interviews in the final report, the names of children and young people will not be revealed. However, **I will need to contact the appropriate persons if a child or young person tells me that s/he is in danger**.

The study will be explained to children and young people, and they will be asked to sign a form agreeing to join in. However, **they will be able to withdraw at any time** if they no longer wish to continue. Parents/carers are also asked to give written consent to their child's participation in the study. This can be given by completing the attached form and returning it to your child's class teacher. After the study is completed, I would be happy to share my findings with parents and teachers at your child's school. Please sign and return this form as soon as possible if you agree to allow your child participate in this research. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact:

Researcher: Fulla Lahmar, ttxfl3@nottingham.ac.uk or call me on 07515638673.

Supervisor: Dr. Kaye Haw, kaye.Haw@nottingham.ac.uk

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: Dr. Alison Kington,
educationethicscoordinator@nottingham.ac.uk

Jazakum Allahu kheiran for your support

Parent's Consent Form

Project Title: Dealing with diversity in Muslim schools in Britain

Researcher's Name: Fella Lahmar

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Kaye Haw

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to my child to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my child's involvement in it.
- I understand that my child may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect their status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, my child will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that my child will be audio-taped during the group interview.
- I understand that data collected about my child will be coded using a fake name (pseudonym) or initials and numbers. The information which is identifiable will be kept separately from the rest of the data. The data will be stored in the investigator's office in a locked file cabinet/password protected computer.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my child's involvement in the research.

Parent/ Carer's approval: _____

Signature

Parent/Carer's name: _____ **Child's name:** _____

Child's year group: _____

Consent date: _____

Jazakum Allahu kheiran

Contact details

Researcher: Fella/Fulla Lahmar, ttxfl3@nottingham.ac.uk or call me on 07515638673.

Supervisor: Dr. Kaye Haw, kaye.Haw@nottingham.ac.uk

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: Dr. Alison Kington, educationethicscoordinator@nottingham.ac.uk

Research Information for Children

What is this all about?

I am doing a research on diversity in Muslim schools. I want to talk to you to find out about your views and experiences of being with other children, teachers and other staff who are different from you.

I need your help to find this out as I am interested in what YOU think.

Who am I?

My name is Fella Lahmar, or Fulla in Arabic. This will be part of my PhD research at Nottingham University.

What do I have to do?

I would like to meet with you for about fifty five minutes along with other children in a group discussion to share your views and experiences of your school.

Where will this happen?

We can decide on a good place to meet together in your school at the earliest convenient time.

Why should I talk to you?

As a child you are the most important person at the school, so it is important for us to find out what you think. This is a chance for you to have your say: I will listen to you. You can help me find out about differences between people in a group discussion involving some of your friends. This may help in making schools like yours better places for all children who go to them. After the interview, I will give you a certificate to thank you for taking part.

Will you tell anyone what I say?

I might write down what you say and would like to audio record the whole interview so that I do not forget what you say. I will not let other people listen to your tape, see what you have written or tell them what you have said. No one except me and your friends involved in the discussion will know your name. The only time I would tell anyone what you said is if you tell me you are in danger. I will need to talk to another adult if this happens, but I would speak to you about it first.

How do I take part?

If you would like to talk to me, you will need to tell me that you agree by filling in the form inside this leaflet and give it to your class teacher. I will also ask your parent or carer to check that it is OK with them: there is another leaflet and form for them to fill in.

Can I change my mind?

Yes, of course. You can change your mind at any time, even during the interview; you also can ask me to turn the audio recorder off if at any time during the interview you feel unhappy. You just need to tell me. I will not mind.

What happens afterwards?

I will write a report summarising our discussions and lessons learnt from that, but I will not use your name (or anyone else's!). No-one will know who said what.

Can I talk to you first?

Yes, of course. I would be very happy to talk to you. You can:

Email me: Fulla: ttxfl3@nottingham.ac.uk Phone me: 07515638673

Email my supervisor: Dr. Kaye Haw, kaye.Haw@nottingham.ac.uk

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: Dr. Alison Kington, educationethicscoordinator@nottingham.ac.uk

Information Letter to Participants

Research Title: Dealing with diversity in Muslim schools in Britain

Researcher: Fella Lahmar

Dear Teacher:

My name is Fella, or as pronounced in Arabic Fulla, I am presently a PhD student at the School of Education, University of Nottingham. I am doing research with people from different backgrounds in different types of Muslim schools. As part of my efforts, I collect interview information from teachers on their experiences in Muslim schools in UK. My aim is to improve our collective knowledge about diversity in Muslim schools in order to improve practice in these schools and better serve our children. This is where I need your help; **I would like your consent to be interviewed** in an audio recorded interview which will consist of one session of approximately **30 minutes** and will take place at your school.

I do not anticipate any risks to you from participating in this study except the inconvenience that might result from taking time out of your day to **voluntarily** help in this study. Although interviews will be **audio-recorded** for research purposes, your name and personal details will not be revealed; what you say will also **remain confidential**. **All identifying information will be removed** and all excerpts will be anonymised. The raw data will be held in a secure office in a locked filing cabinet. So, despite future use of quotations from interviews in the final report, your name will not be revealed.

It is worth mentioning that you will be able to withdraw at any time if you no longer wish to continue. You can also ask me to turn the audio recorder off at any time during the discussion if you are not comfortable with it. Before you join in the interview you will be requested to sign a written consent form to say you are willing to take part. After the study is completed, I would be happy to share my findings with you at your school.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact:

Researcher: Fulla Lahmar, ttxfl3@nottingham.ac.uk or call me on 07515638673.

Supervisor: Dr. Kaye Haw, kaye.Haw@nottingham.ac.uk

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: Dr. Alison Kington, educationethicscoordinator@nottingham.ac.uk

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research title: Dealing with diversity in Muslim schools in Britain

Researcher's name: Fella Lahmar

Supervisor's name: Dr. Kaye Haw

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audio-taped during the interview.
- I understand that data collected about me will be coded using a fake name (pseudonym) or initials and numbers. The information which is identifiable will be kept separately from the rest of the data. The data will be stored in the investigator's office in a locked file cabinet/password protected computer.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed ..... (research participant)

Print name ..... **Date** .....

Thank you

Contact details

Researcher: Fella/Fulla Lahmar, ttxfl3@nottingham.ac.uk or call me on 07515638673.

Supervisor: Dr. Kaye Haw, kaye.Haw@nottingham.ac.uk

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: Dr. Alison Kington, educationethicscoordinator@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 2: Headteacher interview schedule

Thanks for agreeing to take part in this interview (confidentiality, withdrawal, recording, disclosure, forms…ect),

Phase 1: Headteachers' and school background

1. Can you provide a brief background about yourself? How long have you been in this school?
2. Can you tell me a pen portrait about your school? What type of diversities do you have in this school, if any? (demographical information about the school population: children, staff, parents…etc)
3. Have you ever visited other Muslim schools? Do you think they are similar or different from yours? In which ways?

Philosophy of Islamic schooling

1. Sometimes these schools are called Muslim schools and other times Islamic schools, do you think that there is any difference between the two and why?
2. "Islamic education", What does this phrase mean to you?/ What is your understanding of purpose of Muslim schools?
3. As a headteacher what are your aims for this specific school and for pupils in it?
4. So, what aspects of child's education does this school fulfil that mainstream school and the mosque could not?

Phase 2: Parents' expectation and the school's provision

1. How are parents involved into the school life?
2. How does the school identify parents' needs and expectations, and are they met?
3. What would this school do if parents' expectations come to conflict with the school agenda?
4. What resources might be drawn from the cultural and social diversity of your school community?
5. Which partnership practices are currently working at this school?
6. What are the sources of support for Muslim headteachers in meeting diversity challenges and are they sufficient?
7. Is there anything you would like to change in the school? And if so why?
8. What challenges does this pose for you?

Phase 3: Muslimness and Britishness

1. We take our discussion now from the school to the wider discussion. How do you think your school fits into the British educational system in general?
2. How do you see your school in the wider context of faith schools?
3. Faith schools in general are accused of being divisive, what do you think?
4. How do you see this school's current educational aims and practices serving social harmony and citizenship?

5. What sort of world do Muslim schools see children entering into the 21st century within the British context? How does this fit in with your school's perspective of Islamic schooling?
6. Do you think Muslim schools should continue to exist in the 21st century Britain? Why? Why not?
    - What will students need to be able to do, to know and to value and why?
    - What will Muslim schools need to be like to cater for the responses to the previous two questions?
7. What advice do you have for those thinking about starting a Muslim school?

Finally, what do you think the future hold for Muslim schools in Britain? Or what, in your view, do recent debates on Muslim schools imply for their future directions?

8. Would you like to add anything?

Your participation is much appreciated. Thank you.

Appendix 3: Teacher interview schedule

Phase 1: Teacher's background and philosophy of Islamic schooling

1. Can you provide a brief background about yourself? How long have you been in this school?
2. "Islamic education", What does this phrase mean to you?/ What is your understanding of purpose of Muslim schools?
3. Sometimes these schools are called Muslim schools and other times Islamic schools, do you think that there is any difference between the two?
4. Have you ever experienced other Muslim schools? How are they similar or different from this one?

Phase 2: practice at school and support needed

1. How a two-way communication between parents and you, as a teacher, is maintained?
2. As a teacher in a Muslim school, how do you see your role in the lives of the children you teach?
3. What expectations parents have from you?
4. What Challenges does this pose for you?
5. Which partnership practices are currently working at this school?
6. What are the sources of support for Muslim teachers in meeting diversity challenges and are they sufficient?

Phase 3: Muslimness and Britishness

1. Faith schools in general are accused of being divisive, what do you think?
2. How would you evaluate the school's efforts in building links with its wider community?
3. What sort of world do Muslim schools see children entering into the 21st century within the British context?
4. Do you think Muslim schools should continue to exist in the 21st century Britain? Why? Why not?

Finally, what do you think the future hold for Muslim schools in Britain?

Or what, in your view, do recent debates on Muslim schools imply for their future directions?

7. Would you like to add anything?

Your participation is much appreciated. Thank you.

Appendix 4: Children focus group interview schedule

Thanks for agreeing to take part in this interview (confidentiality, withdrawal, recording, disclosure, forms…ect), Discuss the rules of the discussion, what my role is and what I expect from them.

Part 1: Background

- **What are Islamic schools and what type of diversities they have?**

  1. Discuss the types of diversities that do exist in your school.
  2. How would you describe a truly Islamic school?/ Can you describe the best Islamic school that you would like to attend?
  3. How do you think Islamic values need to be taught in Muslim schools?

- **Pupils' religious backgrounds**

  1. What religion means to you in your daily life?
  2. What are your parents expecting from you as a pupil in a Muslim school?
  3. How is the school helping you meeting those expectations?

Part 2: Experience with the Muslim school

1. Encouraged pupils to write 'advantages' and 'disadvantages' about being in a Muslim school. Using felt pens and large pieces of paper. Discuss their points.
1. How do you feel about being a student in an Islamic school?
2. Have you ever changed schools? What brought about the change?
3. How was the experience compared to this current one?
4. Experience of highs: What were your favourite things about being in a Muslim school?
5. Experience of lows: What were your least favourite things about being in a Muslim school?
6. What can be done to improve your overall experience as a child in a Muslim school?
7. What do you think this Muslim school is giving you what the state (community) school or the mosque could not offer?

Part 3: Muslim schools and the wider society

1. What does a good Muslim in Britain mean to you? (learning, society, future, ...etc)

2. Which ways do you think might work best to fit you in the wider society?

    - Do you know if any of these ideas already exist in your school?

3. How do you see your future after leaving the school?/As a Muslim student how do you see your role in the wider British life?
4. How do you think your school is preparing you to be as such?

Finally:

1. Of all the things we've talked about, what is the most important to you? You can pick up something that you mentioned or something that was said by others.

Thank you very much and Jazakum Allahu kheiran

Certificates for participation

Appendix 5: Parental questionnaire

Parent Questionnaire

Diversity in Muslim Schools Researcher: Fella Lahmar

COMPLETION GUIDELINES

Important: YOU DO NOT NEED TO WRITE YOUR NAME OR CHILD'S NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!

- You can answer in English, Arabic, French or Urdu
- If you have more than one child at the school you only need to complete the survey once.
- Your honest and quick response is highly appreciated.
- Please complete the survey as fully as possible to assist with the research.
- Please provide your response to each statement or question by ticking on your chosen circle or square, and typing in the areas provided.
  - ○ circles are provided where only one choice is permitted.
  - ☐ squares indicate that multiple responses are permitted.
- Please remember that all of your responses will remain **confidential** and any personal identifiers will be removed prior to analysis and reporting.

Note: For the purpose of this study, please use the definition below:
Father and mother in this questionnaire refer to the biololgical father and mother or father and mother substitutes.

To help me put together this information, I would be grateful if you could complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to the school reception.
Your quick response is very much appreciated. Jazakum Allah kheiran

School's name: LQ

Parent Questionnaire

1. Background

1.1 What is your relationship to the child enrolled in this school?

Father ○ Mother ○ Other ○

1.2 How would you describe your ethnic origin?

Father _____ Mother _____

1.3 What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

Father _____ Mother _____

1.4 Were you brought up as a Muslim or reverted to Islam?

Father	Mother
○ brought up as a Muslim	○ brought up as a Muslim
○ reverted to Islam	○ reverted to Islam

1.5 Which school of thought do you follow *(Madhab) if any*?

- ○ Hanafi Barelwi
- ○ Hanafi Deobandi
- ○ Hanbali
- ○ Other, please specify: .....
- ○ Maliki
- ○ Shafi'
- ○ Do not follow any

1.6 How many children do you CURRENTLY have enrolled at this School?

- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4 or more

1.7 How long has your child been at this school? *(Enter the child with the longest period if you have more than one child at this school)*

- ○ more than 5 years
- ○ between 3 and 5 years
- ○ between 1 and 3 years
- ○ less than 1 year

1.8 If any of your other children is attending different school/s would you mind telling me why?

1.9 Do your child/children's school fees have a major impact on your finances?

○ **Yes** ○ **No**

1.10 What is your native language?

Father ..... Mother .....

1.11 What is the *primary* language spoken *at home*? .....

Parent Questionnaire

2. Parents' Expectations and Involvement

2.1 Following are some answers given by parents, in other studies, as reasons for choosing their child/children's school. Please tick *the three most important reasons* for enrolling your child in this school.

- ☐ Achieving academic excellence in the national curriculum subjects.
- ☐ Appreciating cultural values.
- ☐ Achieving excellence in the Islamic studies subjects.
- ☐ Learning Arabic.
- ☐ Appreciating Islamic values even when they are different from my cultural ones.
- ☐ Being a better practicing Muslim.
- ☐ Quality of facilities
- ☐ Learning other community languages please specify: .....
- ☐ It is our neighbourhood school.
- ☐ Higher expectations of behaviour
- ☐ Any other reasons, please specify: .....

2.2 What were your *other* expectations for choosing this school for your child?

2.3 Are these expectations met?

○ Yes ○ No

If NO, please state what expectations were not met and why.

2.4 What are the strengths of this school?

2.5 What needs to be improved?

2.6 In which ways are you involved in your child/children's school? *(Please tick ✓ all cases that apply to you)*

- ☐ Attend parents' meetings about my child's learning.
- ☐ Attend school events such as performances and school assemblies.
- ☐ Help out in my child's class.
- ☐ Help out elsewhere in the school, e.g. in library, with school trips.
- ☐ Participate in fund-raising activities.
- ☐ In some other ways, please specify: .....

Parent Questionnaire

3. School Culture

3.1 Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. *(Tick ✓one answer for each statement)*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
A. I am satisfied that the school is giving my child access to the subject matter that s/he needs	○	○	○	○	○	○
B. I am supportive of the programme my child is receiving at this school	○	○	○	○	○	○
C. Students, parents, staff and community members are made to feel like a valuable part of our school culture	○	○	○	○	○	○
D. The faculty and staff have been successful in balancing the schools aims and parents' expectations	○	○	○	○	○	○
E. The faculty and staff have been successful in promoting diversity and understanding among the school community	○	○	○	○	○	○
F. The school respects my child's background and culture	○	○	○	○	○	○
G. I feel welcome when I come into school	○	○	○	○	○	○
H. The school seeks the views of parents/carers and takes them into account	○	○	○	○	○	○
I. My child/children is/are not bullied or harassed at school	○	○	○	○	○	○
J. The school is good at stopping bullying, harassment and racism, or dealing with it	○	○	○	○	○	○
K. The school teaches my child to respect people from different backgrounds, races, schools of thought and religions	○	○	○	○	○	○
L. My child likes school	○	○	○	○	○	○
M. The school has high expectations of my child/children	○	○	○	○	○	○
N. The school is effective in preparing my child/children to live and work in a diverse world	○	○	○	○	○	○
O. The school is effective in promoting equality and diversity	○	○	○	○	○	○

4. Conclusion

That is the end of this survey. If you have any further comments you want to add please feel free to do so in the box below and at the back of this paper, if needed.

Would you like to be involved as a parent in an individual interview and contribute with more perspectives to this study? If yes please send me an email: ttxfl3@nottingham.ac.uk or pass your contact details to the school admin.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SURVEY!

Please place your completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope, seal it and return it to the school reception, addressed 'Confidential-for attention of Fulla Lahmar'
Thank you once again for your response

Appendix 6: Crosstabs analysis for the questionnaire Likert scale

Crosstabs: School programme (A, B, D)

			I am satisfied that the school is giving my child access to the subject matter that s/he needs			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	0	7	26	33
		% within School	.0%	21.2%	78.8%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	0	6	31	37
		% within School	.0%	16.2%	83.8%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	1	4	42	47
		% within School	2.1%	8.5%	89.4%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	3	5	21	29
		% within School	10.3%	17.2%	72.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	4	22	120	146
		% within School	2.7%	15.1%	82.2%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.085[a]	6	.086
Likelihood Ratio	10.607	6	.101
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.093	1	.296
N of Valid Cases	146		

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .79.

			I am supportive of the programme my child is receiving at this school			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	1	4	27	32
		% within School	3.1%	12.5%	84.4%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	0	3	33	36
		% within School	.0%	8.3%	91.7%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	0	4	43	47
		% within School	.0%	8.5%	91.5%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	1	5	24	30
		% within School	3.3%	16.7%	80.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	2	16	127	145
		% within School	1.4%	11.0%	87.6%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.501[a]	6	.609
Likelihood Ratio	5.149	6	.525
Linear-by-Linear Association	.116	1	.733
N of Valid Cases	145		

a. 7 cells (58.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .41.

			The faculty and staff have been successful in balancing the schools aims and parents' expectations			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	1	7	22	30
		% within School	3.3%	23.3%	73.3%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	0	9	28	37
		% within School	.0%	24.3%	75.7%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	2	6	38	46
		% within School	4.3%	13.0%	82.6%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	7	8	13	28
		% within School	25.0%	28.6%	46.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	10	30	101	141
		% within School	7.1%	21.3%	71.6%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.111[a]	6	.001
Likelihood Ratio	20.389	6	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.712	1	.010
N of Valid Cases	141		

a. 4 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.99.

Crosstabs: Parents-school relation (C, G, H)

			Students, parents, staff and community members are made to feel like a valuable part of our school culture			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	1	4	24	29
		% within School	3.4%	13.8%	82.8%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	0	5	31	36
		% within School	.0%	13.9%	86.1%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	1	9	39	49
		% within School	2.0%	18.4%	79.6%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	4	7	17	28
		% within School	14.3%	25.0%	60.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	6	25	111	142
		% within School	4.2%	17.6%	78.2%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.703[a]	6	.069
Likelihood Ratio	10.785	6	.095
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.541	1	.019
N of Valid Cases	142		

a. 5 cells (41.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.18.

			I feel welcomed when I come into school			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	0	5	28	33
		% within School	.0%	15.2%	84.8%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	0	1	36	37
		% within School	.0%	2.7%	97.3%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	1	4	43	48
		% within School	2.1%	8.3%	89.6%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	3	4	22	29
		% within School	10.3%	13.8%	75.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	4	14	129	147
		% within School	2.7%	9.5%	87.8%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.604[a]	6	.050
Likelihood Ratio	12.408	6	.053
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.452	1	.063
N of Valid Cases	147		

a. 8 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .79

			The school seeks the views of parents/carers and takes them into account			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	1	6	24	31
		% within School	3.2%	19.4%	77.4%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	2	6	29	37
		% within School	5.4%	16.2%	78.4%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	5	7	35	47
		% within School	10.6%	14.9%	74.5%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	7	7	12	26
		% within School	26.9%	26.9%	46.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	15	26	100	141
		% within School	10.6%	18.4%	70.9%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.290[a]	6	.039
Likelihood Ratio	12.363	6	.054
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.472	1	.004
N of Valid Cases	141		

a. 4 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.77.

Crosstabs: Diversity of backgrounds (E, F, K, O)

			The faculty and staff have been successful in promoting diversity and understanding among the school community			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	2	5	22	29
		% within School	6.9%	17.2%	75.9%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	0	4	33	37
		% within School	.0%	10.8%	89.2%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	3	7	38	48
		% within School	6.3%	14.6%	79.2%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	6	7	14	27
		% within School	22.2%	25.9%	51.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	11	23	107	141
		% within School	7.8%	16.3%	75.9%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.568[a]	6	.016
Likelihood Ratio	16.118	6	.013
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.320	1	.012
N of Valid Cases	141		

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.11.

			The school respects my child's background and culture			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	0	5	28	33
		% within School	.0%	15.2%	84.8%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	0	1	36	37
		% within School	.0%	2.7%	97.3%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	0	2	45	47
		% within School	.0%	4.3%	95.7%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	3	5	20	28
		% within School	10.7%	17.9%	71.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	3	13	129	145
		% within School	2.1%	9.0%	89.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.757[a]	6	.002
Likelihood Ratio	18.245	6	.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.905	1	.048
N of Valid Cases	145		

a. 8 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .58.

			The school teaches my child to respect people from different backgrounds, races and schools of thought			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	0	5	27	32
		% within School	.0%	15.6%	84.4%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	1	3	32	36
		% within School	2.8%	8.3%	88.9%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	1	4	44	49
		% within School	2.0%	8.2%	89.8%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	2	2	25	29
		% within School	6.9%	6.9%	86.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	4	14	128	146
		% within School	2.7%	9.6%	87.7%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.469[a]	6	.613
Likelihood Ratio	4.644	6	.590
Linear-by-Linear Association	.099	1	.753
N of Valid Cases	146		

a. 8 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .79.

			The school is effective in promoting equality and diversity			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	0	6	24	30
		% within School	.0%	20.0%	80.0%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	0	4	33	37
		% within School	.0%	10.8%	89.2%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	1	9	38	48
		% within School	2.1%	18.8%	79.2%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	3	3	21	27
		% within School	11.1%	11.1%	77.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	4	22	116	142
		% within School	2.8%	15.5%	81.7%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.506[a]	6	.105
Likelihood Ratio	9.603	6	.142
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.807	1	.179
N of Valid Cases	142		

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .76.

Crosstabs: Child development (M, N)

			The school has high expectations of my child/children			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	1	10	19	30
		% within School	3.3%	33.3%	63.3%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	3	6	27	36
		% within School	8.3%	16.7%	75.0%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	0	5	44	49
		% within School	.0%	10.2%	89.8%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	1	2	23	26
		% within School	3.8%	7.7%	88.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	5	23	113	141
		% within School	3.5%	16.3%	80.1%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.682[a]	6	.033
Likelihood Ratio	14.046	6	.029
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.573	1	.010
N of Valid Cases	141		

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .92.

			The school is effective in preparing my child/children to live and work in a diverse world			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	1	9	18	28
		% within School	3.6%	32.1%	64.3%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	2	3	30	35
		% within School	5.7%	8.6%	85.7%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	1	6	38	45
		% within School	2.2%	13.3%	84.4%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	4	6	19	29
		% within School	13.8%	20.7%	65.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	8	24	105	137
		% within School	5.8%	17.5%	76.6%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.791[a]	6	.067
Likelihood Ratio	11.022	6	.088
Linear-by-Linear Association	.200	1	.655
N of Valid Cases	137		

a. 5 cells (41.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.64.

Crosstabs: Child wellbeing (I, J, L)

			My child/children is/are not bullied or harassed at school			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	1	1	31	33
		% within School	3.0%	3.0%	93.9%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	5	4	26	35
		% within School	14.3%	11.4%	74.3%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	1	3	44	48
		% within School	2.1%	6.3%	91.7%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	5	2	22	29
		% within School	17.2%	6.9%	75.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	12	10	123	145
		% within School	8.3%	6.9%	84.8%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.773[a]	6	.096
Likelihood Ratio	11.170	6	.083
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.417	1	.234
N of Valid Cases	145		

a. 8 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.00.

			The school is good at stopping bullying, harassment and racism, or dealing with it			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	0	4	25	29
		% within School	.0%	13.8%	86.2%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	2	6	25	33
		% within School	6.1%	18.2%	75.8%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	1	6	37	44
		% within School	2.3%	13.6%	84.1%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	3	6	19	28
		% within School	10.7%	21.4%	67.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	6	22	106	134
		% within School	4.5%	16.4%	79.1%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.031[a]	6	.420
Likelihood Ratio	6.722	6	.347
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.407	1	.121
N of Valid Cases	134		

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.25.

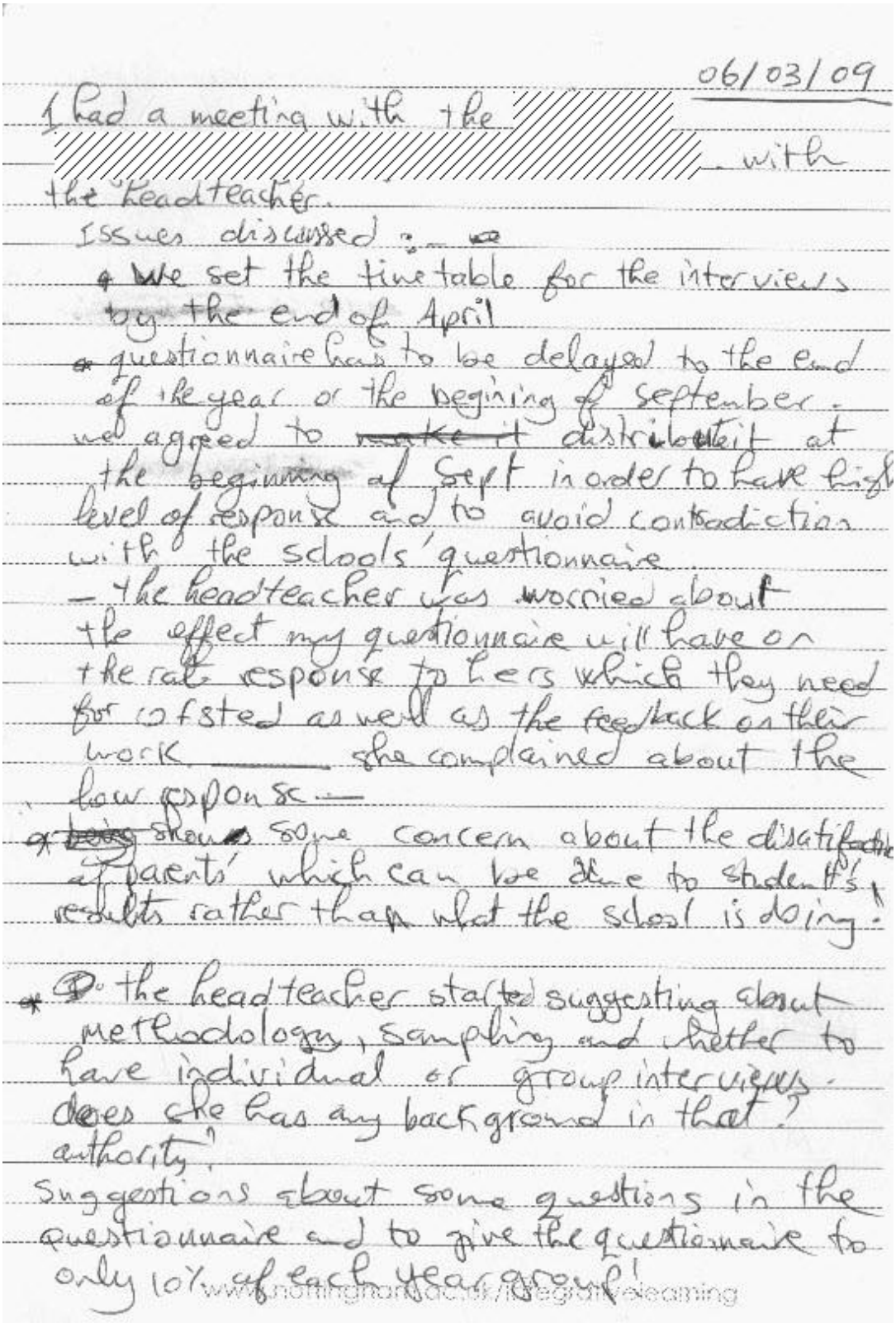
			My child likes school			
			Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree	Total
School	Olive Primary School	Count	0	2	31	33
		% within School	.0%	6.1%	93.9%	100.0%
	London Primary School	Count	0	1	36	37
		% within School	.0%	2.7%	97.3%	100.0%
	Vision Secondary School for Girls	Count	1	10	37	48
		% within School	2.1%	20.8%	77.1%	100.0%
	Andalusia State Secondary School	Count	3	7	20	30
		% within School	10.0%	23.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	4	20	124	148
		% within School	2.7%	13.5%	83.8%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.990[a]	6	.004
Likelihood Ratio	19.757	6	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	13.974	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	148		

a. 7 cells (58.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .81.

Appendix 7: Sample entry of the research journal



06/03/09

I had a meeting with the [redacted] with the headteacher.

Issues discussed :

- We set the timetable for the interviews by the end of April
- questionnaire has to be delayed to the end of the year or the begining of september. we agreed to ~~make it~~ distribute it at the beginning of Sept in order to have high level of response and to avoid contradiction with the schools' questionnaire
- the headteacher was worried about the effect my questionnaire will have on the rate response to hers which they need for ofsted as well as the feedback on their work. she complained about the low response
- ~~being~~ shows some concern about the dissatisfaction of parents' which can be due to student's results rather than what the school is doing!
- the headteacher started suggesting about methodology, sampling and whether to have individual or group interviews. does she has any background in that? authority.

Suggestions about some questions in the questionnaire and to give the questionnaire to only 10% of each year group!

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