Perceptions of Pioneer Female Saudi Higher Education EFL Teachers: A Qualitative Study of their Experiences in English Language Teaching



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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Hatem, and my pearls Adee, Saffanah and Sulafah,

For the company during all the phases of my research journey,

For all the sacrifices you made,

Without your endless love and support nothing would have been possible.

Abstract

This study argues for EFL[1] teacher autonomy and empowerment in Saudi higher education institutions based on the assumption that participating in school decision-making would help to enhance teachers' perceptions, expertise, and commitment towards their own practices.

This research is teacher-centred in the sense that it is written from the teacher's point of view, at a time of multiple changes in Saudi Arabia, where teachers' views are not always taken into consideration. The research focus is on teachers' perceptions of current EFL practices and the role they play in curriculum development and planning, and considers what barriers are hindering them from working towards student-centred and active inquiry-oriented learning environments.

The data used to examine teachers' perceptions and experiences of current English language teaching (ELT) practices are drawn from a sample of 12 female Saudi EFL teachers, who have been awarded international degrees and who are practising ELT in a university in Saudi Arabia.

Data sources include semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, focus group discussions and a drawing activity. The findings revealed: (1) Overall, bureaucracy and a top down approach adopted by the higher education institution affects teachers' perceptions and pedagogical quality; (2) Empowerment appears to be an essential, but not sufficient condition to achieve real changes and successful educational outcomes as it depends on teachers' expertise and their own methods of instructional practice; (3) The need for more continuous professional development (CPD) programmes is an emergent aspect that requires further attention. Three significant issues were raised for further research and comment, relating to the mismatch between current policy aspirations for professional development and the reality of teachers' experience. At the end of this thesis, implications for in-service training of teachers in a mono-cultural society such as Saudi Arabia were discussed.

[1] English as a foreign language (EFL) is a language with no official status, but often widely used in the community for different purposes, e.g. international communication, industry, teaching (Baker and Jones, 1998 cited in Björklund, 2008: 23).

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Glossary of Terms

List of Abbreviations

The following list of abbreviations is used in this thesis and presented alphabetically. The majority of them are used within the field of second language education.

CMs	Course Managers
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELI	English Language Institute
ELLs	English Language Learners
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific purposes
HE	Higher Education
KAFSP	King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Programme
KAU	King Abdul-Aziz University
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Research

''Ask and it will be given to you; search and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you''

(Jesus Christ)[2]

The English language is considered an international language that is needed as a means of communication with the world and has thus received a lot of careful attention from the Saudi Ministry of Education as well as the Saudi community (Al-Seghayer, 2005; Alamri, 2011; Liton, 2013). It is taught as a foreign language, and has been recognised as a compulsory subject in the Saudi national curriculum for approximately 80 years. Due to the huge demand for learning the English language and the increase in the number of English language learners in the Saudi context, there has been a significant demand for teachers of English and a great necessity to ensure the quality of teaching and to move education development forward (Al-Seghayer, 2005; Liton, 2013). Accordingly, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) has reformed the education system in terms of its curricula and quality assurance. For instance, in 2005, a number of development programmes was established, one being the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship programme (KAFSP) (MoHE, 2012). This programme was established to sponsor Saudi male and female students to continue their studies in the highest-ranking universities around the world in a wide range of disciplines. This programme has enabled many Saudi citizens to pursue their higher education (HE) abroad, and has resulted in a generation of teachers who have become pioneers in education. Pioneer in this context is defined as teachers who have had the opportunity to study abroad, learn from different contexts, be exposed to diversified information channels and experience a range of different approaches to teaching and learning

[2] Holy Bible (Matthew, 7:7).

which they bring to their practice, for example, meta-cognitive, student-centred and active learning. Through the reintegration of these pioneer Saudi teachers, who have become active agents capable of bringing about change and who can inform and develop educational policy, different perceptions have been brought back to the teaching profession in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the perspectives of these new entrant teachers are of crucial importance for the further successful development of English language teaching in the Saudi context, and their perspectives form the focus of this empirical research study.

An underlying assumption of the present study is that this new generation of pioneer Saudi EFL teachers may seek to develop new strategies and teaching policies which are appropriate to the social, economic, and political structures of the twenty-first century, and therefore it is essential to investigate their perceptions and experiences towards the English language and the implications of these perceptions towards teaching it as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. Are they able to apply in Saudi Arabia the approaches to teaching and learning that they have acquired abroad? And what are the constraints, if any, they may face? As I was one of those teachers and HE students who went on this sponsorship programme, I find myself driven to investigate more about the cohort of female teachers and not male, as this is the cohort with whom I have access and with whom I share a cultural and educational background.

My starting point for this current study dates back to my MA TESOL research into the perceptions of learning of Saudi female students and how this self-perception could affect their performance. One of the significant findings was the importance of the role of the teacher in shaping students' perceptions, not only towards themselves, but also towards second language acquisition (Althaqafi, 2011). As a result of this research and of my experience on KAFSP, I became interested in the influence of teachers' perceptions towards foreign language teaching. I therefore examined other studies in the field and found that research has demonstrated that the teacher's perceptions and attitudes exert a significant influence on both the perception of students towards learning as well as their responses to social situations (Burgoon, 1990; Giles and Coupland, 1991; Timperley and Robinson, 2001). According to Timperley and Robinson (2001), it is likely that teacher beliefs and perceptions cause students to form or change beliefs towards learning and foreign language acquisition.

Furthermore, teaching is a very personal activity, and individual teachers bring to it different beliefs and assumptions (Richards and Lockhart, 1994). According to Baird et al., (1991), teachers who are seldom asked to reflect upon their own teaching could be nothing more than mere users of textbook materials. It is very important that teaching should appear to teachers as something challenging, dynamic and in no way restrictive to their ambitions (Baird et al., 1991; Kelly, 2004; Kennedy, 2005; Marsh, 2009; Hussain et al., 2011). However, it can be noted, based on my experience as a teacher in a number of public and private schools in Saudi Arabia that the teacher does not have a role to play in terms of input into the curriculum. The curriculum in most Saudi schools is standardized, content-driven and merely a simple representation of the content of student textbooks. It emphasises only the development of basic skills, and the topics covered must incorporate moral values and attitudes that comply with Islamic concepts and reject any other foreign cultural concepts that do not coincide with Islamic culture. Teachers are obliged to abide by that curriculum which is provided by the school and approved by the Ministry of Education (Al-Seghayer, 2005; Liton, 2013). Neither the teacher nor the students have the freedom to choose from the curriculum what can best fit their needs and requirements. This does not seem to fulfil Yates and Grumet's (2011) definition of the curriculum as the programme which nations establish to prepare young people for the world. Curriculum has always been influenced by politics, especially in the curriculum changes that follow major political events (Ibid.), such as the aftermath of 9/11 and the start of the American notion of 'war against terrorism'. Saudi Arabia was one of the main countries involved in this war, as the most wanted person accused of these crimes (Osamah bin Ladin) was regarded as a Saudi citizen. Consequently, Saudi Arabia was urged to seek curriculum reform, as a means of addressing intolerant embedded attitudes and preparing young people for the world (Centre for Religious Freedom, 2008). Indeed, two reforms were conducted in 2004 and 2010 (there will be further detail in chapter 2 section 2.2.2), but the curriculum developments delivered as a result of these reforms kept the same 'teacher-proof' practices and did not encourage any of the new approaches to teaching and learning observed by teachers on the KAFSP.

Current research on educational change has made clear that neither school reform (Kelly, 2004; Kennedy, 2005; Marsh, 2009), nor improving teaching (Britzman, 2003; Olsen, 2008; McIntyre, 2005 cited in Rust, 2012; Miller, 2013), nor reshaping teacher education (Cullingford, 2009; Kennedy and Lee, 2010;

Korthagen et al., 2008 cited in Rust, 2012), can happen if teachers' voices are ignored. For these reasons I feel that it is essential to help teachers to share their beliefs and their own voices and be critically reflective practitioners in order to understand their own needs and requirements. Enabling teachers to make their own voices heard, as they are the main actors in this research and in teaching in general, will ease the path before them to build upon their own choices and learn from their experiences. This research will enable a mutual understanding of both teachers' needs and the forces that constrain them in working towards fruitful educational outcomes and a positive working atmosphere. If a change of attitude and perception in this direction can be achieved, it could have a very significant effect amongst educators and policy makers in Saudi Arabia to make teaching a more attractive and enjoyable career.

When I embarked on this research journey in 2012, I had no clear idea of its outcome. But quickly, after conducting a pilot study and from the examination of the perceived experiences of this category of teachers, it became apparent that there are other related aspects within the field that need much attention, such as teacher empowerment; the teacher as a reflective practitioner; and the nature of continuous professional development (CPD). As these three emergent aspects are too big to be covered in one thesis, I decided to highlight some of the salient work around what I consider to be the main two aspects, which are teacher empowerment and the teacher as a reflective practitioner, although the literature is huge, and the attempt to fill the gaps in the field would be difficult and time consuming. Therefore, the empirical evidence on which I construct my thesis has been gleaned from many data sources and supported by my own background and experience. Indeed, this research is informed by many sources: First, printed documents, literature and periodicals, and I have listed in the bibliography those which have been most useful for me. Second, the actual empirical data collected as well as informal contacts with my participants and faculty head members, which not only left me with vivid memories, but also gave me the chance to see and hear their perspectives on the issues I was researching and helped me to represent their voices. A third source has been my experience with education in Saudi Arabia as an EFL teacher in a number of both private and public institutions. These experiences helped me to begin to highlight the major issues a Saudi teacher may face.

1.1 Context of the Study

The context in which teachers find themselves is crucial and affects how they approach their school experiences, what they learn from these experiences, and how they make sense of what it is to be an effective teacher (Ghaye, 2011). The social context is a dominant variable in the study of language and communication; therefore, it has a strong influence on language learning and teaching (Bucholtz, 2004). According to Bucholtz, teachers shape their beliefs, attitudes and actions largely in conformance with the structures, policies, and traditions of the world around them. The context in this study refers to the physical surroundings in which the participants have been brought up (Muslim/Arabic) and specifically the single sex educational institutions in which they teach.

The study described in this thesis took place at an English language institute in a university in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is a country located in Southeast Asia, between the Arabian Gulf on the east and the Red Sea on the west (see figure 1.1 below). It became a nation in 1932 under the leadership of King AbdulAziz Al-Saud. The country has 27.6 million inhabitants, and occupies most of the Arabian Peninsula with an area of about 900,000 square miles. It is a unique country with no colonial history. It is a monarchy, where the king heads the government as prime minister and as president of the Ministry Council.



Figure 1.1: Map of Saudi Arabia[3]

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the homeland of Islam, and its legal system is based on Sharia (Islamic law) with the Holy Quran as its constitution. Arabic is the official language and the mother tongue of its people, which is taught in schools and is the language of mass media in most Arab countries (Al-Seghayer, 2005). Saudi society is a mainly tribal society with tribal affiliations. Family forms the most important social institution in the Saudi context and is the immediate focus of individual loyalty (Ibid.).

[3] Map adopted from : <https://www.google.com.sa/search?q=map+of+saudi&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei>.

Although almost 90 per cent of the land of Saudi Arabia is desert, the economy of the country was based on agriculture. It was not until 1936 that oil was discovered and commercial production subsequently began during World War II (MoHE, 2010a). Saudi Arabia has about 25 per cent of the world's reserves of oil, and the fourth largest natural gas reserves (Ibid.). By 1950, the country had become a major oil producer (Ibid.). The oil-derived wealth enabled the country to provide free health care together with free education for its population and a tax-free system.

Education in Saudi Arabia is gender segregated and divided into three separate education systems: general education for boys, general education for girls and Islamic education for boys (Alshaer, 2007). Segregation means the separation between men and women in the public domain; girls and boys are separated at the age of six, with designated schools for females and others for males. Female teachers are required to teach in girls' schools, whereas male teachers are required to teach in boys' schools except for Medical sciences, where they can integrate together due to the lack of Saudi specialists within the medical field, and the nature of hospital work. However, in most colleges and universities and due to the shortage of women teachers, male lecturers can teach female students by use of closed circuit television, where female students can see the lecturer, but he cannot see them (Al-Seghayer, 2005, Hamdan, 2005). *''Indeed, segregation is a deeply ingrained social custom in the country and the principle of coeducation is widely rejected''* (AlMunajjed, 1997: 36). However, both male and female students follow the same curriculum and undertake the same annual examinations.

HE is provided by 7 state universities and 17 teacher-training colleges established between 1970 and 1982 (MoHE, 2010a). In 2013 the number of education institutions continued to grow to reach 23 public universities and 102 teacher-training colleges. This serves as an indication of the importance of education that the Saudi government strives to develop. The total budget for HE (universities and teacher-training colleges) was SR 169 billion in 2012. This amount constitutes 25% of the total budget for Saudi Arabia and the HE sector was the second sector to receive such an amount of money. This funding was translated into many developmental educational programmes: the KAFSP was one of them. One of the main aims of this programme was to develop the Saudi human resources and help participants to become familiar with new insights and

perspectives and enable them to develop the country (further details of this programme will be in the next chapter section 2.3.1).

However, although I believe the outcomes of this KAFSP programme will be achieved, in the long run at least, I noticed the reality was different for the returning teachers in the short term. Although the HE sector is the main recipient of attention and the largest amount of funding, during the course of a televised interview in 2012, Dr. Badahdah, the head of curriculum development at King Abdul-Aziz University (KAU), discussed the deterioration of students' educational outcomes. Dr. Badahdah stated that one of the main problems facing the attainment of good educational outcomes was the efficacy of the teachers and he identified the need for further training. The programme raised many issues in my mind. Was the funding squandered recklessly, since the results were not encouraging? What is the evidence that investment in educational development is being made wisely? Why is the importance of CPD programmes acknowledged but the reality is that there are few CPD programmes which are well resourced? Why is there a difference between government rhetoric and the reality of this educational initiative? These questions provoke and shape the debate in this study and I hope to provide some commentary and implications at the end of this thesis.

Since the study is concerned with teachers in KAFSP, where one of the main aims is to invest in human minds and souls, as indicated by King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz, and as a way to enhance the argument concerning teacher agency and the inclusion of teachers in policy formation, the following section draws on human capital theory which inform my understanding of the research aims, especially when we consider this new generation of EFL teachers as agents capable of bringing about change, and how this can be related to education in Saudi Arabia.

1.2 Investment in Human Capital: Pressures and Needs

Education is an economic good, an engine of growth, which rests on the quality and quantity of education in any country (Olaniyan and Okemakinde, 2008). In the 1960s, the new interest of social scholars in studies related to the economic value of investment in education emerged. This interest was supported by the notion that the most productive route to national development of any society lies in the advancement of its human capital that is its population (Schultz, 1961).

This is the main tenet of human capital theory: that an educated population is a productive population, and education contributes in a direct way to the growth of societies by enhancing the skills and abilities of its individuals (Schultz, 1961; Kabaha, 2005). It is assumed that education paved the way for development growth, thus, societies are urged to enhance their productivity through investing in education as a lifelong learning activity (Heckman, 2006). The task for HE is that it should be directed to the creation of intellectual capacity and construction of knowledge (Thomson and Walker, 2010). Some might disagree that the notion of the educational institution as the formal place for knowledge gain is questionable in this technological age where knowledge is no longer restricted to educational sites. I see, at least for the time being, teachers are still the main actors in contemporary educational institutions and they should be helped to reflect their knowledge freely, especially those teachers who have had the privilege of education in their own countries as well as in other international leading universities around the world. This aspect of allowing more freedom for teachers as capable individuals is parallel to the deeper notions of investing in human capital that emerged in the 1990s, when sociologists (e.g. Seers, Sen, Edwards) began to consider development from a human needs perspective (Thomas and Potter, 1992). The emphasis here was not heavily focused on economic growth or human capital as the primary indicator of development, but more on assessing individuals' needs, freedom, equity, quality of life, participation and empowerment to reach their potential (Ibid.). This more holistic view of human development was taking centre stage, especially in organisations such as UNDP[4], emphasising that human development through investing in individuals is not just measured in terms of the economy but also in terms of social freedom. I strongly agree with that, and I believe that a country must have social freedom in order to achieve social development.

1.2.1 The Relevance to the Saudi Context

For a country like Saudi Arabia seeking all the ways of moving rapidly forward, it should rely heavily on its resources of skills and expertise. In this regard, the main provider for qualified skills and expertise needed for development is HE.

[4] United Nations Development Programme.

Accordingly, the planning for HE should attract substance and readiness to build a more fruitful system.

Since 2005, the Saudi Development Plan started generally to acknowledge the importance of human capital in its long term development strategy, and this has been translated into the implementation of the KAFSP programme. This programme was guided by the principle that people are the nation's greatest natural resource. The vision and motivation of this programme was to develop people's capabilities through partnerships with elite organisations. Through the investment in education, this programmes stresses that human developments are essential for the ability to sustain growth in both production and employment. Based on my experience with those pioneer teachers who form part of the country's human capital, and as this programme enables them to develop constructive knowledge, it is desirable that they should be given the space to reflect on what they have acquired and help in moving the wheel of development forward.

1.3 Motivations for Conducting this Research

My interest in the English language traces back to the former days of my BA degree studies, when I chose to specialise in English language as a subject at the College of European Languages and Translation in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Personally, I have always been fascinated by English as a language and its status as a lingua franca. Upon obtaining my BA, I started working as a teacher of general English language at a private school for two years and then worked in public schools for two more years. Also, I had the experience of teaching in a medical school for a year and a half and finally I joined a public university to work as a language instructor in one of its language centres for three years. As the years passed, I realised that teaching became easier with experience but I still remember how difficult my first year was as a teacher because I had a degree in translation not in teaching. Accordingly, I decided to do an MA in TESOL at the University of Nottingham which filled some of the theoretical gaps in my teaching. However, throughout all my previous years of experience as an EFL teacher, prior to my MA, there were some days when I thought of giving up the job as there were days when I felt lost sometimes and conflicted at other times. I also realised that the reason I had sometimes felt lost was because of

the lack of in-service training or lack of any sense of my own professional development as a reflective teacher, trying to find the right way on a road that I had never walked before, and unable to learn from experienced teachers. And I felt conflicted at other times because of the tension between my beliefs concerning what my students needed and the choice of curriculum I had to teach. After attaining my higher degree, my beliefs concerning how to teach and the expectations of the school clashed with the experiences I had in my language classes. This experience made me change my beliefs about ELT; I now feel strongly that teachers, especially those who have had the chance to acquire higher degrees abroad, should be helped to articulate their reflections and put into practice the new insights in ways that benefit their teaching, their students, and their colleagues.

Another drive for conducting this study is the absence of research in the EFL context focusing on the formation of female EFL teachers' perceptions as reflective practitioners, making this study significant and an important contribution to achieving educational change and development in the Saudi context, especially in this new era where the country of Saudi Arabia seeks more development and curricula reforms.

1.4 Rationale

Why Research into Teachers' Perceptions?

According to McLeod (2009), perceptions provide meaning for life, they help us organise and structure our experiences, and so the value of studying experiences and perceptions lies in providing significant indications of current community thoughts, beliefs, preferences and desires. Getting to know the perceptions of a person and her attitudes towards something will enable you to best be acquainted with her needs and then be able to help her to become a critical catalyst in the process of social transformation (Ibid.).

In this study where teachers are the main actors, their perceptions and beliefs can facilitate, or serve as a barrier to, learning English. According to Nespor (1987), Pajares (1992), and Richardson (1996) understanding teachers' beliefs and perceptions helps to clarify:

- how teachers view their work;

- how teachers' perceptions affect their behaviour;
- how teachers go about using new information about teaching and learning;
- what goes on in the classrooms;
- how teaching practices and professional teacher preparation programmes can be improved.

I intend by this research to touch upon generic issues that teachers might want to reveal and help them to enable their voice to be heard, giving them some agency and seek more development and reform. The task for me is not to find a solution, but to outline problems and suggest ways to approach the issues.

This project will focus on Saudi practitioner teachers from two perspectives. The first aims at assessing prevailing ideological beliefs that Saudi EFL teachers have regarding teaching English as a foreign language and how much freedom they have. The second aspect will examine the aspects of teaching that tend to be assessed most and least favourably by new entrant Saudi EFL teachers. This study will tackle the following questions to guide this research, based on literature and my own teaching experience:

● What are the experiences and perceptions of the pioneer new entrant female Saudi EFL teachers towards teaching English as a foreign language in HE?

● What are teachers' perceptions of their department's English teaching culture?

● What are the perceived obstacles and challenges female Saudi EFL teachers face in providing high quality ELT?

Moreover, different people hold different beliefs about teachers and their work but what really matters is the perception of the teacher herself (Connell, 1985). Indeed, it is more significant to discover teachers' own perceptions through their own lenses as they are the major players in any educational system. It is highly important to understand their perceptions because this will help to analyse their work.

Furthermore, in studying teacher perceptions, we need to understand the nature of these perceptions regarding English teaching in terms of positive, neutral, or negative dispositions. In investigating the contributing aspects related to teacher views towards EFL teaching, I want to examine some demographic teacher data including their academic degrees, years of teaching experience and prior training

in working with ELT. I expect that teachers' perceptions and practices are influenced by a complex set of factors including student attitudes, school culture practices, and community and professional development efforts (Kelly, 2004; Marsh, 2009). With a better understanding of this complexity, teaching development efforts can be fulfilled to both remedy negative perceptions and to prevent their formation. I hope that other teachers will benefit from the research, as I know I will.

1.5 Significance of the Study

A plethora of research has been conducted on teacher perceptions and cognition in general education, and the majority of studies have been conducted in developed countries, such as America (Richardson, 1996), England (Day et al., 1990; Day et al., 2011; OECD, 2009) and Finland (Björklund, 2008). To my knowledge, no study concerned with the perceptions of new entrant female EFL teachers towards current ELT practices in HE has yet been carried out in Saudi Arabia. The uniqueness of the participants in this research makes this study significant and an important contribution to providing teacher autonomy and satisfaction.

This study will address the role of teachers in decision formation and curriculum policy, and suggest further developments to create a good workplace climate for them. In addition, gaining an insight into the opinions and perceptions of EFL teachers with regard to the teaching of the English language will have direct implications for those involved in teaching EFL in Saudi universities as well as for their policy makers, and even for any government who wishes to plan national initiatives or any other educational reforms not only in Saudi Arabia, but also in any part of the world. Thus, the significance of the study is wide ranging and of interest to a number of different stakeholders.

1.6 My Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework underpinning this study draws on research and literature concerned with the role of teachers' perceptions in relation to curriculum formation, reflective practice and their professional development as

active agents in their workplace (Schön, 1983; Lawton, 1996; Kelly, 2004; Kennedy, 2005; Marsh, 2009; Kennedy and Lee, 2010). To illuminate these aspects, my developing theoretical framework in analysing the operation of teachers' experience was influenced by human/social capital theories (Schultz, 1961) as EFL teachers form part of the country's human capital, aiding in the education of coming generations and helping in their development. In addition, in analysing the operation of teachers' agency in the hierarchical causal school structure, human agency in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1989, 1997, 2006) is highlighted as it accords a central role to cognitive, self-reflective and self-regulatory processes (Bandura, 1989). This derived framework by Bandura emphasises the means by which individuals exercise personal agency in their career development process, in addition to extra personal factors that enhance or constrain teacher agency. According to Bandura (2006: 164):

> ''To be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances. In this view, personal influence is part of the causal structure. People are self-organising, proactive, self-regulating, and self-reflecting. They are not simply onlookers of their behaviour. They are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them.''

Belief in one's agency and personal efficacy is a key personal resource in personal development and change since it affects people's goals, aspirations, how well they motivate themselves, and their perseverance in the face of adversity and difficulty (Bandura, 1997, 2006).

In addition, as one of the core aims of this research is enabling teachers' voices to be heard, I draw on the work of the philosopher Michel Foucault on freedom, capabilities and emphasising the theme of personal agency (1970, 1983, 1998) and draw on aspects of his thought with respect to the issue of teacher agency. Foucault's work offers new possibilities for political practice and for the pursuit of a model of agent-centred self-determination (Tobias, 2005). Although Foucault's project of freedom offers a strong vivid critique of modern social and political theories, particularly centred around issues of power, knowledge and discourse (Pignatelli, 1993), it informs the discussion about educational reform and school restructuring and highlights the crucial role the teacher must play as an active educational agent in effecting deep changes in the way schools work (Ibid.). Chapter 3 provides further discussion of these adopted theories.

I believe that 'voice' is the mirror of the soul that can speak the truth of consciousness and experience (Jackson and Mazzei, 2009). As people can learn from their voices (Hadfield and Haw, 2001), qualitative researchers have been trained to privilege 'voice' and are keen to free it from whatever restrains it from coming into being (Jackson and Mazzei, 2009). Nevertheless, some problematized notions, such as what constitutes authentic voice and the dangerous assumptions in trying to represent a single truth articulated by a limited number of voices still pose many alerts to qualitative research to search for and liberate. In order to account for these deficiencies and inadequacies of the notion of voice in qualitative inquiry, I will draw on post-structural theories of language and meaning (Foucault, 1970, 1983, 1998).

However, adopting a feminist stance for my research would lead to revealing the complexity of political agency and its relationship to identity and subjectivity (Takhar, 2013). This study is situated within the debate around methodological issues including ethical and political implications. It also provides challenging questions for the methodological process since it is concerned with unpicking the voices and narratives of Saudi female teachers. I understand the link between power and knowledge and realise the sensitive position that I am in as a Muslim Saudi female teacher with high ambitions but low impact. Without recognising the inherent subjectivities of the adopted research method, I may then unwillingly perpetuate the limitations, despite my good intentions. If other stories are to be heard, bias and viewpoint needs to be challenged, so that other voices can tell their stories (Takhar, 2013) (further details of the epistemological and methodological limits of the researcher's reflexivity, voice and agency will be represented in chapter 4).

1.7 Design of the Study

In order to be able to address the research questions, this study employed primarily a qualitative approach for data collection and analysis, which was conducted in a major Saudi university in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. I adopted an interpretive approach where the emphasis was on the understanding of teachers' perceptions through an examination of their own interpretations of their workplace and social environment.

The pilot study of this research included 5 semi-structured interviews, 2 classroom observations, and 1 focus group and helped to formulate the questions for the main data study. The main data collection tools were:

1. Semi-structured interviews (with 12 teachers)
2. Non-participatory classroom observations
3. Focus groups (teachers and course managers)
4. Drawing task (generated by teachers)

Teachers and course managers were encouraged to speak in English or Arabic whenever they wanted, to express their thoughts more easily. The transcribed data were then revised by a professional translator to minimise any loss of meaning. Chapter 4 describes the methodology applied and the data collection procedures together with ethical considerations.

1.8 Some Notes on the Style and Use of Words

This study is mainly concerned with EFL teachers and teaching in formal HE institutions. Since my targeted sample are female teachers, I use the female gender pronoun 'she' whenever I am referring to a person.

Moreover, there is a number of technical words used throughout the development of my thesis. In order for these words not to be an issue for future readers, I have footnoted them as I feel it is more beneficial that they be introduced immediately and do not cause any disturbance for the reader. In addition, I intend to begin each chapter with an appropriate quotation and make sure that each one reflects the main theme of that chapter and signposts it to the reader.

1.9 Organisation of the Thesis

The format of this thesis is seven chapters, organised as follows: following on from this chapter, the second chapter is a review of the social, educational context of the geographical area covered by the study and a critical examination of the socio-historical background, which is necessary for the proper appreciation of current language perceptions in Saudi Arabia. In addition, this chapter sheds light on some aspects of the history of teaching English in HE in Saudi Arabia,

highlighting major changes and reforms and the role of the English language. The third chapter is the literature review that addresses the philosophical approach and the related theories around the role of teachers' perceptions on their practical experiences, empowerment, voice, identity and around the teacher as a reflective practitioner. The fourth chapter is dedicated to explaining the research methodology used for discovering the perceptions and actions of Saudi EFL teachers. Analysis of data and reporting of findings will be the focus of the fifth chapter. A research based discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions will be the core of the sixth chapter. Finally, the seventh chapter will offer some recommendations, personal reflection and a potential contribution to knowledge, which can be usefully applied in language policy planning and implementation in the context of Saudi Arabia and could be adapted for use in other contexts as well.

1.10 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter provided an introduction to the context, motivation, rationale, design, structure, and significance of this empirical research study and explained the relationship between my professional and personal experiences with ELT, which led to the emergence of the core research questions. In addition, a number of emergent themes were raised which will be discussed further in the literature review (chapter 3). My conceptual and theoretical framework, as well as the style and organisation of the thesis were also outlined in order to give the general framework of the thesis. Some aspects of the historical and educational background in Saudi Arabia and the cultural dimension in EFL education to the ongoing debate surrounding the current curriculum, women employment and mobility are explored in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 2

Study Background: Setting the Educational Context for this Research

''A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots''

(Marcus Garvey)[5]

2.1 Introduction

In researching humans and their perceptions it is essential to investigate the role of social aspects in specific contexts (Bucholtz, 2004). Human cognition is always shaped by the social context in which it takes place, thus one can argue that self or group perceptions are essentially context-dependent (Turner et al., 1994). Context forms an ecological paradigm for development (Ibid.). This notion has significant implications for accepted ways of thinking about self and perceptions. Thus, it is important to construct a general overview of the context of the study in order to understand and fully appreciate the research and the many principles that have guided it. For that reason, this chapter aims to provide an outline for the reader by focusing on three major aspects of the specific context of the research in Saudi Arabia: 1) the education system 2) women employment and mobility, and 3) the teaching of English in HE.

In the first section concerning the education system in Saudi Arabia, I will provide a general overview of the history and structure of the Saudi educational system, reviewing some major educational polices and reforms. In the second section, I will address issues around the position of Saudi women in society, their

[5] Marcus Garvey was a Jamaican-born black nationalist, who created a 'Back to Africa' movement in the United States and became an inspirational figure for later civil rights activists. Adopted from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/garvey_marcus.shtml>.

employment and mobility in order to illuminate their role in the broader social context. In the third section, the focus will be shifted onto teaching English as a foreign language: its first introduction to the country and the features of ELT and training in HE, so that a map is created for the reader to depict a better picture of the context of the study and the factors that could affect teachers' perceptions and practices.

Although this study is not explicitly political, nor is it based on political studies, it will inevitably involve some historical description of Saudi political scenarios which inform past and current policies in the educational system and language policies, as well as the adaptation of new curriculum reforms. This brief highlighting of some political background is pertinent to the discussion as it will reflect on the educational practices of the government their new policies and how teachers are explicitly positioned as agents of change within these policies.

Having described the overall outline of this chapter, a general view about the history of its education system is now presented.

2.2 History of Education in Saudi Arabia (1930s-2012)

Education in Saudi Arabia, in the past, was largely limited to instruction in small numbers of Islamic schools, the aim of which was to teach religious rituals (Hamdan, 2005). The situation continued like this until the discovery and production of oil in the 1930s. Such a discovery formed a major shift for the country on many levels. One of these major shifts was the introduction of public education, when *'The Ministry of Education was established in 1953, and the first public schools for boys were opened the same year'* (AlMunajjed, 1997: 60). Meanwhile, girls' education was restricted to some practices which took place at home or in private tutorials in local mosques, and stopped at the age of puberty when veiling in public became mandatory (Hamdan, 2005). This divergent view which led to the overprotection of girls and the prevention of education was due to two main reasons. First, the breadwinner in the Saudi family was the man, so it was necessary for him to be educated to enable him to attain a job rather than his female counterpart (Meccawy, 2010). The second reason was the common belief that the female's nature is different from that of the male (Hamdan, 2005) and the main role of women is to be housewives. Consequently, there was a prevailing belief that women simply did not need education. However, the first

founder of women's education was King Faisal, who established the first school for girls in 1956 (AlMunajjed, 1997) and managed to convince his tribal society of the importance of girls' education. Girls' education was under the administration of a religious institution, known as the General Presidency for Girls' Education, and remained so for over 40 years. However, in March 2002, a fatal fire tragedy in one of the girls' school in Mecca in which 15 girls died, led girls' education to be removed from the care of the Presidency and merged with the boys under the Ministry of Education. Since girls' education in Saudi officially began, educational levels have increased rapidly; in the first year of girls' teaching, there were only 15 young girls attending (Altorki, 1986), but the number has increased to reach 246,559 girls in elementary schools in 1970 (Hamdan, 2005). By the year 1989 the number reached 649,509 (Ibid.), and it keeps increasing year after year, as the number of women increases.

On the other hand, high oil revenue in the early 1970s helped to introduce large-scale changes in educational levels, in terms of opening up more free educational institutions for both males and females, as well as providing more public spending (Yamani, 1996). According to the World Bank database, in 2004, public spending on education was 6.8 per cent of GDP, and government expenditure on education was 27.6% (World Bank, 2008). Economic growth as a result of increases in the price of oil impacted greatly on this trend in Saudi Arabia. It is clear that education spending as a proportion of overall spending tripled from 1970 to 2004. The literacy rate in 1970 in Saudi Arabia was 15 per cent for males and 2 per cent for females (UNDP, 2003). By the 1990s, there was a steep rise in the literacy rate, that continued until it was 78.8 per cent in 2003, female literacy was estimated to be at 70.8 per cent, and male literacy was at 84.7 per cent (which was the lowest literacy rate in the Gulf nations) (World Bank, 2008; Alamri, 2011). The recent statistics by UNESCO (2002) predict that the percentage of literacy rate in Saudi Arabia by the year 2016 will continue to grow to a large extent.

2.2.1 Structure and Overall Features of Saudi Educational System

The education system in Saudi Arabia lies under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and the General Organisation for Technical Education and Vocational Training. There are also other authorities

such as the Ministry of Defence and Aviation, the Ministry of Interior, and the Presidency of the National Guard who provide their affiliates with primary, secondary and adult education as well, following the study plans and curricula formulated by the Ministry of Education. The highest authority that supervises educational policies and practices within Saudi schools and institutions is the Supreme Committee for Educational policy, which was established in 1963 (MoHE, 2010a).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1958, along with other members of the Arab League agreed upon a uniform education system which provided for a 6-year elementary, a 3-year intermediate, and a 3-year secondary cycle with a separate higher education system. Education is not compulsory except at the primary stage which is divided into two levels: elementary and intermediate (Al-Seghayer, 2005). Nowadays, general education consists of four levels offered for Saudi citizens and residents for free: a 3-year kindergarten, primary, intermediate, and secondary with the same duration of time agreed upon within the Arab league. The following table summarises the duration of time for each period, and the general curriculum at each stage.

Type of Education	Duration	General Curriculum
Primary Education 1. Elementary	Six years (Ages 6-12)	Arabic, art education, Islamic studies, history, geography, science, mathematics, English (at the 4th level), physical education (for boys) and home economics (for girls)
2. Intermediate	Three years (12-15)	Arabic, English, art education, Islamic studies, history, geography, science, mathematics, physical education (for boys) and home economics (for girls)
Secondary Education 1. General Secondary Education	Three years (Ages 15-18)	Arabic, English, religious studies, history, geography, biology, chemistry, mathematics, physical education (for boys) and home economics (for girls)
2. Religious Secondary Education	Three years (Ages 15-18)	Religious studies, Arabic language and literature, English, general culture, geography and history
3. Technical Secondary Education	Three years (Ages 15-18)	There are two branches: 1) Vocational/Technical Schools which include subjects around auto/metal mechanics, architectural drawing, and electricity. In addition to these technical subjects, students study Arabic, English, religious studies, mathematics, physics, chemistry and physical education. 2) Commercial Schools Students at these schools take Arabic, economics, accounting, commercial correspondence, financial mathematics, general mathematics, bookkeeping, English and geography.

Table 2.1: Saudi General Education Classifications

Although English, and particularly British English has been mandated to be a school subject in primary and secondary schools, the age at which it is introduced and the hours per week it is taught are currently still under debate (Charise, 2007). English was taught only starting from intermediate level, but in 2004, it was implemented from the sixth grade. However, the second massive curriculum

reform to Saudi public education in 2010 has resulted in the implementation of English instruction from the fourth grade[6] onwards.

2.2.2 National Curriculum Review

Curriculum is at the heart of any education system and it is clear that it has a fundamental role in shaping the body of any educational institution; it reflects the models of instructional delivery chosen (Wilson, 2005). It cannot be studied in isolation; it is the formation of the interaction between school and society, which is also shaped by them (Ibid.).

> ''The school curriculum is the program nations establish to prepare young people for the world. It points to the world and engages in the formation of personhood. At times of important political change, curriculum becomes a key site for attention and reworking.'' (Yates and Grumet, 2011: 3)

One view is that curriculum policy serves to narrate the history of a nation by providing future generations with a story-line about who they were, are and want to be (Yates and Grumet, 2011). As curriculum plays a crucial role in education and shaping the beliefs of future generations, it has always been influenced by politics. This can be shown clearly in proposals to change what is taught as national history, or in the curriculum changes that follow major political events (Ibid.), such as the aftermath of the terrorist attack of 9/11. It is of a paramount importance here to refer to this important period of time in Saudi Arabian history, which is a crucial period that brought change not only to the political system, but also to the educational system. This terrorist attack awakened the world to a growing movement by extremists within the Islamic world. It has become clear that extreme Islamic ideologies, which favour Muslims over non-Muslims, men over women, and a dominant Muslim sect over other Muslim sects have been gaining adherents throughout some parts of the world (Centre for Religious Freedom, 2008, Al-Rasheed, 2010). Accordingly, it became essential to look for the reasons that could have contributed to generating such hostile feelings or thoughts. As a result, the Saudi curriculum has come under intense scrutiny by America, especially when we think of Osama bin Laden as Saudi Arabian by birth and upbringing (Centre for Religious Freedom, 2008; Elyas and Picard, 2013).

[6] The fourth grade is the fourth school year when students are usually 9 or 10 years old.

Accordingly, the United States of America negotiated the reality of the intolerance embedded in some Saudi religious subjects, asserting that this could generate unfavourable feelings within students and teach them not to accept others, such as Jews or Shi'a Muslims[7]. Although Saudi officials rejected any link between their curriculum and any extremism, many educationalists recognised the need for curriculum reform (Prokop, 2003; Elyas and Picard, 2013). Consequently, the Saudi government in 2004, called for a *National Curriculum Review* with the aim of modernising and avoiding any radical beliefs or intolerant mindsets. As a result, all educational materials and textbooks in general education have been reissued at least once, and some of them (especially religious books) twice. Even though the response was slow, many Muslim countries decided to undertake some tentative steps to avoid any radical thoughts. For example, Algeria is another Muslim country which faces such radical beliefs, and has tried to extirpate the extremist influence from its own curriculum (Charise, 2007). Additionally, Qatar, one of the Arabian Gulf countries, underwent a massive reform to its public curriculum in 2002, resulting in the implementation of English from first grade, with 900 hours of ELT throughout their primary and secondary education (Ibid.). This is in contrast to Saudi Arabia, in which the majority of classes are dedicated to Islamic religion and the Arabic language and literature.

After the first reform of the Saudi general curriculum, the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education received criticism for their preference for Islamic and Arabic texts over English educational materials, under the assumption that this could encourage religious extremism and terrorism (Charise, 2007). Although this might be the American version of the scenario of recent curriculum reform in Saudi Arabia, Saudi educationalists' version is in contrast to this. For instance, the Ministry of Education published on its website that the Kingdom's education policy affirms that the State considers the curriculum as one of the most important aspects of teaching and education and developing it would play an integral role in developing the future of the Kingdom (MoHE, 2010a). In addition, King Abdullah submitted a draft for education reform in the area. A workshop was convened at the King AbdulAziz University to discuss the implementation of the draft. Dr. Ibrahim Alawi, one of the speakers who attended, presented a

[7] Shi'a is the second largest sect of Muslims who believe that Ali (the Prophet's cousin) is the legitimate successor to the Prophet Mohammad and reject the first three caliphs (the chief Muslim religious rulers who reigned after prophet Mohammad).

paper at this workshop entitled *'Development article: The Thinking Approach'* and argued in his paper that the main problem of the education field in Saudi Arabia is the lack of engagement in opening to others' worlds and the non-existent practice of broadening one's thinking (Islam Daily, 2005).

Based on these thoughts in multicultural education, in 2010 there was another massive reform to Saudi public education which resulted in new textbooks for all levels in general education, and the introduction of English instruction from the fourth grade, as well as the cut down of familiar cultural subjects, such as Arabic and Religion to increase the time given to English. The question here is: would this new modern curriculum, reflecting local as well as global cultures, perform a better job than the old curriculum? There is a need for further research in this regard, especially when we think of the situation of unrest that Saudi Arabia has been through in this era alongside its surrounding Arab countries.

However, although two reforms have been made to some aspects of the content, most Saudi educational institutions kept, and still keep, the same curriculum practices with the same slavish representations of textbooks or 'teacher-proof' curricula (Elyas and Picard, 2013). Teachers still have no say in the official curriculum, and they have to operate a curriculum which has been imposed upon them. Neither the teacher nor the students have the freedom to choose from the curriculum what can best fit their needs and requirements. As cited in Marsh (2009):

> ''In our zeal for solutions, we are quick to condemn the strategies of reformers who preceded us because they have obviously not achieved the desired results.'' (Reville, 2006: 1)

This might also justify our interpretations and sensation of frustration of being not able to achieve what we were aiming at. I concur with what was noted by McCaslin (2006) and cited in Marsh (2009): that successful reform should start with a clearer understanding of how to learn from previous reform efforts in a way that will help to build upon each of them and not to serve as sequential correctives. On the other hand, the reform of curriculum content and organisation are important, but this is unlikely to be successful unless a reform effort is consistent with the values of the wider society. For instance, when we take the case of the national education reform in Qatar, as it is one of the Arabian Gulf states that share many things in common with its neighbour Saudi

Arabia, the same religion, language, social values and structure, one can notice the huge strides the Qatari educational system was able to accomplish in a very short period of time. For instance, Qatar managed to develop a detailed plan for the implementation of its reforms, reforms that incorporate four principles: autonomy, accountability, variety and choice (Brewer et al., 2007); reforms that are based on decentralised autonomy, where classes are learner-centred. The aim by this comparison is to provide a visible, live example of how a nation can easily fulfil such an outcome. The case of Qatar is instructive for other countries, especially its neighbours, as they grapple with reforms to their values and education programmes in direct response to its challenges. This can be attributed simply to the well-balanced homology between civic and moral education (Ibid.).

Indeed, curriculum reform is multifaceted as it includes analysis of teaching staff, students, and school structure, as well as curriculum content (Marsh, 2009). Barnett and Coate (2005) proclaim that curriculum is a missing term in HE; missing from public debate, governmental policy, and even absent from educational texts produced by educationalists. Although this might be arguable in some contexts, where there has been a significant body of scholarship on curriculum formation and development in HE (Muller, 2008), as the situation in Saudi Arabia, but what is really missing is a deep understanding of the conceptual framework of knowledge in curriculum formation. How can we enable a higher proportion of learners to gain access to powerful knowledge? Who should be the main stakeholders of curriculum formation: policy makers, teachers, or why not students?

Having discussed the new curriculum review and aspiration, the following section identifies HE in Saudi Arabia, its aims, aspirations and outcomes.

2.3 HE in Saudi Arabia (1957-2012)

In 1975, a segment of the Ministry of Education became a separate individual entity, and was renamed the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), to deal exclusively with HE issues (MoHE, 2010a). It was assigned with many responsibilities, among them were:

- Creating and administering universities in the Kingdom;
- Developing necessary human resources through education and training;

● Offering special programmes in accordance with the needs of the country;

● Raising the level of communication and coordination between higher institutions and other governmental ministries in terms of their interests and needs in HE;

● Representing the government abroad in all educational and cultural affairs, through its various cultural and educational bureaus distributed over more than 32 countries.

Saudi HE lasts for four years in the fields of humanities and social sciences and five to six years in the fields of medicine, engineering and pharmacy. Arabic is the primary medium of instruction for Islamic studies, arts, humanities, social sciences, and education. English is often the language of instruction for 'globally-oriented' subjects, such as applied sciences, technology and business (Findlow, 2006).

The Saudi government has assigned HE a paramount significance which is evident not only in the large number of students who pursue tertiary education, but also in the way it has expanded since its inception in 1957 from a single institution with an enrolment of 21 students and a staff of 9. By the year 1982 HE had grown to include 7 universities with 63,563 students and staff numbering 6,906 (Saleh, 1986). Over the last five decades, HE in Saudi Arabia has undergone tremendous growth and expanded to include:

- 23 Government Universities;
- 22 Primary Teachers' Colleges for men;
- 80 Primary Teachers' Colleges for women;
- 40 Colleges and Institutes for health;
- 24 Technical Colleges;
- 33 Private Universities and Colleges.

These universities were established in a very short time span and the future promises more (MoHE, 2010a, Alamri, 2011). It is evident that during the second half of the twentieth century, HE has grown significantly in size and resources. *''HE did not occur in a vacuum, however; rather, it reflects recent periods of not only social and geopolitical transition, but also technological and scientific developments''* (Kabaha, 2005). For instance, in the last decade, the Saudi MoHE

has launched several HE initiatives in both technical and educational readiness and infrastructures.

> ''These reform plans are being carried out through transforming Saudi universities into 'functional and developmental institutes' via a careful balance of international academic standards, national needs, local cultural identity, and careful management of knowledge production, management, dissemination, access, and control.'' (World.edu, 2010)

As a result of these fundamental reform plans, the Saudi Arabia-based universities have joined the international league table of the world's top universities. According to Webometrics of World Universities in June 2010, three Saudi universities were amongst the top 200 World Universities and six universities were included in the top 10 universities in both the Arabian Gulf states and Islamic states (World.edu, 2010). In addition, when it comes to efficiency in HE, Saudi Arabia was ranked 31 in the Muslim world (Ibid.).

As a major fruitful outcome from the new vision of HE and as a way to develop its cadre, a large scale foreign scholarship programme was launched. The following section describes this programme.

2.3.1 Foreign Scholarship Programme

Seeking the path of development, and aspiring to become globally competitive, government in Saudi Arabia sought a national education hub to create more opportunities for meeting Saudis pressing demand for HE and development. Hence, this national initiative *'King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Programme'* (KAFSP) was launched by the late Saudi monarch King Abdullah, who was cautiously pressing for political reforms during his office, in May 2005 (and it is expected to continue until 2020). This programme was established to sponsor Saudi male and female students to continue their studies in the best-qualified universities around the world in a wide range of disciplines at all academic levels. According to King Abdullah, *'this can be regarded as a true investment in Saudi minds'* (MoHE, 2010). In this regard, it can be asserted that the most productive route to national development of any society lies in the advancement of its population, that is its human capital (Schultz, 1961).

This programme was designed and tailored in accordance with the needs of the labour market and national institutions with the aim of preparing Saudi human resources to be an effective force in order to be internationally competitive in many areas of scientific research and to raise the development of the Saudi workforce (MoHE, 2010a, Alamri, 2011). This scholarship programme is awarded to students who have been accepted in one of the top 100 worldwide institutions determined by the MoHE to ensure good attainment of expertise and develop world-class researchers and build the Saudi Arabia HE research base.

In 2010, around 50,000 male and female students were awarded these scholarships to further their studies in more than 20 countries (MoHE, 2012). By the year 2012, the number had increased to reach 145,277 students enrolled within more than 22 high-ranking, leading international universities (Ibid.). The following table shows the number of Saudi scholarship students worldwide according to the database of the MoHE (2012):

Categories of Students	Total Numbers
Unemployed sponsored students	103,661
Employed scholarship students	17,335
Self-sponsored students enrolled to the programme	11,198
Students' dependents learning English	13,083
The sum no.	**145,277**

Table 1.2: The Number of Sponsored Saudi Students in 2012

According to a report published by the MoHE in 2010, Saudi Arabia is ranked by UNESCO as the fourth country in the world for the international movement of students; Saudi Arabia ranked behind China (421,000 students), India (153,300 students), and South Korea (105,300 students), hence, Saudi Arabia is ahead of Japan and the United States in international student movement (Alamri, 2011). Moreover, Saudi Arabia is also ranked by UNESCO as the first country in the world for the number of students studying abroad in proportion to the population at a total of 0.3% (Ibid.) and has continued to increase to reach 0.5% in 2014. Saudi female students won the majority of places in this programme since it was launched for the first time in 2005 (MoHE, 2010b).

In fact, this programme has produced a new generation of Saudi women, who have become pioneers in a variety of scientific research and human development careers, for instance, Professor Ghada Al-Mutairi who is now heading a research centre in California after winning the National Institute of Health Directors' Pioneer Award for her research in reflecting rays and treating illnesses without the need for surgery. Another female Saudi name is Dr. Faten Al-Zamil, Associate Professor in medical biology, College of Medicine and Medical Sciences at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, who has received a gold medal for her excellence in the field of anti-cancer nano-molecules in camel urine. She also introduced an invention that ranked sixth among 600 inventions in an international competition in Kuala Lumpur. Another name that shines as an exemplary female Saudi academic is Dr. Soraya Al-Turki, Professor of Anthropology at the American University in Cairo, who lectures at universities worldwide. Dr. Intisar Al-Suhaibani, Associate Professor in the College of Science at King Saud University, is another successful Saudi example who received a silver medal for her research in international trade at the International Fair for Women Inventors held in Seoul in 2009 (MoHE, 2010b; Alamri, 2011).

It is evident that one of the most impressively outstanding tangible Saudi achievements in modern educational history which is worthy of recognition and acknowledgement is the above mentioned scholarship programme, which invested in human resource capabilities as a developing force. However, it can be noted that some of those academic names who engaged in cross-cultural learning experiences prefer to work outside their home country. According to Alamri (2011), there is high percentage of expatriate faculty because there is no motivational system for them in their home country. Hence, it is feared that this could lead to displacement of Saudi teachers in an era where the country is in the great need for them.

As the majority on this scholarship programme are women, this study aims to tackle a group of this new generation of female Saudi teachers to reveal their perceptions towards EFL practices in Saudi Arabia. What are their aspirations, and what do they aim for? The following paragraphs consider the changing quality and objectives of the product of education in Saudi Arabia in order to draw a mental picture of the new educational context and its objectives.

2.4 The Quality and Characteristics of the Product of Education

2.4.1 The Changing Objectives

> ''Education is a desired change in behaviour, imparting knowledge and information to the adult to enable him to apply such knowledge and information in his working life. In other words and according to theories of learning, adult education is the conversion of knowledge and information into practical skills through which the learner is able to make use of what he has learned in adult education programmes'' (Alshaer, 2007: 15)

This statement could be regarded as the tenet, or the basic foundation, upon which the Saudi education programme is being built (Ibid.). In the past, in particular before the events of 9/11, the focus of effort and evaluation of input and processes was mainly directed to implant the following characteristics and qualities within our male and female students[8]:

- Profound belief in God;
- Informed worship of God;
- Taking pride in one's religion and allegiance to country and nation;
- Appreciation of social order.

It is clear that the united efforts in Saudi nation-building education were mainly guided by the principles of belief in God and then loyalty to the King and country. However, regarding the social, technological and political changes at both the national and international level, educationalists have found themselves with an undeniably major function in providing new comprehensive scientific and practical objectives to future generations. Therefore, new objectives, in addition to the previous ones, have been added to seek a more tolerant behaviour and attitude (Alshaer, 2007; MoHE, 2010a; Elyas and Picard, 2013):

- Representing praiseworthy Islamic morals in oneself and with others;
- Having a healthy body, mind and spirit;
- Appreciation of responsibilities to oneself, society and nation;

[8] Based on my readings from Alshaer, 2007.

● Positive interaction with other cultures;

● Active participation in charitable activities and voluntary work;

● Efficient management of self and time.

Hence, in relation to the new aspirations of the Saudi national educational philosophy and the objectives of the MoHE represented above, it is clear that the new Saudi insight towards the adoption of a more tolerant view of others that is based on the appreciation and respect of others can be viewed as a more open path for having a healthy society which really represents the true essence of Islam. Furthermore, it is self-evident that properly formulated goals in accordance with educational concepts help in choosing the curriculum, and that has made the MoHE anxious to scrutinise goals and define areas of importance that determine the subject matter of the curriculum (Alshaer, 2007, Elyas and Picard, 2013), especially when we think of *"goals as a map for the acquisition of scientific, educational, and practical knowledge"* (Alshaer, 2007: 17).

In order to elaborate more on the social context of the female Saudi, in which they construct their preliminary self image of their selves, the following section tries to highlight the status of woman in Saudi Arabia in terms of social equality and employment as a way to understand the key factors that impact upon their agency and perception.

2.5 Women in the Saudi Context

A Saudi woman is considered to be a unique woman who truly represents a good image of Muslim females. Although women's rights, responsibilities and their roles in the development process in Saudi Arabian society have been the subject of many debates and discussions and are still controversial amongst both conservatives and progressives[9], available data show that significant advances have been made in many fields. For instance, there were only a few professions open for Saudi women compared to men in the past. Currently, especially in the reign of King Abdullah and his successor King Salman, Saudi women started to have more freedom to choose the kind of job they want as the government offers

[9] For more details see (*Women and Education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and Achievements,* 2005, Amani Hamdan).

free education and the right to choose their job. In addition, it was not until 2010 that Saudi women were given the right to vote and run in municipal elections[10]. Also, they were allowed for the first time to be appointed to the consultative Shura[11] Council (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Even when it comes to the sporting sector, it can be seen that the female sport sector is currently receiving much attention in the Saudi context. For instance, in 2012 the world witnessed a major advance in the history of sports in Saudi Arabia when the Saudi Sports Minister and the Head of the Saudi National Olympic Committee confirmed that Saudi Arabia will support women in practising sports and this was translated in the participation of the first Saudi women in the London Olympics 2012.

Moreover, in the past a Saudi woman could not be hired in government institutions unless she could bring a signed consent from her 'Walee'[12] (husband or father). This existed until very recently (11/5/2012), when the Ministry of Labour dropped this condition from the list that restricts woman's work (see Appendix I for more details about conditions for women's employment in Saudi Arabia). This reform has generated a tense debate between conservatives and reformists. Conservative people such as Dr. Al-Nujaymi (the member of International Islamic Jurisprudence Council) condemned this law in an interview on a television Saudi channel, claiming that this could drag the country to a more tense situation between men and women. However, it is pertinent to mention here that according to Islamic Law, both men and women are equal, *''All people are equal, as equal as the tooth of a comb. There is no claim of merit of an Arab over a non-Arab, or a white over a black person, or a male over a female. Only God-fearing people merit a preference with God''* (Hadeeth of Prophet Mohammad)[13]. This quotation by the Prophet Mohammad is a translation of the equality espoused in the Quran. Islam gives the woman the same work rights as men. Muslim women are free to pursue employment if they want to, and they have equal rights to men to participate in all public affairs. Throughout Islamic history, we find examples of women actively participating together with men in the development of their societies, in serious debates with the Prophet Mohammad (Badawi, 2000), in wars, and even ruling over people. Hence, it

[10] Municipal elections are the only public polls in Saudi Arabia.
[11] A formal body advising the King, whose members are all appointed. It corresponds to the House of Commons in Britain.
[12] 'Walii' is the person who is in charge of the woman and her expenses, in Islam it is her father or brother, and after marriage it becomes her husband who is responsible for her.
[13] 'Hadeeth' means the sayings of Prophet Mohammad.

might be proposed that a woman should have the right to seek knowledge, pursue the type of job she wants and choose her own way as an active agent. However, this tension between Islamic law and practice in Saudi Arabia needs to be resolved.

In short, although Saudi Arabia is considered to be a conservative society, Saudi women are awarded liberties and privileges, and they were entrusted with important tasks that significantly enhance her nature. Having said that, in the following section I need to point out a useful aspect related to teachers' work, namely the division of labour and their job market in HE, as this will help to understand female Saudi teachers' perceptions towards their work.

2.5.1 Work and Job Market for Women in HE

The public sector is the largest employer of Saudi women. Currently, women make up around 30% of government employees, around 95% of the Saudi women who work are employed in the public sector: 85% in education (both teaching and administrative works), 6% in public health, and 4% in administration, only 5% of working Saudi women are employed within the private sector (AMEinfo, 2010). On the one hand, it could be argued that Saudi women seek the public sector rather than the private one as the public sector offers good wages, vacations, and is more secure when it comes to having a permanent job. On the other hand, it is also essential to point out here that most Saudi people are very inclined to regard teaching as being the most suitable job for women due to gender segregation issues[14]; that explains why most female Saudis are mainly in the education sector.

Furthermore, as part of the new educational reforms during King Abdullah's reign, changes to the funding structure have been implemented. This resulted in the increase in teachers' wages in both public and private schools (MoHE, 2010a). It can be noted that financial prospects are considered in career choice. Therefore, salaries or wages are an important factor to be taken into account by people embarking on their careers. Among the suggestions for making teaching

[14] Many Saudi people still have the notion that it is preferable for women to work in segregated spheres, where they cannot be seen by men unknown to them, and the education system in Saudi Arabia provides a gender-based segregation in most schools except for one gender-mixed university, King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST), which was established in 2009.

more attractive as a career, this increased need for good financial prospects is considered in career planning. Teaching in HE in Saudi Arabia is known to command a high salary (which is tax free), and generous vacations combined with a manageable workload. The minimum wage for the novice teaching assistant reaches (with bonuses) SR153,180 per year (£25,530), and SR248,940 (£41,490) as a basic salary for a professor. Thus, most Saudi teachers have high financial expectations at different stages in their careers. The following table shows the amount of wages in Saudi currency, in numbers, that teachers in HE receive based on the database of MoHE (2012):

Degrees	Job Title				
	Teacher Assistant	Lecturer	Helping Professor	Associate Professor	Professor
1	6650	8765	12765	16080	18420
2	7065	9275	13335	16745	19155
3	7480	9785	13905	17410	19890
4	7895	10295	14475	18075	20625
5	8310	10805	15045	18740	21360
6	8725	11315	15615	19405	22095
7	9140	11825	16185	20070	22830
8	9555	12335	16755	20735	23565
9	9970	12845	17325	21400	24300
10	10385	13355	17895	22065	25035
11	10800	13865	18465	22730	25770
12	11215	14375	19035	23395	26505
13	11630	14885	19605	24060	27240
14	12045	15395	20175	24725	27975
15	12460	15905	20745	25390	28710
Annual Increase	415	510	570	665	735

Table 2.2: The Salary Scale of Staff in Saudi HE

The above table indicates the amount of salary that can be obtained by staff in HE according to their acquired degrees. This salary scale, which was in operation at the time of the study, was introduced in 2011. The table considers three points in salary scales; firstly starting salaries, secondly acquired degree, thirdly years of experience. The starting salaries depend on the type of degree obtained (BA, MA, PhD) and the number of years spent in training. It is important to note here that there are other payments which are not included within the table, such as transport, housing allowance, and communication services (some staff members design their own website page in order to communicate with their students, by

doing so they are able to attain SR1300 as an added amount to the basic salary). There are no differences between the salaries offered to both men and women. This applies to education and all other sectors. It could be assumed that such increase in and equality of salary could help to raise job satisfaction and sense of worth, at least amongst female employees.

Although there are still many hurdles facing working women in Saudi Arabia, we should acknowledge that a number of positive steps have been taken, and despite the fact that the labour law reform mentioned above came late, it is hoped by implementing such reforms to improve the working conditions for women who will help to move the wheel of development forward.

Having discussed women's work and employment in the Saudi context, major reforms, and new vision and objectives of Saudi HE, the status of the English language in Saudi Arabia in now reviewed. In order to understand this aspect more clearly, the following section discusses the history of English language and teaching it as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia.

2.6 English as a Foreign Language in Saudi Arabia

2.6.1 Historical Overview of English Language in the Saudi Context

The English language has proved itself to be a universal tool for international communication and ascending knowledge (Ostler, 2010; Pennycook, 2014). It is the most widely used language that is spoken in every continent. Although some think it will spread without end, linguists in recent years disagree on where the language is heading. Some experts on the English language, such as Graddol (2006) and Ostler (2010), believe that the English language will soon be relegated to second place after Chinese, Arabic, Hindi or Urdu as the number of speakers of these languages is rising. Others linguists, such as Crystal (2003), consider that the situation of English remains at a global status and he suggests that it is not rational to underestimate the future dominance of English. He relates this to the fact that more than 25%[15] of the world's population speaks English as a second language (ESL), and that it is learned by a higher number of people with every passing day. He points out that at no other time in history has

[15] According to the Eurobarometer database in 2012, the English language is spoken by almost 38% of the world's population.

a language been in such a position. Within this perspective of contrasting discourses, English continues to enjoy high status in Saudi Arabia, and the significance of English as an international language makes it an important subject to be studied within the curriculum in Saudi Arabia. It is a global language that is required in order to pursue further development and openness to the world (Al-Seghayer, 2005; Alatis, 2007; Liton, 2013).

English language usage in Saudi Arabia is linked to nineteenth-century British trade interests in the Gulf region (Charise, 2007). This British interest was primarily due to the strategic location of the Gulf States (namely: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates) along trade routes to India. Beyond the imperative to support the revenue of British East India commerce, there was little interest in occupying the deserted Gulf region (Goldschmidt, 2005). Although Saudi Arabia was never occupied as a colony proper, it entered into a trade agreement in 1915 in order to support its infrastructure development (Charise, 2007). However, with the introduction of the British in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, English was implemented increasingly as a lingua franca for trade purposes, but this did not change the prevalence of the Arabic language in the region (Al-Khatib, 2006). In fact, English serves several important roles in Saudi Arabia. For example, the tremendous revenue from petroleum exports has resulted in large scale development projects requiring imported labourers and experts from other countries who speak different languages (Ibid.).

> ‘‘As a region that heavily relies on the international trade of its petroleum and oil reserves, a means of international communication is essential. Significant trade partnerships with the United States and Britain and their provision of engineering and technological expertise to the region has encouraged English as the language of international communication in the Gulf.’’ (Charise, 2007)

In order to coordinate this language diversity and due to the increased use of English as a lingua franca, it was essential to adapt English as a link language and the medium for communication with those non-speakers of Arabic (Charise, 2007). Furthermore, the rapid advancement of business and communications technology in Saudi Arabia has led to an unprecedented interest in learning English (Al-Khatib, 2006). Consequently, there was an urgent need to call for ELT throughout the country. Foreign organisations, such as the British Council which had established its first offices in Saudi Arabia in 1965, have a significant role in

enhancing English language learning (Charise, 2007). The British Council has helped in establishing many centres to teach English language, in addition to the English language services provided by British Council, and US-based TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) also contributes to the development of ELT (Alatis, 2007; Charise, 2007). TESOL is an international organisation for English language educators, which was established in 1966 (Alatis, 2007). In order to promote the teaching of English in a manner compatible with Islamic faith and culture, a new comprehensive, independent internet resource of TESOL, designed for both students and teachers in Islamic contexts, has been introduced: 'TESOL Islamia'[16]. It is based in the UAE (United Arab Emirates) and provides downloadable, alternative ELT materials that are sensitive to Islamic concepts (Charise, 2007).

> ''[…] TESOL Islamia is unique because of its critical approach to traditional TESOL pedagogy and its commitment to promoting scholarship, disseminating information and facilitating cross-cultural understanding among all TESOL professionals (Muslims and non-Muslims) involved in the teaching of English in the Muslim World.'' (TESOL Islamia, 2012)

The British Council and TESOL programmes have played an important role in the promotion and development of ELT in Saudi Arabia and worldwide. Generally speaking, the English language is regarded positively, and knowledge of it has become requisite for most government and business jobs. Currently, the usage of English is evident in various media sources including television, radio, and internet, and can be seen on public and private signs, in advertisements, clothing, in the names of shops and stations (Meccawy, 2010). In fact, there are many reasons for identifying English as a favoured foreign language in the Saudi context. The urgent desire for technological, cultural and commercial contact has entitled the English language to gain such a status.

Having said that, the next section highlights the reality of EFL teacher training in Saudi Arabia and how female Saudis are trained.

[16] It is an independent internet resource of TESOL designed for both students and teachers in Islamic contexts.

2.6.2 EFL Teacher Training in Saudi Arabia

Over the last four decades, EFL teachers have mainly been graduates of colleges of education and faculties of arts and humanities affiliated with Saudi universities offering a diploma (a two-year-programme), BA degree (a four-year-programme), MA (a two-year-programme), and PhD (a four-year- programme) in English language and literature. Colleges of education emphasise the educational skills and aspects in the preparation of their graduates, whereas, colleges of art and humanities prepare students to acquire English language skills, English literature, linguistics, and translation (Al-Hazmi, 2012). Art and humanities graduates lack the required teaching skills as these colleges do not offer courses on EFL teaching methodologies. Even students at a college of education do not receive enough training as they spend only the last semester of their registered programme in primary or secondary schools (Al-Seghayer, 2005).

However, some educationalists, such as Tony Wright in his paper *'Towards a Revised Role for English Language Teacher Education in the Developing World'* demonstrated that initial teacher education for foreign language teachers does not always cater for all their training needs. He argues that formal classroom experiences of language teaching require a major role for initial teacher training in a way that could help to prepare them for the challenges of making the learning of English language more accessible (Hussain et al., 2009). According to Al-Hazmi (2012) who investigated EFL teacher preparation programmes in Saudi Arabia, these programmes can be described as non-systematic and inadequate. He goes on to argue for the need of a more systematic approach to pre- and in-service training for EFL teachers based on the assumption that having untrained teachers inside classrooms negatively affects the quality of learning, which would lead then to affecting the character of education, as well as the education budget. He concludes by stressing the need for a more comprehensive pre- and in-service master plan at the national level. Actually, part of his proposal has been implemented as the country initiated this KAFSP in 2005 and enabled a new generation of teachers to be exposed to new trends and tools in teaching and learning. The question, as this research poses, is whether this pioneer generation of teachers and new researchers who become familiar with new pedagogies and innovative teaching methods are able to reflect what they have acquired abroad and apply it in reality. I strongly believe that the Saudi HE system cannot develop without a schema which focuses on research and provides funds for

researchers to conduct research and prioritise this in the agenda of scholars in Saudi Arabia (Alamri, 2011).

2.6.3 Teaching English in Saudi HE

In 1952, in recognition of the utility of English as an international language, the Ministry of Education, which was called then the Directorate of Education, introduced English as a foreign language to be taught in schools (Al-Ahaydib, 1986). Firstly, it was introduced at secondary level along with French, but it had no clear stated objectives then. It was not until 1959 that English became a subject with instructional objectives and a formal curriculum, which was adopted from neighbouring countries (Al-Seghayer, 2005). The aim of teaching English was then:

> ''*To enable Saudi students to acquire at least one of the living languages, in addition to their mother tongue language in order to enable them to be furnished with the knowledge, arts and useful inventions, and enable them to be a transmitter of their own knowledge and sciences to other communities all over the world […]''* (Al-Ahaydib, 1986: 25)

As Saudi educationalists believed in the importance of obtaining one of the foreign languages, such as English, they found themselves obliged to design textbooks. Due to the lack of resources and the small number of Saudi staff teaching English language at that time, the country opted for a borrowed curriculum from another Arab country (Egypt). The first borrowed programme called *'Living English for the Arab World'* had been taught for twenty years (Al-Seghayer, 2005). In 1980, as this programme was seen as no longer suitable for Saudi learners, a new programme called *'Saudi Arabian School English'* was introduced (Ibid.). In 1995, a new series of books called *'English for Saudi Arabia'* was introduced at the intermediate and secondary level. In addition, in 2004, another new series was developed. All of these later series of books focussed mainly on the needs of local culture and identity. Throughout the history of these programmes, the curriculum was merely a simple representation of these textbooks. Although an English curriculum at school level differs from that at university level (as the school curriculum is directed by the Ministry of Education, whereas in universities it is directed by the MoHE), the practices were

the same. For instance, the focus in the development of curriculum was mainly (and still is) on the content of the textbook as it is the only channel for curriculum. There will be further details of EFL curriculum in HE and the role of teacher in curriculum formation in chapter three.

As the interest in learning English is growing in Saudi Arabia, competency in English is expected among all students. Therefore, Saudi students have to pass a special English proficiency test in order to be enrolled within a higher educational institution. On entry, they have also to pass a placement test in order to ensure preparedness for library research, post-graduate studies, or future career requirements (Charise, 2007). In fact, English is a compulsory subject that forms an essential part of the curriculum in HE. In most universities, students are required to take an English course, regardless of their subject major.

Furthermore, to ensure the quality of teaching in higher institutions, the MoHE has made partnership with schools more formalised and systematic. There is now a requirement that school departments are fully and actively involved in the selection and final assessment of teachers, as well as the planning of initial teacher training (MoHE, 2010a). In addition, to allow students to be more acquainted with English native speakers, most Saudi higher educational institutions have large numbers of Westerners teaching English at universities, language centres, and most private schools.

However, teaching English as a foreign language brings up conflict among TESOL educators and researchers due to some cultural and political attitudes and practices created by language learners and instructors (Holliday, 2005). One important aspect of these concerns is the notion of identity and fear of losing it. Based on my experience, some people are reluctant to embrace some foreign cultural aspects. I remember that, one day when I was teaching about 'kinship', a student asked me whether the term 'single mother' means divorced woman, but when I explained the meaning, almost all the students were looking to the ground avoiding direct eye contact with me and some looked at the girl who asked in an offended manner. They made me feel as if I had said something terrible, although I tried to explain the term in a simple manner. However, one of the main solutions, proposed by educationalists to this public scepticism about foreign cultural aspects, is the formulation of a new modern curriculum that reflects students' lifestyles, cultures and traditions in a modern way fitting with the twenty-first century (Ibid.). Many partnerships have been formed with some

of the biggest names in the book-publishing agencies, such as Longman and McMillan, in both Britain and America in order to write special series of books which address Saudi students with content that matches their Islamic culture. However, the question here is whether these adapted policies can fit or match the current aspirations of the Saudi government and their foreign scholarship programmes, which seek to build a future generation with knowledge of, and make them open to, the world around them?

2.7 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has provided a brief summary of the background of the study in various contexts including the demographic, economic and modern educational. Moreover, work conditions for women, as well as a brief history of ELT in Saudi Arabia were provided as a way to help to understand some of the factors that impact upon female teachers' perceptions. I cannot claim to have covered everything concerning Saudi Arabia in a small number of pages, but I have attempted to briefly clarify some major issues about the Saudi context, in a way that may aid the reader in understanding the issues that will arise out of the data in the coming chapters.

Based on this chapter, it can be noted that although the national history of the Saudi state is very short compared to other countries, Saudi Arabia has proved to the world that, through the major developmental jumps it has accomplished in different fields, making rapid advancement is possible.

In order to understand the scope of teachers' perceptions and how can this affect their practices, the next chapter will supplement this chapter by providing a thorough account of the educational context in terms of curriculum practices and the role of the teacher in policy formation, as well as throwing light on the concept of perception and its mental representations on teacher practice, empowerment, voice and agency.

Chapter 3

Review of the Literature

''Teaching is not a lost art, but the regard for it is a lost tradition''

Jacques Barzun[17]

3.1 Introduction

A theory is a system of logical statements that explains the relationship between two or more concepts and phenomena and the attempt to develop explanations about reality or ways to classify, organize or even predict events (Berg, 1998 cited in Thomson and Walker, 2010). Theory also could be regarded as a platform from which we can launch a critique, and a tool to challenge contemporary discourses (Thomson and Walker, 2010). This study focuses on teachers' perceptions and how significant they are in shaping the perceptions and attitudes of their students towards learning (Burgoon, 1990; Giles and Coupland, 1991; Timperley and Robinson, 2001; Althaqafi, 2011). In order to confront and transform teachers' negative perceptions and understand their agency, one must first understand the nature and the extent of their perceptions and belief systems. Therefore, the first section of this chapter will explore the concept of teachers' perceptions from different psychological and social angles, ending with my own definition of perception which will be used in this study. Furthermore, in order to explore teachers' perceptions at a deeper level -unconscious process- and as a way to make them more conscious, there is a need to examine the notion of teacher voice, empowerment and the implications of reflective practice upon them. Identification of some aspects of human agency and teacher efficacy

[17] Jacques Barzun was an eminent French born American historian whose work touched on literature, philosophy and music. Adopted from <http://www.age-of-the-sage.org/history/historian/Jacques_Barzun.html >.

in social cognitive theory will be highlighted as it accords a central role to cognitive, self-reflective and self-regulatory processes owned by the teacher (Bandura, 1986, 1989, 1997, 2006). Elicitation of the difficulties that are inherent in researching these themes (voice, empowerment and engagement with reflective practice) will also be provided in the following section, with special focus on how teachers' perceptions, beliefs and practices are aligned with a provision of a materialised example of the role of teacher in curriculum formation in Saudi Arabia. In addition, some aspects concerning a top-down approach and school climate will be touched upon in this chapter.

The following section highlights the importance of teaching as a profession and what it means to be a teacher.

3.2 Humanistic Nature of Teaching

The Art of Teaching

> ''The teacher, like the artist, the philosopher and the man of letters, can only perform his work adequately if he feels himself to be an individual directed by an inner creative impulse, not dominated and fettered by an outside authority.'' (Bertrand Russell, *Unpopular Essays*, 1950: 159)

A teacher may be regarded as a person of high ideals and a humanist nature, entrusted with the duty of modifying and shaping the behaviour of their students (Hussain et al., 2011). Teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make significant instructional choices and play a central role in shaping classroom events (Borg, 2006). Teachers must know the art of communication, understanding others' needs and requirements and their ability to learn from experience (Hussain et al., 2011). Moreover, teaching is itself a very complex and demanding profession. It is a profession, which exalts service above personal gain (Goodings et al., 1995). Recent research in the educational field maintains that teaching is not just a cognitive or technical procedure but a complicated and even elusive personal and social set of embedded interactions and practices that involve the whole person (Britzman, 2003; Olsen, 2008).

Clearly, a significant construct varying greatly amongst educational institutions, which is systematically associated with student achievement, is the efficacy and attitudes of teachers within that institution or school (Bandura, 1997). According

to Smith (1990), teacher personality in the attitudinal sense plays a significant role in teacher behaviour and has a huge impact on student achievement. Accordingly, it is of paramount importance for educational research to help teachers, who are considered to be message conveyers of the whole educational process, with tools that could enable them to be better practitioners. This is supported by TALIS[18], using representative data from 23 countries across the globe, which examined a variety of teachers' beliefs, practices and attitudes and their relevance to the improvement and effectiveness of schools. This study concluded by asserting the significance of teachers' beliefs and attitudes not only to improvements in educational processes, shaping students' learning environment and influencing their motivation and achievement, but also to the general wellbeing of teachers and their strategies for coping with challenge in their professional life, as well as to mediating the effects of job-related politics, such as changes in curricula or professional development programmes (OECD, 2009).

Teachers' wellbeing, professionalism and their professional development are crucial in any debate as to how to improve educational performance (Bangs and Frost, 2012). The quality of teachers, as well as what they do, makes all the difference (OECD, 2011 cited in Bangs and frost, 2012). This notion was central to the core agenda at an international education summit hosted by the US Education Secretary in March 2011. This Summit was the product of three organisations: the US Education Department, the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development and Education International, which was the first time that a global federation of teacher unions had jointly organised a conference on the future of the teaching profession with governments (Ibid.). There was a remarkable degree of consensus between teacher unions and governments by the end of this Summit on the importance of teacher policies involving the teaching profession in systematic improvements (Bangs, 2011 cited in Bangs and Frost, 2012). However, this conclusion has yet to translate into teachers becoming central players in establishing educational policy and shaping practice in their schools (Ibid.).

On the other hand, the question of how teachers can inform policy and practice is bound up with the way we conceptualise professional development, but it is commonly assumed that the quality of what teachers do can be improved by

[18] TALIS stands for: Teaching and Learning International Survey.

people other than teachers themselves (Ibid.). From a different angle, Britzman (2003), claims that teachers are born not made, and real learning begins once novices arrive in their classrooms. Some may concur with the first part, however, if teachers are born not made why would there be the need for more continuous development programmes? I think the second part of Britzman's statement contradicts the whole claim, as he asserts that real learning begins once new teachers dip into the field of practice. Thus, teachers are not born; they need to be shaped by degrees, experience and practice. Moreover, it can be argued that each and every individual teacher has a variety of perceptions and attitudes, which might be positive or negative and can vary according to various attitudinal objects. Teachers' perceptions and attitudes depend largely upon their personal characteristics and disposition, and both of these two elements are highly interlinked (Hussain et al., 2011). In fact, it is essential to acknowledge teaching as 'a human effort'. However, research has shown that the traditional respect and the old prestigious role enjoyed by teachers within society and inside classrooms have been eroded fundamentally (Awanbor, 1996). Teachers' roles have become more diversified and do not cover only learning and teaching, but also extend to cover school management, administration, as well as guidance and counselling. Consequently, some people lose interest in the teaching profession. Awanbor (1996) reported that some teacher trainees in a college of education did not express any enthusiasm for the core goal of teaching as they explained that the teaching profession was not really an attractive profession to them. For instance, in Nigeria in 2006, it was revealed that of more than 700,000 candidates processed by the Admission and Matriculation Board for admission into various university courses, only about 10,000 (0.0147%) applied to education (Osunde, 2006). The same thing applies to Saudi Arabia. For example, in a study conducted by King Saud University, Riyadh, to measure the number of Saudi students enrolling within Teacher Training Colleges, it has been reported that there is a huge demand for more Saudi teachers as the number of Saudi student teachers enrolled within Teacher Training Colleges decreases (Al-Dawood, 2008). This study also reports that the number of Saudi student teachers in 2006 represents only 30% of the overall demand for teachers which resulted in the increase of the employment of non-Saudi teachers. In fact, the status of the teaching profession is affected by social background (Afe, 1999) and teaching practices. It is of paramount importance to point out here that Saudi teachers are caught between the demands and commands of the state and its inspection, and the needs of students. The role of teachers is sometimes

interpreted as 'deliverers' of the curriculum, in the sense that they are carrying out the orders that have been imposed by policy makers. Cullingford (2009), stated that it is an international conclusion, based on research, that the more independence educational institutions and teachers have, and the less interference from outsiders, the better they perform; unfortunately, this is not how it is perceived by most of those who are in control of the educational system in the Saudi context, which could affect teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards teaching.

Teachers' personal disposition towards various aspects of their professional life is vital in that it determines their teaching behaviour and hence shapes learning outcomes and contributes to their perceptions about what constitutes desired learning and desired teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). In order to prepare for the analysis of teachers' perceptions, it is essential to explore the nature and definition of teachers' beliefs, attitudes and values, as well as considering some of their implications on teachers and teaching processes.

3.3 Exploring Teachers' Perceptions

Before exploring the realm of perception, I would like to underline my own understanding of teachers' perception with regard to this research, although the exact nature of perception has never been adequately conceptualised. Perception is the top-down way our brains organise and interpret information that we receive through our senses and put it into context (Efron, 1969). It is the process of the mind that allows us to make meaning of our sensory input and experience the world around us, in other words, it is what makes life understandable. According to Borg (2006), who extensively researched teachers' cognition, perceptions and practice, it is hard to understand teachers and teaching without understanding the unobservable mental dimension and cognition of their learning processes. Teacher cognition research provides significant insights into teachers' mental lives and makes an important contribution to our understandings of the process of becoming, being, and developing professionally as teachers (Borg, 2009). It is crucial to understand teachers' perceptions and cognition as they affect teachers' behaviour and practice.

Furthermore, according to Clark and Peterson (1986), Veenman (2004) and Kymes (2005), teachers' perceptions are affected by meta-cognitive abilities such

as awareness, attitudes, beliefs, thinking, and reflecting. All these underlying processes (beliefs, values, attitudes, thinking and reflecting) are organised and linked together to form a functionally integrated cognitive system, and any change in any part of this system will affect other parts, eventually culminating in change in behaviour (Rokeach, 1968). Although there is as yet little consensus about what exactly we mean by a belief, an attitude, or a value (Rokeach, 1968; Borg, 2006), I tend to employ them arbitrarily and interchangeably. By extending the scope of my treatment to include beliefs, attitudes and values, I aim to enlarge my research interest area to include not only the education domain, but also to be of some value to the domains of social psychology, sociology, philosophy, and anthropology.

What we perceive is what we believe, or it could also be the other way around. Our perception of reality is partially constructed and can be altered by our beliefs (Veenman, 2004; Kymes, 2005). Beliefs, attitudes and values are like motives, genes cannot be directly observed but must be inferred with the help of our psychological devices (Rokeach, 1968). There is an enormous range of beliefs and values which are represented in society, schools or even single institutions, and they reflect people's deepest convictions about right, wrong and the purpose of life (Poole, 1995). As we grow, we possess a large number of beliefs accumulated through different stages of our lives. People's upbringings affect their beliefs and values as they may make these beliefs of their upbringing their own, but they may choose new ones (Poole, 1995). In this regard, Rokeach (1968) goes on to describe this accumulated belief system as:

> ''It must be assumed that man's beliefs –like the physicist's electrons and protons, like the astronomer's moons and planets and suns, like the geneticist's chromosomes and genes- become somehow organised into architectural systems having describable and measurable structural properties which, in turn, have observable behavioural consequences.'' (Rokeach, 1968: 1)

However, by this definition, Rokeach implies that beliefs are constructed and organised in some psychological form but not necessarily in a logical form as may be understood from the above quotation. Rokeach goes on also to assert that Man does not allow beliefs to exist outside the belief system or perception, simply for the same reason that the astronomer does not allow stars to remain outside the universe. On the other hand, it could be argued that all beliefs and values are simply matters of taste and personal choice without any taking precedence over

others, nevertheless, common ground is found across societies over some matters like property rights, social justice, sexual practices and so on. This shows possible responses to the plurality of beliefs among people and this is evident in the existence of common beliefs about styles of music, or new fashion and trends, for instance (Poole, 1995).

Within the framework of social psychology, beliefs or attitudes can be regarded as a subjective or mental preparation for action that affect the individual's prevailing predispositions to respond favourably or unfavourably to an *object* (person or group of people, institutions or events) (Tiberghien et al., 1998). Attitudes determine what each individual will see, hear, think and do, they are rooted in experience and *do not become automatic routine conduct* (Ibid.). Beliefs or attitudes can be positive (values) or negative (prejudice). A number of social psychologists study and distinguish three components of responses: a) *cognitive component,* which is the knowledge about an attitude object (your thoughts and beliefs), whether accurate or not; b) *affective component:* feelings and attitudes towards the object, person, issue or event; and c) *conative or behavioural component,* which is the action taken towards the object (Ibid.). In most situations, it could be assumed that the three latter mentioned components shape teachers' perceptions and practices inside the classroom, through direct and indirect interaction and influence their views and behaviour towards school (Ibid.). Beliefs and attitudes are important to understand human behaviour and in this research, the word attitudes refers to the way Saudi teachers react to their educational cultures and settings emotionally, physically, and verbally in order to reflect their own way of thinking and feeling.

Horencyzk and Tatar (2002) state that teachers' perceptions, behaviours and attitudes do not exist in a social vacuum; rather they tend to be affected by the norms and values both of the larger society and of the educational settings in which the interactions take place. Perception is influenced, biased even by our expectations, experiences, and moods. In fact, culture, context, and expectations are important factors in our perceptual set (the psychological factors that determine how we perceive our environment) (Ibid.). Perceptual set is also influenced by personal emotions and motivation. Teachers are members of the community, so they are affected by societal norms, beliefs and attitudes. When they internalise dominant societal messages, they bring them into their classrooms (Ibid.). Hence, one can understand that perceptions or beliefs are formed as a result of experience. They may emerge due to personal experience,

prior knowledge and histories or result from observation (Borg, 2009). Nevertheless, changes in system beliefs and attitudes are often said to occur following successful therapy, religious or political conversion, or as a result of ideological disillusionment or defection after a discovery that something is not as good as one believed it to be (Rokeach, 1968). Hence, positive, constructive changes played by the school can help to alter teachers' negative beliefs and attitudes.

Accordingly, it can be said that our perception is the product of the meta-cognitive accumulated processes that are influenced by psychological and social factors. In order to understand more teachers' perceptions, we need to know the sources of teachers' beliefs and perceptions.

3.4 The Source of Teachers' Perceptions

The study of teachers' perceptions make it essential to address questions such as: What are the sources of teachers' beliefs and perceptions? How do teachers' beliefs and perceptions influence their teaching?

> ''Teachers' belief systems are found in the goals, values, and beliefs teachers hold in relation to the content and process of teaching, and their understanding of the systems in which they work and their roles within it. These beliefs and values serve as the background to much of the teachers' decision making and action, and hence constitute what has been termed the 'culture of teaching'.''
> (Richards and Lockhart, 1994: 30)

It could be noted that teachers' beliefs are the sum of accumulated goals and values. They represent the general framework of what has been built up gradually through the passage of time and involve subjective and objective dimensions (Richards and Lockhart, 1994). Research on teachers' belief systems report that beliefs are derived from a number of different sources (Kindsvatter et al., 1988), they are as follows:

- Teachers' own experience as language learners;
- Experience of what works best for teaching;
- Having established practices of certain teaching styles;

● Personality factors and preferences for a particular teaching pattern because it matches a teacher's personality;

● Research-based or educationally based principles and what teachers may draw on for their understanding of a learning principle in a field of knowledge and try to apply it in the classroom.

It is clear that in order to understand teachers' belief systems and how they perceive their current ELT one might need to look at the above mentioned principles, in addition to the educational context in which teachers are situated, to be able to reach a kind of understanding of such a cognitive system.

3.5 Research into Perception, Beliefs and Attitudes and Language Learning

The concept of perception in language learning has a long history of research. Different studies have cast light on the role of perceptions, beliefs and attitudes in first language, second language, foreign language and bi-lingual teaching and learning contexts (Bartram, 2010). A number of researchers in the field of language attitudes in general, such as Gardner (1985), state that the interest in the notion of perception can be explained by wide acknowledgement of the relationship between attitudes and successful learning. Baker (1992) acknowledges the value of attitudes in providing a significant social research route to access 'indications of current community thoughts and beliefs, preferences and desires'. In addition, Byrnes and Kiger (1994), report that teachers' perceptions and beliefs can facilitate, or serve as a barrier to, learning English. Borg (2006) also asserts that the study of teacher perceptions and cognition provides an account of understanding their practice and provides food for thought for teachers, researchers, teacher educators, policy makers and curriculum managers to understanding teaching and educational innovations. They also concluded that it is important to understand the structure of teachers' perceptions and attitudes in order to better work toward constructive change. Moreover, Byrnes et al., (1996), surveyed 169 teachers in three states and have found that teachers who had completed a graduate degree, participated in carefully and organised, formal training, and had supportive educational

mandates have the most positive attitudes towards ELT and ELLs[19]. In a similar study, Youngs and Youngs (2001) surveyed the attitudes of 143 teachers towards their ELLs. Their findings demonstrated that positive attitudes are more likely to be found amongst teachers who have taken foreign language or multicultural education courses, received some training in ELL education, lived or taught outside their home country, and worked with a more diverse ELL population.

Though some researchers contested this relationship between attitudes and learning, for instance, Oller and Perkins (1980) cited in Bartram (2010) discovered no direct correlation between second-language proficiency and learner attitudes, the majority acknowledge the importance of attitudes. However, the nature of attitudes together with the constituent component and their status as an outstanding concept in the field of language learning is still an issue with much disagreement (Bartram, 2010).

On the other hand, as the formation of perceptions towards language learning and teaching is discussed, it is noteworthy here to refer to perceptions towards English language after the aftermath of 9/11. Recent linguistic studies of perceptions and attitudes demonstrate the ambivalence towards the English language, which might be due to a renewed awareness of the notion regarding English as a vehicle of Western culture (Charise, 2007). For this reason, it was essential for research to survey teachers and learners in linguistic studies regarding their cultural attitudes and perceptions towards English. For instance, a 1996 study reports that a sample of 54 male Saudi students indicated an acute awareness of the practicality of English instruction, and more than half of participants disagreed with the linkage of English and imperialism (Charise, 2007). Also, similar numbers disagreed that English poses a threat to the Arabic language (Ibid.). A 2010 study of 83 Saudi undergraduates with their teachers suggests that generally speaking, Saudi students possess positive attitudes toward learning English and towards English language speakers. In summary, this study of Saudi students concludes that English is highly regarded for its utility and role in career development, and was not perceived to be a threat to Islamic or Arabic values (Meccawy, 2010).

Attitudes are cognitive and affective, i.e. they are related to thoughts as well as to feeling (Brown, 2000). According to observational theory, Bandura (1977, 1989), demonstrated that behaviours are acquired by watching others (the

[19] English Language Learners.

model: teacher, parent, friend or mentor) displays behaviour. In the educational field, we can see that the model here (the teacher) demonstrates a behaviour and the learner tries to observe and imitate it. Thus, the teacher is a role model whose behaviour can be easily copied by students. However, some teachers unfortunately do not realise that how they behave and interact with students can be of paramount importance, rather than what they teach (Olatunde, 2009). Ogunniyi (1982), reported that students' positive attitudes towards the subject matter could be enhanced by:

* Teachers' enthusiasm;

* Teachers' resourcefulness and helpful behaviour.

From these factors, it can be argued that the role of the teacher in shaping students' perceptions and attitudes towards the subject matter and learning in general is enormous as she is the one who translate all thoughts into actions (Olatunde, 2009).

In short, it is clear that students' perceptions and attitudes can be affected by their teachers' perceptions and practices, and in turn, teachers' attitudes are affected by culture and social factors. Attitudes and perceptions are of great significance because they affect teachers' motivation as well as teachers' receptivity to professional development efforts to dispel unwarranted beliefs about language and cognition, and these attitudes can impede some practices that could be more conducive to student success (Karabenick and Noda, 2004). Hence, this research aims to reveal how the social culture in which Saudi teachers work can affect their perceptions and practices.

As teacher work is highly readable and often gives a picture of the real world of teaching, allows an insight into how things look from the other side of the school wall, and gives teachers themselves cause for reflection (Connell, 1985), it is pertinent to discuss their role as reflective practitioners in the following section. From this perspective, accessing teachers' perceptions through their reflection, thinking and self-awareness during the practice of teaching might better articulate their perceptions and cognitive processing and be more transparent and more easily shared.

3.6 Reflective Teaching and Perception

There are several meanings in the vocabulary of reflection; these include reflection, reflective learning or practice and reflective writing (Moon, 2004). My focus is on reflective teaching or practice, as this is one of the main generated themes in this research. Firstly, the exploration of reflective teaching was discussed by John Dewey in the early 1900s, who was an educational philosopher and the first American theorists to view teachers as reflective practitioners and the ones who play very active roles in educational development and reform (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). Building on the work of Dewey, Donald Schön has also written widely about reflective practice highlighting its uses in some fields, such as architecture and medicine (Ibid.). 'Reflective practice' as a term was introduced by Donald Schön in his book *'The Reflective Practitioner'* in 1983, and it refers to the capacity and ability to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning (Schön, 1983). It should be noted that the words reflection and reflective practice are used interchangeably in this research.

In one of Dewey's books: *How We Think* (1933), Dewey makes a distinction between action that is routine and action that is reflective (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). He defines routine action as action that is guided by impulse, tradition, and authority, whereas, reflective action is a process which involves active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or practice in light of the reasons that support it and the consequences to which it leads. It is a process, unlike routine action, that involves intuition, emotion and reason (Ibid.). According to Dewey (1933), the continuity of routine action with the absence of reflection makes a teacher lose sight of the fact that their everyday reality is one of many alternatives, besides losing sight of the purpose and goals towards which they are working and becoming merely the agents of others.

For Dewey, there are three attitudes that are integrated into reflective action and they could be regarded as three preconditions for a person to be reflective:

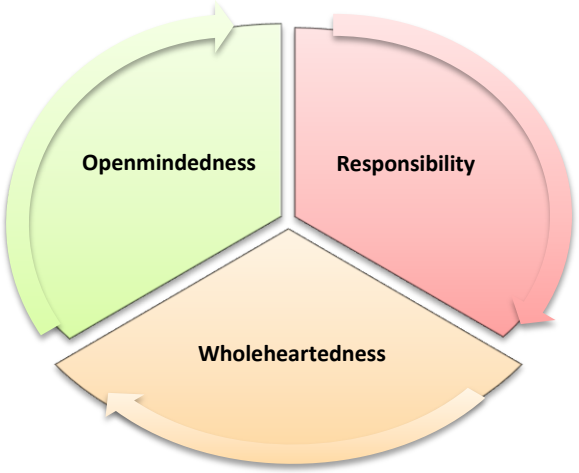


Figure 3.1: Dewey's Attitudes of Reflective Action

According to Dewey (1933), openmindedness is the active desire to give full attention to alternative possibilities. Dewey's concept of openmindedness can be compared to the conceptions of beliefs and believers by the sociologist Wright Mills (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). Mills argues that there are three types of believers:

a) Vulgar: believers who have no interest in listening to opposing arguments or in analysing their own beliefs and operate only according to stereotypes.
b) Sophisticated: believers who are still not open to the potentiality that their own belief system might be flawed.
c) Critical: believers who are willing to oppose points of view because they realize that all belief systems have weakness and can be strengthened by confrontation with different beliefs.

It should be noted that Dewey's conception of openmindedness can be linked to Mills' understanding of critical believers; openmindedness accepts the distinct ways of viewing pupils, learning, and schooling. An open-minded teacher does not hold one perspective instead she listens and accepts the strength and limitations of her own and others' perspectives (Ibid.). This can be contrasted with responsibility which is the careful consideration of the consequences to which an action leads. Dewey reports that this attitude of responsibility involves the thinking about at least three types of consequences of one's teaching:

a) Personal consequences: the effects of teaching practice on student self-concepts;
b) Academic consequences: the effects of teaching practice on students' intellectual development;
c) Social and political consequences: the anticipated effects of one's teaching on the life chances of various students.

According to Dewey, responsibility for reflection involves examinations of these issues and more unexpected outcomes. On the other hand, wholeheartedness is perceived by Dewey as the third precondition for reflection. By wholeheartedness he meant the possession of both openmindedness and responsibility as central components in a professional life. Wholehearted teachers are always striving to understand their own teaching and the way in which it impacts their students. Overall, Dewey meant to say that teachers who are openminded, responsible and wholehearted are continually asking themselves what they are doing, why they are doing it, examining rationales, whether the results good, for whom and in what ways, and taking the pain seeking out conflicting evidence not merely seeking, to meet their objectives (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). By possession of these three attitudes, together with a command of other skills of inquiry, such as observation and analysis, a teacher would be helped to be reflective (Dewey, 1933).

Furthermore, reflection can be seen in two time frames: 1) Reflection-on-action: reflection that occurs before or after an action or a lesson (when we plan for our lesson and after instruction when we consider what occurred). 2) Reflection-in-action: reflection that occurs during the action or lesson (reflective conversations with students while instructing and trying to solve problems on the spot) (Schön, 1983). We do carry out actions, understandings and reflection spontaneously, we are often unaware of having learned these things, we simply find ourselves doing them, but we are usually unable to express this knowing in action (Ibid.). In order to be reflective, one needs to be conscious of this tacit knowledge and understanding, surface and articulate them and then subject them to critique (Schön, 1983; Elliot, 1991). According to Schön, reflective practitioners must be helped to reflect both 'in' and 'on' action. However, due to the fact that there is a separation between theory and practice, which needs to be overcome, there is the belief that theories are generated exclusively in research and universities, and that only practice exists in schools (Zeichner and Liston, 1996).

Although the conceptions of reflective action provided by both Dewey and Schön were acknowledged and advocated by theorists, they have received some criticism. For example, the expectations brought by Dewey's concept of teachers as reflective practitioners was viewed as idealized and divorced from the complex reality of teachers' work (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). It seems that Dewey ignored the unpredictable environment of classrooms, besides other numerous institutional constraints that increase the complexity of teachers' work, such as lack of time and pressure to cover a required and broadly defined curriculum (Ibid.). This corresponds with what some Saudi EFL teachers reported during interviews as the reasons which hinder them from keeping a reflective journal to document their daily learning and practice. Nevertheless, proponents argue that what Dewey was aiming at is the balance between reflection and routine, between thought and action, between the arrogance that blindly rejects what is commonly accepted as truth, and the servility that blindly receives this truth (Ibid.). In addition, the criticism was also directed to Schön around his focus on teaching practices at the individual level without sufficient attention to social conditions; focusing teachers' attention only inwardly on their own practice regardless of external social aspects of their practice (Ibid.). Critics argue that teachers should be encouraged both to reflect internally and externally, as plans for change should involve efforts to improve both individual practice and their social situations (Ibid.).

To sum up, reflection means thinking, and in turn thinking involves perception. While teachers engage in reflecting upon their own practices, they are also engaged in a process of self-awareness, examining their own perceptions. The purpose of bringing out the consideration of reflective teaching or teachers as reflective practitioners is to help teachers to make cognitive processes during the practice of teaching as transparent as possible, and to provide a pointed and defensible view of reflective teaching that could enhance the conception of reflection in schools and institutions.

3.6.1 Teacher as a Reflective Practitioner

Reflection is a social scientific variety of self-consciousness (Delamont, 1992), it is important, and some might acknowledge that they do not really know how to get the best from it. According to Ghaye (2011), reflection or reflective practices

help us understand the links between what we do and how we might improve our effectiveness. Reflective practices help people to understand the significance of work, and provide new insights for developing this work. They also help us understand the links between feeling, thinking and doing, how we feel affects how we think, (Ibid.). According to Hayes (2011), teachers should be seen as reflective learners, arguing that teachers must be self-reflective, understanding that their development occurs over the course of their careers. He describes teachers as reflective learners as follows:

- They integrate ideas, concepts and theories from fieldwork, teaching experience and professional development into their work;

- They act and adapt a personal philosophy of teaching and learning that is consistent with current theories and ethical and legal standards of their profession;

- They reflect on positioning and personal experiences to form responsive relationships with their students in order to enhance learning;

- They recognise and change behaviours in order for them to be in accordance with the accepted standards for teaching;

- They negotiate their own identity and commitment in response to the perspectives of different stakeholders;

- They habitually reflect on feedback and consequences of choices;

- They tend to form judgements about their own teaching efficacy through the use of multiple sources.

It can be noted that through a reflections project, we can help teachers to develop their understanding, learning skills and professional practice. Allowing Saudi teachers to have an agency and to explore the power and potency of reflecting on strengths and weaknesses, will aid them to make sense of teaching and be the best that they can be.

Reflective practice can be used as an experiential learning experience. The following section examines some aspects of experiential learning and how teachers develop their understanding of their current practices.

3.7 Furthering Teacher Agency through Reflection and Experiential Learning

Teachers are still considered as learners, especially when we think of education as a lifelong learning process. Since teachers can be regarded as mature adult learners, research has demonstrated that adults learn through reflection (Kolb, 1984). The following figure shows the process by which adults learn:

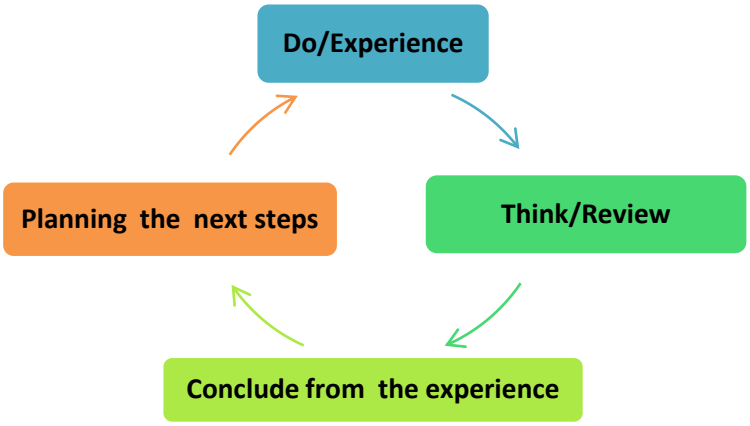


Figure 2.2: Kolb's Adult Learning Cycle

The above figure shows that the learning and reflection processes goes in cycles. The person herself will plan and decide her action and attention, apply it, think it over, and then she will be evaluating the amount of the learning and its reliability in relation to her purposes or intents. Hence, Kolb (1984) expresses that knowledge formation results from the combination of grasping experience and transforming it through dynamic changes or what we can call 'experiential learning'. It can be noted that there is no dichotomy between knowledge and experience in Kolb's definition, as experience grasped in different ways generates elementary forms of knowledge (Björklund, 2008). Kolb's definition of knowledge formation complies with Piaget's (1970). According to Piaget, knowledge is a process of assimilating reality into a system of transformation. He stresses that understanding an object is possible not through perception only, but by acting upon it through dynamic interaction between individuals and the outside world. As a way to answer the claims that other kinds of non-experiential learning might occur, Kolb offered the justification that it is possible to claim that other types of learning are possible when we define experience as merely the occurrence of

physical action, but if we choose to define experience as the type of interaction the person gets involved in, then we have covered the whole complexity of those varied processes which constitute learning within the framework of the social-constructivist paradigm (Kolb, 1984).

According to Hargreaves (1994) teacher learning as a process is both individual and social. Researchers recognise that individuals already have existing knowledge and beliefs which are central to how and why they develop understanding. Therefore, the process of learning could be seen as an active process of interaction between individuals, resources and the social context around them. Hence, for teacher learning to occur, teachers need to have opportunities to participate in professional communities discussing various teaching methods and materials, learning theories and classroom strategies. In this research, while investigating teachers' perceptions of their current EFL practices, the purpose of asking teachers to reflect upon their own teaching experiences, and the use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, is to help teachers to reflect and demonstrate that while teachers are engaged in teaching they are also learning at the same time. They learn from the feedback they receive from their students and colleagues, learn new issues from new materials or methods they use in their classes, or from searching for other resources. Teachers construct their own beliefs about the way they prefer to learn and teach (Kolb, 1984; Hargreaves, 1994).

Furthermore, one significant factor that brings reflective and experiential learning together in an effective way for the management of education is that both are forms of learning that are independent of mediation (Moon, 2004). This learning is a self-managed continuing professional development which could happens in life beyond the formal systems of education, or what can be referred to as everyday learning (Schön, 1983; Moon, 2004). According to Moon (2004: 74), *"the idea of 'mediation' is useful because it focuses on the material of teaching rather than on the activities of the teacher."* I concur with that, although I believe that the idea of mediation targets both teaching material and teachers' practices. This is why nowadays we see educationalists conducting research that tackles what is being taught and how it is taught, and trying to nurture CPD programmes in many respects.

The concept of mediation leads to discussion of the influence of the top-down approach in HE institutions.

3.8 Top-Down Educational Approach

Research indicates that the top-down approach played by schools is a crucial factor in organisational effectiveness and the key to success and improvement (Miller, 2013). There is no unitary definition of what can be counted in this approach to leadership (Ibid.). However, this concept includes many aspects starting from teacher recruitment, teacher development, improving outcomes for students, and so on.

In Saudi Arabia, *"bureaucracy is a major obstacle in HE"* (Alamri, 2011: 90). For instance, the system is centralised in the MoHE. The Saudi government provides policy statements detailing the aims of HE institutions, and confers legitimate power to the MoHE, which provides a list of policies for universities to follow, such as the start and end dates of each academic year, the choice of academic staff and administrative members, faculty entrance scales and other managerial directives (see Appendix I, II). The ultimate authority goes to the MoHE, but the education authority is in the hands of the managers in national universities. People who work within universities, including teachers, are required to abide by these directives and commands. However, as the universities authorise their managers, differences between universities and even faculties has emerged.

A top-down approach means the institutionalisation of power and the regulation of desire and emotion (Elliott, 2007; Ball, 2013). Foucault argues that in modern society, individuals are increasingly subject to what he terms 'disciplinary power', a power that is hidden (Elliott, 2007). Power is imposed upon people through the bureaucratic surveillance of their daily life and the routine gathering of information (Ibid.), as the workplace and school settings are fully concerned with the routine monitoring of teachers. However, Foucault often speaks of the micro-politics of power, by which he refers to the multifarious submissions and resistances of individuals in their interaction with social and institutional life. Foucault warns that power is never fixed; instead it is best conceived as a relationship between individuals, groups and institutions with recognition of the importance of human subjects as creative and knowledgeable agents, not simply the passive victims of power practices and domination (Ibid.). Within the framework of Foucault's society, it can be noted that more order means more repression (Ibid.).

Moreover, research has indicated that leadership within the school system and the whole-school management style has a direct impact on teacher's perceptions and practices (Humphreys, 1993). Humphreys adds that effective leadership and management within the school can enhance teachers' effectiveness and the effects of role load are considerably reduced where there is strong staff cohesion and co-operation.

''The international literature on effective schools makes reference to leadership being firm and purposeful, involving others in the change process'' (Miller, 2013: 8). Research findings assert that the concept of leadership should not be single-handedly managed by a designated group of people but should be disseminated among staff. Such dispersal can boost teachers' motivation levels and improve the quality of teaching activities as well as students' educational attainment (Sergiovanni, 2001; Harris, 2002; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003 cited in Miller, 2013).

3.8.1 The Role of School Climate on Teachers' Perceptions

The study of the effect of school climate has its roots in organisational psychology and research on school effectiveness (OECD, 2009). School climate includes relevant aspects of the school environment: the physical environment, the social system, relationships between principals, teachers and students, a sense of community, norms among peers, teacher and student morale, and safety, hence, researchers agree that it reflects a subjective view of the learning environment at the school level (Cohen, 2006 cited in OECD, 2009).

The climate of the school plays a crucial role in the quality of schooling and instruction. An increasing body of research shows that school climate affects teachers' as well as students' academic achievement, their well-being and personal and social development (OECD, 2009). In addition, a study conducted by Beets et al. (2008) revealed how school climate and school-level factors influence teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the influence of a school's administrative support and perceptions of school connectedness. This study asserts that the positive action programme of the school administration enhances teachers' positive behaviours and behavioural attributions directed at the self (e.g., positive concept of the self and self-responsibility) and social relationships (e.g., respect, fidelity, kindness). This study also concludes to emphasise the

need to consider the importance of a supportive school environment on curriculum implementation and attempt to incorporate models of successful school leadership and collaboration among teachers that foster a climate promoting cohesiveness, shared vision and collaboration.

The positive action role played by the school consists of scripted and scoped programmes that reinforce positive teacher/classroom behaviour and are based on wide staff recognition and empowerment (Beets et al., 2008).

3.8.2 The Role of Empowerment on Teachers' Perceptions

Empowerment is a process. Empowerment is a term that carries different meanings. For instance, from the field of feminist studies, the emphasis is on the empowerment of women (Weiler, 1988). Empowerment in this view is about the freeing of females: from oppression or subordination of their positions within their field of work, and having their contributions recognised and respected. Others see it as linked with enhancing human possibility (McLaren, 1989). The definition that fits best with the theme of this study is that which was provided by Bolin (1989: 82): *"teacher empowerment means investing teachers with the right to participate in the determination of school goals and policies and to exercise professional judgement about what and how to teach."* This term was most usefully discussed by Simpson (1990), where it is linked to professionalism and concerned with improving working conditions for teachers. This view regards teachers as confronted with all the social, political and economic forces which hold the power to limit what is possible. A further view of empowerment is offered by Paolo Freire (1970) cited in Robinson (1994), the revolutionary Brazilian educator who called for this humanizing process which means to him being freed from what he described as the banking concept of education. The way in which empowerment was described by Freire at that time can be referred to today as the marketing of education. Both notions suffocate the vision of teacher autonomy and empowerment as they put more emphasis on the student regardless of teachers. However, it can be noted here that the term empowerment *"has an expanding presence in a broad range of fields and contexts, it has often been used as a rhetorical device without being carefully defined by its wielders"* (Kreisberg, 1992:19 cited in Robinson, 1994). In this

research I shall look at empowerment subdivided into control over curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

My understanding of teacher empowerment is aligned with that of Spreitzer and Quinn (2001) cited in Brindley and Crocco (2009), who emphasised the importance of self-determination of the teacher (the freedom of an educator to determine their own actions), meaning (what teaching means to the teacher), impact (feeling of making a difference), competence, guidance and control. Spreitzer and Quinn suggest that in order to empower teachers and enable them to have an impact, the following measure should be realised:

- Developing a structure for change;
- Using a common language that leads to a common understanding of the concepts and goals of that piloting structure;
- Soliciting relevant professional partnerships;
- Providing the needed professional development support.

In order for the empowerment of teachers to be achieved, all these measure need to be understood in a balanced culture based on mutual understanding, respect, guidance and trust (Brindley and Crocco, 2009).

The notion of teacher empowerment in the Saudi context has been through different shifts and stages. For instance, in the early days of schooling in Saudi Arabia (during the 1930s to 1970s), teachers enjoyed a great deal of power and were considered as the main actors in the whole educational process. In Saudi Arabia as well as in some Arab countries there was a famous saying used by parents who used to take their child to school. They used to tell the teacher that *''The flesh (of the pupil) is yours, but the bones are ours.''* They meant by this saying that the teacher was able to do what they wanted with that student, but should keep them in good shape and they meant that literary and metaphorically.

However, by the late 1980s, attitudes towards teachers had changed and teachers were regarded as semi-skilled workers whose performance needed close supervision and further training. This was transformed into education and training in Teacher Training Colleges (Lawton, 1996). A quote by Viscount Lowe, who was the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education in England from 1859 to 1864 (cited in Lawton, 1996: 118), may best reveal the truth about how people perceive teachers: *''Allowing teachers to decide what to teach would be as foolish as asking chickens what sauce they would like to be served in.''*

Although this quote is old in time comparing to the situation in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, it indicates the changing perspective towards teachers and the down grading of their role.

Furthermore, in response to globalisation and with the rise of the current knowledge-based economy, there have been changing expectations of teachers' roles both from the public and from educationalists. Accordingly, there has been a shift in thought, viewing teachers as moving from being transmitters of knowledge to facilitators of knowledge, from traditional old paradigm of 'followership' to 'leadership' (Frost et al., 2000). Due to this paradigm shift, implementation of new educational policies, innovations and reforms have been made in different contexts, but when it comes Saudi context there is still a need for more teacher involvement and empowerment to some aspects such as curriculum choices and assessment. What is striking through all those years until recently is the fact that there was/is no control by teachers over curriculum. Therefore, I think the Saudi teacher is still stuck in the 70s era, where their whole involvement is underestimated. A number of research studies have demonstrated that when there is an increase in empowerment and professionalism, job satisfaction increases, and on-the-job stress decreases (Britzman, 2003). Thus, it is obvious that greater job satisfaction is associated with a high degree of professionalism and empowerment. Moreover, an empirical study by Dee et al., (2003) demonstrates that empowered teachers show higher levels of organisational commitment. This study also indicates that empowered teachers showed high levels of self-determination and impact dimensions, and the total empowerment score had positive effects on teachers' levels of commitment to the school. Therefore one can claim that in order to engage teachers in pedagogical reform one must give them some control over their own work, enable their voices to be heard and let them influence the reform process. It also means that 'fake empowerment' strategies will lead to bad outcomes (Dee et al., 2003).

I advocate what the educationalist Sir Kenneth Robinson suggests in his lecture in 2013 at TED conferences, *'How to Escape Education's Death Valley'*, which reports that some local cultures deprofessionalise teachers and adopt a mode of command control education. Dr. Robinson defies this notion of education and suggests that to engage and succeed, education has to develop on three fronts:

1) It should foster diversity by encouraging individualisation of the learning and teaching process, offering a broader curriculum, and giving responsibility for defining the course of education to individual schools and teachers.

2) Education should foster curiosity by developing high quality teachers: ''education cannot be improved if we do not improve teachers''.

3) It should foster creativity by developing alternatives to didactic processes that put less emphasis on standardised testing. He gives Finland as an example of a successful education system where teachers have the space and power to choose their own curriculum and creative practices.

Dr. Robinson also goes on to assert that there is no system in the world or any school in any country that is better than its teachers, as he notes, *''Teachers are the life blood of the success of schools''* and emphasises that we only can succeed if we recognise that education is an organic system not a mechanical one *''Successful school administration is a matter of fostering a helpful climate rather than commands and control''*.

To be empowered is to have voice. Voice and its significance in enhancing teachers' perception and agency will be highlighted in the next section.

3.8.3 The Role of Voice on Teachers' Perceptions

It is vital in this research study to take into consideration teachers' voices because their voices reflect how they perceive their own teaching experiences, the major factors affect their own teaching and what aspects they need to improve within their own classroom environment.

Voice is a term which is increasingly linked to teacher empowerment by most researchers, and it has been central to the development of teacher thinking research (Day et. al., 1990). For example, Smyth (1987) identifies this area of research as a way of empowering teachers and facilitating the expression of the teacher's perspective and getting inside their heads. Whereas, in other areas, such as feminist research e.g. Gilligan's (1982), the notion of voice is referred to as a way to redraw the terms of moral development and engagement of teachers. In fact, voice is a term that has been used in a plethora of research and policies:

> ‘‘Voice is now used in a variety of projects and policies from advocacy to consumer rights and citizenship education [...] It has become an established element of central and local government rhetoric, but as it gains in popular usage it becomes increasingly open to question and criticism.’’ (Hadfield and Haw, 2001: 485)

Indeed, the notion of voice has prevailed in traditional qualitative research as it assumes to present the *truth* and reflects the *meaning* (Jackson and Mazzei, 2009). Qualitative inquiry is currently positioned in an era of evidence-based policy and the debates in qualitative research are taking up the question of truth and evidence and what these terms mean for qualitative inquiry (Jackson and Mazzei, 2009) (The problematic nature of interpretation and ’authentic voice’ will be further discussed in the methodology chapter).

’’Yet the rise of dissident voices threatens traditional centres of power and control’’ (Hargreaves, 1994: 249). Hargreaves in his book *’Changing Teachers, Changing Times’,* describes the bureaucratic impetus to guide processes of change and improvement lead the teachers’ voice that doubts the change or disagree with it to be unheard, or be silenced. He indicates that the best solution to such conflict is the development of a *common vision,* establishment of *trust*, commitment to shared goals, and developing clarity in understanding the goals being implemented because a world of vision without voices is problematic. He concludes that a major challenge for educational restructuring is to work through and reconcile this tension and create a collective vision not complying the principal’s own.

Like Hargreaves, Chambers (1998) points out that empowering teachers to present their realities and enable their voices to be heard, understood and acted on leads us to talk about two sequential aspects related to voice and how it can bring about change in a society: 1) voice to policy change (policy-in-principle); 2) policy change to practice (policy-in-practice). According to Chambers the link between voice and policy change and practice include three dimensions:

- **Ownership**: affects likelihood of change. However, ownership by groups of people or even a person in civil society may have to be initiated without explicit government support and then lead to confronting policymakers with evidence about desirable change.

- **Credibility**: is needed to convince policymakers. Researchers carry conviction by being transparent and self-critical about their methods and findings; their reports and outputs include voices in the form of what their participants have said, visualise and made.

- **Process**: is far more than just presenting a report. It is rather the most important and critical aspect to seizing potential opportunity.

It can be noted that it is a triple nexus of aspects, that should be understood to enable delivery of all voices with no bias. This taxonomy by Chambers relates us to the three axes suggested by Foucault in his book '*The Courage of Truth'* (1983 cited in Ball, 2013), knowledge (truth), power (government) and subject (human agent). In his book, Foucault argues that neither knowledge, power, or subject are reduced one to the other nor absorbed one by the others, but whose relations are constitutive of one another (Flynn, 2005 cited in Ball, 2013). Foucault explains these axes involve a repositioning and reconsideration, and he goes to emphasise that power is an 'agonism' and our personal qualities such as self-esteem, empowerment, as well as our hopes and dreams are artefacts of power (Ibid.). Hence, our understanding of ourselves is linked to the ways in which we are governed (Dean, 1999 cited in Ball, 2013).

As voice and agency are related and one can reflect the other, the following section sheds light on agency, efficacy and how this can affect the concept of the able self.

3.8.4 Teachers' perceptions of their own Identity (Selfhood) and Agency

Identity refers to the way one understands and views oneself, and is often viewed by others, at least in certain situations (Horn, 2008). Teacher identity is easily misunderstood and hard to articulate, but still open to interpretation (Olsen, 2008).

> ''Teacher identity is a useful *research frame* because it treats teachers as whole persons in and across social contexts who continually reconstruct their views of themselves in relation to others, workplace characteristics, professional purposes, and cultures of teaching. It is also a *pedagogical tool* that can be

> used by teacher educators and professional development specialists to make visible various holistic, situated framings of teacher development in practice.'' (Olsen, 2008: 5)

The concept of identity or self has been central to many schools of thought in the social sciences, yet an emphasis on human agency varies significantly depending on whether we are adopting a sociological, psychoanalytic, feminist, post-structural or postmodern approaches (Elliott, 2007). For our analysis, and from a sociological point view, teacher identity provides access to the dispositions of individuals together with the environment they encounter and helps to see the people we are trying to understand (Horn, 2008). Thus, it helps to make sense of the relationships individuals develop together with the context they encounter in HE. It is essential to investigate teacher identity as a useful framework for the study and practice of teacher education. Moreover, the talk of teacher identity leads us to think of how a teacher constructs a sense of selfhood inside her own workplace context. However, the construction of selfhood is not entirely a matter of private reflection on one's experiences, yet social aspects play a significant aspect in this process (Bandura, 2006). According to Bandura, human identity is partially constructed from one's social identity as reflected in how one is treated by significant others and how one is labelled socially. In this global society, teacher identities are constructed through the complex interactions between individuals and social, national, and global realities (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Teachers are faced with the challenge of aligning their 'teaching self' in congruence with everyday realities, but how teachers derive meaning from contemporary realities and how they negotiate contradictory expectations defines how they construct their sense of selfhood or 'teaching self' (Ibid.). It can be said here that the sense of selfhood is the product of a set of complex interactions between the person himself and the social reality in which he lives. However, one pervasive and core factor in the foundation of human agency is the belief in personal agency, which is also a key resource in personal development and change (Bandura, 1997).

> ''Efficacy beliefs affect whether individuals think optimistically or pessimistically, in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways. Such beliefs affects people's goals and aspirations, how well they motivate themselves, and their perseverance in the face of difficulties and adversity. Efficacy beliefs also shape people's outcome expectations [...] determine how opportunities and

> impediments are viewed. […] affect the quality of emotional life and vulnerability to stress and depression. And last, but not least, efficacy beliefs determine the choices people make at important decisional points.'' (Bandura, 2006:170-171)

Indeed, the effect of beliefs in one's personal efficacy and agency operates through its impact on cognitive, emotional and decisional processes and many meta-analysis of the effects of efficacy beliefs have concluded, both laboratory and field studies with diverse populations of various ages in different cultural milieus, that efficacy beliefs contribute dramatically to level of motivation, emotional well-being, and performance accomplishments (Ibid.). For instance, it has been found that the well-being of the human is determined by the level of self-esteem. Medical evidence shows a strong correlation between physical health and high self-esteem, likewise, psychology and psychiatry have indicated that peoples' hardships in life are related to personal vulnerability and feeling of inferiority and experiencing low self-esteem (Humphreys, 1993).

On the other hand, high level of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs relate positively to high levels of student achievement, however, the role of collective self-efficacy matters, too (Leithwood, 2006 cited in Bangs and Frost, 2012). The collective agency or voice of teachers is embedded in many educational systems and it is essential to consider the role of organisations representing teachers, such as subject associations and unions (Bangs and Frost, 2012). Such organisations can undertake to promote teachers' professional pride and enhance their sense of collective self-efficacy (Ibid.).

> ''Teachers' unions exercise leadership on behalf of teachers but can also empower their members as individuals to act strategically on initiatives which may be driven by values and principles not necessarily in line with current policy.'' (Bangs and Frost, 2012: 42)

Indeed, teachers' organisations and unions can both enhance teachers' empowerment, learning experiences and contribute to the formation of teacher policy (Bangs and MacBeath, 2012 cited in Bangs and Frost, 2012). However, such institutions are limited in numbers in Saudi Arabia and formed based on individual initiatives and play a zero to fragile process in decision making, which could lead to the absence of teachers' voices and empowerment. Fullan (2011) cited in Bangs and Frost (2012), is critical of teaching policies in specific countries

which fail to engage teachers and he argues that unless governments back off low-trust strategies and start engaging teachers in the profession, they will get neither the commitment nor the skills needed for the success of whole system. Accordingly, one of the outcomes of the International Education Summit on the future of the teaching profession in America in 2012, makes clear that teachers' unions are prepared to engage in the development of teaching policies on the basis of equal partnership with governments, and draws strongly on the evidence that teacher unions are essential to successful education reforms and supporting social dialogue (Ibid.).

To sum up, it can be noted from the discussion above that the notions of voice, empowerment and the teacher as a reflective practitioner are interrelated and hold an overlapping relationship due to the dynamic nature of each concept and the intricate subject (human beings/teachers). The complexity of and relationships between these concepts became more evident through the discussion of each one, its definitions and characteristics. Voice is said to influence empowerment and thus identity, but also to be empowered means to have voice and identity. Thus, they are interrelated and enhancing one of them would boost the other.

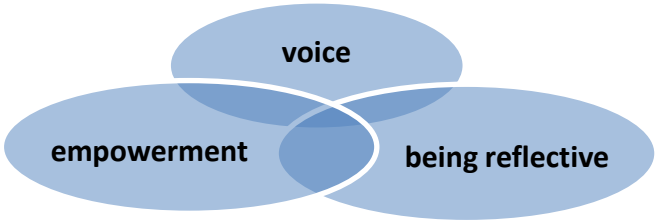


Figure 3.3: The Interrelation of the Concepts of Voice, Empowerment and being Reflective

Having discussed the three nexuses (voice, empowerment and the teacher as a reflective practitioner) that shape teacher agency and efficacy, the next section will provide a materialised example of the curriculum in Saudi Arabia, its concepts and practices, and the centrality of teachers in curriculum formation in Saudi higher institutions which will help represent the field.

3.9 The Saudi National Curriculum

Curriculum is at the heart of any education system and it is clear that it has a fundamental role in shaping the body of any educational institution. It reflects the models of instructional delivery chosen (Wilson, 2005). It cannot be studied in isolation; it is the formation of the interaction between school and society, which is also shaped by them (Ibid.). The success of the education process and the acquisition of knowledge and skills depend largely on the way we tailor or design school curricula and make use of educational, pedagogical, and psychological ideas, which help to open new channels of understanding of the required aspects for learning to take place (Kelly, 2004; Wilson, 2005; Marsh, 2009; Yates and Grumet, 2011). Hence, a school curriculum is a fundamental part of teachers' perceptions and practices.

The Saudi national curriculum is underpinned by scientific, philosophical and pedagogic bases (Alshaer, 2007), that comply with its religious and future aspirations. It comprises content and skills, with the emphasis on the development of basic skills. Each subject must incorporate the inculcation of Islamic moral values and attitudes. This integrated approach is the main focus in the design of the 'Integrated Curriculum', that is contextualised for Saudi students, their school, their community, and state standards. The incorporation of both the elements of knowledge together with the skills and values has been made in order to bring integrated development of the intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical aspects of the learner (Ibid.). Having this in mind, it is clear that the curriculum is designed to cater for the needs of the country and provide it with well-balanced, knowledgeable and loyal citizens who will be better able to serve their country. As a matter of fact, it could be argued that such an approach could introduce future generations into who is the 'we' and who is 'other'. This theme can proliferate unfavourable feelings within students towards other cultures. Nevertheless, this new era of war against terrorism, made it hugely significant for educationalists to teach future generations to be more open and respectful to other cultures. That was the main reason for conducting two reforms to curriculum and its intolerant content in 2004 and 2010 (as we have discussed in chapter 2). However, it is of high importance to teach students to be open and respectful to others' cultures and concepts because the emergence of new advances, and easy and instant communication, has made the whole world a small village. However, information technology has also a major issue for school

curricula in the twenty-first century, and that is how to create a sense of community and common values in a context where knowledge cannot be restricted (Kennedy, 2005). Curriculum experiences are no longer confined to the classroom, there is an increasing gap between 'official' school knowledge and 'real' world knowledge (Kennedy, 2005; Marsh, 2009). Indeed, this emergence of new advances which have eased communication and made the whole world a small village cannot be ignored in curriculum formation. So, it is not rational, even impossible to try to create barriers between students and reality in the world through the control of curriculum. It is essential for the curriculum to relate students to the real world and give them the tools that could enrich their knowledge and ease their lives.

> ''For the curriculum to be comprehensive and realistic, the adult learner must be given the opportunity to have direct experience of tools and equipment, rather than theoretical explanation. This should be done under conditions comparable or similar to actual conditions of work and with educational equipment, tools and aids comparable to those found at work. All of these conditions produce good results when capable and experienced adult education teachers are chosen.'' (Alshaer, 2007: 17)

Alshaer's statement implies the importance of curriculum to enable students to master technical, interpersonal, and methodological skills as well as the significant role of the teacher. Technical skills include problem-solving and analytical skills. Interpersonal skills include teamwork and communication. Methodological skills include the ability to learn on one's own and to cope up with risk and change (World Bank, 2003: xx). However, based on this, it seems that the content-dominated approach of the Saudi curriculum is missing an important goal that is supposed to be incorporated into any curriculum, which is the lack of emphasis on methodological and thinking skills. There is a reduction in curricular content that allows more time to be devoted to creativity, innovation, knowledge application, entrepreneurship, and the ability to work in real environments. These latter mentioned skills are requirements in any educational system which helps to outline the final desired outcomes. We are in need of the application of *'Teach Less, Learn More'* model inside our classrooms. It is important to help our students to be creative thinkers and instil a passion for learning among learners instead of having them study merely for the purpose of obtaining good examination grades (Goh, 1997).

Although in recent years there has been a tendency for governments to try to influence curriculum content, there is still room for curriculum planning at the school level (Bangs and Frost, 2012). Nevertheless, in most Saudi educational institutions, there are 'teacher-proof' packages: versions of curriculum, a curriculum that fails to engage enough with a most crucial link –the agency of the teacher. Teachers ought to be able to adapt and use what they were offered by their course designers. Teachers do not have the freedom to design their own curriculum or even to choose from the curriculum what best fits their students' requirements. They find themselves obliged to abide by one standardised curriculum as the assessment is a summative one. As an experienced teacher, I find myself explaining some lessons that have been part of the English curriculum in general education and students know them by heart. So, why do I need to waste instructional time repeating something that has been done before? This could also be the main reason for the low incidence of English proficiency amongst Saudi students in HE, as most curriculum practices are repeated. Based on my own experience, there is a definite need to call for curriculum development in Saudi Arabia.

These attempts to manipulate teachers by remote control or through the creation of teacher-proof curricula (Kelly, 2004), denies the role of the teacher as the central figure inside classrooms practices. There is a loss of teacher identity and autonomy, which might affect the teacher negatively. In order to achieve the personal and local adaptation by teachers as real practitioners, the Ministry of Education must adopt a policy of supporting school-based curriculum developments rather than attempting to enforce teachers to follow prepackaged programmes which might not fit the specific needs of students. The practices of such educational policies can be summarised as follows:

> ''There is thus every discouragement in the present political climate for teachers who wish to view their professionalism in 'extended' terms and to pursue a study of curricular issues at levels beyond that of the mere 'delivery' of their subject knowledge. Indeed, the processes they are subject to have been described by many commentators as processes of deprofessionalization.'' (Kelly, 2004: 11)

Indeed, research has shown that most teachers feel very strongly that having the freedom to exercise professional judgement about curriculum content and

approaches to teaching and learning is important as there should be no gap between actuality and aspiration (Bangs anf Frost, 2012).

However, as teachers play a crucial role in any educational context, their inclusion as active agents in policy formation should be enhanced. It is pertinent to discuss their role and centrality of teachers in policy formation, as the following section will do.

3.9.1 The Centrality of Teachers in Policy Formation

No one can ignore the significant role of teachers in making educational change and development as they are also concerned with curriculum formation and the preparation of individual lessons.

> ''The teacher has a 'make' or 'break' role in any curriculum innovation. Teachers have been known to sabotage attempts at change; certainly it is clear that such attempts can succeed only when the teachers concerned are committed to them and, especially, when they understand, as well as accept, the underlying principles. The practice of education cannot be a mechanical, largely mindless activity; it requires constant decisions and judgements by the teacher.'' (Kelly, 2004: 9)

Education is an interactive process, therefore, it is necessary for such a process to appreciate and accept the decisions made by teachers and to enable them to be fully engaged in the rationale of any educational process design. Kelly (2004) advocates that the quality of any educational experience depends largely on the work of the individual teacher and any outside attempts at controlling their practices must be doomed to failure, or at best to triviality. He also goes on to visualise the activities of the Office for Standards in Education, in some education institutions, as those of a kind of 'thought-police' designed to prevent teachers from indulging in any act of 'sabotage' as they act on their own professional judgements. Teachers sometimes find themselves obliged to implement new curricular policies over those they have had no influence in framing in order to try to fulfil their students' needs, as the situation in most Saudi HE institutions. According to Kumaravadivelu (2012), the recognising and promoting of teachers'

roles and motivation and 'teaching self' is all about recognising teacher identity, beliefs and values.

However, the effective fulfilment of the role of the teacher is dependent on the breadth of her insight and understanding. Therefore, it is essential to find an alternative strategy for ensuring teachers' compliance to external requirements through the introducing of new schemes of pupil assessment, regular inspections, and teacher appraisal and accountability (Kelly, 2004). These measures are extremely significant for the long-term quality of educational provision. Hence, this study aims to reveal the role of Saudi teachers in their HE institutions and what the forces that constrain them in working towards fruitful educational outcomes. Cullingford (2009), stated that it is an international conclusion, based on research, that the more independence educational institutions and teachers have, and the less interference from outsiders, the better they perform; unfortunately, this is not how it is perceived by some people who are in control of the educational system.

3.9.2 A Partnership Curriculum

It should be noted that a truly democratic society requires a curriculum which the students and teachers have the right to comment on and contribute to (Brundrett and Silcock, 2002). Brundrett and Silcock describe the partnership approach or 'co-constructive teaching' as an approach which gives formal party to teachers and learners. They go on to assert that all interested parties have the right to inclusion in this process of negotiation. They also argue that the curriculum which emerges from this process would reflect a more egalitarian and democratic approach which could be the solution of the conflicts of interest and perspective. Kelly (2004) explains that the idea of enabling students and teachers to negotiate and to contribute to decisions concerning their curricula is important in achieving autonomy and individual empowerment. Indeed, no one is in a better position to decide what the students' needs than the students themselves and their teachers. We are discussing students in HE and they are old enough to have a space to be autonomous and decide on their own. Nevertheless, the teaching in most Saudi institutions, if not all, is still traditional with the teacher spoon-feeding the students and most classes are teacher-centred.

Kelly (2004), also criticised the educational societies that do not apply such a partnership approach and articulates that:

> ''It (partnership curriculum) has an important part to play in counteracting the anti-democratic aspects of those policies of government to plan their educational systems by target-setting [...] This is thus an important response to the ills of the top-down approach to educational planning.'' (Kelly, 2004: 90)

Kelly concluded that the notion of education as individual development is a highly important one and no one can reject it without rejecting democracy itself. Nevertheless, this developmental model approach has attracted more criticism. The criticism of this model of curriculum has come from two main sources: the politicians and the philosophers of education (Kelly, 2004).

Political objections: the first reason for the developmental model not to be favoured by politicians is that it is expensive. Secondly, the effectiveness of this form of curriculum depends on great deal on decisions made by teachers, pupils and even parents, hence, if there is to be a national curriculum, it will need to be one which consists of broad guidelines rather than tight prescriptions. The third reason is that such a curriculum cannot be controlled through central direction.

Philosophical objections: the criticism here comes from those philosophers who advocate content-based curriculum. For example, Dearden (1968, 1976) cited in Kelly (2004), claims that a developmentally appropriate curriculum, which is based on enquiry, discovery and active forms of learning in general, is not a sufficient device to ensure that students learn all they have to learn. Nevertheless, this may not be a sound judgement to make. Following a content-based curriculum or any other curriculum does not guarantee full attainment. This issue relates to assessment which needs further study and focus. Kelly (2004), rejected such claims and stated that this kind of criticism errs in regarding such an approach as a form of methodology, in addition, it is mounted from a completely objectivist position that fails to recognise how the developmental approach to curriculum is founded.

> ''[...] the evolutionary process of curriculum development has been effectively halted; and, in general, the 'secret garden' of the curriculum has been thrown open to the public – an event which, as in many other stately homes, has led to

ossification as well as preservation and too much trampling on the flower-beds.'' (Kelly, 2004: xiv)

There have been new and emerging themes cited in the literature around curriculum. For instance, in the United Kingdom, a text published by Ross (2000) cited in (Marsh, 2009) has a focus on curriculum and reproduction, hidden curriculum, content-driven, objectives-driven and process-driven curricula. In Australia, other major themes focusing on curriculum concepts have evolved. For example, Smith and Lovat (2003) cited in (Marsh, 2009) examined the origins and nature of curriculum, curriculum and ideology, curriculum and the foundational disciplines, critical theory, assessment and evaluation, curriculum change, and curriculum futures. A study by Brady and Kennedy (2007) examined social contexts, curriculum planning models, assessment and evaluation, in addition to curriculum change. Marsh (2009) examined student learning, curriculum planning models, providing for individual differences, assessment and reporting, school culture, standards, innovation, and change. Furthermore, in (2011), Yates and Grumet in their book *'Curriculum in Today's World',* which has been classified as the world yearbook of education for that year, question the configuration of knowledge in curriculum and what is meant by a school 'transmitting knowledge'. They conclude with the emphasis on the dynamic relations between knower and known, learner and learning, student and teacher, who should be engaged in curriculum formation and aspirations. Students and teachers interpret instructional material and curricula according to their community and home-based knowledge (Canagarajah, 1999). During classroom activity they move between competing rhetorical and discursive traditions to find coherence for their thought and expression (Ibid.). The cognitive and educational advantage of this practice should be appreciated. Accordingly, teachers and learners should be encouraged to become reflexive about their classroom practice, to negotiate language and knowledge, their common values and community membership, in particular ways, since knowledge is socially constructed. In this reflexive and negotiated process of pedagogy there is scope for developing a context-sensitive and culture-specific approach to language teaching. Such an orientation to pedagogy functions as a heuristic to develop appropriate practices from bottom up (Ibid.). Highlighting such salient studies provides evidence that there has been much research around curriculum with new insights as it plays a significant role in the development of educational

institutions. There are also a number of common key concepts that are involved in these studies, and the future promises more.

Having highlighted the literature that aids me to better understand the key themes generated in this study, the next section identifies how the literature helped me as a researcher to identify research questions.

3.10 How Literature Informed the Formation of Research Questions

Literature review is not merely a summary of the literature that has been read, additionally it is a critique that assesses the significance of many authors' work and how each item of their work fits into a narrative that you construct when writing your literature review (Bryman, 2012). A good literature review helps in developing conceptual and theoretical frameworks, brings the reader up-to-date with a particular topic, inspires research ideas by identifying gaps or controversies, and accordingly helps in determining or defining research questions, hypotheses, and what research methods to apply (Flick, 2014).

As pointed out by Bryman (2012), being able to link the questions generated to the existing literature is a significant and useful way of demonstrating the credibility and contributions of the research. In fact, research questions are significant as they guide and structure the choice of data to be collected. Although creating a research question is a task and there is no recipe for the perfect research question, it is a process that requires considerable attention. According to Flick (2014), research questions should be:

- Clear and simple;

- Consistent with the nature of the inquiry;

- Manageable;

- Interesting and incorporating the possibility of different outcomes and opinions.

I am keen to provide assurance that my research questions were feasible and complied with the features mentioned above. Below, I will explain how the literature helped me in the formation of my theoretical set of research questions:

1. What are the experiences and perceptions of the pioneer new entrant female Saudi EFL teachers towards teaching English as a foreign language in HE? Firstly, this research question was developed based on my previous experiences as a Saudi EFL practitioner. My aim was to shed light on the reality of ELT in Saudi HE institutions in order to understand teachers' perceptions about their own EFL practices and what is needed to enhance students' learning experiences and outcomes. Secondly, throughout my reading of the literature, I found that there was a lack of research in the Saudi context, tackling new entrant female Saudi EFL practitioners and how their perceptions can affect their performances. New challenges arise as a result of educational and political reforms within Saudi Arabia and thus research of the type described is very important.

2. What are teachers' perceptions of their department's English teaching culture? As the literature suggests that a school's culture can affect teachers' motivation and performance, another research question focusing on how teachers' perceptions of their workplace policies can affect their self-efficacy and agency was devised.

3. What are the perceived obstacles and challenges female Saudi EFL teachers face in providing high quality ELT? The literature helped me to identify some of the factors that could affect teachers' perceptions, motivation and efficacy in developing effective EFL practices (e.g. teacher's formal experience as language learner, age, years of experience, prior training, in-service training, and workplace culture) and I therefore developed a question that focuses on identifying these factors. I have tackled these factors in my pilot study semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix VII).

3.11 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter explored the concept of teacher perceptions, how they are formed, why is it essential to confront teachers' beliefs and attitudes and provided some examinations of the sources of teachers' perceptions about teaching and learning. It was essential to outline some of the key aspects about teachers' perceptions, beliefs and values as this threw the importance of the topic into focus.

In addition, the chapter raised the complexity of the issues pertaining to teacher empowerment, agency and voice and the significance of these concepts in general in relation to the field of enhancing teacher efficacy and agency. Moreover, a materialistic example of curriculum formation and the centrality of teachers in its formation in the Saudi context have been highlighted.

The next chapter details the research methodology employed for this study.

Chapter 4

Research Design and Methodology

''To know that we know what we know, and that we do not know what we do not know, that is true knowledge.''

(Confucius)

''The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing''

(Socrates)

4.1 Introduction

In exploring the issues which are key to curriculum planning and teachers' perceptions and practices, it is essential to begin from an analysis of the status of human knowledge, for a number of reasons. Firstly, however we conceive of education and curriculum, still the need for learning of some kind is central to it. Secondly, there are different ways of conceptualising reality, and how we conceptualise it will depend on how we conceive human knowledge (Kelly, 2004). One of the most dangerous fallacies around knowledge construction of any social phenomenon is the failure to recognise the problematic nature of human knowledge (Ibid.). This chapter endeavours to discuss the ontological and epistemological aspects of the research as well as the theoretical perspectives underpinning it. This is based on my intellectual struggles to construct a methodological framework to guide my PhD research. Throughout my research project I have become deeply aware that there is considerable disagreement about knowledge construction and the clear cut boundaries between ontology and epistemology. However, I attempt to illuminate the tangled philosophies underpinning such topics and identify two key approaches by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Crotty (1998) which have used the construction of knowledge in particular ways. This choice of epistemology/ontology, leading to a suitable

theoretical perspective, also involves methodological and analytical methods and techniques, which are significant in addressing the research questions.

According to Greenbank (2003), epistemology, methodology and the choice of paradigms (sets of ideas, assumptions and beliefs that guide action) are all influenced by researchers' values, beliefs, and identities, as well as the subject of research. Therefore, it might be clear that throughout the examination of such aspects, my own ontological position, together with the epistemological position, will be revealed. It could be argued that researchers are embodied agents within their research, and their emerged ideas and emotions represent their individual identities (Hartas, 2010). It might appear to the reader that throughout my research I have adopted a more dominant western approach rather than an eastern one. I can attribute this to my belief that human knowledge is the heritage of mind, and thus it is everyone's legacy. I want to draw from both cultures in a framework that could help to construct knowledge.

The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part provides an overview of my ontological and epistemological stance as a researcher. The second part begins with an explanation of the methodological framework, which provides an entrance through which knowledge construction can be accessed, followed by a discussion of ethical considerations.

The following section will take us through a brief journey around some major theories and philosophies of meaning construction.

4.2 Ontological and Epistemological Perspective

> ''I fell asleep, and while sleeping, I dreamed that I was a butterfly. But when I awoke, I was uncertain whether I was a man dreaming that I was a butterfly, or whether I was a butterfly dreaming that I was a man, dreaming that I was a butterfly.'' (Old Chinese Paradox, cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 70)

From early in human history humanity endeavoured to establish a sense of the world and the social phenomena around, and therefore, it is evident that ancient people tended to create the notion of 'myths' as a way to try to help them understand/construct reality or inexplicable aspects of life (Altrichter et al., 1993). Answers to questions about the nature and significance of human beings

stem from our value system and beliefs expressed in world-views: 'our interpretations and evaluations of the world, which shape our perceptions of desirable courses of action' (Poole, 1995).

> ''A world-view is concerned about such questions as, 'is the universe a cosmic accident?' or 'is there a purpose behind it?' Such questions broaden the enquiry from *scientific* considerations about nature (Gk. *Phusis*, hence physics), to further questions which arise *after* (Gk. *Meta*), questions about 'the interpretation of ultimate reality'. These belong to the realm of *metaphysics*, which is 'an attempt to discover the most general and pervasive facts about the world.'' (Poole, 1995: 18)

Poole also goes on to consider metaphysics as a philosophical outcast sometimes, which can be verified as discoveries are made. According to Poole metaphysics includes three dominant concepts:

1) **Ontology**: the theory of 'being' or 'what exists'.
2) **Epistemology**: the philosophical theory about 'how or whether' what exists can be known.
3) **Axiology**: the study of 'values' and their relation to ultimate reality.

The nature or the essence of social reality -in other words, the theory of being (ontology)- together with the philosophical theory of knowledge, i.e., the study of the bases of knowledge and forms of social phenomena (epistemology), as well as studies around human belief systems and values, and the paradoxical views around these philosophies of how we perceive reality, is as huge and as old as humankind (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These dominant concepts of metaphysics permeate through all sciences and show that metaphysical questions are increasingly being asked (Poole, 1995).

However, research in education is situated within epistemologies with diverse schools of thoughts (e.g. positivism, interpretivism, naturalism, critical theory, pragmatism, postmodernism, etc.), and our understanding of social reality and what counts as knowledge becomes blurred as confusion that emerges from a kaleidoscope of epistemologies offer a fragmented vision of the way in which knowledge is generated through research (Hartas, 2010).

> ''Experienced researchers and novices alike find it hard to keep up with the cacophony of diverse epistemologies. Behind the welter of names –positivism,

> naturalism, post-positivism, relativism, feminist standpoint epistemology, foundationalism, each with an array of sub-species- lie important questions: Is there a single, absolute truth about educational phenomena, or are there multiple truths? […] Can knowledge of the world be evaluated independent of the social and historical contexts in which it exists, or is it always contingent upon, or relative to, particular circumstances?'' (Pallas, 2003: 6 cited in Hartas, 2010)

This debate and the confusion emerging from these epistemological traditions and their contribution to understanding social reality has been raging amongst philosophers and intellectuals for centuries. For example, Plato, the famous Greek philosopher asserts that knowledge is of the world of forms of ideas which exist in the mind and are acquired through the use of the senses, whereas, the empiricist philosophers, such as Aristotle, had a contrary view. For empiricist philosophers knowledge is not that which is created by the mind but that which corresponds to the world as it is; things we can observe are the objects of knowledge but non-observable things like ethics and religion are in the realm of beliefs, not knowledge (Annas, 1981). However, Muslim scholars have different perspectives from these former idealist and realist epistemologies. In Islam, knowledge is truth and it comes from God's revelation to Adam and to His Prophets, and from reasoning and perception or empiricism and the use of senses. Muslim scholars refer to the systematic study of nature by science, which is the study of the 'Work of God' (Hoodbhoy, 1991). According to Muslim scholars, the objects of knowledge and essences that can be known are therefore God, His visible and invisible creation and the tangible and intangible phenomena. Like Socratic irony, Muslim scholars such as Al-Jahiz, Ibn Sina, Ibn Alhytham, Al-Ghazali and many more believe that the way to truth comes through doubting things and questioning (Ibrahim, 2014). Combining reason and faith is a tenet that Muslim scholars incorporate together, go hand in hand and the knowledge of each leads to the other.

I concur with Hoodbhoy (1991) that the scientific revolution of the last millennium has established that there is one 'universal science' and it is a shared heritage developed by Jewish, Christian, Muslim and atheist. Indeed, science is a universal concept and there is no separate Jewish, Christian or Muslim science.

As there is not enough space to go through this prolonged debate concerning social reality, instead it is pertinent here to refer to two dominant research paradigms in educational research and how the social world should be studied and whether a scientific approach is the right stance to adopt: positivist and interpretive paradigms. I am rejecting the positivist paradigm since I do not support the view that truth can only be discovered by observing, experimenting, or interrogating a large number of subjects, resulting in outcomes that can be statistically analysed (Basit, 2010).

Unlike the positivist paradigm, I adopt an interpretive paradigm as I believe that truth is socially constructed at least in the social sciences. This post-positivist paradigm, also known as the 'naturalistic' or 'constructivist' paradigms takes a more qualitative approach. It adapts values and perspectives in searching for reality. It holds the constructivist view that truth is socially constructed (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). According to constructivists:

> ''Meaning is not discovered, but constructed. In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon.'' (Crotty, 1998: 9)

It was not until the 1960s that educational researchers started to recognise the interpretive paradigm, but this model was perceived as a soft scientific paradigm, its findings personal and full of bias (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Accordingly, criticism grew between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Harre (1981) cited in Lincoln and Guba (1985: 30) visualises the argument between positivism and the qualitative paradigm as follows:

> ''Where positivism is concerned with surface events or appearances, the new paradigm [qualitative] takes a deeper look. […] Where positivism sees its central purpose to be prediction, the [qualitative] paradigm is concerned with understanding. Finally, where positivism is deterministic and bent on certainty, the [qualitative] paradigm is probabilistic and speculative.''

It can be seen that quantitative and qualitative approaches are often regarded as two fundamentally diverse, competitive paradigms. However, setting the two paradigms in an adversarial role is truly unhelpful; it implies that we are faced with two homogeneous traditions which are internally consistent (Clark and Creswell, 2008). Conversely, one could admit that both the paradigms are

acceptable and each serves certain objectives. Qualitative approaches fulfil the need for searching for answers to questions relating to how social experience is created and given meaning (as the scope of this study). Whereas, quantitative approaches emphasise the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Clark and Creswell, 2008). Thus, it can be said that the controversies between positivist and interpretive approaches cannot be denied and the break is not clean or neat. The adoption of an extreme interpretive or positivist perspective would not allow for communication between individuals and no progress would have been possible (Barbour, 2014).

Furthermore, as qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality and the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied (Cohen and Manion, 1994), it is essential to discuss the researcher's philosophical stance in order to be able to provide a better understanding of the selection of a research methodology (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

4.3 The Philosophical Underpinnings of the Qualitative Approach

4.3.1 Researcher's Philosophical Stance

> ''Research enquiry is a search for understanding. Understanding involves the construction of ideas in a framework, which, to extend the building metaphor, needs to have strong foundations and to be sufficiently robust to resist all but the most vigorous shaking. These frameworks are the concepts that inform our study and that are also the basis for us to inform others of our study [...]'' (Su et al., 2010: 86)

Indeed, research is an heuristic endeavour, in which the outcomes cannot be prespecified. The hermeneutical aspects of research and its interpretations lie at the heart of all intellectual endeavours (Ibid.). Su et al., also go on to consider the researcher as both a consumer and a purveyor of concepts, with the successful negotiation of transactions being dependent upon the clarity of interaction and communication.

It is intended by this research to give an overview about the way teachers approach EFL teaching, what criteria they use and how they assess their school's practices. In keeping with the goal of the study to understand teachers'

perceptions from a situational perspective, I have developed a conceptual framework that relies on constructs that allow me to remain sensitive to both the teachers I follow and the teaching world they meet. In this study I build on my own experience as a teacher to construct reality about what Saudi teachers go through during their instruction in Saudi HE institutions. Indeed, experiencing teaching in Saudi general and higher education in both private and public schools has enabled me to construct a general view about some of the school practices that Saudi students and teachers experience inside their educational institutions. I believe that experience enables a person to construct some form of reality, although this might be affected by one's beliefs and values: I concur with Crotty that:

> ''We humans are not that creative, however. Even in subjectivism we make meaning out of something. We import meaning from somewhere else. The meaning we ascribe to the object may come from our dreams, or from primordial archetypes we locate within our collective unconscious [...], or from religious beliefs, or from ... That is to say, meaning comes from anything *but* an interaction between the subject and the object to which it is ascribed.'' (Crotty, 1998: 9)

Speaking about reality or truth leads us to another epistemological debate: Is there one absolute truth? Or is there just a humanly fashioned way of perceiving things which we can only come to understand through a similar process of making meaning? (Ibid.). Nevertheless, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the most accurate ontological position is that there is no reality at all; reality is best understood as a standing wave function that is not realised until some observer rides it. To sum up, we should notice that it is not possible to be idealistic, but I endeavour to be realistic in order to be able to visualise the findings relative to the experienced reality perceived by my participants.

On the other hand, it should be noted here that teachers, like any members of organisations, shape their perceptions and attitudes in accordance with the world around them (Rosenholtz, 1991).

> ''People come to define their workday realities through a set of assumptions about appropriate attitudes and behaviours constructed within them. Meanings of work are exchanged, negotiated, and modified through the

communications people have with, or the observations they make of, others. Thus teachers learn through everyday interactions [...]'' (Rosenholtz, 1991: 3)

However, it is self-evident that social organisations vary enormously from one school to another. Even within one school context, there might be some teachers who hold different definitions of teaching and school reality. The fact is that teachers differ substantially in their individual biographies and those differences may produce variations in their perceptions of reality (Ibid.). These multiple definitions of the concept of EFL teaching, in accordance with the social organisation within schools, is what this study about. Not only I am interested in the beliefs, perceptions, and behaviours of Saudi teachers towards their EFL teaching and school culture, but also in the reciprocal effect of those beliefs and behaviours on their school practices.

Ontologically, 'truth' is constructed. Therefore, to perceive this reality, it was intended by this research to examine the views of the teachers through interviewing them face to face. I am interested in what teachers perceive (construct) to be truth or reality about their own conception of their teaching needs and requirements. It might be clear that I am adopting cross-cultural epistemological views in my research. This can be justified by the fact that educational research has become internationalised (Hartas, 2010). The international educational exchange of skills and cultures created a 'flat-world platform' enabling, empowering, and enjoining individuals to go global immensely easily and seamlessly (Friedman, 2005 cited in Gu, 2010). Statistics shows that in 2010 more than 3.6 million tertiary students studied outside their home countries compared to 2 million in 2000, with a 78% increase in a decade (UNESCO, 2012). With these epistemologies and skills mobility it is likely we will see continued change in the ways that knowledge is produced, displayed and utilised, driven by the unevenly distributed economic, political and ideological powers and cultural diversity (Gu, 2010). However, according to Hartas (2010), there are some issues, such as translating, synthesising and, most importantly, interpreting international research findings which require further consideration because the absence of a shared cultural experience makes interpretation challenging. It can be said that my formal background in studying translation (from English to Arabic) for five years and then working as a language teacher for more than seven years, as well as pursuing my higher studies for more than five years, in an English speaking country, helped me to develop some of the

tools and insight that are necessary for accessing and interpreting knowledge and being aware of the variability of cultural interpretations of meaning. Additionally, the review of international literature has enabled me to develop a kind of critical stance towards cross-cultural evidence at an international level. After all, I believe that it is a human right to seek knowledge in every respect possible because knowledge or truth is not yet finalised. So we might reach towards truth if we work collaboratively as an international community because the formation of knowledge is value free regardless of race, gender and judgement.

4.3.2 Neutrality in Research

Considering perceptions made me think of my own personal perceptions and impact as a researcher in this research study, and what might affect the way I address the analysis of such a topic. I explored the work of my colleagues (some I know and others whom I do not know) as they go about their daily work. I am aware that the social and working relationships I form with some of them may influence the process of data collection and analysis. This raises a number of issues around researcher membership in the group or area being studied. For instance, Spindler and Spindler (1982) cited in Burgess (1985), warn of the problems of being too familiar with the setting under study and how easily assumptions can be made and situations taken for granted. However, they acknowledge that the advantages of detailed knowledge of the local culture and of the setting will assist the insider researcher in analysing data.

These issues are relevant to all approaches to qualitative methodology, as the researcher plays such a direct and intimate role in both data collection and analysis (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). In this situation, I believe that being a member of the population of the research, who shares the characteristics and experiences under study with my participants, helps me as a researcher to reach a better understanding of their needs and aspirations. In addition, being an insider enables me to portray a picture close to the reality of EFL practices and the social organisation of the workplace in most Saudi HE institutions. Nevertheless, in order to go over the impact of my position in this research as an insider to the population under study and to avoid imposing my own perceptions, I intended to follow what has been suggested by Asselin (2003), that it is best for insider researchers to gather data with their 'eyes open', but assuming that they

know nothing about the phenomenon being studied. In addition, in order to produce what I could regard as a transparent and personally satisfying ethnography, I employed a 'censorship strategy', this strategy works as a filter to what I perceive through data collecting methods in which I can discuss my interpretation of any inflammatory action or statement with the actor in question (respondent) (Ibid.). However, as Postmodernism emphasises the importance of understanding the researched context (Angrosino, 2005), I believe that I am in a better position to shed light on the reality of ELT in the Saudi context clearly. In this regard, my past experience as a practitioner EFL teacher is in no way disadvantageous to my present role as a researcher. Knowledge of professional practice becomes useful to me as a source of data.

Moreover, critique of educational research rejects the notion of neutrality and value-free research. Many researchers, such as Tooley and Darby (1998), Hammersley (2005), Greenbank (2003), Hartas (2010) and many others, argue that removing systems of belief and norms from educational research is faulty in that beliefs and values form the basis of education. The researcher's personal judgements reflect moral responsibility, which cannot be reconciled with the notion of a value-free science (Hartas, 2010).

> ''[…] values will always impact upon research. I would therefore reject claims that research is able to uncover the 'truth' by adopting a value-neutral approach, preferring instead to accept the existence of different realities due to the influence of values on the research process.'' (Greenbank, 2003: 798)

This statement by Greenbank best summarise the dilemma around neutrality in any research inquiry. It simply means that researchers should not strive to be wholly detached from their research as their view of the world is always from within it and what they see, even what they erase from view, will be framed by their cultural resources (Savin-Baden and Major, 2010). Indeed, it could be argued that my personal perspective in this research sheds light on my position in the study and helps to explain the rationale behind selecting this particular topic.

However, human inquiry demands human instruments (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Hereafter, the following paragraphs provide a discussion of the research methodology followed by a description of the proposed methods of enquiry.

4.4 Qualitative Inquiry

In order to be able to address my research questions, I employed primarily a qualitative approach for data collection and analysis. Qualitative research can be described as *''a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning''* (Shank, 2002: 4). It could also be referred to as *''the interpretive and naturalistic approach; that studies things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them''* (Lincoln and Denzin, 2011: 3). This implies that qualitative research provides an understanding of the social and psychological phenomena of the social settings of individuals. It is an approach that is useful for exploring 'why' rather than 'how many' (Flick, 2002). Although, some scholars, such as Finch (1984) cited in Burgess (1985) argue the case for using qualitative research design in the field of educational research and prefers the use of action research. However, Burgess perceives qualitative research can be complementary to other kinds of research with their special contribution to make more comprehensible accounts and understandable descriptions. Burgess also goes on to contend that qualitative studies provide more insights and reflect the subjective reality of the people being studied. After all, I believe the matter being investigated is the arbiter of which approach the researcher should adopt to tackle a problem. In addition, I contend that research conducted is not merely concerned with day to day practice but is also associated with conceptual questions, methodological issues and problems of dissemination (Burgess, 1985). Different approaches can bring us a full circle of any social phenomena, so collaboration over investigation with different approaches is needed.

Although I believe no method of research, either quantitative or qualitative, is better than any other, I consider a qualitative method to be more appropriate to the research problem in which I am interested. I opted for a case study methodology that would enable me to tap into the complexities of teachers' perceptions and demographics. Case study can be defined as: *''A strategy of research that aims to understand social phenomena within a single or small number of naturally occurring settings. The purpose may be to provide description through a detailed example or to generate or test particular theories*'' (Bloor and Wood, 2006: 36).

Case study research always involves *''the study of an instance in action''* (Hartas, 2010: 161). The emphasis in a case study is on far fewer instances but rather

more depth of focus and practices within a more grounded context as a way of providing a deeper understanding of origins, causes and motives (Ibid.). It is often that case studies are associated with ethnography where the purpose is to describe social groups in their natural setting applying a number of qualitative methods, mainly observations. These shared properties between case study research and other forms of naturalistic inquiries have made it difficult to offer an absolute definition of case study (Bloor and Wood, 2006). Case study research is considered particularly valuable when the researcher wants to gain a detailed understanding of the processes involved within a setting, and capture the unique characters of people through their ability to generate holistic data and theories before such theories are tested in the main study (Ibid.). In fact, this study project could be regarded as an ethnographic case study; ethnography in the sense that it entails the study of a particular cultural group, who are in this regard female Saudi EFL teachers, and case study as it targets a particular defined case of people in action.

However, *''ethnography involves the disciplined study of what the world is like to people who have learned to see, hear, speak, think, and act in ways that are different. Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people''* (Spradley, 1979: 3). And this study aims to reveal the reality of current EFL practices from the eyes of Saudi EFL teachers, what they hear, see and perceive to be true. I believe this methodology enables the study to generate rich data pertaining to issues that Saudi female teachers reflect upon regarding their own curriculum practices and help to reveal teachers' internal feelings and hopes. By adopting such methods and approaches I aim to help to make visible the consequences of decisions made by the socially powerful construct (school administration) about the socially powerless (teachers).

Furthermore, a naturalistic inquiry has no definitive design, nevertheless, it does have a characteristic pattern of flow and development (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Figure 4.1 summarises the form of the logical flow of this research:

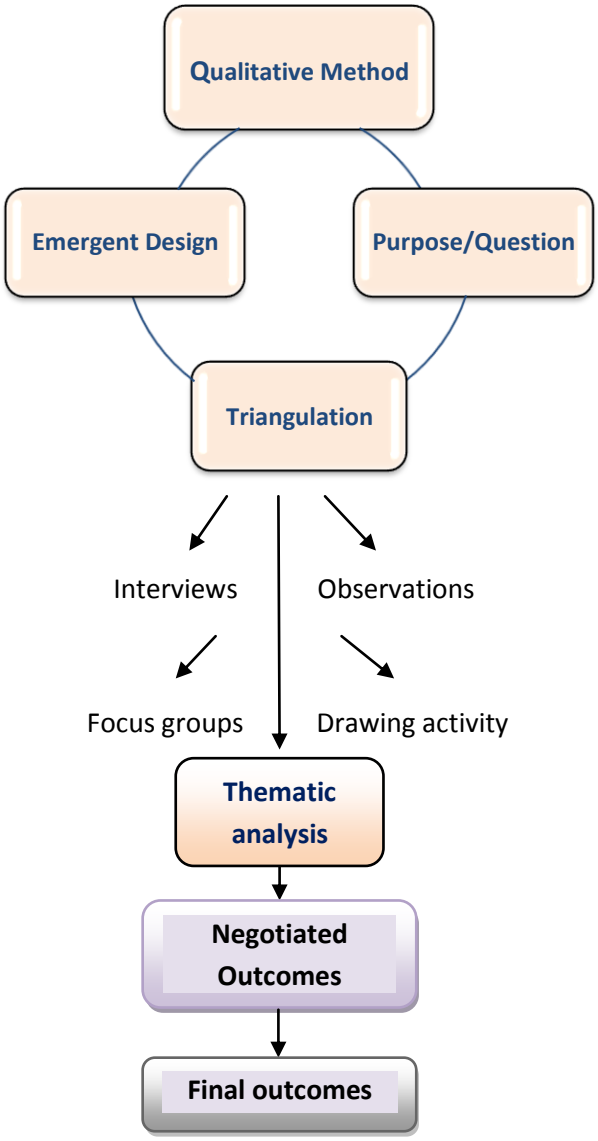


Figure 4.1: Sequential Methodological Design

This research adopts a qualitative approach towards the relationships between the experiences of Saudi EFL teachers in HE and the intersections of 'expertise' and 'training'. Data analysis takes the form of successive iterations of different components: Purposive sampling, inductive analysis of the data obtained (rather than beginning with any a number of preconceived notions and then attempting to prove or disprove them, the analysis has emerged from the data), and development of thematic analysis based on emergent codes and themes. I conducted ongoing process of coding of the data to look for emerging theories and developing themes. It is necessary to iterate the data obtained until redundancy is achieved (Ibid.). Throughout my research, but especially by the

end, the data and its interpretations were checked with study respondents until the outcomes were agreed upon, then, the outcomes used to develop a report of my research project.

4.4.1 Method and Methodology

Methodology focuses on the specific usage of the method or strategy which we apply to understand social reality. In educational research, the emphasis is sometimes placed on the value and the objective power of methods, however, placing huge emphasis on the method rather than on the research as an inquiry can reduce research to be merely a method (Hartas, 2010). Janesick (1994) has coined the term 'Methodolatry' which is a combination of two words: method and idolatry to indicate the notion of focusing on methods to marginalise the scope of research inquiry. Researchers should try to reconcile the nature of an inquiry together with the methods employed to make sense of data (Hartas, 2010). In addition, relying on a single method is unlikely to constitute truth as it does not help to unravel all the complexities around social phenomena (Ibid.). Thus, in order to demonstrate trustworthiness in this study I intended to seek multiplicity by encouraging the use of multiple methods (semi-structured interviews, focus groups, some observations, and a drawing activity), keeping a reflexive journal, using purposive sampling, undertaking persistent observation, and engaging in member checking.

The following paragraph provides a brief discussion and explanation of the research context, questions and design.

4.5 The Study

4.5.1 Context of the Study

First of all, in order to make sense of the varied experiences of the participants of the study, it is essential here to distinguish between *arenas* and *settings*. According to Lave et al. (1984), arenas are physically, economically, politically and socially organised in time, while settings are the personally ordered and edited versions of the arena which appear as individuals interact in these contexts. In this study, it is intended to view school culture as a kind of arena

that each participant tailors into a setting of their own. The data will be derived from teachers at their school settings and their feedback as well as their course managers' (CMs) feedback in English EFL content and practices in order to enable a mutual understanding of both teachers' needs and the forces that control them.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that naturalistic inquiry demands a natural setting because ontologically reality constructions cannot be separated from the world in which they are experienced. The context of the study from which the data were driven is an inner city university in Saudi Arabia, which has three different branches in three different main cities with more than 4000 teaching staff. The study was conducted in one of the University's English Language Institutes (ELI). This designated institute was established in 1975 by the British Council (KAU, 2012). The main aim then was to teach English courses to over 500 male students at the colleges of Engineering and Medicine; the number of female students at the School of Medicine then did not exceed 100 women (Ibid.). This institute has developed over the years to currently providing general English language courses to over 12,000 male and female full-time students in their Foundation Year (Ibid.). The ELI's responsibilities grew as the intake of Foundation Year students increased every year.

There are over 600 qualified EFL teachers across the Men's and Women's campuses. Some teaching there have been awarded their higher degrees from a number of international leading universities; and others have local awards. This institute is administratively run by the Dean and six Vice-Deans, but any Council decisions have to be approved by the President of the University in order to be valid and effective. Furthermore, this ELI has met the eligibility requirements for academic standards set by the commission on English Language Programme Accreditation (CEA), which is recognised by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a national accrediting agency for English language programmes and institutions (Ibid.). Indeed, it is an internationally-oriented institute which serves to promote both innovative learning and educational core values.

4.5.2 The Respondents

The procedure for selecting the sample of teachers to be approached in this study is determined by two factors. The first is that the study should tackle Saudi female teachers who teach English as a foreign language in higher educational

institutions because this is the sample that I have ready access to. The second decision was that an important part of the analysis should take the form of comparing the experiences and perceptions of new entry teachers (only those who had been awarded their degrees abroad and excluding those who carry local degrees) towards EFL teaching and its curriculum practices, in a way that helps to throw light on teacher engagement in curriculum development and practices.

Teacher	Acquired Degree	Country of Study	Age	Years of experience	Prior Training
1	PhD	Australia	39	9	-
2	PhD	UK	43	12	1 year
3	PhD	UK	38	7	-
4	MA in Linguistics	UK	35	8	-
5	MA in ESL	USA	33	7	8 weeks
6	MA	USA	34	9	-
7	MA in Applied Linguistics	USA	32	7	-
8	MA in Linguistics	USA	37	10	2 years
9	MA in Literature	USA	29	5	-
10	MA in ESL	USA	31	6	-
11	MA in TESOL	Canada	31	7	-
12	MA in TESOL	Canada	29	5	-

Table 4.1: A Profile of the Participant Teachers

The respondents to my interviews are 12 female Saudi EFL teachers in one of the HE institutions in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, who had been awarded their degrees no less than five years prior to the study. It was assumed that all participant teachers had at least five years of teaching experience or more and the sample did not include novice teachers, so that the scope of the research was narrowed down. Respondents were chosen according to a purposive sampling principle. The principle of selection in purposive sampling is determined by the researcher's judgement of typicality or interest (Robson, 2011), and my interest in this study is female Saudi teachers (new-entrant award winning) and their perceptions and experiences of current EFL teaching. A cluster sampling which involves dividing the respondents into a number of units according to a range of characteristics (in this research new entry teachers vs. their CMs) was applied. This cluster

sampling tactic is useful, particularly when dealing with a dispersed population (Robson, 2011). The study tackles teachers' CMs in order to help teachers to be heard and reach a mutual understanding between them which is another core of the study.

However, it was difficult to know in advance how many interviews it is necessary to conduct. There might be some issues around the theory or data saturation (the number of interviews needed to get a reliable sense of thematic exhaustion and variability within a data set) and on the criteria for deciding when theoretical saturation has been achieved (Bryman, 2008). According to Guest et al. (2006), who had conducted sixty in-depth interviews with women in two West African countries, and who interestingly analysed the process of data saturation, concluded that data saturation was achieved once around twelve transcripts had been thematically analysed. They found that by the time twelve interviews had been examined (from just one of the two West African countries), 92 per cent of the codes used for this batch of transcripts had been generated. In addition, after twelve interviews, the codes did not require significant revision, implying that saturation of categories was arrived at quite early. As this research is narrow in scope (teachers' perceptions of current ELT), and the sample is relatively homogenous (Saudi female EFL teachers at HE), consequently, it is hoped that saturation was achieved.

4.5.3 Research Questions

Research questions help to shape up the general inquiry of the phenomenon under study. Since the study aims to investigate teachers' perceptions of current curriculum and ELT practices, the purpose of the research is twofold. The first aims to address theory related questions, and the other is more empirically based. The following questions were designed to act as the governors that guide the scope of this research:

1- What are the experiences and perceptions of the pioneer new entrant female Saudi EFL teachers towards teaching English as a foreign language in HE?
2- What are teachers' perceptions of their department's English teaching culture?

3- What are the perceived obstacles and challenges female Saudi EFL teachers face in providing high quality ELT?

However, as the study developed, based on my pilot study and as a result of my reading around a wider review of the literature, another set of more practical questions emerged:

1- How is empowerment being implemented within the Saudi context?
2- What are the extent and nature of existing EFL services and CPD programmes provided in their HE departments?
3- How do Saudi EFL teachers perceive themselves dealing with possible tensions that arise from existing workplace policies?
4- How does highlighting such aspects aid teachers to seek more improvements?

In this study project, in order to be able to address these research questions, I employ a qualitative data approach, and I return to them in chapter 7 to examine whether the data generated shed any light on them. It is important to address these questions through research and the next section discusses the formation of specific questions used during the research.

4.5.3.1 Research Question Formation

The semi-structured interview and focus group questions for both teachers and their course managers were based upon three types of interview questions suggested by Spradley (1979) and Janesick (1994): descriptive, structural and contrast. Structural questions are used to provide some sort of explanation, while descriptive questions require providing expansion of meaning and utterances as this type of questions takes *"advantage of the power of language to construe settings"* (Frake, 1964: 143 cited in Spradley, 1979). Contrast questions help to elicit missing attributes and new dimensions of contrast (Ibid.).

According to Spradley (1979), the developmental research sequence goes from descriptive questions to structural questions to contrast questions, however, it is best to alternate the various types of questions in each interview as structural questions complement rather than replace descriptive ones. These types of questions could be thoroughly mixed together in an almost random fashion in any interview, and this will not only keep the participant from becoming bored,

but it relieves any anxiety created by the test-like effect of structural and contrast questions (Ibid.).

There are five major types of structural questions and several subtypes as shown in the following table:

Type	Explanation
1. Verification Questions	Ask an informant to confirm or deny a hypothesis. Request for a yes/no answer.
Subtypes: 1.1 Domain Verification Questions: seek to verify the existence of a domain[20] which has been hypothesized 1.2 Included Term Verification Questions: seek to verify whether one or more terms are included in a domain. 1.3 Semantic Relationship Verification Questions: seek to test the appropriateness of the way a semantic relation is expressed. 1.4 Native-Language Verification Questions: seek to verify whether a particular term is the informant term rather than a translation created for the benefit of the researcher.	
2. Cover Term Questions	Asked to discover terms, e.g. What are the different kinds of ..?
3. Included Term Questions	These questions surface before the researcher has discovered the cover term[21], or when the researcher has collected several terms, which by their use the researcher is confident belong in the same domain.
4. Substitution Frame Questions	Are constructed from a normal statement used by an informant.
5. Card Sorting Structural Questions	Used to elicit a list of terms provided by informants in order to verify and discuss a domain.

Table 4.2: Types of Structural Questions
(Adapted from: Spradley, 1979: 126)

In the formation of the interview and focus group questions, I used structural and contrast questions concurrently with descriptive questions as a way to reduce the

[20] Any symbolic category that includes other categories is a domain (Spradley, 1979: 100).
[21] Cover term is a term for a category of cultural knowledge, for example, 'tree' is a cover term in English for a larger category of knowledge, the various types of trees such as oak, pine, and yew (Ibid.).

boredom that might be caused with constant repetition. In addition, preceding the interview and focus group questions, I provided the participants with some contextual information and quotes from previous semi-structured interviews (see Appendix VI). According to Spradley (1979), providing informants with contextual information helps to place them in the setting where the domain is relevant, aids greatly in recalling ideas and avoids the problem of making the participant feel she is being tested with a series of short questions. In addition, I intended to ask some moderately long questions as I believe that *''expanding the length of the question tends to expand the length of the response*'' (Spradley, 1979: 85), but not so long that the participants' span of concentrations was affected.

The following table provides an example of some of the major themes that have been generated based on the pilot study findings and the typology of some of the questions of the interviews used in this study (see Appendix VI for more details about the type of semi-structured interview and focus group questions).

Themes	Interview Questions	Type
Teachers' perceptions of current continuous professional development programmes (CPD) provided by school.	What are the extent and nature of existing EFL services provided in your school, in terms of continuous professional development programmes, seminars and conferences?	Descriptive
	''We should develop as teachers and be acquainted with all that is new, so we are always in need for more efficient professional trainings.'' What do you want to get out of CPD programmes?	Structural
	Do you think your CPD needs have been met? Why/why not? What is required to meet your CPD needs?	Contrast

Table 4.3: Typology of the Semi-Structured Interview Questions

It should be noted that these types of questions (structural, descriptive or contrast) all function to explore the organisation of people's cultural knowledge that lead the researcher to discover and verify the existence of variables (Spradley, 1979). These types of question need to be meshed with each other

and skilfully repeated over and over to elicit all the included terms (Ibid.). In addition, Spradley stresses the appropriateness of these types of questions for ethnography research, as the latter is concerned mostly with discovering what people know and how they organise that knowledge.

4.6 Research Design

4.6.1 The Process

The study was undertaken in three stages:

1. Interview questions were piloted in a selected higher educational institution in Jeddah. Based on this pilot study, a report was written, emerging themes were identified and as a result, refinement to the interview questions took place (mid. December-January, 2013).

2. Data collection for the main empirical study started with interviews and feedback of teachers' practices in the classroom (March-April, 2013).

3. Focus groups with teachers and their CMs aimed to reach a collective perspective (July, 2013).

As an attempt to bring you a general picture of how my data collection was planned, the following table will summarise the data collection journey:

Phase	Samples	Instruments	Data Collection Date
Pilot 1	Pilot group: A group of 5 new entrant Saudi teachers in a university in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	Semi-structured interviews (interview each one individually)	Mid. December 2012
Pilot 2	2 EFL classrooms in a HE institution in Jeddah	Classroom Observation (Micro Teaching)	Mid. December 2012
Pilot 3	Pilot group: A group of 4 Saudi teachers from whom have been interviewed	Focus group interviews	December-January 2013
Phase 1	12 Saudi EFL teachers in a HE institution in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	Semi-structured interviews + Non-participant observation	March-April 2013
Phase 2	All teachers selected in this study + CMs	Focus group study	July-September 2013

Table 4.4: Data Collection Schedule

Phase 1: Pilot Study

Pilot study refers to the conduct of preliminary research prior to the conduct of main study (Bloor and Wood, 2006). Conducting a pilot study helped to attain a range of essential functions regarding research design and instrument, timing, costing and other issues concerning the conduct of the study (Basit, 2010). For me, there were many reasons to run a pilot study. One of these reasons was to test the adequacy, relevance and suitability of the research instruments. According to Bloor and Wood (2006):

> ''Piloting allows the researcher to develop a better background understanding of the research setting [...] also alerts the researcher to potential **ethical** issues and to the threats of **dangerous fieldwork**, again allowing remedial modifications in design and procedures to be put in place.'' (Bloor and Wood, 2006: 131)

I also wanted to measure whether the sampling frame and techniques were effective. I aimed by this pilot study to assess whether my research procedures were realistic and workable. Indeed, it provided valuable insight for the research

regarding the process of actual data collection. Accordingly, it could be argued that piloting provides a structured opportunity for informed reflection and modification of a whole gamut of issues concerning the everyday conduct of the research (Ibid.).

The pilot study was conducted with some of the Saudi EFL teachers in the middle of December 2012 to discover their views about EFL teaching and its practices. Measures had been taken to ensure that interviews were conducted before the school end of term holiday. During the period of the pilot study, Saudi schools were starting their second term of instruction. The questions in the proposed semi-structured interview guide were piloted to five Saudi EFL teachers (see Appendix VII), who had been chosen according to their demographic information which had been obtained from the school administration (Staff Affairs). Three teachers had been recently obtained their higher degrees from America, one teacher from Canada and one from Britain, the multiplicity of teachers' reflections around the key points and issues were taken into account. At the end of December 2012, two classrooms were observed using the non-participant structured observation guide (see Appendix XII). The purpose of classroom observations was to attain a more holistic view of the issues being raised by teachers, as well as to search for a closer picture of teacher's interaction with the students and the physical environment of the classroom. Furthermore, at the beginning of January 2012, I had a focus group discussion with the teachers who had been involved in the pilot semi-structured interview and who had been observed in order to verify the validity of the questions.

Phase 2: Main Study

Types of Data to be Collected

1. Semi-Structured Interviews (teachers)

''In a postmodern approach the qualitative research interview appears as a construction site of knowledge'' (Kvale, 2007: 21). Interviewing enables researchers to go deep inside people's hearts and minds. This method is carried out when a researcher wants to reveal something that cannot be directly observed from the respondents. The reason for choosing semi-structured interviews complies with the need to choose a less structured approach that

allows the people interviewed free space to say whatever they like to express on the researched topic.

The purpose of using interviews in this study is twofold:

1. To establish pre-existing beliefs about teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the ELT and how these attitudes and beliefs can affect their own practices.

2. To investigate the role of teachers in establishing a sense of empowerment and voice within their school.

Although the validity of interview data has been questioned, for example, Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000) argues that the results of interviews can only be understood as products of the contingencies of the interview situation and not by the unmediated expressions given by respondents' real thoughts, as usually assumed. Having the experience of being one of these Saudi female teachers enables me to be in a better position to understand their real thoughts and feelings.

Why Semi-structured Interviews?

Semi-structured interviews are the kind of approaches whereby the researcher provides a set of questions about a given topic that serve as a checklist with default wording and order, but the wording and order can be modified based on the flow of the interview and additional unplanned questions can be asked to follow up what the interviewees say (Bryman, 2008; Robson, 2011).

I decided to use a semi-structured interview approach because it allows me to control my research aims, and provide a more reciprocal relationship to develop between me and my respondents, as opposed to other approaches which involve closed, pre-coded or fixed sets of questions as is the case in structured interviews which constrain the freedom of expressing oneself. I also find it essential not to choose unstructured interviews as respondents may be prone to deviating to other unrelated topics which can cause some problematic issues to the research, as it could be time consuming and lessen the emphasis of the research focus. In addition, it would be difficult to compare the data produced in unstructured interviews, which could affect reliability. It would be easier to

quantify and code the data produced in semi-structured interviews as there is a guide to much of interview questions.

Semi-structured interviews allow me to attain a depth of information through the use of open-ended questions, and by this I was able to provide my respondents with more space to talk freely about issues of concern which could add validity to the research data. I aimed to generate a flexible flow of discourse with my respondents that could help to generate a richer atmosphere of sharing experiences, rather than a dry discourse of interrogation. In addition, it can be argued that this type of qualitative method generates more data in terms of words, and words are "fatter" than numbers (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Although words can be unwieldy, they can render more meaning (Ibid.).

Design

Taking advice and help from my supervisors, I designed the interview schedule following the cognitive domains of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives provided by Forehand (2005) and which had been piloted to some teachers and then refined (see Appendix VII, VIII). Face validity of the interview questions carried out through the review by my supervisors and a number of educational researchers based on the responses drawn from the literature review Spradley (1979) and Forehand (2005) to ensure the questions solicited accurate information needed to fully address the study's research questions.

After contacting teachers targeted in my research, all the 12 participant teachers were invited to the individual semi-structured interviews. Some of them via email and others via telephone, suitable dates were arranged with them prior to my visit to Saudi Arabia in order to take advantage of time. I received positive replies via this method, and almost all of the teachers agreed to be audio taped except for one, who expressed her desire not to be captured on tape. This teacher was given the semi-structured interview questions to look at and allowed enough time to write her responses. Then, I asked her orally, and wrote down her answers. Such measures were adopted in order to ensure no piece of information was missed.

The interviews were carried out between March and April 2013 respectively. The time required for interviews was about an hour. Although interviews by telephone

or the Internet are increasingly being used because of the savings in time and resources they offer (Robson, 2011), I intended to conduct face-to-face interviews as the interaction between the interviewer and the respondents may better be achieved in a more social atmosphere. Respondents were provided with the necessary documentary approval forms in order to make them feel secure and disperse any suspicion of the motives of researchers. Each participant was interviewed individually in order to enable her to reflect freely. Interviews preceded classroom observations in a suitable place for respondents. A period of about 6 weeks was given for the interviews to be conducted. The interviews were audio-recorded after gaining ethical approval for the study. An interview guide was used for the researcher to ask the intended questions, but the exact sequence and wording did not have to be followed with each respondent. Using an interview guide is useful in helping to provide clear instructions and guidelines during the interview process.

The interviews were audio taped (except for one) because audio-taping is useful for the transcribing purposes as it allows the researcher to rerun the tape as needed. Unfortunately, I could not video tape my respondents due to some religious and cultural issues that require women to cover their faces and their preference not to reveal their identities in public. However, to ensure not to miss any expressive body language or movement, I constructed an observational protocol with a page with a dividing line down the middle to separate descriptive notes (description of physical setting and accounts of particular events) from reflective notes (researcher's personal thoughts, feeling, ideas, or problems), this would help not to entirely rely on memory where data might be lost in transit. In addition, I find it essential to transcribe the data myself as a researcher because no one would be in a better position to portray the detailed analysis of the interaction between the two poles of the interviews me (as the interviewer) and respondents.

Furthermore, I had to translate some interviews from Arabic into English, and as a way to counter the meaning being lost in translation, I asked one professional translator in Riyadh, whom I got to know through my BA in The Faculty of Translation and European Languages at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to review the translated scripts to verify them.

2. Non-Participant Structured Observations

"Saying is one thing; doing is another" (de Montaigne, 1588 cited in Robson, 2011). It could be argued that direct observations can usefully complement information obtained by virtually any other techniques such as interview and questionnaire, where responses are notorious for discrepancies between what people say that they have done/will do, and what they actually did/will do (Robson, 2011). Observation is a flexible form of data collection that can enable the researcher to have access to interactions in social contexts and is able to yield more authentic data than would otherwise be the case with inferential methods, such as questionnaires (Cohen et al., 2011). Observational data may be useful for recording non-verbal behaviour and longitudinal analysis (Bailey, 1994).

The purpose of observing EFL classrooms was to attain a more holistic view of the issues being raised by teachers, as well as to search for a closer picture of teacher's interaction with the students and the physical environment of the classroom. By undertaking non-participant structured observations in respondent teachers' classrooms, I aimed to seek objectivity and not be influenced by the participants in the study. These observations enabled me to gain new insight and learn things that teachers might be unwilling to reveal in the interviews. Conducting such a strategy also allowed me to best capture and understand the context within which participants interact.

I found it more fruitful for me to follow a non-participant observation as I was able to take down notes, listen, watch and ask questions which would not be possible in a participant observation in which I have to rely on memory when writing up diaries at the end of the observations: this might cause data to be lost in transit.

Design

In order to capture the material dimension of EFL classrooms: classroom setting, visual material, and whether there is extra activity set for a particular lesson, as well as the nonmaterial dimension: the role of the teacher inside classroom, teacher's interaction with students, student-teacher interaction, and student-student interactions, an observation guide was designed to help me as a non-

participant observer to attain clear instructions and maintain attention during the observation (see Appendix XII: Non-Participant Structured Observation Guide). This guide also helped me to stay focused and highlight the main aspects I was seeking, especially while observations were only audio-recorded and not video-taped due to the cultural limitations mentioned previously.

3. Focus Groups (Teachers + CMs)

''Focus group is an open-ended group discussion on a specific topic which is where the 'focus' comes from with the guidance of the researcher'' (Robson, 2011: 294). Focus groups are known to work well with certain issues that involve the determination of perceptions, feelings, and ways of thinking, and this is the main reason why I chose focus group discussions to explore what Saudi teachers feel towards the ELT and its practices.

> ''The technique allows the researcher to develop an understanding about *why* people feel the way they do. In a normal individual interview the interviewee is often asked about his or her reasons for holding a particular view, but the focus group approach offers the opportunity of allowing people to probe each other's reasons for holding a certain view.'' (Bryman, 2012: 503)

Focus groups present a more natural interactive environment than that of an individual interview because participants are influenced by and influence others. That complies with what Bryman contends in one-to-one interviewing, the interviewees are rarely challenged but in a focus group, interviewees often argue with each other and challenge each other's views and perspectives, which Robson (2011) refers to as 'group dynamics'. This helps in focusing on the topics that they deem to be important and significant and it is feasible to assess the extent to which there is a consistent and shared view in relation to a topic.

Meanwhile, the purpose of the focus group discussions were to obtain more in-depth understanding of the issues being raised during semi-structured interviews and observations, as well as to search for possible ways to help teacher to reflect their concerns around some certain issues to their CMs.

Design

After analysing responses from the semi-structured interviews from the participant teachers, and in order to follow up the developed questions that needed further exploring, focus group questions were designed (see Appendix X, XI: Focus Group Interview and Discussion Guide). This guide was developed to facilitate the flow of the interviews, to ensure the proper amount of time was allocated to each topic, focus of the raised issues and to develop the discussion in a systemic manner avoiding distraction of the scope of the research. The asked questions were designed to further explore what and how teachers perceive upon ELT practices and personal development of teacher competencies, as well as to help to bring teachers together as a way to reach a mutual understanding and help teachers' voice to be heard. Two focus group interviews were conducted with teachers and one focus group with CMs. One outcome of the focus group interviews is to determine suitability and relevance of interviews questions and to gain a more holistic overview of Saudi teachers' perceptions and experiences of the practices of ELT, as well as to understand whether or not there is any difference in their beliefs towards ELT, and to enable a mutual understanding to be achieved.

Furthermore, it is essential to note here that focus group discussion relies on generating and analysing interaction between participants, where the researcher is actively encouraging of, and attentive to this group dynamic and interaction, rather than asking the same question(s) to each group participant in turn, as in what is commonly referred to as the 'group interview' (Barbour, 2007). Being actively engaging and encouraging of group interaction required preparation and developing of a topic guide and selected stimulus materials (textbooks, pictures of classrooms' physical materials) that helped to encourage interaction, as well as referring back to some of the teachers' quotes that could resonate with them as a way to generate more meaningful data. The use of technology in terms of PowerPoint presentations and recording equipment enabled me to concentrate and prompt participants for further clarifications. I concur with Bloor and Wood (2006) that the application of recording equipment in qualitative research has been a significant advancement. Nevertheless, there is an ethical issue of the application of such advancement around distracting participants from being biased and the loss of anonymity (Barbour, 2007; Flick, 2014). One way to counter this is to ensure that the equipment is as unobtrusive as possible, and I

believe this was the case during the focus groups, and to achieve anonymity, pseudonyms were used in order for the participants not to be easily identified.

4. Drawing Activity (Visual Method)

Visual research method is the kind of method that is concerned with the production, organisation and interpretation of imagery, such as photos, drawings or videos (Hartas, 2010; Reavey, 2011). Although the use of visual methods in social sciences is not new, it has become recently a less marginal and a legitimate approach to research (Ibid.). It can be argued that this increase in visual methods in social research can be attributed to the growth in interest in visual culture within the social sciences (Jenkings et al., 2008). The following statement by Hartas best justifies the increasingly interest in visual methods:

> ''In the past, researchers have focused on words and numbers to make sense of society and have adopted methods to meet their needs. However, as an often used cliché runs, we live in a world replete in visual images –we plan, think and create in terms of imagery, therefore we need appropriate visual methods to aid our understanding of these phenomena.'' (Hartas, 2010: 202)

I concur with Hartas that the application of visual methods provides researchers with a powerful tool that could help them to get an in depth picture of what people perceive, generate more meaning. According to Webber (2008 cited in Hartas, 2010), there are many useful outcomes of the application of visual methods, some of them are:

- Visual methods provide a versatile elicitation media that evokes ideas and memories in respondents.
- They build bridges between researchers and researched.
- They are less threatening than words/numbers, thus they are empowering.
- They can be used to capture ineffable and illusive concepts and enhance emphatic understanding.

Moreover, according to Bland (2012), image based research has become accepted as a valid method of enabling people voice, bringing their perspectives

as well as contributing to pedagogical decision making. In addition, this kind of research has been combined with imagination when it used to look into the 'inner world' of school from the perspective of its members, such image can generate a rich source of qualitative data (Walker, 2008 cited in Bland, 2012). I intended by using such visual method to enable teachers in focus group to express their thought using another medium (image drawing) so that these visual data can be used to enhance that obtained through verbal discussions with participants, or in a more academic expression, it can be used as a means to triangulate the initial analysis. According to Bland (2012: 3), *''The authenticity of visual analysis can be established through triangulation with material from a secondary source such as participant discussion or written text,''* and that could help consequently to enhance validity as well. In addition, teachers were asked in this activity to provide some written descriptions of their provided images, and this incorporated use of written text was meant to corroborate the interpretations of visual data and extend it (see Appendix XIII). In this regard, Prosser (2007) contends that images are 'polysemic'; they have multiple meaning, however, adding context on the making or use of the visual images extend interpretations.

Design

Visual research employs various research methods, but in this study the graphical elicitation task consists of a drawing activity exercise, given to the participant teachers after each focus group discussion. It is a pencil and paper, respondent generated exercise, where teachers were asked about how does it feel to be a Saudi EFL teacher, and they were encouraged to portray their feelings in drawings and words, too. Teachers were provided with paper, coloured pens and pencils as this activity required so. This activity was first discussed with the participants and then demonstrated. 45 minutes were set as the estimated time for this activity to be done. Apparently, it is a short activity that does not need much time, but I dedicated the first 7 minutes for demonstration, as I prepared a model paper prior of the activity in order to help teachers to understand what is needed from them. In addition, I intended to leave some time for me to check their drawing, complementing their contribution and checking with them what they meant by their drawing, so that I can avoid any subjectivity.

4.7 Triangulation

The use of different data instruments (interview, observation, focus group, and participant-created drawing activity) in this study serves a triangulation purpose in the process of data collection and analysis. Triangulation can be described as *''a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomena is being seen''* (Stake, 2000: 443). It can be achieved through an ongoing process by reviewing data analysis of the different data sets and comparing the information obtained from multiple sources in order to ensure the accuracy of the data interpretation. Thus, triangulation helps to explain the richness and complexity of human perception and behaviour by studying it from multiple standpoints (Cohen et al., 2011). In this study, I intended to incorporate a visual method (drawing activity) together with other methods in order to obtain richer data and to achieve validity. Hartas (2010), suggests that the use of a visual method should be done within a mixed methods design, such as qualitative or quantitative research because this could add another dimension of triangulation and provide a more fine-grained visual modality and sensitivity to the phenomena under study.

4.8 Issues around Research design

Access as an Insider

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research entails researchers to be closer to the subjects of their research studies (Bryman, 2008). In this research, being an EFL practitioner teacher who has had the chance to teach general English at the designated higher institution in this study and know the principals there, allowed me as a researcher to gain access to the institute site and get to know most of the teachers and administrative members there. Initially, I planned my data journey, contacted most of my potential interviewees, informing them of the aims and ethics of my research and asked for appointments at mutually suitable times. In light of that, some appointments were arranged prior to my visits. This helped me to build trust with the participants in this research before even being with them physically.

On the other hand, being an insider helped interviewees to feel trust and confidence and provided a relaxing atmosphere during focus group interviews. However, I was fully aware of the role of the researcher as an insider, but I tried

to consider the study problem from an outsider perspective. I worked hard to ensure that the data collected are valid and avoided bias and subjectivity by using different strategies to gather data (interview, observation, focus group, and blogging). I can say that being an insider researcher has given me the advantage of gaining full access to my informants more than any outsider researcher would have had.

Voice and Authenticity

While my goal as a researcher has always been to give teachers a voice, the further I went into the research process, the more hesitant I became with the problematic use of the term 'voice'. Whose voice is heard? The voice of the researcher or participants? What does it mean to give voice? And was I really giving voice?

I began to question the methodological implications of whose voice was heard or what it means to give voice. Throughout my readings within the context of critical qualitative inquiry in the feminist tradition, I found that the notion of 'whose voice' or 'giving voice' are complicated and problematic.

For example, Ashby (2011) argues that by attempting to give voice, researchers are not free from the problematic nature of interpretations and perspectives. In this research I could not assume that it is only the teachers' experiences that are being brought to light, it is also my interpretation of their experiences. To justify this issue it might be suggested that in our attempts to access authentic voice, we deny the performative nature of identity:

> ''Our knowledge of the world, and our existence in it, is always fluid and changeable depending on the context and situation. Our identities, and therefore our voices, are always discursively constructed [...]. Similarly, the search for a unified, authentic voice denies the subject discursive agency [...]. We craft an identity for ourselves, both consciously and unconsciously, that we present to the world. This fluidity and permeability of identity makes it impossible to imagine that one could uncover an authentic voice, which lies outside of discourse.'' (Ashby, 2011: 1732)

Claims of authentic voice imply a positivist orientation that assume there is one real truth of events and denies the contextual and normative nature of voice (Ibid.). Voice is not mine to give or uncover, rather voice is discursively created through the process of research and we have to acknowledge our own internalised discourses of normalcy and subjugation (Ibid.). Like Ashby (2011) Takhar (2013) contends that the notion of subjectivity and reflexivity in qualitative research is promoted as it serves to locate the researcher into the research process to confront and deal with relating to the interpretation of data and being biased. Reflexivity allows for reflection on the difficulties associated with access, power and knowledge production (Takhar, 2013). On the other hand, Kasahara and Chadwick (2008) cited in Ashby (2011) assert that rather than seeking to uncover authentic voice, critical qualitative researchers should aim at working with the individual to facilitate their presentation and construction of 'self' through providing communication support and possessing the listening skills to hear them. While my message is clearly about empowerment and representation of marginalised perspectives of teacher practitioners, creating space and opportunity for teachers to express and reflect upon their practices was a way meant for teachers to facilitate their agency and selfhood. Additionally, from feminist theory and methodology, being a woman interviewing and listening to stories narrated by women within the limits of law and with no complex interactions of power and gender operates positively with the research (Atkinson et al., 2003).

In addition, Ellsworth (1997) cited in Ashby (2011) indicates that less data means a greater possibility of misinterpretation; and with fewer supporting details there are many blanks left to be complete, hence there is a temptation as a qualitative researcher to want a 'clean story' or 'beautiful fit' to seek consistency and cohesion in the data. Actually, the application of many methods in this research study helped me to fight against that as the data generated was rich and vast.

Ashby (2011) also indicates that while the aim of giving voice is emancipatory, the researcher often benefits more from the telling than the researched. I believe both myself and my participant teachers can benefit from this research.

Deception

In social psychological research, the term deception can be defined as the researcher's intention to knowingly conceal the true purpose and conditions of the research, or that the researcher misinforms the subjects, or exposes them to unduly painful, stressful or embarrassing experiences without informing the subjects of what is going on (Cohen et al., 2011). It is evident that the relationship between researchers and participants must be built on honesty and openness.

As I used to be a member of the staff at the designated university in this study, I was concerned that this could affect the reaction of teachers and hinder them from expressing themselves freely. However, in carrying out the individual interviews and focus groups, I have assumed that:

● The participants in this study responded honestly and were not influenced by the presence of me as a researcher as I was one of them and what they experience will apply on me.

● The transcribing and translation of the data obtained was done in ultimate faith to ensure no loss of meaning in translation, although I endeavoured to send the data interpretations to my respondents to check if my interpretations matched their reflections. In addition, I believe that what I chose to transcribe was more representative than convenient in order to reflect the reality of what teachers perceive and not my version of reality.

Furthermore, when it comes to deception in terms of reporting findings, I intended to be honest and truthful concerning my data whatever the outcome. After all, I intended by this research to develop EFL practices and reveal the obstacles that Saudi teachers face.

Ethical Issues and Harm to Participant

''Ethics is a branch of philosophy which is concerned with thinking about morality, integrity and the distinction between right and wrong'' (Bloor and Wood, 2006: 64). Also, this term can be defined as *''The search for rules of conduct that enable us to operate defensibly in the political contexts in which we have to conduct educational research''* (Simons, 1995: 436). They are the set of

principles and the guidelines that advise researchers as they conduct their work (Bloor and Wood, 2006).

It is essential to consider ethical issues in any research that deals with real people in real world situations and to avoid causing them any harm (Bassey, 1999). Harm can entail a number of facets: physical harm; emotional harm, such as stress, or loss of self-esteem, as well as harm to participants' development (Bryman, 2012). It should be noted that a great deal of ethnography is 'confessional' (Greetz, 1973 cited in Pillow, 2010), which raises the stake of reflexivity which in turns may make participants vulnerable to emotional harm.

In order to conduct the study in the correct ethical manner, research ethics approval of this research was obtained from the School of Education of the University of Nottingham in November 2012. Also, permission was requested from the head of the designated institute for study to interview the teachers (see Appendix III: Letter to the Head of Institute) in December 2012. Gaining institutional consent was an important strategy for me because it enabled me to present my credentials as a serious investigator and establish my own ethical position with respect to my current investigation. In addition, it was important to build up trusting relationships with my participants during the data collection process, I informed the participants about the purpose of the research and indicated the extent of commitment required of them (see Appendix VIII: Semi-Structured Interviews Guide). All participation was voluntary and participants had the right to withdraw at any time. Additionally, a consent form was distributed to all teachers and CMs (see Appendix IV: Participant Consent Form). Overall, informed consent is a prerequisite for most research, especially that which could carry a risk for the participants (Cohen et al., 2011).

In addition, to ensure that this study will not cause any harm, my participants were assured that their identities and records will always be maintained as confidential and anonymous (pseudonyms were used in reporting). They were guaranteed that the data and all audiotapes would be kept in a secure place (under lock and key), would be kept for five years and then will be discarded at the end of the study. Furthermore, I intended to do all the data transcribing myself in order to ensure that no one could have access to my data. Care will be taken when findings are being published to ensure that participants are not identifiable. Also, it is essential to report here that any data which conflicts with ethical issues remains within the study and will not be reported on.

Reliability and Validity (Trustworthiness)

The validity of a study is an essential criterion shaping the overall value of research and the meaningfulness of its results (Hartas, 2010). The concept of validity in qualitative research refers to *''the honesty, depth, richness, and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher''* (Cohen et al., 2011: 105). Validity is concerned with the question as to whether we measure what we set out to measure, whereas, reliability refers to *''the consistency and stability of a measurement, and is concerned with whether the results of a study are replicable (repeatable)''* (Hartas, 2010: 71). Qualitative studies are concerned with validity, rather than reliability as establishing the validity is more important than achieving reliability, in that the research findings may be reliable but not valid, making the entire research worthless (Hartas, 2010).

In fact, dealing with teachers' perceptions makes it hard to guarantee that the findings are 100% valid or reliable as teachers' thinking can be affected by many psychological and social variables, such as: teachers' temper, satisfaction, values and assumptions, beliefs, as well as classroom atmosphere, tools and methodologies. Other inherent difficulties in the reliability and validity of following qualitative methods arise from reflexivity of the researcher, deficiencies in memory and the wish to present oneself in a favourable light, or what we can call the 'social desirability response bias' factor which can be regarded as an important factor that could affect the level of validity and reliability (Robson, 2011). Nevertheless, a number of researchers (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Creswell and Miller, 2000; Cohen et al., 2011; Robson, 2011; Bryman, 2012) have suggested measures to enhance the validity of a study. These as summarised below together with an indication of how I sought to put them into action:

- Prolong engagement in the field: According to Creswell and Miller (2000), this relates to taking time for the researcher to familiarise him/herself with the context of the study and people around. As I had four years of teaching experience in Saudi public and private education institutions and three years of teaching at the University under study, I was familiar with its culture and how the system works there. Staying in the research site for a long period enabled me to know my participants more and establish a robust relationship with them built on trust which enabled them, in turn, to disclose information more openly. Being

one of them enabled me to easily detect if change occurred in teachers' perceptions of their EFL learning and practices.

● Use of thick description: Guba and Lincoln (1989) indicate that providing the reader with a detailed description of the research context, the participants and the procedures applied ensures a broad understanding of where, with whom and how the study was conducted and helps to increase the validity of the study. In this research, I endeavoured to provide such information to create a clear picture for the reader and familiarise them with the context of the study to enhance validity.

● Avoid reflexivity of the researcher: Creswell and Miller (2000) state that presenting the role of the researcher and describing their relationship with their participants, and trying to keep a balance between these roles help to achieve a high level of validity. In my research I was totally aware of my role as an insider researcher so that I was careful to avoid subjective judgement or imposing my own belief. My interest in issues around teachers' voice and the implication of this upon methodology emerged early in the data collection process. Hence, I tended to write frequent notes about the methodological implications and my positionality in this research so that a high level of validity can be achieved.

● Use of multi layers of coding: Data analysis is a scrutiny stage that incorporates several elements and multiple layers of coding (Bryman, 2012).

● Appealing to the participants: The participants in this study (teachers and their CMs) were given the opportunity to view and reflect upon their own responses as the results were communicated to them in order to assure the validity of their responses and the data generated.

● Use of triangulation: Triangulation refers to collecting data through multiple methods with the same participants at different times (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Stake, 2000; Cohen et al., 2011). Through the use of multiple methods, I was able to generate rich data, cross-check similarities and differences across methods and grasp a comprehensive account of the phenomenon under study.

Writing up

> ''To do social sciences means mainly to produce texts [...] research experiences have to be transformed into texts and to be understood on the basis of texts. [...], no matter whether and which experiences were made by those who were involved in the research. The observability and practical objectivity of social science phenomena is constituted in texts and nowhere else.'' (Wolff, 1987: 333 cited in Flick, 2002: 241)

Wolff above regards writing as the main core of social sciences. Writing in social sciences or any field is not only a process of representations in texts, it is a process of documentation and portraying ideas and a wide range of experiences in papers. The process of writing involves experiencing high measures of objectivity, transparency and persuading measures in order to communicate with and sound appealing for readers. In this regard, Flick (2002) explains that text is an epistemological instrument for documenting data and a basis for interpretation, which is also and above all an instrument of mediating and communicating findings and knowledge.

Moreover, doctoral writing can be seen to be both text work and identity work (Thomson and Kamler, 2010). Text work in terms of accumulated written words and identity work in that the researcher develops understanding and scholarly identity at the expense of an old one. Personalisation of this new identity comes through identification with key research figures to whose work they might aspire, and this also includes their supervisors, advisers or any member of academia (Ibid.). This identity formation process appears in many doctoral research texts. Thomson and Kamler argue that through the process of research writing, research students learn to resolve tensions between their scholarly identity and other aspects of their selves, and they assert that this textual new identity will look different at different stages of candidature and beyond, which I agree with.

There are different ways in which social research can be written up, and these vary according to the different styles of undertaking research (Bryman, 2012). However, there are some core ingredients that most research work or theses will include (Figure 4.2):

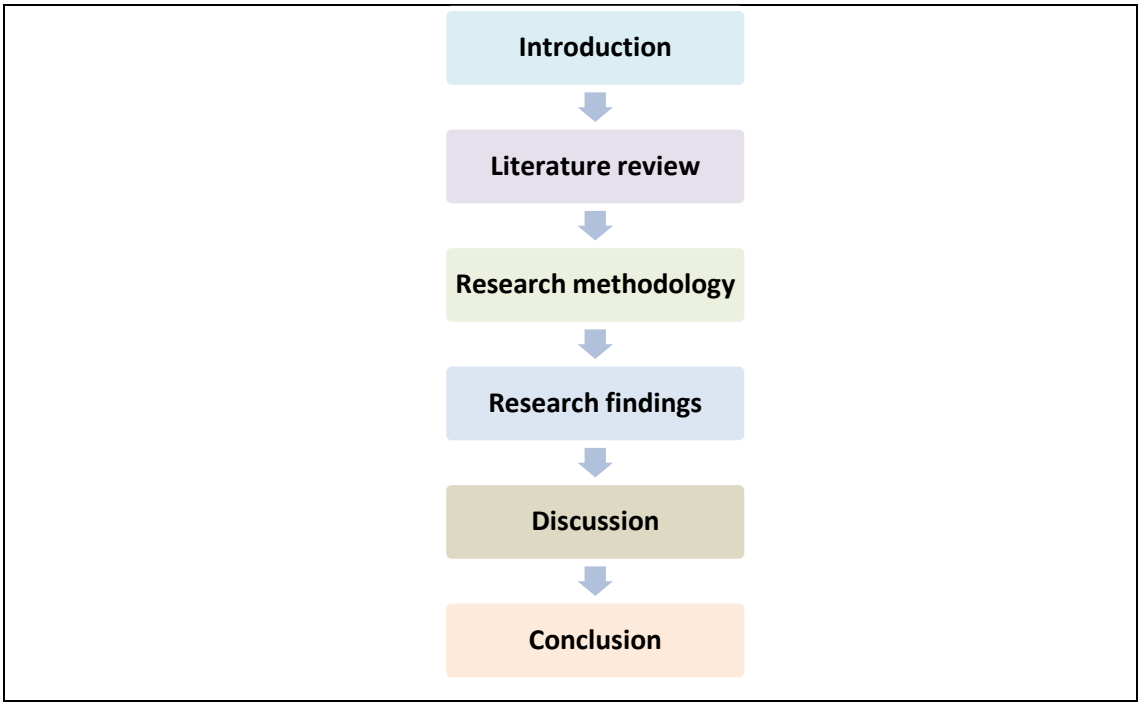


Figure 4.2: Structure of Thesis

As I have mentioned above, there is no exhaustive list of research writing as writing conventions differ, but these are recurring elements of the final written output. I enjoy writing freely and elaborately, however, I tended to be selective during the process of writing up and do my best to construct it cohesively as I was writing to special audience with the idea in mind that the outcome of the four years of hard work will be judged through my text.

4.9 Summary of Chapter

This chapter provided a discussion of ontological and epistemological perspectives together with my philosophical stance underpinning the choice of research methodology as a way to describe and provide a rationale for the research design and the adopted methods. A case study approach was adopted; within this, four research methods were used. These were semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, focus group discussion, and drawing activity. Qualitative research methods are utilised in the study for the purpose of gaining a more holistic but accurate representation of Saudi EFL teachers' perceptions and practices. These methods enabled me as a researcher to explore teachers' perceptions and to triangulate these with insights from other categories

of administration staff (CMs), and my own observations. Provision of definitions and justifications of the proposed methods and strategies were given in this chapter to test validity and reliability. After verifying the qualitative strategies analysis in this chapter, the next will present the findings of teachers' perceptions and experiences.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis and Findings

''It would be possible to describe everything scientifically, but it would make no sense; it would be without meaning, as if you described a Beethoven symphony as a variation of wave pressure''

(Albert Einstein)

''Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth''

(Marcus Aurelius)[22]

5.1 Introduction

This study utilises mainly qualitative data analysis to address the research questions. This chapter will consider the data results in terms of teachers' perceptions towards ELT practices together with the perceptions of their CMs and how they vary. All the data (semi-structured interviews, non-participatory classroom observations, focus group discussions, as well as the drawing activity), provided rich information in understanding the complex factors contributing to the pervasiveness of negative teachers' perceptions as we shall see as the findings emerge. These findings are presented in terms of emerging themes. The themes include the influence of a top-down approach, lack of empowerment and engagement, lack of CPD programmes, workload and common misapprehensions about effective EFL education. It should be noted that a number of these themes overlap with each other, and most of them reoccurred in the analysis of each instrument, which adds validity to the findings. Extracts/quotations from the data

[22] Marcus Aurelius was a Roman emperor (reigned 161-180), best known for his meditations on Stoic philosophy. Adopted from: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/364331/Marcus-Aurelius>.

will be incorporated under each thematic heading to establish a platform for the argument and discussion which will be further explored in chapter 6. Quotations are from teachers (numbered 1 to 12) unless labelled course manager (CM). Detailed descriptions of the procedures will be provided followed by data analysis.

5.2 Data Analysis

Analysis involves a way of thinking (Spradley, 1979), as a way to form meaning. But what is meant by 'meaning'? How do words and objects become meaningful to us? As there is not enough space to go into detail about the formation of meaning, however, I will shed light briefly on how meaning is created. *''Meaning is an intricately patterned system of symbols, [..] a symbol is any object or event that refers to something, and the meaning of any symbol is its relationship to other symbols in a particular culture''* (Spradley, 1979: 95).

Spradley contends that the task for researchers is to decode cultural symbols and identify hidden coding rules, and this can be achieved by discovering the relationship between these cultural symbols. In addition, Spradley adds that *all* the words provided by participants responding to the researcher's questions, their facial expressions and hand movements, as well as the way they are dressed or behave, are all symbols. And in order to decode the full meaning of these symbols, we have to discover the relationships between them. We have to observe the way people use symbolic objects instead of merely inquiring about their meaning, and analysis is the search for all the relationships between symbols (Ibid.).

Moreover, in my endeavour to explain meaning, especially in this research where I draw on my analysis in words and images generated by my participants, I refer to the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), who coined the terms: *'semiotics'* the sign/symbol and *'semiology'* the general science of signs, which considers the sign/symbol as the basic unit of meaning, but contains within it two related elements known as: the *signifier* (word, image, sound) and the *signified* (the idea or concept associated with the signifier) (de Saussure, 1983). According to this semio-linguistic approach to meaning, both signifier and signified are combined to form the sign or symbol. For instance, when we see a picture of a book or see the word book (the signifier) it should connect with the concept we

have in our minds of book (the signified). The following figure demonstrates this concept:

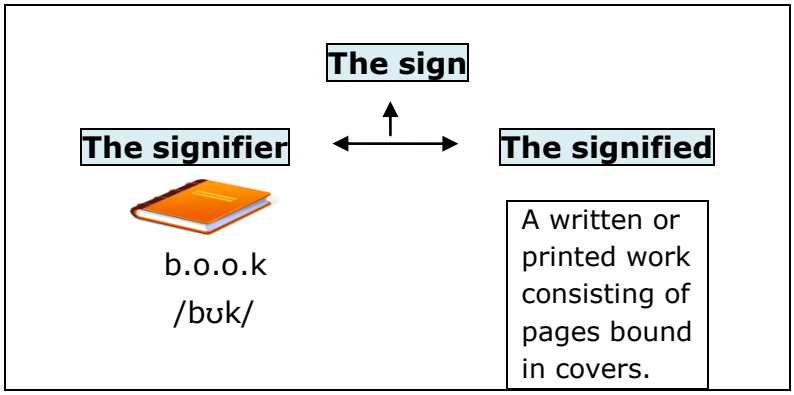


Figure 5.1: Signifier and Signified
(Adopted from: Hartas, 2010)

It was mentioned above that the meaning of signs is socially constructed. However, some scholars, such as de Saussure (1983) assert that the relationship between the signifier and signified is an arbitrary one. This implies that there is no necessary connection between the label 'book' and the idea of a book. We can substitute the label *boc* or *rkuk* etc. and attach it to the generalised concept of 'book'. What also adds to the analytical prowess of the symbol is the notion of difference relative to other symbols, i.e., the meaning of 'book' is contingent upon what it is not, e.g. a pen, a house, a brush and so on. Accordingly, meaning is not only identified by the internal relationship between the signifier and signified, but also by its difference relative to other signs in a particular socially constructed setting that are agreed upon (de Saussure, 1983; Hartas, 2010).

Before unpacking the perception of meaning, it is essential to define two major concepts in constructing meaning generated by the French critic Roland Barthes (1915-1980) who endeavoured to explore how representation of meaning is working at a broader cultural level. Barthes indicated these concepts: 1) Denotation, which refers to the literal description of an image and 2) Connotation, which refers to the metaphorical meaning of the sign and connects with more abstract and diffused ideas around ideology, values, and culture (Barthes, 1972). Like Spradley, Barthes indicated that denotation (literally what is in it) is not straightforward, as our reading of a symbol/image draws on a host

of cultural concepts which each person brings, including their own culturally mediated interpretation (e.g. age, gender, ethnic group, educational attainment, former experience etc.) which not only affects the way in which content is selected, but also the meaning attributed to it (Ibid.).

These encoded cultural symbols/meanings in every society can be expressed through the use of language, which is in turn regarded as one of the primary cultural symbols (Spradley, 1979). *"Language is a system of signs which can include sounds, images, written words, paintings, photographs and material objects"* (Hall, 1997: 31 cited in Hartas, 2010). The concepts we use are creations of the language we produce, thus it is impossible to isolate language from thought (de Saussure, 1983). According to the perspective elaborated by post-structuralist theorists, such as Foucault (1970, 1979), language gives us access to ideological implications and cultural interpretations. The view of such theories looks at the ongoing practices of a given cultural group or community through the various forms of discourse which make up the text of that group. However, although language represents a way of understanding the world, by differentiating between things and relating them to one another, it can be altered by individuals (Belsey, 2002). This could be regarded as a limitation on what it is possible to mean. To bring all these discourses together, it is essential to understand that in the long tradition of the humanities and the interpretation of meaning of texts taken up by many scholars, such as de Saussure, Barthes, Foucault and many more in the last century, there is an emphasis on the multiplicity of meanings in a text, and on the interpreter's foreknowledge of a text's subject matter (Kvale, 2007). What I understand from my readings on meaning-making processes and the discussions I have had with my supervisors, is that it is an axiom, interplay between text and reader, where one's personal assumptions and social disposition decide what or how meaning is constructed.

In this study, I seek to represent the meaning of what I perceived through the culture in which I and my participants have been exposed. However, it is essential to state here that meaning is differential and controversial, as it has profound implications for our understanding of the relations between human beings and the world (Belsey, 2002). Meaning is not pre-given, it is something that is worked at and achieved (Bryman, 2012). This could justify how different people may construct meaning differently.

5.2.1 Identifying Themes and Developing Categories

> ''You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs. And –to extend the aphorism- you can't make an omelette without beating the eggs together. 'Analysis' too involves breaking data down into bits, and then 'beating' the bits together [...] Like the omelette, the result of this process of breaking down and beating together is something quite different from what we started with.'' (Dey, 1993: 30)

Indeed, analysing data is a process of resolving data into small bits and pieces in order to reveal, explain and understand what we want to know. It is not surprising that we might end up with totally new outcomes, since, after all, the aim of analysis is not just to describe the data obtained (Dey, 1993). We break down our data in order to classify it and we describe it in order to analyse it. *''Description lays the basis for analysis, but analysis also lays the basis for further description''* (Dey, 1993: 30). Although I concur with Dey, I interpret it the other way around: through analysis, one can grasp a fresh insight of the data obtained, but also through description, one can generate further analysis, thus both analysis and description are two faces of the same coin, namely two parts of the same process.

Data collection represents the key point of any research project, as it incorporates several elements and approaches (Bryman, 2012). The approach I have adopted in order to analyse my data was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis can be defined, according to Bryman (2012), as one of the commonest approaches to qualitative data analysis, which is undertaking a search for concepts and themes in transcripts or field notes. It involves a search for the relationships among categories and how they are linked to a particular culture as a whole (Spradley, 1979). The identification of core themes was based on the frequency of the occurrence of certain words and phrases that were reported by teachers during interviews, and which denoted some concepts and meanings, while infrequent words were also carefully considered, especially because the sample of this study (number of participants) is small. Furthermore, one of the main elements of the identification of themes was through coding, which refers to the process whereby the data are broken down into their component parts and those parts then given labels (Bryman, 2012). I began basic coding as I was transcribing in order to distinguish overall themes. Then, after finishing

transcribing the data obtained, another process of in-depth coding was applied in which more specific themes were generated. Each transcript was coded manually -using coloured pens and paper clips- highlighting different concepts with different colours, searching for recurrences of some sequences of coded text within and across each interview transcript in order to extract meaning from different segments of data. This two-process of coding: basic coding for overall themes followed by a more in-depth, interpretive code was highlighted by Hay (2005) in his book *'Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography'*, as a way to ease the coding process and interpreting data.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the data analysis stage is essentially about data reduction; that is, it is concerned with reducing the large corpus of the gathered information in order to make more sense of it (Bryman, 2012). As a way to achieve data reduction, I grouped the textual material I obtained through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, focus group discussions and drawing activity into categories like themes. Three major coded categories (perceptions about teaching requirements; perceptions about students' requirements; and perceptions about administrative requirements) were generated as a means of making data more manageable. This also could help to link the process of making sense of the data with the research questions that provided the starting point about teachers' perceptions and experiences. A further aim of coding data is the breakdown of complex relations into outstanding variables, which allows the researcher to isolate and test their effects (Flick, 2014).

The following sections present the findings of the pilot study followed by the main study findings and analysis.

5.3 Pilot Study Data: Results and Findings

By piloting the questions, it was intended to obtain a more holistic understanding of the issues being raised, and to seek more explanations rather than having mere descriptions of the researched issues, as well as to search for possible ways to help teachers to reflect their concerns around certain issues to their CMs.

Based on these interviews four themes have been generated:

- A prevailing sense of teacher disempowerment

● A heavy workload

● The exclusive use of textbooks

● An urgent need for continuous professional development (CPD)

As the purpose of the pilot study was to verify the validity of the questions, some amendments were made according to the feedback from the teachers involved. For example, some questions have been refined based on these interviews (see Appendices VII, VIII), and more new practical questions have been generated:

● How is empowerment being implemented within the Saudi context?

● How do Saudi EFL teachers perceive themselves dealing with possible tensions that arise from existing workplace policies?

● What are the extent and nature of existing EFL services and CPD programmes provided in their HE departments?

● How does highlighting such aspects aid teachers to be more reflective?

5.4 Main Study Data Analysis

Stage 1: Data from the Semi-Structured Interviews

Patton (1980) cited in Robinson (1994), states that interview questions typically deal with six clusters of questions: feeling and knowledge; opinion and value; experience and behaviour; perceptions; background; and demographic questions. I intentionally tried to incorporate all the six clusters into the teacher-interview schedule in order to have a clearer picture of my participants in this study.

Moreover, as I transcribed all the data myself, I become immersed in them, which is something stressed by Bloor and Wood (2006: 167):

> ''[…] self-transcription is important as it provides opportunities to engage in early data analysis. The transcription process inevitably involves close listening and re-listening and through this one becomes more familiar with and immersed in the data, thereby gaining a more detailed understanding of the data.''

Indeed, as I transcribed and revisited the data frequently, I became more familiar with them and on the basis of the literature I had come across on teachers' perceptions, I started to categorise the themes in my mind. The four themes discussed in this study emerged from the pilot study (see section above) and aided the coding and analysis of the interview data, but the coding process and analysis also yielded further emerging themes, namely: the teacher's role; the teacher as a reflective practitioner; and the classroom physical environment. These new themes did not seem to fit under the main four categories generated from the pilot study, and were therefore considered emergent themes.

I cannot ignore that fact that I came to the interviews with some codes that I had generated through the pilot study, through the literature and based on my experience as an EFL practitioner within the institution studied. The following table summarises the main themes and emergent ones which occurred during analysis together with teachers' quotations. The quotations from teachers are representative of the group of 12 respondent teachers and not merely the teachers featured in the discussion.

Main Themes	Findings	Emergent Themes	Findings
1. The importance of English language	Saudi EFL teachers acknowledge the importance of the English language as a required subject to be learned and are aware of the requirements of being an EFL practitioner.	1. Previous learning experiences	Formal qualifications and previous learning experiences have a direct effect on the quality of education provided by teachers.
2. A prevailing sense of teacher disempowerment	Teacher empowerment is a challenging issue for teachers from a cultural perspective.	2. Teacher motivation and self-perception	Teachers' self-perception and motivation decreases as soon as they start teaching.
3. Top down approach	Bureaucracy and a top down approach from administration within the university affects teachers' perceptions of themselves and of ELT.	3. Impact of cultural background	Teaching English as a foreign language at the HE level can be seen as constructed from teachers' cultural background and does not encourage students' creative thinking.
4. Urgent need for CPD programmes	Teacher education and development programmes established by the department are fewer than expected.	4. The deterioration of teachers' power	The marketing of education might be a reason for the deterioration of the power of the teachers.
5. Teacher as a reflective practitioner	Teachers lack programmes that could encourage them to reflect their own views.	5. Physical classroom environment	Physical environment was considered a real burden, hindering teachers from having an interactive classroom conducive to a learning atmosphere.
6. The use of textbook	Teachers admit their excessive use of textbooks.	6. Collaboration	Teacher collaboration and school as a learning community is perceived to be more effective for teachers.
7. Experiencing heavy workload	Lack of time and heavy workload negatively affects teachers' perceptions and practices.		

Table 5.1: Main and Emergent Themes of Semi-Structured Interviews

Main Findings from the Semi-Structured Interview Data

1. Saudi EFL teachers acknowledge the importance of the English language as a required subject to be learned and are aware of the requirements of being an EFL practitioner: English continues to be an important language to be learned in Saudi Arabia and most of the teachers acknowledge this fact:

> ''In my opinion, English is an important subject to be learned.'' (Teacher 1)

> ''English is important and it helps students to interact with the world.'' (Teacher 12)

Although 10 out of 12 participant teachers believe that English is an important language to be learned in order to be open to the world, some teachers stated that some students feel unmotivated to learn this language:

> ''Students **fear** the language and feel **unmotivated**; it is an issue of attitude towards the language. The great challenge is that students are not opening up quickly, but after teacher's many attempts and efforts they start to open up and learn.'' (Teacher 3)

> ''The lack of motivation for learning English strikes a fine balance between the L1 (Arabic) and the TL[23] (English). There are also issues arising from lack of immersion in the language.'' (Teacher 9)

> ''I can say that most of the students are struggling to learn English, most of them are not highly motivated and they are **not** up to the standards of higher education.'' (Teacher 10)

> ''I have been working for five years now and I can say that there is still a lot to do in order to raise the level of students and provide them with informative experiences in language learning.'' (Teacher 11)

These statements provided by teachers show how much they are aware of their responsibility and role as EFL practitioners. Although some might define the teacher's role as a teacher's performance during a lesson (e.g. Hedge, 2000), I see that the role of the teacher goes beyond classroom practices, to include

[23] Target Language.

broader ethical and civic roles. It is the teacher who, as a socialiser, is seen as one who gets involved in extracurricular, socialising activities with students; as a social worker seen as one who offers advice to students; and as an acculturator who drives the engine that starts to steer learners towards negotiating life's challenges, and the one who helps learners to become accustomed to the cultural beliefs and practices of the target language community (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). It is evident that teachers play an important role in shaping students' personalities and learning practices. During interviews and focus groups, the Saudi EFL teachers show a great deal of self-awareness of their role as EFL teachers, as most of them expressed the following:

> ''Every language teacher should have a degree and further qualifications besides having a good personality, understanding students' backgrounds and abilities, and be patient. She also should know about students' learning styles.'' (Teacher 1)

> ''The teacher is like a **candle** that lights itself to light the life of others. Teaching is a very demanding profession: you need to be active, flexible, understanding, physically fit, and able to cope with any changes.'' (Teacher 5)

> ''[…] it is all about the teacher. You need a successful teacher to have a successful class.'' (Teacher 6)

> ''As a teacher you should be **motivated**, love what you are doing. If you love what you are doing, you will transmit that to your students. You should also be prepared. Prepare your material in advance also you should know your students and their English level, the difficulty they face, if they need extra material or training.'' (Teacher 7)

During interviews, most teachers showed a great deal of understanding of the importance of having good teaching skills, such as having creative abilities, knowing classroom management, adopting student-centred approaches, encouraging students to take an active part and using interactive activities. In addition, they indicated that teachers must be tolerant, understanding, fair and friendly with students in order to be able to relate to them better and be approachable. This can be related to the degree they have acquired, so they become familiar with all it takes to be a teacher. In addition, experience and the practice of teaching itself 'teaches' people what the work entails, as *''engaging*

oneself in the task can lead one, through time and experience, to appreciate one's obligations as a teacher, and this in a way that no amount of prior exhortation from others can do'' (Hansen, 1995: 36).

2. Teacher empowerment is a challenging issue for teachers from a cultural perspective: During interviews, 11 out of 12 participant teachers expressed their sense of a lack of empowerment. Indeed, there was a prevailing sense of disempowerment. For instance, teachers cannot choose, add to or omit anything from the curriculum as they need, instead, they have to stick to one unified syllabus. Teachers expressed their sense of disempowerment as follows:

> ''We are not **autonomous** at all, nor do we have the power to build our own choices in our own teaching [...] We should be consulted in the first place. They don't consult me, I feel like I'm a slave. I have no authority, even if I have I am so tied up with a **fixed** curriculum and a workload that hinders me to pursue further continuous development [...] And to make things worse for us, we are not even allowed to invigilate our own classes.'' (Teacher 2)

> ''[...] teachers have nothing to do with anything; everything is **planned ahead** without engaging the teacher. The choice of topics, tasks, grading and assessment system is provided for the teacher and she has to follow the plan.'' (Teacher 7)

> ''You have everything set for you, you just follow it. If you choose to go off track, you might be **questioned** and you really don't want to put yourself in a place where you can be questioned.'' (Teacher 6)

In addition, teachers revealed the fact that they cannot even see the examination questions until the day of assessment. They also cannot see their students' grades as the assessment is computer-based and correction takes place automatically. Only the examination committee can set the exam and inform students of their grades. One respondent teacher reported:

> ''I don't have the **freedom** to set the exam questions that measure my students' progress and I don't even know about the test format until the day of

the assessment because the exam committee does everything without teacher engagement.'' (Teacher 7)

It seems that there is a prevailing cultural sense that a Saudi teacher is only a transmitter of a pre-prepared package of curriculum and assessment. This sense could not only affect teachers' perceptions of themselves and their disposition regarding how to teach, but may also affect students' motivation to learn the language and how they perceive their teacher.

Although teachers showed their interest and tendency to develop some new procedures that could help students' autonomy and progress, they lack the opportunity to be engaged in school policy making. Furthermore, most of them also stated that they are afraid of losing prestige in front of their students because of their loss of empowerment around issues related to assessment and curriculum, which is something which affects their self-perceptions and pedagogical practices. Literature has shown that teachers feel very strongly that having the freedom to exercise professional judgement about curriculum content and approaches to teaching and learning is important as there should be no gap between actuality and aspiration (Bangs and Frost, 2012).

3. Bureaucracy and a top down approach from administration within the university affects teachers' perceptions of themselves and of ELT: Generally speaking, participant teachers believe that a teaching career should be intellectually stimulating, broadening and maturing to teachers' personality and intellect, and conducive to bringing out the best in them. However, their experienced reality is the opposite. Most teachers feel that they lack freedom, are under scrutiny all the time and consider current teaching to be a repressive, regimented job, intellectually deadening.

''It is not an easy task for an EFL teacher. I **lack freedom** with my students. I always feel like there is an eye on me, we cannot negotiate together what we will discuss tomorrow or next week.'' (Teacher 11)

''The policies are not flexible and as I told you before they are fixed, we have nothing to do with them and this is it, we just get orders by emails.'' (Teacher 7)

''[...] I have **no value** in front of the students. [...] It is really a matter of trust. They do not trust us at all.'' (Teacher 2)

''There is **no stability**, every now and then they come up with new resolutions we have to follow.'' (Teacher 10)

''As a teacher I feel **stressed out**. The system is **not fair**.'' (Teacher 8)

Accordingly, teachers feel that they are manipulated by remote control and detest the notion of teacher-proof curricula as this contradicts what they have seen in other countries. Teachers reported that:

''The Saudi teacher has **no say** in making decisions or ability to decide on her own practices. […] and this contradicts what I have seen abroad.'' (Teacher 1)

''Teachers here are only **parrots**; they have to repeat what it is in the textbook.'' (Teacher 2)

The administrative and academic culture of the school plays a major role in creating an effective mechanism for communication between staff and the school (Evans and Nation, 2000). *''Universities are not walled machines geared to political, social and economic engines. They are typically large collections of people who are structurally related to one another through employment and pedagogical relationships''* (Evans and Nation, 2000: 2). In addition, it is essential to refer here to the significant role of the leadership within a school. Effective leadership needs to be inclusive, non-dominant, embracing and actively recognise and include all teachers (Miller, 2013). Education is a public good, hence, each individual who aspires to, and who possesses the relevant skills and knowledge capacity, should be encouraged and supported in playing a full part in their national education system (Ibid.), and clever leadership builds on that.

4. Teacher education and development programmes established by the department are fewer than expected: Although all of my participant teachers were able to pursue their higher degrees overseas, which can be also regarded as a type of CPD programme, they still need more CPD, as education is lifelong learning. Many of them have expressed the fact that they lack institutional

support in terms of professional development. There is a lack of CPD programmes provided and where they exist, again the quality is an issue:

> ‘‘The workshops run by the institute are **insufficient** and **ineffective** because they are not run by well qualified staff members.’’ (Teacher 11)

> ‘‘Workshops are offered by the publisher of the textbook every academic year and you can get benefit from these workshops. But the workshops run by the institute are **insufficient** and **ineffective** because they are not run by well qualified staff members.’’ (Teacher 11)

> ‘‘These programmes go on throughout the module, but then again **quality** vs. **quantity** becomes an issue.’’ (Teacher 9)

> ‘‘We as teachers need far more continuous development as the education field is developing and changing, also many theories evolve every now and then and we should be acquainted with all new information.’’ (Teacher 5)

It should be noted that most teachers were calling for more effective CPD programmes and they were aware of the importance of such programmes to their self and professional development. Indeed, CPD programmes can play an effective part in any development strategy that helps drive motivation, enthusiasm and commitment. Nevertheless, giving preference to who gets involved in such activities could lead to unintended consequences for the school, such as loss of motivation, alienation and resistance (Miller, 2013) and this was perceived by most teachers who expressed dissatisfaction with not having the same opportunities to attend international conferences as administrative members who have more opportunities to attend such gatherings:

> ‘‘[...] They allow only teachers with a half work load to attend international workshops and conferences, if you have a full work load no one cares about you.’’ (Teacher 12)

> ‘‘We should have **equal** opportunity to attend conferences, not choose some people and forget about others.’’ (Teacher 2)

> ''[…] I want to add that the people who attend international gatherings or conferences are only administrative people who don't teach mostly, not practicing teachers, so what's the point?'' (Teacher 8)

As it is always hard to strike a balance between teachers' needs and school needs, it is essential here to draw on what Leitch (2010: 349) has reported: *''Teacher educators and those charged with providing professional learning and development, are generally sensitive to the need for teachers to sustain professional selves over time''.* Sponsored professionalism is usually proclaimed on behalf of teachers as a collective, however, this does not necessarily coincide with individual teachers' views of professionalism because it is promoted by regulatory bodies (Miller, 2009). It should be pointed out here that the power to sustain the development of everyone in any educational organisation is axiomatic to successful school leadership and culture (Miller, 2013). A successful institution is dependent on an understanding of everyone's needs and rights, which extends beyond constructions of job status and authority (Ibid.).

5. Teachers lack programmes that could encourage them to reflect their own views: It can be noted through most teachers' reflections during interviews that the policies and practices in the designated institution do not encourage teachers to reconsider their current practices and express their views and thoughts about what they believe works best for them and their students. One teacher reflects the following:

> ''We need to have trusted people amongst us who can help us to design **continuous** meetings together as teachers and discuss the problems we face as teachers and support each other. Not just have course coordinators who observe you only and most of the time do not know much better than you.'' (Teacher 1)

In addition, most teachers expressed the idea that they lack institutional support in terms of professional support and investment. For example, all of them had been away from their country and their institution for about three years for some and up to six years for others. Many changes had been made, but when they came back, they had no induction programme planned for them to learn about new procedures, assessment systems, or even new textbooks. Nor was there a

programme provided that helped them to reflect on what they had acquired abroad, or what could be implemented or suggested:

> ''No one asked me about my studying experience abroad and what could be done here, or the things I need to apply here, or what could be done to enhance students' attainment. Till now no one asked me. This is my second year since I returned home and till now I didn't even have my job position upgraded.'' (Teacher 2)

> ''Especially nowadays, since we have technology, we should have our own blog or journal as teachers to **share** our experience.'' (Teacher 4)

Overall, teachers are not helped to air their views, there is no online diary or blog that could help teachers to get together and express their emergent needs or thoughts or reflect on implemented procedures. Also, when I asked some teachers whether they keep a reflective journal to document their daily practice and learning, most of them replied negatively and some others replied that they keep a portfolio and this is enough for them. As noted earlier, research argues that teachers should be encouraged to constantly assess and reflect what they believe, as plans for change should involve efforts to improve both individual practice and social situations (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). According to Ghaye (2011), reflective practices help the teacher to understand the links between what she does and how she might improve her effectiveness. Reflective practices help teachers to understand the significance of work, and provide new insights for developing this work. They also help teachers understand the links between feeling, thinking and doing (Ibid.). This is also supported by Senior (2006) who stresses that when allowing language teachers to talk and reflect upon their practice and personal experiences in the profession, they identify a range of catalysts that lead them to empower themselves and develop as professionals.

6. Teachers admit their excessive use of textbooks[24]: Although almost all of the teachers agreed that textbooks should be viewed as a helping tool and guide

[24] Textbooks that were being used during the data collection period are:

- Soars and Soars (2011). New Headway Plus Beginner Student's Book. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

while instructing, the majority of them admitted to the excessive use of textbooks. Some of them reported that:

> ''Teachers here are only **parrots**; they have to repeat what it is in the textbook.'' (Teacher 2)

> ''I use it **extensively** because it focuses the students on what to learn because English is a broad language, so the textbook can give them the basics of learning the language.'' (Teacher 5)

> ''I cannot remember a lecture without opening a textbook, or even to spend 20 minutes without referring to a textbook.'' (Teacher 4)

> '' […] without the textbook we will be **lost**. For me the textbook is a major factor in teaching English.'' (Teacher 6)

> ''It (the textbook) serves as the **guide** for students. It is the main resource for information. All the time, I rely on it. And the top priority is to get done with it.'' (Teacher 8)

It can be noted from teachers' statements that the textbook is paid much attention and used as the tool that guides instruction. Furthermore, most teachers questioned the general orientation of the textbooks used for both art and science students in their foundation year as these textbooks are addressing international or target culture, with the focus only on general English use. While in the past years the focus was on EAP[25], as teachers reported, and this was something most of the teachers disagree with, as they believe that general English should target students in levels 1 and 2, but for students in levels 3 and 4 they should start to learn EAP, according to them:

> ''I think we should start teaching students in level 1 general English and in level 2 they should start learning EAP. In this new system we teach only general

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- Soars and Soars (2011). New Headway Plus Elementary Student's Book. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Soars and Soars (2011). New Headway Plus Pre-Intermediate Student's Book. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Soars and Soars (2011). New Headway Plus Intermediate Student's Book. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[25] English for Academic Purposes.

English, not what we used to teach before, and EAP is what students need for their future studies in the university.'' (Teacher 8)

However, most teachers, when asked about their perceptions of the notion of the textbook and whether it can be updated in today's technological society, welcomed this idea and reported their agreement to abandon the hard copies of textbooks as they are heavy and expensive for students. Most of them welcomed the notion of applying new technologies inside classrooms as it is more interactive and appealing for this new technology generation, and they report:

''[..] 'I Tools', is an online programme you can upload on your computer. It has all the exercises included in the textbook but you can show it to them on the screen, zoom in on some parts, or play them some clips and listen to them.'' (Teacher 4)

''Especially in this age, I mean it is hard to ask students to put their mobiles down and concentrate on the lesson because they are always playing with their phones. So imagine that they are having their lesson using their smart phones or iPads that would be very easy and **enjoyable** to them.'' (Teacher 6)

''I feel that we can use these new technologies, such as What's Up, Instagram, Face book, all these applications, especially when we speak about our girls, they are addicted to them. We have to take advantage of that for their own interest. And they can get access to them anytime they want.'' (Teacher 2)

On the theoretical level, this distinction in thoughts and actions amongst teachers reflects the distinction between intention 'theory' and reality 'practice', teacher experience between what is suggested to be done and the actual thing that has been translated into reality. According to Korthagen (2001) the transfer of theory to practice is meagre or even non-existent as research has shown that many educational concepts developed during pre-service teacher education, were 'washed out' during field experience. This also can be linked to the fact when teachers face severe problems once they leave their pre-service training, as a consequence, they pass through a quite distinct attitude shift during their actual teaching, creating an adjustment to current practices in the school and *not* to recent scientific theories into learning and teaching (Dann et al., 1981 cited in Korthagen, 2001). Hence, it can be argued that the reality teachers face in their workplace justifies their functioning; why they believe in one thing but in practice

they do another. Linking theory and practice can be achieved by harmonising and offering a sound balance between the goal of serving teachers' learning and the interests of the school, a balance between safety and challenge (Ibid.).

7. Lack of time and heavy workload negatively affects teachers' perceptions and practices: Whilst interviewing teachers, it was noted that teachers feel pressure because of excessive workload and time demands, along with guilt and frustration because they are implementing the new curriculum more quickly and less efficiently than what should be required. Teachers have to finish each module within six weeks. From the teachers' point of view, the new curriculum requirements are imposed with little regard for the teachers' existing pressures and demands. Some of them expressed:

> ''We teach each module in only 7 weeks and then another module begins. It is hard to get to know your students and measure their progress in 7 weeks. I feel like I **run a marathon**, every 7 weeks you have to get to know different students with different needs.'' (Teacher 6)

> ''I don't have enough time, I feel like I am **running**; I just want to get done with the textbook regardless of how much students have benefited.'' (Teacher 8)

> ''The ELT in SA is **challenging**, **challenging** [repetition] for the teacher. Teachers can't manage the current workload.'' (Teacher 12)

Research has shown that some aspects of work environments, such as experiencing heavy workload, has a deleterious impact on teachers' professional work and personal welfare (Blix et al., 1994; Gillespie et al., 2001). For instance, Richards and Pennington (1998) cited in Borg (2006) report that heavy workload discourages experimentation and innovation, and encourages sticking blindly to prescribed materials and familiar teaching approaches. Furthermore, heavy workload within schools can lead to occupational stress, affects teachers' ability to communicate well with students, and can impact negatively on their time to pursue further training and develop professionally.

Findings According to the Emergent Themes from the Semi-Structured Interview Data

1. Formal qualifications and previous learning experiences have a direct effect on the quality of education provided by teachers: The findings show that previous learning experience is influential on the formation of teacher's perceptions and practices. Firstly, I asked teachers their opinion about how the English language can be best taught, and whether having a higher degree reshaped their understanding of ELT. Some teachers made reference to their previous learning experience as language learners and how this affected their later beliefs about teaching it. One teacher reported:

> ''It (learning experience) has nothing to do with the degree, maybe it has something to do with being a former student, and the most important characteristic of a good teacher to me then was the ability to transmit knowledge.'' (Teacher 11)

It was not only their past experiences as former language learners that were influential, but also the degrees obtained were found to have an effect on how they viewed their roles as teachers and how they wanted to teach. For instance, in relation to teaching and learning, as students would not have much opportunity to practise English outside their classrooms, teachers believed that the use of communicative activities would be beneficial and they agreed that a student-centred teaching approach would be favoured. This shows that there is a shift in the view of teaching in Saudi Arabia, as only twenty years ago, teacher-centred classes were believed to facilitate learning. This finding indicates that accumulated degrees can contribute to the shaping of teachers' cognitive and intellectual development.

However, during interviews with teachers, it was found that some teachers do not have formal qualifications in English language teaching. Some of the teachers have postgraduate degrees in Linguistics or English literature and they are not aware of modern teaching methods for ESP or EAP programmes. Some excerpts from their interviews reveal the following:

> ''It (having a degree) didn't affect my teaching style as much as it affected my way of thinking […]. My MA helped me to develop my research skills more than teaching skills because I did my **MA in Linguistics**, so it is far away from

> teaching. It was more concerned with theories, syntax and semantics, it has no direct relation to the teaching of English as a second language. But I am planning to do my PhD in TESOL.'' (Teacher 4)

Whereas teachers for whom English was their major specialisation, reported the following:

> ''I have learnt how to deal with students more accurately on the **psychological** level. I know more now about the psychological issues of the language learner and I am aware now that each of my students is a different person with different needs and different ways of thinking. I have also learned to **design a curriculum**, and how to **utilise technology** in a more useful way.'' (Teacher 1)

> ''I learned so many things I wish I can apply here. I discovered how wrong I was teaching, for example, I used to explain too many rules at one session because I knew nothing about the students' **capacity.** After all, English is still their second language and they need some time to process all the information they gain from you.'' (Teacher 2)

It can be noted therefore that former learning experiences can be linked to teachers' efficacy and awareness. Teachers who had qualifications in TESOL or ESL and trained to be language teachers showed awareness of current ELT issues and the psychology of second language learners more than their colleagues who had degrees in linguistics or literature. This difference was translated into differences in classroom practices as it turned out through the classroom observations with teachers (further discussion of this finding will be found under the analysis of non-participant observation).

2. Teachers' self-perception and motivation decreases as soon as they start teaching: Personal factors, such as teachers' beliefs, enthusiasm and interest can affect teacher's perceptions and motivation concerning their own teaching. Through interviews with teachers, it can be said that most teachers did not believe in what they were doing, or at least did not enjoy a good deal of scope in the curriculum to make of it something they could value. When I asked them about their perceptions of current ELT practices, some of them reflected:

''We are working in an environment where the expectations are very high but the reality is sometimes **discouraging**. We have to enjoy what we are doing in order to convey that to our students.'' (Teacher 3)

''As a teacher you should be motivated, love what you are doing. If you love what you are doing, you will transmit that to your students.'' (Teacher 7)

Another factor that could be linked to having less motivated teachers is low student attainment, which could be as a result of the lack of practice of English language as the latter is taught only as a foreign language. In a study by Ali and Ammar (2005), investigating EFL teachers' beliefs, the authors concluded that Saudi Arabian EFL teachers work in a very challenging environment where the target language (English) is practised only within the walls of classrooms, which leaves teachers anxious about their students' attainment level. This leads teachers to feel stressed and less motivated. Some teachers noted:

''It (teaching) is a hard profession in this country, particularly. English is a foreign language and students only use it for academic purposes, they do not practice it other than inside the classroom.'' (Teacher 3)

In addition, the ELT in most if not all Saudi HE institutions is an assessment driven system, where students are constrained and horrified by the idea of testing. This could affect both the teacher and students negatively as they feel more stress to meet their target. Moreover, most teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the idea of having summative assessment and they question the reliability of it. Most of them believe that current assessment does not measure the true level of the students, and this is something that affects their motivation, as well. Many of them commented:

''As a teacher I feel **stressed out**. The system is **not fair** for students; I mean the grading system **doesn't measure** students' progress.'' (Teacher 8)

''You can notice that even weak students get good marks because the questions are very easy for students because the English course is 4 hours and it weighs a lot in students' GPA and we do not want this to affect them.'' (Teacher 1)

''[…] the level of the students is weak. Today, for example, I found some students in level three who cannot tell the difference between give and gave. They ended up in level three because the exam questions were **easy**.'' (Teacher 5)

''It doesn't do the students any **justice**, it is only a multiple choice questionnaire. Some students get very high grades, but they are not very good at English.'' (Teacher 6)

Overall, there appeared a general consensus that EFL teaching has become more demanding and burdensome due to the inclusion of summative assessment and the pressure teachers feel to prepare their students for school-wide assessments. The fundamental assumption this study is based on is that the cognitive-behavioural perspective and the meaning that teachers give to their experiences determines how they will feel, act and interact (Fox, 1993; Ali and Ammar, 2005). A famous quotation from Epictetus best exemplifies the cognitive-behavioural position: *''People are not moved by things but the view they take of them. It is peoples' beliefs that produce their emotional response, and it is their emotional response that underpins their behaviour''* (cited in Fox, 1993: 22).

On the other hand, teachers' expressed feelings and emotions show that they are mindful of how they are being treated in formal employment. As they acknowledge their feelings and beliefs, taking this step makes it possible to reflect on their sentiments, which holds the power to lead the teacher either to a reasoned affirmation of what they are doing, should be doing, or to a change in conduct (Buchmann, 1989 cited in Hansen, 1995). In addition, expressing sentiment is a sign of teacher mindfulness, which in turn can help teachers to be reflective. Such reflections can help teachers resist, or alter first impressions as people aware of the circumstances that cause such feelings to occur and any change to the cause will entail a change in conduct and sentiment (Hansen, 1995).

3. Teaching English as a foreign language at the HE level can be seen as constructed from teachers' cultural background and does not encourage students' autonomy and creative thinking: Teachers' practices are affected by their culture (Tiberghien et al., 1998; Horencyzk and Tatar, 2002), although

this contradicts the kind of education they have received abroad (theoretical knowledge about the language and practical knowledge about the teaching). It can be argued that Saudi teachers learned to be Saudi teachers in a particular social context, and they are aware of it. Most of them reject the teaching of some foreign cultural aspects associated with the teaching of English language, such as drinking alcohol, as they believe in the importance of providing culturally relevant curricula:

> ''I often ignore anything that does not go with **our culture** or does not match it.'' (Teacher 1)

> ''It is just a curriculum; it has nothing to do with Saudi **society**. It has nothing to do with our **culture**.'' (Teacher 1)

> ''The textbook doesn't relate students to reality, i.e. there are some themes and topics that don't touch students' everyday life, so students won't feel they are important. We have to focus on **everyday English**.'' (Teacher 2)

In addition, most teachers showed disagreement with the time students spend at the university. A typical day runs from 8:00 to 4:00 at the latest except for Medical School students who work until 5:00. This finding was somewhat surprising because these teachers have been exposed to other working hours in developed countries, from where they obtained their degrees. It could be the case that others might find it typical for students to spend this duration of time at university and expand their knowledge. However, some teachers commented that Saudi people are a family society, needing to get together very often, but spending more than half of the day outside their homes leaves them with little time for their families.

> ''Students spend much time at the university, till 4 o'clock and this is **too much** for a girl in our society. That doesn't work in our society socially. She needs someone to pick her up and she needs to spend some time with her family because we are a family society.'' (Teacher 1)

> ''Having students come to university daily from 8-4 o'clock is hard for them, we feel that as teachers, but we can say nothing about it. Also, in our culture most jobs finish early, so parents need to pick up their girls early.'' (Teacher 1)

It can be noted from the statements above that Saudi EFL teachers are affected by some cultural aspects and the general norms of their society, which shape their perceptions and practices. On the other hand, teachers reported that the current curriculum encourages memorisation and kills creativity.

> ''Students are being taught to **memorise** only, not to **think**.'' (Teacher 8)

Teachers blame public education policy which has led to having spoon-fed students who are not familiar with problem-solving activities and not trained to think critically. Some teachers reported that most of their students ask for a summary of the curriculum in order to enable them to study for the exam because they were used to getting summaries before assessment in their public education. They even refuse to do ungraded tasks provided to them by the teacher because they are driven by exam grades only.

> ''Students are used to being **spoon-fed** and to having summaries and they refuse to use extra materials. This is not the goal we want to achieve. They even don't do ungraded tasks.'' (Teacher 11)

> ''The majority of students aren't well prepared, they come from general education with a very low level of English and face this new academic life which is very hard for them to cope with because of the different academic manner of teaching. Also, coping with long hours of English instruction along with other subjects is hard for them. But students who come from international or private schools are the ones who perform well.'' (Teacher 7)

Most teachers noted that although students at the university level should be autonomous, they still demand such summaries. This shows that what is cultivated during the early days of a student's education remains engraved in their minds and affects their behaviours. In addition, it shows that the transfer of knowledge and beliefs from initial teacher education to classroom practice does not happen in a linear, smooth manner; the context of the classrooms exert a powerful influence on teachers' cognition and practice which may outweigh principles learned during teacher education (Borg, 2006).

4. The marketing of education might be a reason for the deterioration of the power of the teachers: Teachers stated during the interviews that they feel they lose power over their students and they relate that to two main reasons: firstly, the disempowering of teachers and secondly, the notion of the marketing of education. I have discussed earlier the notion of teachers' disempowerment which was a major finding. Here, I would like to focus on the second reason provided by teachers as a justification to the deterioration of their power, which is the marketing of education.

In general, Saudi public HE is free for most Saudi students except for external, distant learners and those low achieving students[26]. Some teachers believe that the notion of enforcing some students to pay fees makes them feel as if they are paying for high quality goods, and that students should be served by teachers all the time, which makes a teaching career more demanding and takes power away from teachers to place it on the hands of students. The latter are the ones who generate revenues for the school but teachers are the ones who benefit from these revenues. Some of them reflect:

> ''They [school administration] **respect** the student more than the teacher because students pay them but we don't.'' (Teacher 11)

Most teachers feel that forcing some students to pay for their education or what can be referred to as the marketing of education made most educational institutions to be akin to business corporations, the outputs are different but the input is the same –money revenues. This rise of consumerism within education has had effects upon teachers and their relationship with their universities and students (Hussey and Smith, 2010). According to Hussey and Smith, the most serious consequences of students seeing themselves as customers is that it distorts the relationship between them and their teachers. In order to resolve such a dilemma in the relationship between teachers and students in this economic world, a channel of open negotiation between them would need to occur. The implications of negotiating multiple and competing discourses for teacher and student empowerment is important. It is also significant to consider the instinctive, untutored, and untheorised modes of relationship which student and teachers display in the classroom (Canagarajah, 1999). They negotiate their relationships, roles, values and knowledge content in strategic ways; they

[26] Saudi low achieving students can attend public universities, but they are required to pay tuition fees unless they obtain a high GPA (grade point average) during their enrollment within university.

interpret instructional materials and curricula according to their community knowledge, and move between competing rhetorical and discursive traditions to find coherence for their thought and expression (Ibid.). The cognitive and educational advantage of this is that both students and teachers are developing a meta-discursive awareness of their competing values, roles, conventions, and resources. This process of reflexivity could develop a critical awareness of the processes and practices involved in educational agenda (Ibid.).

However, it should be emphasised that the purpose of higher educational institutions is not to satisfy consumers, but to provide them with a good education and prepare them for life. Education is not a collection of commodities, it is more like an attitude to life ((Hussey and Smith, 2010).

5. Physical environment was considered a real burden, hindering teachers from having an interactive classroom conducive to a learning atmosphere: Many teachers have reported their dissatisfaction with the physical environment inside classrooms as it is not conducive to learning; one teacher complaining about that expressed the following:

> ''The chairs are **fixed** in most classes and this causes me a headache when I want them to work in groups. And when it comes to air conditioning (ac) inside classrooms, it is a serious problem. Sometimes the room is full of mosquitoes and I have to **battle** that. I have to bring a spray with me and it is hard for me to teach in a class which is not safe for me and for my students. Also, the ac is too cold or too hot, we cannot control it because it is a central system.'' (Teacher 6)

The classroom atmosphere gives rise to some concerns around the general well-being of students as well as teachers since there are mosquitoes and the ac is uncontrollable. It is evident that students' health and physical development are crucial to their well-being and capacity to learn (Hugdahl, 1995 cited in Pollard et al., 2005). This matter needs to be tackled by the school leadership as harm could be sustained. However, regardless of the physical environment of most classrooms, most of the teachers were content with the total number of students in their classes.

> ''The number of students is fine. In each class the maximum number is 30 students and most classes have 25.'' (Teacher 7)

''We used to teach 30 students, now they reduced the number to 20 maximum 25 which is good.'' (Teacher 11)

Teachers also added that their administration is considering lowering the number of students in each class but due to the increase in numbers of foundation year students every semester, this seems hard to fulfill. This finding shows that teachers are not even helped to reflect what they believe about their classroom environment. Reflective teachers aim to structure the environment so that opportunities are taken to reinforce their overall purposes bearing in mind the following questions: What are the main design features of the classroom and how do they affect its aesthetic feel? Is the classroom environment as practical as it can be to maintain? How often is it necessary to change displays? Do the displays stimulate and inform? Do they provide opportunities for students to interact with them? (Pollard et al., 2005).

Research always indicates the importance of the quality of the learning environment and the fact that it has considerable impact on the kind of teaching that can take place, and influence the attitude of the learners as well as the quality of learning (Ibid.). But when the teacher is not helped to reflect what they want their classes to be like in terms of space, resources and time this could affect and constrain practices and the general framework within which they work.

6. Teacher collaboration and school as a learning community is perceived to be more effective for teachers: Teachers have expressed their desire for a more collaborative environment where teachers are the major players, as they are the closest people to students and more acquainted with their needs and requirements. Teachers note the following:

''Having a **motivated** teacher and a warm environment in terms of establishing good relationships between teachers, students and admin would help to achieve successful educational outcomes.'' (Teacher 5)

''There are mainly instructions and rules, why is that? I am the most important one who should be responsible for decision making in my school, but I am being deprived of such a duty. I am not the one who decides to mark student

DN [denial, i.e the student is moved from the course] although I am the one who takes the register every day.'' (Teacher 2)

''There should be a transparent relationship between us and our policy managers and a channel for **giving** and **taking** should be there, not only taking.'' (Teacher 3)

Considering the role of organisational culture and climate and how these can impact teachers' performance, one should anticipate that school principals are therefore encouraged to adopt an appreciative approach, rather than a deficit one, i.e., they should actively build upon existing competences and find ways of working with or around weaker teachers (Miller, 2013). Successful leadership is not about gaps in competency and putting teachers under scrutiny, but about cultivating and nurturing a unique and workable, nonlinear and multilevel approach to leadership (Bolden, 2006 cited in Miller, 2013). Any successful school working environment must embrace, engage, motivate and inspire teachers' demands and expectations (Miller, 2013) and this what most teachers were calling for.

Stage 2: Data from Non-Participant Observation

Divergence of beliefs and practices

I was able to observe four lessons from four teachers while they instructed in classrooms, despite the fact that some teachers seemed reluctant to allow me to observe their classes. I was interested in understanding teachers' practices, not what or how they believe in isolation from what they do. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), it is unusual for people to say they are doing one thing, but in reality are doing something else. Therefore, one of the main objectives for conducting classroom observations was to identify the extent of convergence between teachers' stated beliefs and their practices.

In fact, the data obtained by semi-structured interviews and observation indicated a high level of divergence. During interviews, teachers showed a strong inclination toward an explicit approach to interactive methods of teaching and learner autonomy, which they believed would be more appropriate to their students' learning. Nevertheless, such a belief was not clearly translated into their observed practices. For example, group work strategies were only used by

two teachers while teaching grammatical structures, which represent 50% of the observed classes. However, in the interviews, all of the teachers said they believed in the engagement of learners and an interactive classroom environment. Translation and teacher directed error correction strategies were used in two classes, while in interviews teachers rejected the idea of using mother language tongue (Arabic) as they believed that using mainly the target language (English) is more helpful for students and their practice. In addition, most of the teachers expressed their beliefs that the textbook should only be used as a reference and not to rely on it much of the time, but the reality was different. Most teachers started their lesson by asking students about the title of the unit and stuck to the use of the textbook alongside their presentation.

Most of these issues were prominent in two of the observed classes where teachers had fewer years teaching experience compared to their colleagues. This could help us in discerning the significance of teacher qualification and experience. Moreover, this divergence between beliefs and practices could be explained by the fact that, working in an under-resourced environment where access to explicit theories was limited (Barnard and Burns, 2012) can create a barrier to the implementation of new and innovative methods of learning and teaching.

According to what was perceived during classroom observations, the following points were observed, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following pages:

1. Formal qualifications and years of experience have a direct effect on the quality of education provided by teachers.

2. Teachers tend to teach the way they were taught rather than the way they were taught to teach.

3. The physical environment is considered a real burden, hindering teachers from having an interactive classroom conducive to a learning atmosphere.

4. The excessive use of textbooks while instructing makes the textbook an end not a means.

1. Formal qualifications and years of experience have a direct effect on the quality of education provided by teachers: This finding reoccurred through individual semi-structured interviews with teachers and through classroom observations. As two of the teachers observed had less teaching experience compared to other colleagues observed, it can be found that teaching experience is influential on the formation of EFL teachers' practices. Teachers who had more years of experience showed more ability to manage students' questions and control the general flow of the classroom. In addition, what was prominent through one of these classes (where the teacher had 12 years of experience) is how the teacher motivated and engaged students in speaking English without interrupting or correcting them. This helps students to feel positive about speaking English and not be traumatised by the idea of making mistakes, especially in the presence of a strange observer (the researcher).

Moreover, it can be noted that formal qualifications play an important role in shaping teachers' understanding of how to teach a foreign language. One of the teachers observed had her MA in literature and there was an excessive use of grammar rules and structures in her session which I felt exceeded students' capacity to process in one go (see Appendix XVII). The literature supports this argument, for example Byrnes et al. (1996) and Youngs and Youngs (2001) have demonstrated that teachers who have taken foreign language courses and education have the most supportive and positive attitudes towards ELT and ELLs.

2. Teachers tend to teach the way they were taught rather than the way they were taught to teach: It has been said that *'How' a teacher teaches is as important as 'what' he or she teaches''* (Humphreys, 1993: vii). During classroom observations, it was found that the teacher is the main actor in the classroom 'chalk and talk' pattern. The use of normative language teaching methods was also dominant in most classrooms with the focus on grammar rules and language skill-based approaches (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Although teachers stated during interviews their tendency to have more communicative classrooms, as they believe that interactive environments are more conducive to learning, the reality being observed was contradictory. It could be noted, based on teachers' reflections during interviews, that the fear of having students failing summative assessment was the factor that prevents teachers from attributing more time focusing on communicative activities. For instance, during interviews,

teachers attribute the difficulty in encouraging critical thinking to their fear of summative assessment as they do not want students to achieve a low score, so they have to focus on the given textbook. Excerpts from the interviews with teachers comply with what has been observed.

> ''We teach students mainly to survive the test and this is wrong.'' (Teacher 1)

> ''The English course is 4 hours and it weighs a lot in students' GPA and we do not want this to **affect** them. Besides the Institute is seeking academic accreditation and law students' achievements can affect its status.'' (Teacher 1)

Teachers believe that it is important to help students to be creative thinkers and instil a passion for learning among learners instead of having them study merely for the purpose of obtaining good examination grades and this complies with Goh (1997) and the need for the application of the *'Teach Less, Learn More'* model inside our classrooms.

Another factor that could be responsible for such a dilemma is the lack of time as teachers have four modules per term and they have to finish each module within six weeks and the seventh week for assessment:

> ''The duration of the module is too short, you cannot notice student progress by the end of it, you cannot even fully know their names. We cannot help them to progress within a six-week time frame. We don't have a chance to apply what we want. We don't have time to apply certain methods. For example, in writing about brain storming and helping students step by step to write, I couldn't explain that **freely** because of time constraints.'' (Teacher 2)

And to the restricted curriculum they have to apply:

> ''Our curriculum is **restrictive** in that you have to cover the book. So interactive learning experiences do take place, but are limited. Also, teaching one group for 4 hours constantly is **too much**. I think 2 hours per day is enough for teaching a language.'' (Teacher 9)

This divergence between what teachers believe and what they do complies with the research indicating that a change in beliefs and perceptions might occur but it does not necessarily lead to change in practices and vice versa. For example, studies investigating change in ESL teachers' beliefs after undertaking certain

training programmes found that some beliefs may change, but they do not necessarily change in line with the teacher education programme's intentions (Flores, 2005; Gatbonton, 2008). Although this point raises the need for a more valid picture of the change of teachers' beliefs and perceptions which might be gained through the study of teacher cognition literature, some researchers relate this to the fact that some teachers may abandon their beliefs once they leave their education programmes (Gatbonton, 2008). Accordingly, it can be said that most Saudi teachers are inclined to abandon their beliefs about theoretical teaching once they leave their virtual educational programmes and get involved in their real world. They might be also discouraged to actively apply communicative, interactive approaches as they are restricted to completion of the syllabus and preparation for summative exams, which can kill both teachers' and students' creativity and enthusiasm.

3. The physical environment is considered a real burden, hindering teachers from having an interactive classroom conducive to a learning atmosphere: Fixed chairs, broken data displays, and unmanaged ac conditions were the three major physical obstacles teachers experience whilst instructing. The photographs below, taken by the researcher in the designated HE institute on 27 March, 2013 demonstrate the reality of most of the observed classroom environments:



Figure 5.2: Physical Environment in most Classrooms

During my observations, I noticed that chairs are fixed and cannot be moved, which could hinder group work arrangements and the traffic flow of the classroom, the ac cannot be controlled, and some of the data projectors do not work. During interviews, some of the teachers stated that even if they report any technical issues to IT, they do not receive an instant response, as the number of IT technicians employed is insufficient. Also, during observation of a three-hour lecture, the classroom was interrupted by another teacher in a neighbouring classroom, asking if anyone could help her to get the data projector to work, but the teacher responded that she could not handle technical issues. It can be argued that the physical layout that set the context for a well-managed environment is missing in most of the observed EFL classrooms.

4. The excessive use of textbooks while instructing makes the textbook an end not a means: Textbooks can be viewed as a helpful guide and reference to teachers. In most Saudi educational institutions, EFL teachers are restricted to using teachers' books which show the methodologies of teaching and techniques to be adopted, however, they are left to their own understanding of these books. Al-Seghayer (2005) is in support of this. His research around the use of textbooks in Saudi higher institutions shows that the textbook is the curriculum; it provides the core content for teaching as well as the teaching methods. Moreover, English textbooks need to be approved prior to use by the dean of the school and should not contain any concepts that do not coincide with Islamic concepts. This 'Saudization' of the curriculum or textbook (as described by Al-Seghayer, 2005) can be perceived as Pinar describes:

> ''It seems to us that most textbooks present a field of study as if it were an army of disembodied ideas, marching across the blank space of time, inevitably annexing unincorporated space, establishing cities of systemised thought. The truth is fields do not proceed that way. Fields are comprised of people, sometimes extraordinary, often ordinary people, whose job it is to write material that complies with the rules and principles other people -their predecessors- have established as reasonable. Fields, just like schools, are comprised of people, people with ideas. Both people and ideas change.'' (Pinar et al., 2008: 3)

Pinar et al. referred in their statement above to the use of textbooks especially in social science, and they argue that this collection of textbooks is mainly a subjective representation of the prevalent ideas of people which could be amendable or changeable throughout time or depending on context. I find it true especially when a conservative context such as Saudi Arabia is discussed, we can see that the content of textbooks should comply with Islamic culture and the concept of the country and its people. But it is people who decide what is culturally acceptable and what is not, and people are different and their perspectives change and develop over time. So, what was regarded as a prohibited issue may become acceptable through the passage of time. Therefore, in the future we may have textbooks more open to the world around us, especially in this era where we live in a global village with technological advancements that reach almost every house and every corner of our lives. We cannot create a bubble around our students: they became involved in this technological world.

Stage 3: Data from Focus Group Discussion

After the first and second phases of my study (the semi-structured interviews and lesson observations) I had sufficient time -three months- to examine the data obtained, identify themes as a source of reference and accordingly form the questions that led on to this third stage of data collection, that is the focus group discussion. With the help and guidance of my supervisors, I identified the necessary documents and contact list for my next stage. In addition, I had booked the venue for focus group discussion prior to my visit with a member of the administration team at the designated language institute through telephone contact, as I needed a room equipped with data demonstration facilities, with convenient seats for teachers and a venue with no distractions. I was given permission to use the ELI meeting room. I intended to start this stage by the end of August 2013, which was the first week of the new academic year in Saudi Arabia, with teachers not yet attending classes. All teachers were sent emails proposing dates and times for the focus group meetings, and I received only some positive replies via this method. The respondent teachers were then contacted again to inform them about the place and to propose meeting times with them. Some were contacted in person, especially CMs. Although almost all agreed to the designated times and place, there were instances of teachers

agreeing to participate, but then actually not showing up on the day of the focus group, and two of them had to leave in the middle of the discussion as they received phone calls. Accordingly, I had low participation rates, see table 5.2 for teacher and CM actual participation in focus groups (FG):

	FG 1 (teachers)	**FG 2 (teachers)**	**FG 3 (CMs)**
Date of Focus Group	August 24th 2013	27th August 2013	1st September 2013
Time	11-1	12-2	12-2
Recruited CMs and teachers	12	9	9
CM and teachers **agreed** to participate	7	4	5
CM and teachers actually **participated**	4	3	4
Show up rate	57 %	75 %	80 %

Table 5.2: Teacher and CM Actual Participation in Focus Groups

The selection of focus group participants (teachers and CMs) was to ensure that they had sufficiently varying experiences and perspectives in order to allow for some debate. Being attentive to group interaction helped me in picking up on differences in views, paying attention to any consensus formed and the explanatory framework and their interpreted ELT messages.

Overall, there was a discrepancy between what CMs say and what teachers say and feel is happening. The following table shows the findings of the focus group discussion with teachers. It provides descriptions of main themes, emergent themes, and main findings followed by analysis together with sample quotes from the respondents to demonstrate how each category was implied in the responses.

Main Themes	Findings	Emergent Themes	Findings
1. Lack of authority and empowerment	Saudi EFL teachers report their desire for more teacher engagement and empowerment	1. Openness	Teachers call openly for partnership and communication with administration and providing consultations
2. Teachers' reflections	Teachers' reflections lack impact	2. Student needs to take priority	A successful education is one that meets student needs and this is the most fruitful outcome which teachers are the first people to judge
3. Professional development opportunities	Teaching is an ongoing process that requires ongoing professional development	3. Student autonomy should be enhanced	Independent learner means independent person
4. Heavy workload	Workload can be a burden against teachers' development programmes	4. Physical environment of the classroom	Teaching requires better equipped classrooms

Table 5.3: Main and Emergent Themes of Focus Groups with Teachers

Main Findings from the Focus Group Data with Teachers

1. Saudi EFL teachers report their desire for more teacher engagement and empowerment: During focus groups with teachers, most of them expressed their feeling of disempowerment and lack of involvement in curriculum practices although they are the closest people to students and the ones who are more acquainted with students' needs and limitations. Teachers reported their desire to be free to implement what they see works best for their learners without being afraid to be questioned one day.

> ''We feel our students' needs and requirements but cannot do much about them, we are tied up by many rules and regulations we have to follow.'' (Teacher 3)

''We need to feel free to discuss or say what we want without being afraid to be questioned because this is **scary**.'' (Teacher 3)

The use of the word 'scary' by the teacher implies her intense feeling of fear and anxiety and this is something that can affect her perception of her own career and create a sense of psychological instability and this, in turn, affects her attitude and productivity. According to Easen (1985), teachers' anxieties and fears are important forces in shaping how they view the events of their daily experience; they are the 'hidden agendas' they carry around with them.

2. Teachers' reflections lack impact: Reflective practice was an emergent code from the pilot study and individual interviews and this code was tackled during focus group discussion as well. It was found through this latter instrument that most teachers were aware of 'reflective practice' as a term only but lacked application of the term in practice. When teachers were asked to provide a definition of 'reflective practitioner', in their own words, and what they understand by this term, some of them were familiar with it as they replied:

''It means to **reflect** what we see or **think.**'' (Teacher 1)

''From my experience, I used to know a professor who was specialised in this term, he did not teach me but I saw him talking about reflective practitioners as those who held focus groups with each other, talking together, getting to **learn** from every one's experience. It also means allowing teachers to write their own journals and share it with other teachers like having a blog for example.'' (Teacher 2)

''When I used to study in America, we used to join Blackboard, it is an online discussion board run by one of our professors there. It is online, so you could get access to it anytime you liked and add your comments and **thoughts**.'' (Teacher 5)

In addition, when teachers were asked if they were helped to be reflective, most of them expressed that there are frequent meetings being held for them to discuss problematic issues only and they are not conducted on a regular basis:

''To be honest, here at the institution, they try to hold some meetings and focus groups with teachers and sometimes with students if they need to discuss some issues.'' (Teacher 4)

''[...] As I have said before just to discuss problematic issues.'' (Teacher 2)

''But these meetings are only conducted at the beginning or by the end of the term.'' (Teacher 7)

However, during focus groups teachers showed that they are interested in developing as a reflective practitioner, in having continuous meetings among them to share good practice, learn from each others' experience and use technology to get them together and have their say through interactive channels, such as online blogs or journals, as they demonstrated in the following:

''Speaking about myself, I always tend to hold discussions with my colleagues to see if they are experiencing the same problem I have or not, what did they do for it?'' (Teacher 1)

''We need to have **trusted** people amongst us who can help us to design continuous meetings together as teachers and discuss the problems we face as teachers and support each other. We have course coordinators who observe you only and most of the time do not know much better than you.'' (Teacher 1)

''[...] I think it is very important to have continuous meetings together or to have focus group discussions every now and then to discuss and **reflect** upon our practice.'' (Teacher 6)

''Especially, nowadays, since we have the technology, we should have our own blog or journal as teachers to share our experience.'' (Teacher 4)

It can be observed from what teachers expressed that the notion of teachers as reflective practitioners was not translated into their reality. When teachers were asked about their personal professional development, many of them reported that they learn from fellow teachers. When teachers are helped to get together and reflect upon their practices, they can share ideas on how to be creative with materials, discuss issues they are facing in teaching and suggest alternatives (Senior, 2006). Unfortunately, it was rare for the teachers, who developed their

subject knowledge and became experts in the field, to report being supported to reflect what they believe. Teachers need to reflect and their reflections also need to have an impact, to be appreciated and translated into actions. However, it can be said that the top down approach played by the HE institution has implications for teachers' social and professional development (Borg, 2006).

3. Teaching is an ongoing process that requires ongoing professional development: CPD is regarded as an essential part of teacher development in any educational institution, especially for teachers who had no prior knowledge about ELT. Some teachers expressed the following:

> ''Frankly speaking, I didn't know much about how to manage the class properly until I obtained my MA. The first three years of teaching were disastrous for me because I had my BA without prior knowledge about how to teach. That's why I find it essential to keep developing as a teacher and attend as much professional training as possible.'' (Teacher 12)

In addition, when teachers were asked about what they want to get out of CPD programmes, most of them replied that they need to know more about how to teach certain skills, learn about new teaching methods and theories, learn how to design a curriculum and learn more about assessment:

> ''I want to know certain effective strategies that could help to teach some skills, such as writing skills and how to teach them effectively.'' (Teacher 11)

> ''I also would like to know more about new technologies and new teaching methods in our field.'' (Teacher 1)

> ''Also, I would love to know about how to design a curriculum, an **effective curriculum.**'' (Teacher 2)

> ''We also need to know more around assessment and how to assess students, especially when it comes to speaking assessment. Although we follow some rubrics whilst assessing students, but still you feel that you cannot assess them properly.'' (Teacher 4)

> ''[…] For me I want the kind of programmes that help me as a teacher to know how to deal with our students, and get to know more about their psychology.'' (Teacher 6)

Teachers also reported that they need to be acquainted with all that is new but they need to learn this from experts in the field, calling for more effective CPD programmes. Research supports the fact that CPD programmes promote change in teachers' thinking and professional growth, in which new information and new experiences lead teachers to add to, reflect upon and restructure their ideas in a progressive way (Borg, 2006). Indeed, teacher development pathways seem central to an understanding of the impact of teacher education on EFL teacher cognition, and therefore further studies of teachers' development on teacher CPD programmes are to be encouraged.

4. Workload can be a burden against teachers' development programmes: Heavy work load was a recurring theme, demonstrated through individual interviews and focus groups with teachers. Most teachers were obliged to teach for 15 hours per week plus working within committees, such as the Student Help Committee or Examination Committee. However, some of the teachers were also teaching external students or distant learners which represents extra paid work for teachers. Teachers also were required to spend at least 5 hours as office hours per week with no days off for research. Overall, teachers feel that they are over burdened by workload and they have to deliver the curriculum in a short period of time (7 weeks) and then another new module starts. Some teachers reflected the following:

> ''We are over... **over scheduled**. Truly, we are.'' (Teacher 6)

> ''This is because we are **pressed** by time. There is not enough time for us to provide the students with what we want because the term is very short and we have to cover the given curriculum. There is not even enough time for students to fully understand and process what they have been given, or apply what they have acquired.'' (Teacher 2)

Teachers' feeling of not being able to relate to their students' needs due to heavy workload and the large number of modules they have to cover per term can affect their self-motivation, their practices and the way they address the

curriculum. Teachers also relate being unable to seek self-development programmes to the fact they are over scheduled. Research suggests that experiencing heavy workload and burnout is a crucial factor that can cause occupational stress, job dissatisfaction and consideration of job change (Blix et al., 1994). It was noted through teachers' reflections that they have negative feelings towards their workload and studies have shown that the perceptions of teachers towards their profession have an effect on their performance (Hussain et al., 2011), so this heavy workload is a major issue that can affect their predisposition, productivity and how they approach teaching.

Findings According to the Emergent Themes from the Focus Group Data

As there are a number of convergent themes between semi-structured interviews and focus groups, discussed below are the new emergent themes:

1. Teachers call openly for partnership and communication with administration and providing consultations: Teachers showed an ongoing interest in having a transparent relationship with their CMs and working collaboratively with them. They call for a relationship of trust that enables them to implement what they believe in.

> ''There should be a transparent relationship between us and our policy managers, and a channel of **giving** and **taking** should be there, not only taking.'' (Teacher 3)

However, despite teachers sometimes having the chance to reflect their opinions in meetings or focus groups with their policy managers, they feel that their opinions are not appreciated or genuinely taken into account:

> ''Also, sometimes they hold focus group with us to discuss certain issues but in the end they apply what they want **regardless** of our **opinions**. And you cannot see or feel any changes accordingly, and this led us to think that our opinions do **not matter** to them.'' (Teacher 4)

> ''In fact, our course managers arrange urgent meetings with teachers to discuss problematic situations or issues. For example, do you remember when there

was a high rate of failed students in level three, we had a meeting with Dr. (name). They asked us to justify this problem. They also asked us to provide them with some solutions. But all in all, they were trying to say the problem **lies** with you as a teacher.'' (Teacher 2)

''If they arrange such a meeting, I do not try to attend because they gather us mainly to **blame** not to **listen** to us, most teachers reported the same.'' (Teacher 1)

Although some teachers manage to cope with the demands of their workplace and hide their tension, what they believe deep inside was different. Most of the teachers believe that they are the most influential people in the whole education system and those who run most of its business, so they should be the ones who establish its agenda and tailor it to students' needs:

''[...] We are the ones who run most of the business here, so we have to be given the **chance** to **say**, change, and [...] change what we think works the best for students.'' (Teacher 5)

It is essential here to indicate that workplace experiences can affect teachers' perceptions, feelings and practices. Organisational and cognitive stress theories indicate that negative workplace experiences can be associated with greater psychological distress of employees (Gifford, 2007). Establishing a flexible working environment that is based on support from co-workers and management, recognition of achievement and lowering standards was reported to help staff cope up with stress and negative attitudes (Gillespie et al., 2001).

2. Teachers believe that a successful education is one that meets student needs and this is the most fruitful outcome which teachers are the first people to judge: Teachers believe that students' needs must take priority over bureaucracy and paper work. Teachers also believe that resolutions should come from teachers, not from people behind desks. As some of them reported:

''We as teachers are the only people who are close to our students and that gives us the **right** to design the curriculum that goes with their needs and

requirements. We can see that the furthest person from students is the one who makes decisions for them and plans their curriculum.'' (Teacher 5)

''It is simply that, people who are responsible for implementing new rules should be the ones who experience teaching in the first place, not the ones who only issue **rigid** paper.'' (Teacher 2)

Teachers perceive that the curriculum is not helping students progress and the procedures applied, such as syllabus and assessment are not conducive to effective learning outcomes. Teachers relate that to the disempowerment of teachers who are those with 'dirty hands' who know a great deal about their students' needs and requirements.

In addition, teachers detest the notion of summative assessment and having a unified final exam as this hinders them from being creative when teaching a curriculum, as they need to focus on the material given for the sake of the exam, which again suffocates students' creative thinking. Hargreaves (1994) is in support of this argument. Hargreaves points out that professional learning is vulnerable to the priorities of the prevailing educational policy and he asserts that this kind of learning could be the impetus to improve and expand students' motivation to learn, extend and sustain their personal knowledge. He also comments that students could be hijacked by those criteria focused on high-stakes summative tests, reinforcing compliance around a narrow definition of curriculum. He concludes in highlighting that a school becomes a professional learning community only when the educators within it align their agenda and practices with a broader sense of professional learning community concepts that lead to an authentic educated learning community. Also, teachers feel that to teach a vast number of students the same material is not effective, as students have different abilities and competences:

''You know what. We cannot change many things because after all the final exam is unified so all 4000 students need to study the same curriculum. That's why we **cannot** change anything regarding the curriculum because this is the policy of the institute. […] It does not make sense to teach more than 4000 students with different abilities and needs the same materials and topics, and I suppose that they will end up with the same level of language competence.

This is wrong, totally wrong. Every single student is different from the other.'' (Teacher 2)

Since every student is a different individual case, teachers believe that it is essential to tailor a curriculum and assessment that is flexible and matches students' needs and abilities, but there is no one to decide that except for the teacher who knows every pupils' capability and chance in life.

3. Independent learner means independent person: Student autonomy was an emergent theme raised by teachers. Most teachers noted that their students are accustomed to the notion of being spoon-fed and less engaged, as the teacher provides them with everything they want as the teacher is in charge. As teachers reported, this is an outcome of general education and HE policies where students are not encouraged to be fully involved and not trained to be independent and autonomous. Teachers expressed their desire to have more proactive and engaged students in their classes:

''I want my students to be **autonomous** and search for information for themselves, but according to policy here you should provide students with all the activities only because they all have the same final exam. When we were students we were treated more rigidly than this generation.'' (Teacher 3)

From the above statement one can understand that the policies applied by the institute are not encouraging the students to be autonomous, or allowing the teacher the potential to train her students to be independent. It seems that the general culture is not helping Saudi learners to be independent as dependence is rooted in them from the first years of their education and continues to be so in their HE.

4. Teaching requires better equipped classrooms: It is evident that the physical environment of the classroom can be considered a real burden, hindering teachers from having an interactive classroom conducive to learning. During focus groups many teachers have expressed their dissatisfaction with the physical environment of the classrooms. In addition, some teachers reported their eagerness to have smart boards in their classes:

''We are **eager** to have all our classrooms equipped with smart boards and new advances so that we can become detached from our textbooks.'' (Teacher 5)

''And we also need smart boards inside our classrooms in order to be able to access online resources.'' (Teacher 7)

It can be understood from the above statements that most classes are not technologically well-equipped. This can affect teachers' as well as students' perceptions towards their foreign language environment, affect their motivation, and hinder learning. Having a well-equipped classroom can help teachers to demonstrate some materials more effectively and collaboratively. Research has shown that the physical learning environment including class sizes, arrangement, number of students and the lack of the use of technologies can make the act of teaching more onerous (Evans and Nation, 2000). Hence, an EFL classroom must be considered to be a laboratory which needs to be equipped with all the facilities that both aid teachers' instruction and enhance students' learning and experimenting. The classroom is not a microcosm of society, but society itself, a significant site in the reconfiguration of larger social structures and processes (Canagarajah, 1999).

Data from Focus Group with CMs

Hereafter, the analysis of the data generated from the third focus group with four of the CMs is incorporated with example quotes to demonstrate how each category was implied in the responses.

Table 5.4 shows the final results of the focus group discussion with CMs. It provides descriptions of each main and emergent theme together with major findings.

Main Themes	Findings	Emergent Themes	Findings
1. Teachers' role	CMs believe in the importance of teachers' role	1. Flexibility	CMs show professional flexibility, adapting well to teachers' feedback and reflection which could help to make teachers reflective.
2. Modest respect for teacher authority and empowerment	Saudi EFL CMs show modest respect for teacher engagement and empowerment	2. Mutual trust between parents and teachers	Cultural aspects affect teachers from implementing some practices with students
3. The use of textbooks	Textbooks should only be used as a reference.		
4. Professional development opportunities	Although CMs acknowledge the importance of CPD, they see it as the responsibility of the teacher		

Table 5.4: Main and Emergent Themes of Focus Group with CMs

Main Findings from the Focus Group Data with CMs

1. CMs believe in the importance of teachers' role: CMs acknowledge the important role played by teachers as many of them agreed that teachers are the most influential people in the whole education system and the ones who are closer to students. They also believe that a teacher is a facilitator, a communicator and an advisor who has lots of responsibilities:

> ''I think we can't change the role of the teacher. The teacher has always been the most **influential** person in the whole educational process and will always be. As we say in Arabic, the teacher is a messenger.'' (CM 2)

> ''Teachers hold lots of **responsibility**, especially Saudi teachers coming to the EFL field, they have great responsibility because EFL is not integrated from the past only we come to know it in this new era. They have to **struggle** a lot. Teachers need to do their job in a good way because they can change students'

minds and they can change the policies of education, so I think they have to be very careful and they have to do their job in the best way.'' (CM 3)

''Teachers are advisors. In addition to what (name) has said 'facilitators'.'' (CM2)

''Sometimes a teacher is a communicator, too. She helps students communicate with the outside world because English language will help them to understand what is going on the world around them.'' (CM 2)

It can be noted from the above statements that CMs show much respect for the role of the teacher and they do not underestimate that. Although teachers are acknowledged to have an important role together with a heavy duty of responsibility, they are not fully empowered and engaged in shaping the curriculum or choosing the method of assessment as the next finding reveals.

2. Saudi EFL CMs show modest respect for teacher engagement and empowerment: Although CMs acknowledge the significant role of the teacher, they refuse to give total freedom to her to design her own curriculum or choose the method of assessment that suits her students, as they relate that to the fact that some teachers have lower language competencies than others or 'have limits' as they stated:

''Teachers have **limits** [...] You can find some excellent creative teachers, but on the other hand you can find not good enough teachers. But we are responsible for them and help to get the most out of them.'' (CM 1)

In addition, CMs justified their belief in the disempowerment of teachers because of the fact that working under one affiliation means following certain lines and rules that applied above all. They also commented that their own responsibility as quality assurance members require them to be more cautious about the trustworthiness of teachers. For instance, when I asked them if it would be possible for teachers to design their own curriculum following the general aims of the institution, some of them replied:

''We should draw lines for teachers in order to help them, so that they can help their students. They have to stick to the general **rules** and **boundaries** of

the institute, but they can add more things that could help their students but within the boundaries of the institute.'' (CM 2)

''Yes, I do agree as (name) said. But when it comes to institutional **values**, it is very important to draw lines for teachers because every teacher comes with her own progress, culture of experience, values and mindset, but the basics have to be the same.'' (CM 4)

''If she is a one to one teacher, it is her own world, but if she works in an organisation, then she has to follow and ask for advice when it comes to something [...]'' (CM 1)

Most CMs indicated that their role as part of the administration and quality assurance members requires them to set boundaries for teachers to ensure that everything goes according to a plan. These statements provided by CMs relate again to the dominant aspect of a top-down approach and how it affects teachers' practices and shapes their perceptions.

3. Textbooks should only be used as a reference: Another aspect generated was the use of the textbook and why it is the curriculum instead of being part of the curriculum. CMs indicated some understanding of the notion of the textbook and that it should be used as a reference only although the reality is different, i.e. the textbook is the curriculum that is being taught every day and there is no other overt curriculum to be taught. Some CMs have reported:

''Since we are here at the ELI dealing with foundation year students, so usually their level of English is not that good, so students need to have a reference, also the range of topics in the textbook are arranged and designed to develop gradually with the level of students and this is not something every teacher can do.'' (CM 3)

CM statements above contradict the policies applied by the institute where the textbook is mainly the whole curriculum, however, few CMs agreed with that reality:

''Let's say at least **70 %** of the classroom must be based on the textbook, teachers need to refer to their textbooks because if students couldn't get

> something from the teacher, at least they can go back to their textbooks if they need guidance. Speaking from a 22 years of experience as a teacher and as a former language learner long years ago (hhh), I feel safe when I have a textbook with me because I need a reference. And this reference should be the same that my classmates have and the same that the teacher refers to.'' (CM 1)

CMs acknowledge that up to 70% of students are textbook oriented and they are accustomed to having a textbook during language classes through all years of their education in most Saudi schools:

> ''But I think at least **60-70 %** of our students are book oriented because they come from a background where there are only textbooks inside language classes, but this depends on the teacher and how she goes about teaching her students.'' (CM 3)

In fact, the above statements reflect how students as well as teachers and their CMs are affected by the cultural context and the historical educational practices they have been raised on. Although well-structured textbooks provide teachers with organisational frameworks, showing them how structures, tasks, skills, topics and themes can be integrated, the dilemma facing teachers is the degree to which they should rely on the structure of a textbook to give their particular course coherence and innovation (Senior, 2006). Classroom language teaching is a dynamic process that involves far more than simply following the instructions outlined in the textbook (Ibid.).

4. Although CMs acknowledge the importance of CPD, they see it as the responsibility of the teacher: CMs acknowledge the importance of CPD. When they were asked if they believe teachers are born or made, most of them acknowledge the fact that teachers are made not born as they are always in need of further CPD programmes as the educational field is continuously developing.

> ''In this materialistic world they (teachers) are **made.**'' (CM 3)

> ''I don't believe that teachers are born because I can say that the person I am now is a 100% different from the one I used to be 22 years ago, when I started as a teacher. Life taught me a lot, life taught me a lot (repetition). I got inspired

> by [...], I got education. That's why we have lots of workshops and CPD programmes around the world because if teachers are born then there will be no need to teach them that much.'' (CM 1)

In addition, CMs admit their responsibility to provide their teachers with effective CPD programmes. Also, they assured their dedication to providing teachers with all the insightful programmes they could to further teacher professional development as well as personal development.

> ''I always attend international conferences and I swear that we are always trying to provide the teachers with everything new in the field of ELT, we make every effort to provide them with new tools and helping strategies.'' (CM 3)

However, although CMs acknowledge the importance of CPD programmes and their responsibility to provide their teachers with all the programmes needed, they also held teachers responsible for their own personal as well as professional development. Most CMs reported that seeking professional development as a teacher is something which should come from within. They were implying that in this competitive world, self-development is something crucial and lack of it detrimental in any profession, let alone teaching where teachers are responsible for shaping future generations with knowledge and values.

> ''It is also the role of the teacher to develop as a person and a professional because she is dealing with many minds in front of her.'' (CM 1)

It seems that CMs want to defend their stance and do not want to be the only people to be held responsible for the quality and development of their staff members. Although there is a grain of truth in the assumption that teachers are also responsible for their personal and professional development, especially when we think of teaching as a competitive job, the ultimate responsibility still lies with the leadership of the school to provide such CPD programmes as we think of the school as a beacon for education and training.

Findings According to the Emergent Themes from the Focus Group Data with CMs

1. CMs show professional flexibility, calling for open partnership with teachers which could help to make teachers reflective: During focus groups with CMs, most of them expressed that they are always available for teachers and they welcome feedback from teachers and encourage them to turn back to them if they experience any difficulty or have any new ideas or insights to be implemented.

> ''[...] I think Saudi teachers, especially those like you who have completed their higher studies abroad are more than welcome to suggest and come to us with new ideas because this is what we are hoping and wanting from them.'' (CM 1)

> ''We help them to implement what they want if we find that promising and beneficial. We always **encourage** teachers to turn to us if they have new ideas or something inspiring.'' (CM 1)

> ''It is all about the basics, then each teacher is the master in her class, she has her own way, **nobody questions** her.'' (CM 1)

> ''Yes, teachers have the **opportunity** to come to us and together we can make new changes for the needs and demands of students.'' (CM 3)

> ''That's why we hold **frequent** meetings with our teachers and focus group discussions with them to hear from them.'' (CM 4)

Although CMs call for open partnership with teachers, some of them expressed that not all the teachers make suggestions, are proactive, or willing to be interactive with the school:

> ''Let me say something as the head of the Research Committee, you won't believe that I just have contacted three new award winning teachers and asked them to participate in this coming ELI conference, one was (name) who has just been awarded her MA from Leeds University in the UK and two other teachers, I tried with them by all means, but I am really sorry (really sorry)[repetition] that they hesitated to participate, they made excuses and they were not willing to do anything.'' (CM 3)

Furthermore, when CMs were asked about what they do to inform new incoming teachers (who have been abroad) about the new policies, and why they do not, for instance, hold an induction day or programme for them to encourage them to reflect what they have acquired abroad, they expressed the following:

> ''They do not come all in one go, so we can't arrange something formal for them all. But [...] seriously this is something we need to consider for the coming teachers.'' (CM 1)

Moreover, two of the four CMs expressed that they are happy with the policy adopted and what the institute has accomplished so far and they believe in teamwork and that the development of the institute is the responsibility of everyone:

> ''I would like to say that we are here at the [name] university are trying our best to stay in the **lead** always because we are ranked the second best university in the Arab world after King Saud University, which is also a Saudi university and this is good, but here I would like to say that with everybody's effort [name of the university] will have a high rank within the world's universities too, and this is not too far, but this needs **teamwork** and **mutual understanding**. Teamwork, it's not one's person job or role […] A house cannot be built in one day; everything needs to happen slowly and gradually. And a time will come when everybody's effort will pay off.'' (CM 1)

> ''Everybody, teachers, quality assurance members, deans and every individual person at the [name] should play her role actively, positively and have a goal, without setting a goal, everybody will be lost.'' (CM 3)

These utterances provided by half of the CMs reveal that many of CMs understand their role and what is needed from them, however, comparing that to what teachers revealed shows that what is being said might not be what is implemented in reality. This satisfaction of what has been accomplished so far is not acceptable comparing to students' low achievement and the teachers' negative perceptions of ELT practices. Any effective leadership should always look forward to seeking more development if not perfection, not accepting modest standards. When I raised this point CMs answered me with promising statements, but within these statements I feel a sense of a monitoring tone

which might hinder teachers from expressing their desires freely and comprehensively. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a change requiring CMs to reduce their policing role and welcome and acknowledge teachers more.

2. Cultural aspects affect teachers from implementing some practices with students: This was another emergent theme generated from the focus group with CMs and which can be also linked to the effects of cultural aspects upon teachers' perceptions or attitudes towards teaching. When I asked CMs whether teachers can have total freedom to make their own choices about how they teach the English language and what obstacles they might face, some of them referred to cultural boundaries:

> ''Of course, there are some **restrictions** or **lines** a teacher can't cross over, such as taking them outside the university because of some cultural aspects. It's our culture, parents don't easily trust the teacher. Even if they trust teachers, they won't trust people at the mall or whatever. They don't trust people outside, so that's why…we try to do teaching mainly on campus.'' (CM 3)

Accordingly, it can be said that cultural aspects affect teachers from implementing some practices with students and this is related to the general beliefs of the society. Saudi Arabia is a very conservative society and when it comes to women, many Saudi people are very protective. Under Saudi laws, all females must have a male guardian (a father, brother, uncle or husband) or at least receive permission from him, for example, when they want to travel or leave the house. Although this guardianship requirement is not a written law, it is applied according to the customs and understanding of some officials and institutions (universities, police stations, banks, etc.) (Al-Rasheed, 2010; Alresheed, 2012). Even at the university level, students are not fully independent, which creates boundaries for teachers and hampers creating opportunities for furthering students' education beyond the university campus, such as taking students on field trips or visiting an English speaking country.

Comparison between the Two Groups (Teachers vs. CMs)

In the section above, I provided the findings of both teachers' and CMs' beliefs and perceptions. This section presents a comparison of the two groups, drawing attention to their perception of current EFL practices and aspirations.

	Teachers' perceptions	**CMs' Perceptions**
Beliefs about teacher's role	Teachers play an important role and they should be fully engaged and empowered.	Teachers play an important role but some of them have limits and they should not be fully empowered.
Beliefs about student requirements	Students' needs take the lead.	Students' needs are number one priority.
Beliefs about administrative requirements	Teachers call for a more open relationship with policy makers.	Teachers are always welcome to reflect and express their needs but everything should be within school boundaries.
Beliefs about CPD programmes	Teachers call for more effective CPD programmes.	Seeking self-development is everyone's responsibility.

Table 5.5: A comparison between Teachers and CMs Perceptions

The findings of focus groups have shown that both teachers and CMs are concerned with their students' affective and cognitive needs and acknowledge the importance of CPD programmes. They also indicated some understanding of the role of the teacher and how crucial it is in any educational institution. However, beneath the surface, it can be noted that although both teachers and CMs understand their students' needs, they are less concerned with each others' affective needs. They might be aware of each others' expectations and duties, nevertheless, they lack a channel of mutual understanding between them. This channel is essential in order to help both of them avoid mutual accusations. Teachers should not be the first to be blamed nor should the CM, both of them

should be equally involved in decision making and shaping the future of academia. However, it appears that teachers are left greatly disheartened as they are on the front lines to receive blame.

According to Freire's work (1993) cited in Reavey (2011) on critical consciousness raising and community-based action research to social transformation, power relations in education should be shifted from a sermon-type approach (as perceived by CMs) to a conversational approach involving the mutual exploration of topics. An approach to education that conceptualised teachers and learners as co-constructors of knowledge, a knowledge that can be regarded as the product of joint introspection and exploration fostered through dialogue could be desirable (Reavey, 2011). However, this tension between teachers' and CMs' reflections and thinking can be understood by referring to the three levels of engagement with reality that members of marginalised groups can be guided through, as outlined by Freire (1993, cited in Reavey, 2011):

- **The magical-conforming level:** Where people are restrained by feelings of inferiority and helplessness. They do not question or challenge their reality as they consider their situation as natural. Their passivity contributes to continued oppression, but their adaptation to adversity allows them to survive.
- **The naive-reforming level:** Where people focus on the corrupt nature of the status quo, but instead of challenging it, they engage in in-fighting and blaming peers for the situation in which they exist.
- **The critical-action level:** Which involves people reflecting on the ways that correspond to their values and assumptions, and correspondingly they became more aware of their own role in accepting or challenging the status quo. Collective action and civic engagement is more likely to occur at this level.

It is essential to help teachers and CMs to get to the third level, which is the critical-action level and grow the sort of mutual understanding that serves their shared goals and aspirations. In helping people move through this level of consciousness, Freire used techniques such as drawing exercises to link such emotional experiences to broader processes of oppression and to encourage reflection and dialogue. To unpack teachers' perceptions more and visualise their cognitive representations, the analysis of focus group activity (drawing task) is in the following section.

Analysis of Focus Group Drawing Activity

Drawing has long been used as a medium of communicating meaning and drawings from the Stone Age provide evidence in support of this argument. What distinguishes drawings in academia from similar uses in other fields, such as journalism or media, is the methodological rigour behind it and the aim of theorising from data (Jenkings, 2008). The aim of these drawings in the focus group activity is to be of use in bringing the perspectives and voice of teachers to the forefront. This raising voice technique is being referred to as 'photovoice' and has commonly been used in applied and politically engaged areas of psychology for delivering voices of those who are marginalised from the decision-making processes that shape their lives, as well as showing deprivation to those in power and lobbying for change, more inclusion and equity (Reavey, 2011).

However, even with a single method such as drawing, there are a number of issues we have to bear in mind, such as how that method is to be understood in practice, how it is described methodologically. For instance, although we do refer to the work of other researchers in research and during analysis, in essence we apply a radical reflexivity to it and suggest its applicability to others (Jenkings, 2008). This again raises some concerns around validity and applicability of data, which has been covered in chapter 4. Another methodological issue in analysing images is raised by Horn (1997) cited in Bland (2012) that not all visual images are instantaneously understandable*;* nevertheless, collaboration and proximity with participants as part of the creating and drawing process 'talk and draw' is useful to elicit ideas and I did this deliberately with teachers during the activity. I had the opportunity to talk to teachers and tell them what I understood from their images, and ask whether I was correct, and even asked some of them to clarify some words as their handwriting was not clear.

Jenkings (2008) refers to this process of image analysis by the term '*autodriven*', in which our observations are involved. According to Jenkings, we adopt largely an interactional approach, where we look back at the transcripts and analysis, and post analysis of our study in order to re-inspect our own techniques. In addition, Hartas (2010) indicates that the development of categories from visual methods were a result of two forms of interaction: a joint initial viewing of some of the images by researchers to assess their properties, and secondly building on one's own theoretical and disciplinary framework to try and understand these properties.

Coding the Drawing Task

The participant-constructed images were initially analysed following a content analysis grid, adopted from Hartas (2010) but then re-examined and modified to fit my ethnographic analysis (see Appendix XIV). This systematic, thematic technique is regarded as a process for working with documents or images which allows researchers to enumerate the occurrence of common words, phrases, images, etc. via the use of pre-specified categories which act as a sorting device (Hartas, 2010). Each drawing was coded by content to identify common features. The key factor in analysing a visual image is to consider the features given the most emphasis by the artist (Bland, 2012) and in my analysis I tried to capture the most prominent features provided by teachers and tested against the written information provided by each participant to assess the relevance of each property.

Based on the drawings, inferences and feedback provided by teachers, key findings were:

1. Teachers feel impacted by the many duties and rules: Many teachers pictured themselves overburdened and unhappy. For instance, a teacher drew herself carrying a heavy handbag full of labels that represent the multiple duties she has, these duties were represented in form of heavy bricks. Another teacher pictured herself with no full body, only her feet show and the rest of her body is buried under the instructions and tasks provided by her administration, and she seemed lost on a road with no clear end, not even a sign to show her where to go. Whereas, another teacher pictured herself with a big fuzzy hair, wide open eyes and her mind is about to explode as she is concerned with many issues represented in words (ELI regulations, students' needs, preparation, and teacher's personal needs). All the used signs (e.g. heavy bricks, loaded bags, fuzzy hair, and wide open eyes) deliver a sense of unease and hardship the teachers are facing, which affects their motivation and perceptions of ELT.

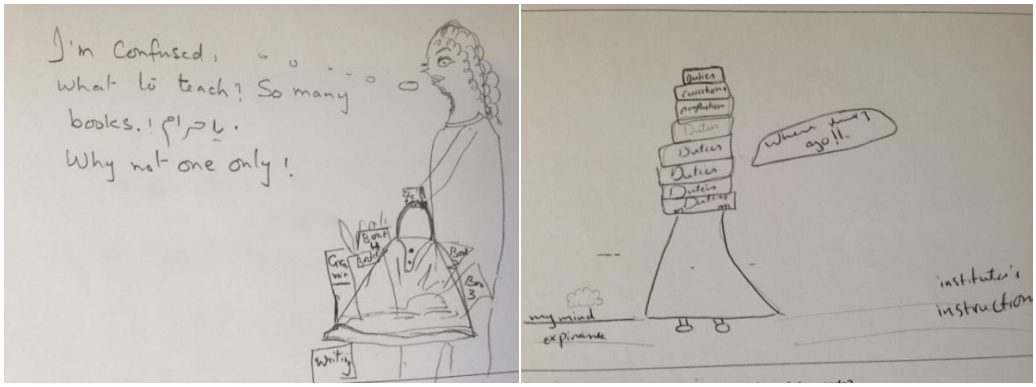


Figure 5.3: Teachers-Constructed Images (1)

2. Teachers experience a sense of being distracted and unfocused due to the continuous changes and multitude of duties: Many teachers expressed their feeling of being lost and confused due to continuous changes imposed by their administration and the heavy duties they feel on their shoulders. In many teachers' drawings you can notice the use of exclamation or question marks (see the images below). These marks indicate teachers' feelings of astonishment at their current workplace practices and their sense of uncertainty and confusion. In addition, the liberal use of these marks through most images can be viewed as a protest against their sense of disempowerment and disengagement.

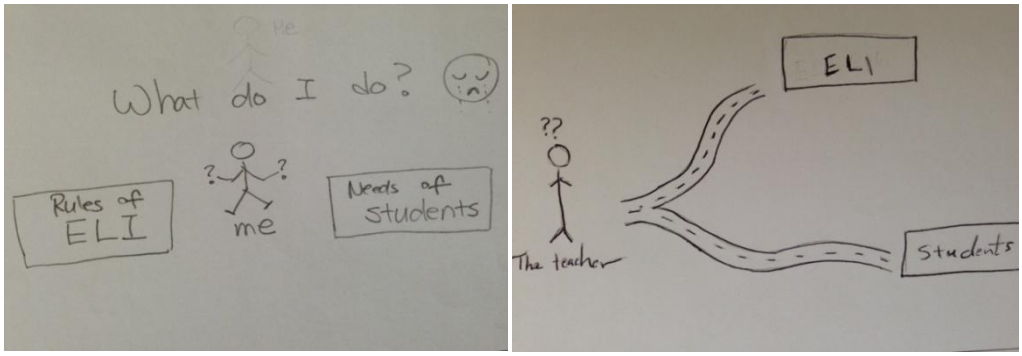


Figure 5.4: Teachers-Constructed Images (2)

3. Teachers' religious beliefs shape the way they perceive teaching: One of the drawings revealed the impact of religious belief upon teachers. A teacher portrayed her sense of religious obligation towards her students and her duty to educate them and shape them with good knowledge and she used the Islamic symbol of Ka'aba[27].

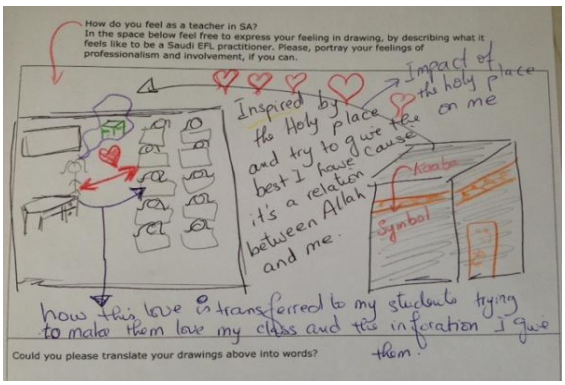


Figure 5.5: Teacher-Constructed Image (3)

Ka'aba is considered as the centre of Islamic worship and the use of this symbol by the teacher represents how deeply she feels towards her duty as a teacher and her responsibilities. The teacher also transcribed her feeling into words, stating next to the picture that she is inspired by the Holy place and she tries to give the best of her because it is a relationship between God and her. This can be

[27] Ka'aba is an ancient stone structure that was built by Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael as a house of monotheistic worship. It is located inside the Grand Mosque in Makkah, Saudi Arabia. It is considered as a focal unifying point among the Muslim world.

related to the fact that in Islam the status of the teacher is very high, even the Prophets of God, are referred to in Islam as Teachers because they taught people to know and worship God. In the same way, teachers carry a heavy duty as they deal with minds and souls, and in this regard this might be what drove the teacher to draw such an image.

4. Teachers are caught in the middle of students' needs and school requirements: Many images generated by the teachers represent their feelings of being stuck between students' needs and all administrative instructions and procedures. A teacher pictured herself as a sandwich caught in the middle between the institute and students. Another is lost between two crossroads and does not know where to go (see figure 5.4).

These images generated by teachers reveal how teachers feel towards their workplace policies. Most of these drawings show grumpy faces, overburdened people, no clear roads, exclamations and question marks. From these representations we can infer that teachers feel stressed and experience some difficulty which can affect their instructional practices.

To sum up, it can be understood from the description used and the repetitive adjectives and words produced by participant teachers in this study (equal opportunities, unmotivated, not autonomous, free/freedom, have no say/value, stressed out, burdened, ...) that most Saudi EFL teachers have negative perceptions of their own ELT practices and feel a strong desire to be involved in decision making processes and have more of an impact on curriculum development as well as self-development.

A further point that can be highlighted here is that most teachers' reactions were of either fright or fight, and the use of the collective pronoun (we/us) indicates their sense of collective identity and a general consensus of how they feel as Saudi EFL practitioners. However, this also might be a way to try to defend their self-identity and hide behind their sense of collective identity. Either way, I believe that social change is visible through the crowd, thus teachers' sentiment of collective selves and actions is essential to deliver their voice.

In addition, it can be noted that the results of all the instruments (semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations) are overlapped

and replicated, a summary of the findings that will be tackled in chapter 6, will be brought into focus below:

Composite Summary of Findings

1- Saudi EFL teachers acknowledge the importance of the English language and are aware of the requirements of being an EFL practitioner.

2- Bureaucracy and a top down approach from administration within the university affects teachers' perceptions of themselves and of ELT.

3. Teacher empowerment is a challenging issue for teachers from a cultural perspective.

4. Formal qualifications and previous learning experiences have a direct effect on the quality of education provided by teachers.

5. Teaching English as a foreign language at the HE level can be seen as constructed from teachers' cultural background and does not encourage students' autonomy and creative thinking.

6. Teachers tend to teach the way they were taught rather than the way they were taught to teach.

7. The excessive use of textbooks while instructing makes the textbook an end not a means.

8. Teacher education and development programmes established by the department are fewer than expected.

9. Lack of time and heavy workload negatively affect teachers' perceptions and practices.

10. Physical environment was considered a real burden, hindering teachers from having an interactive classroom conducive to a learning atmosphere.

11. Teachers' self-perceptions and motivation decreases as soon as they start teaching.

12. The marketing of education might be a reason for the deterioration of the power of teachers.

13. Teachers lack programmes that could encourage them to reflect their own views.

14. Teacher collaboration and school as a learning community is perceived to be more effective for teachers.

5.5 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has made use of qualitative data from individual semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, focus group discussions, and teachers generated drawings to explore issues arriving from the research questions presented in Chapter 4. Thematic analysis was applied as a tool to lead to the discovery of teachers' constructed reality of ELT and workplace practices. The data suggest that the majority of teachers had negative perceptions and attitudes towards current ELT practices, but their enthusiasm was calling for the inclusion of more teachers' authority, and the urgent need for more effective CPD programmes. Furthermore, in this chapter the analysis was based on teachers' perspectives and their own thinking, but the findings generated will be further discussed and cross-referenced with the literature in the next chapter to form the platform for the argument of this study.

Chapter 6

Discussion of Findings
What Are Teachers' Perceptions of EFL Practices?

''Teaching should be such that what is offered is perceived as a valuable gift and not as hard duty. Never regard study as duty but as the enviable opportunity to learn to know the liberating influence of beauty in the realm of the spirit for your own personal joy and to the profit of the community to which your later work belongs''

(Albert Einstein)

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings generated by the study. This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the literature review and in terms of reoccurring themes which appeared across all the types of instrument used in this qualitative study.

As I reported earlier in chapter 4, this is an interpretive, naturalistic study, which was guided by a constructivist paradigm that emphasises the multiple social constructions of meaning of social reality. I draw attention to the discussion of the findings which is based on my interpretations of what I understand through the data collection and analysis. The data were representative of female Saudi EFL teachers under study and may not be representative of teachers in other cultures due to the small sample of participants and the peculiarity of Saudi female teachers and their social context.

6.2 Teachers' Experiences in English Language Teaching

Finding 1: Saudi EFL teachers acknowledge the importance of the English language and are aware of the requirements of being an EFL practitioner.

It could be argued that the perception of the English language differs from one individual to another.

> ''*English represents different things to different people. For some it represents the language of English literature. For others it is the language of the English-speaking world. Some associate it with the language of colonialism […] Peoples' views of English, or of any language, are influenced by contacts they have had with the language and its speakers.''* (Richards and Lockhart, 1994: 32).

However, in Saudi Arabia English continues to be an important language to be learned and has high status as it is regarded as the tool needed for engaging with the globe and pursuing further development. Most teachers in this study acknowledge this fact and are aware of their role in shaping students' perceptions towards learning the language.

Indeed, teachers play an important role in shaping students' personality and learning practices. During interviews and focus groups with Saudi EFL teachers, they show a great deal of self-awareness of their role as EFL teachers and how to deal with second language learners and get them motivated. A role that is crucial in preparing students for a future life with extensive knowledge and good values, especially in this new era where Saudi Arabia is witnessing a crisis of values. Research indicates that teachers' self awareness affects their pedagogical practices, for example, Andrews (2007) in his book *'Teacher Language Awareness'* examined the use of teacher language awareness (proficiency of language and L2 teachers' cognition) in teaching and its significance for the way language teachers deal with language-related issues during lesson preparation as well as classroom teaching. This book was based on more than 30 years of research on the language awareness of English language teachers from different secondary schools in Hong Kong. In this study, Andrews stresses that teachers' cognition, awareness and feeling about the subject matter and their teaching influences various interactions with learner difficulties, learning content and materials. Moreover, Wright and Bolitho (1993) report that teachers who are aware of their role as language instructors would be more likely to engage in

various tasks, such as developing teaching materials and contributing to the English language curriculum. Thus, we can assert that teachers' awareness of their role as EFL instructors influences their interaction and pedagogical practice.

Furthermore, teachers' responses and narratives revealed that teachers in this study desired to teach English independently, beyond ideological constraints and the controlled walls of their own educational institution. In a similar study investigating Saudi EFL teachers in Saudi universities and how they construct their identity, it has been reported that university teachers are constrained by the direct visible hierarchical power of institutional structures (Elyas, 2011 cited in Elyas, 2013). The study also critiqued the Saudi educational system for the loss of teacher identity, engagement and autonomy, excluding the encouragement of critical thinking and creativity. Elyas (2013) goes on to assert that due to the lack of empowerment and autonomy, Saudi teachers and students assume responsibility for the constraints of power. However, it can be said that most of this new generation of Saudi EFL teachers under study think according to Western definitions of 'criticality' and 'creativity', yet they do not enforce them. The development of a creative, neoliberal future generation would not be possible without non-liberal teachers, and the policy to be enforced through internalised, non-corporeal power (Elyas, 2013). This justification leads us to the second finding.

Finding 2: Bureaucracy and a top down approach from administration within the university affects teachers' perceptions of themselves and of ELT.

Overall, teachers under study believe that a teaching career should be intellectually stimulating, broadening and maturing to the personality, and generally conducive to bringing out the best in them. However, their experienced reality is the opposite. Data have shown that most teachers consider current teaching to be a repressive, regimented job, intellectually deadening and narrowing to the personality.

In fact, the problem teachers face can be attributed to the top down approach of faculty control, which is a finding supported by Alamri (2011) who investigated the strength and weaknesses of the HE system in Saudi universities. This problem exacerbates as managerial expectation puts pressure on teachers to perform without providing the necessary professional support or even

consultation. Most teachers felt that they lack a balance between personal needs and institutional needs. During interviews and focus groups, most of them reported that there are too many 'directives', but not in the interest of teachers or students. Moreover, many of them have expressed their dissatisfied feelings from constant change and the new procedures imposed by their institution. According to Hargreaves (1994), constant change and uncertainty in teaching affect teachers' perceptions and can contribute to the guilt that they feel. In addition, Fullan (1997) concluded after surveying the results of various educational change and reforms, that mostly teachers' experience was profoundly negative and they experience a sense of helplessness, either because they are taking a defensive position from external attack or because they have been reformers who have burned themselves out. And in this regard, it can be said that Saudi EFL teachers in this study might be taking this defensive position because they were not allowed to be involved in making changes so they might prefer not to be blamed for something they had no control over.

Furthermore, as we have referred to in the literature review earlier (chapter 2) under the top-down approach section, research has indicated that the top-down approach within the school system and the whole-school management style has a direct impact on teacher's perceptions and practices (Humphreys, 1993). In addition, research has shown that social organisation of schools (hierarchical/macro-level) has a significant impact on both teachers and students. For instance, a study by Lee et al., (1991) about the effect of social organisation of schools on teachers' efficacy and satisfaction, which included 8,488 full time teachers, found that there is an empirical link between the hierarchical linear order or the top down approach taken by the school which influences how teachers view their work and how they teach, and this, in turn, affects student learning. In order to understand some of the complexities of the link between micro- and macro- level perspectives with effectiveness, the implications of research on teaching and teacher emotions in a post-structuralist perspective is described. Post-structuralist thinking attempts to understand emotions as both individual and socio-cultural experiences, emphasising the role of culture, body, power, subjectivity and ideology in creating educational discourses that privilege some practices while preventing others (Day and Lee, 2011). According to post-structuralism, power relationships determine what must, can, or cannot be said about self and emotion, and what only some individuals can say about them (Ibid.). Although this tenet might be true to a

large extent, I hope that this research and excerpts capture the emotions of teachers and expressed what they feel, as I concur with Freire (2004) that the role of emotions is as transformative forces in the fight for social justice. Emotions in the workplace, then, are not only a private matter but also a political space in which students and teachers, as well as administrative members interact with the implications of larger political and cultural struggles (Ibid.).

It could be argued here that teachers are contributing to the development of educational systems, yet not gaining status or proper acknowledgement of their efforts. The quality of educational outcomes cannot improve, unless respect for the teachers' role is fostered. However, the next finding reveals the opposite.

Finding 3: Teacher empowerment is a challenging issue for teachers from a cultural perspective.

It can be noted through interview and focus group discussions with teachers and CMs that teachers' whole involvement is under-utilised in Saudi educational institutions and this could affect their perceptions and productivity. For example, during the focus group discussion with CMs, they acknowledged the fact that teachers indeed are not being empowered, as some of them reported that not all teachers are experienced enough and some of them have limits. Most CMs linked the lack of teacher empowerment to their duties as admin members who are responsible for quality assurance in the institute so that teachers cannot be left alone to decide for themselves.

However, research has supported the idea of teacher empowerment and full involvement in their school policy making. This is in line with the literature reviews of Bolin (1989) and Simpson (1990) that teachers should have the right to participate in the determination of school goals and policies and to exercise professional judgment about what and how to teach. Moreover, a number of research studies have demonstrated that when there is an increase in empowerment and professionalism, job satisfaction increases, and on-the-job stress decreases (Bolin, 1989; McLaren, 1989; Robinson, 1994; Simpson, 1990; Britzman, 2003). Therefore, greater job satisfaction is associated with a high degree of professionalism and empowerment, which could lead to having happier teachers and accordingly more productive teachers. This is in line with the

literature that empowered teachers show higher levels of organisational commitment and productivity (Dee et al., 2003).

However, although empowerment is a generic issue in this study and the full involvement of teachers was advocated, it turned out that empowerment is an essential but not sufficient condition to reaching real changes and successful educational outcomes as this is dependent upon teachers' expertise and accumulated academic degree as the next finding reveals.

Finding 4: Formal qualifications and previous learning experiences have a direct effect on the quality of education provided by teachers.

It has been found through this research that some teachers do not have formal qualifications in English language teaching. Some of the teachers have postgraduate degrees in Linguistics or English literature and they are not aware of modern teaching methods for ESP or EAP programmes.

A recent research study conducted by some researchers in HE in Pakistan revealed that the majority of teachers in public sector institutions of HE do not have formal qualifications and/or training in English language teaching and this has a direct effect on the quality of education and the language skills attained by university students (Hussain et al., 2009). This could be one of the reasons that contributes to explaining the perception that teaching styles of English language are deteriorating in higher educational institutions in developing countries, which in turn entails further investigations.

Moreover, literature has shown that formal qualifications affect teachers' perceptions towards their practices, for example, a study by Byrnes et al., (1996), surveyed 169 teachers in three states and found that teachers who had completed a graduate degree, participated in carefully planned and organised, formal training, and had supportive educational mandates have the most positive attitudes towards ELT and ELLs. In a similar study, Youngs and Youngs (2001) surveyed the attitudes of 143 teachers towards their ELLs. Their findings demonstrated that positive attitudes are more likely to be found amongst teachers who have taken foreign language or multicultural education courses, received some training in ELL education, lived or taught outside their home country, and worked with a more diverse ELL population.

Nevertheless, one of the major objectives of The Quality Assurance Programme project, which was initiated by the MoHE in Saudi Arabia in 2010, was to focus on the quality of teaching in the graduate and postgraduate programmes of the universities (MoHE, 2012). However, this entails a massive training programme for university teachers with a comprehensive approach towards curriculum and testing. It is believed that people who took specialised degree courses tend to have a very strong interest in their main subject and it is only natural that they are concerned to choose a career which would enable them to make good use of their degree knowledge (Williams et al., 1966). Although this declaration by Williams et al., may have some value, there are many people, who are practicing in jobs that are separate from their own area of specialisation. The same applies to teaching, in the sense that there are some practitioner teachers who turn to teaching as a profession with no previous qualification in the field of teaching. It is necessary for these teachers to be attracted to teaching to be convinced that they would be using their subject in an interesting and valuable way (Williams et al., 1966). Teaching must be seen as a congenial work for the teacher.

Culture has always been a dominant variable in educational research and the next finding supports this.

Finding 5: Teaching English as a foreign language at the HE level can be seen as constructed from teachers' cultural background and does not encourage students' autonomy and creative thinking.

This goes with the argument reported by Wilson (1999), that what a person learns and how they make sense of that knowledge is dependent on where and when they are, i.e. the social context. People do not act in isolation, but as active members of society (Ibid.). It is essential to refer in this regard to the influence of culture. According to Lawton (1996):

> ''Culture is one of the most complex concepts in our language, but it is central to the task of curriculum planning. A major difference between animal behaviour and human behaviour is that human beings rely less on instinct than on what they learn from their culture. A bird does not need to learn how to build a nest, but humans have to learn how to use tools, how to employ

> language, how to know what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, and many other aspects of culture.'' (Lawton, 1996: 25)

In this regard, one could say that culture shapes our behaviours and informs our mindsets. It can be noted that some of the teachers reported their disagreement to teaching some foreign cultural language aspects that do not comply with the general cultural framework of Saudi society although they have experienced being in a western society and are well informed of some of its cultural aspects. But it can be noted that the influence of the mother culture is dominant. The disadvantage is that humans are dependent on others to form their beliefs and customs, but the advantage is that human behaviour is flexible and adaptive (Lawton, 1996). So, through continuous personal development, we can change people's behaviour and mindset.

Furthermore, another factor that shows how teachers are affected by the top-down culture in their schools is what teachers have reported during interviews. It has been noticed that most teachers resisted the notion of teacher-centred classes during interviews, however, classroom observations revealed the opposite. The study found that most Saudi teachers put greater emphasis on ensuring that learning is well structured, -following the top-down approach inside their classes- than on student-oriented activities which could help to make students more interactive and autonomous. It might be true that in most western countries, teachers are inclined to regard students more as active participants in the process of learning and teachers less as transmitters of information, but this is less true in Saudi Arabia where teachers fall between the two views. This reminds me of the Arabic saying: *''The deprived have nothing to offer''*[28] which can be interpreted as those who cannot experience a thing cannot offer it.

Another finding that shows how culture and former learning experience can impact the perceptions and practices of teachers is as follows:

Finding 6: Teachers tend to teach the way they were taught rather than the way they were taught to teach.

One of the findings revealed is that Saudi EFL teachers themselves displayed an influence from their original culture, such as former beliefs about teaching and

[28] An Arabic saying, its English counterpart is ''You cannot get blood out of stones''.

language learning. Jones (1984), asserts in his research around teaching practices that there is a tendency amongst teachers to teach according to the way they were taught rather than the way they were taught to teach. Teachers' beliefs are rooted in their personal and collective experiences (Barnard and Burns, 2012). Their teaching practices are regulated by normative ways of teaching and learning which were historically embedded in their local context and into which they were socialised (Canagarajah, 2005 cited in Barnard and Burns, 2012). In the end, their perceptions are the result of their general beliefs and their own workplace culture.

The interviews and the classrooms observations reveal that the teaching methods applied in most Saudi EFL classes are: the ALM (Audio-Lingual Method) and the GTM (Grammar-Translation Method). A study by Al-Seghayer (2005), notes that the teaching methods in most Saudi schools adhere to the 'teacher-centred approach', and the ALM and GTM are the most popular ones. It has also been found that there is a greater emphasis on a deductive way of teaching rather than inductive. The use of normative language teaching methods was salient in most observed classes. Overall, there are two dominant approaches in most Saudi classrooms:

1) A skill-based approach, which focuses on the discrete language skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing;

2) A rule-based approach, which emphasises the importance of grammatical rules and conscious understanding of the language system.

Nevertheless, there is an absence of a function-based approach, which focuses on interactive and cooperative learning with enhancing students' ability to function in real social situations. This approach is associated with the development of creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Richards and Lockhart, 1994). This kind of pedagogy acknowledges the students as a 'knowledge maker' not 'knowledge sucker' (Kennedy and Lee, 2010).

A recent research conducted by Alresheed (2012) is in support of this finding. Alresheed's research explores the beliefs and attitudes of male Saudi English teachers towards EFL and its effect on their pedagogies, and ends in showing that in most Saudi EFL classrooms there is a focus on the use of normative language teaching methods. Learners have little communicative practice in English within and without the classroom. This study also asserts that these methods promote

rote learning, dispirit learners' motivation to learn and focus only on passing exams. And this latter point, studying mainly for the purpose of an exam, has been frequently raised by teachers and can be regarded as the main obstacle towards having interactive classrooms that encouraging students' creative thinking and autonomy.

When I asked most of the teachers to describe the teaching methods they apply, some of them reported that their learning experience was affected the most by their past experience as language learners and what best worked for them at that time, and this has nothing to do with any degrees they obtained. It seems that their foreign-based training as EFL teachers and the fact that it contained virtually no explanation of the practices they were trained in might be linked to human cultural thinking and adaptations. This finding shows that humans thinking and learning is distinct:

> ''Human beings have some distinguishing characteristics that give a unique quality to a study of them. First, they talk and are *time-binding* individuals; *time-binding* means that both a past and a future enter into their present perception of things. […] Also, they are cultural beings, building on their past in a peculiarly selective fashion.'' (Bigge and Shermis, 1992: 1)

It can be noted based on the statement above that we as human beings tend to impute from our past experiences, especially those that were instilled in our heads as young learners. Past experience is always an integrated outlook in regard to the nature of the process whereby people relate to their environments in a way that could help them enhance their ability to use both themselves and their environments (Bigge and Shermis, 1992). And most Saudi teachers had learned to be teachers in the same context in which they were young language learners. Research conducted by OECD in 2009 shows that at least half of the teachers in most countries spend over 80% of their instruction time on teaching and learning. They found that one in four teachers in most countries wasted at least 30% of their lesson time, and some lose more than half through administrative tasks or disruptions (OECD, 2009). This was associated with the school disciplinary climate, or school culture. This is consistent with what has been observed during Saudi EFL classes. Teachers spent more than 80% of time on instruction, taking attendance and explaining tasks, without paying much attention to transferable skills or encouraging creative thinking. This may be justifiable by the fact that teachers are affected by their previous perceptions as

language learners and by their culture. This finding concurs with the literature and proposes the notion that there is a separation between theory generated exclusively in universities and development centres, and that only practice exists in schools (Zeichner and Liston, 1996).

In addition, a study conducted by Ali and Ammar (2005), to investigate the relationships between pre-service Saudi EFL teachers' epistemological beliefs and their learning strategies, teaching practices and foreign language classroom anxiety, supports this finding. This study included 114 EFL pre-service teachers in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The subjects responded to four tools: an EFL Epistemological Beliefs Questionnaire (EFLEBQ), an EFL Learning Strategies Questionnaire (EFLLSQ), an EFL Teaching Practices Questionnaire (EFLTPQ) and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The findings show that Saudi EFL pre-service teachers generally hold naive epistemological beliefs and that they tend to rely more on lower order cognitive strategies, such as memorisation and repetition, than higher order skills, such as elaboration and critical thinking. Findings also found that these pre-service teachers tend to adopt traditional teacher-centred practices rather than constructive learner-centred ones, as well as exhibiting high levels of anxiety in both learning and teaching in EFL classrooms. In fact, this was also noticed in most of the classes observed in this study, which leads us to understand that teachers are affected by their previous past experiences as language learners. It seems that learning habits can affect teaching habits as well.

Hence, it is important for teachers to change their perceptions and beliefs in the first instance and accordingly their practices, and conditions for successful innovative experiences should be created for them (Barnard and Burns, 2012).

Another finding that also can be linked to the effect of learning habits upon teaching habits is the excessive use of textbooks, the utility of which in the Saudi educational context has remained the same for decades.

Finding 7: The excessive use of textbooks while instructing makes the textbook an end not a means.

Although textbooks should be viewed as a helpful tool, they are used extensively. Most of the teachers believed that textbooks should be a helpful guide, however,

the majority of them admitted their excessive use of textbooks. This complies with what Al-Seghayer (2005) reports during his investigation of the use of the textbook in Saudi higher institutions. He found that the textbook is the curriculum; it provides the core content for teaching as well as the teaching methods, and this is exactly what has been perceived during classroom observations and interviews with teachers. It can be said that the notion of the textbook has not changed much since 2005, perhaps even earlier to that.

I am not against the use of textbook as it is regarded as a helpful tool for the learner, but what I do not support is the slavish representation of the textbook as the only medium for instruction. The excessive use of textbooks and sticking to their contents might weaken the implementations of creative thinking skills. A study conducted by Al-Qahtani (1995), examined how effective thinking skills are being taught in the social studies component in Saudi Arabian secondary schools. Two major data collection methods were employed: Classroom observations and interviews with teachers to determine their perceptions of what thinking skills are; and what aids or impedes their teaching of thinking skills. The major conclusion was that social studies teachers were aware of the importance of teaching thinking skills, nevertheless, they were basically unaware of what teaching involves. And the second major finding demonstrated that there are administrative, curricular, textual and extra-textual impediments hindering the teaching of thinking skills. Indeed, all the major impediments Al-Qahtani has stated are still the major obstacles hindering a teacher in thinking beyond boundaries, being creative and helping her students to be creative, too.

However, most teachers, when asked about the notion of the textbook and whether it can be updated in today's technological society, positively reported their agreement to get rid of the hard copies of textbooks as they are heavy and expensive for students and welcome the notion of applying new technologies inside classrooms as it is more interactive and appealing for this technology generation.

This distinction in thought amongst teachers reflects the distinction between the official and the actual curriculum, between the intention 'theory' and reality 'practice' teacher experience.

> ''There is frequently a gulf between theorists and practitioners in any sphere of work. This probably results from suspicion on the part of the practitioners that

> theorists are out of touch with the everyday reality of a situation and an assumption on the part of the theorists that the practitioners are incapable of seeing general trends and patterns while immersed in the detail of specific events.'' (Burgess, 1985: 251)

This gap between theory and practice and the significant problem of communication between them has resulted in teachers often ignoring relevant research or regarding the finding with cynicism (Ibid.). Teachers are concerned with the practical aspects of education and their standpoints can be affected when they have to operate in isolation to what they believe.

As learning habits can affect teaching habits, this leads us to emphasise the importance of sufficient and effective CPD programmes and in-service training, as the next finding reveals, in order to help teachers to amend their perceptions and develop their professionalism.

Finding 8: Teacher education and development programmes established by the department are fewer than expected.

Teacher research cannot be disconnected from issues of professional development of the teacher, or of at least some of the teacher's school colleagues (Clarke and Erickson, 2003). This link between teacher research and professional development implies valuable products. These products involve new understandings, ideas, insights and advice not only for teachers, but also for their school level administration, system level officials, as well as university-based educators (Ibid.). Accordingly, there are different stakeholders in teacher research, each of them might face different costs, but share one goal which is achieving success and quality.

In the 1990s, there was much debate about the interpretation of teacher development paradigms or approaches (Kennedy and Lee, 2010). For some scholars, the term teacher development means:

> ''CPD is any process or activity that provides added value to the capability of the professional through the increase in knowledge, skills and personal qualities necessary for the appropriate execution of professional and technical duties, often termed competence.'' (Rodrigues, 2004: 11)

For others, teacher development relates to four types of growth: growth in knowledge, growth in skill, growth in judgement and growth in a teacher's contributions to a professional community (Glatthorn, 1995; Little, 1992 cited in Kennedy and Lee, 2010). It can be noted that the first three types of growth are related to teacher's professional growth, whilst the fourth type refers to teacher's cooperative efforts to generate new knowledge (Kennedy and Lee, 2010). In order to address such an issue, I concur with Kennedy and Lee that:

> ''To address teacher development, we need to adopt a holistic view of understanding, incorporating not only the knowledge and skills of teachers but also what the nature of a teacher is, how a teacher thinks, feels and makes pedagogical decisions as well as the contexts which may affect a teacher's work and life.'' (Kennedy and Lee, 2010: 141)

The context in which teacher finds herself is crucial and detrimental to her role. According to Kennedy and Lee (2010), teacher development in Asian societies is a challenging issue because, from a cultural perspective, a teacher is often regarded as a respected, wise person a 'guru'. Nevertheless, there exists a tension in development as there is an increasing call for an improvement in school and teacher quality and if teachers cannot meet these demands, society may bestow less prestige on the teaching profession. Thus, teachers may feel that they are required to develop themselves in order to restore their prestige of 'guru'.

In fact, many countries including Saudi Arabia acknowledge the fact of the importance of CPD programmes for their staff members as a way to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness as academic members. For instance, in 2012, the Saudi Arabian dedicated budget for professional development programmes for academic staff was 9,000,000,000 SR. However, this study has revealed that Saudi EFL teachers begin their career in a professionally isolated environment with little assistance. Not much attention is given to the mentoring of the new entrant teachers. No induction programme was designed for them on their first day. Although some teachers acknowledged the provision of some support programmes, such as workshops, many of them complained that this did not go far enough. In fact, this raises many issues around the reckless manner in squandering this amount of money. Why is the country paying much but the outcomes are not encouraging? Why they acknowledge the importance of CPD programmes but the reality is discouraging? Although this appears to be a

managerial issue in planning and tailoring such programmes, I will leave those questions open for further research.

Furthermore, it should be also pointed out here that one of the reasons that teachers provided as an obstacle hindering them from pursuing more CPD programmes and attending international gatherings for developing teacher education is the lack of time and heavy workload.

Finding 9: Lack of time and heavy workload negatively affect teachers' perceptions and practices.

Many Saudi EFL teachers are experiencing increasing stress because of their heavy workload. And the obligation to respond to the demands by administration changing rules and curricula is worsening the problem. In research conducted by Kennedy and Lee (2010), in a number of schools in Asia including (Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vanuatu and Vietnam) the same conclusion was made. Kennedy and Lee see the problem of heavy workload as a pervasive problem in most Asian schools and this is worsening disciplinary problems.

Furthermore, research has indicated that heavy workload and burnout perceived by teachers is one factor that is responsible for occupational stress, lowered work productivity, stress-related health problems, job-satisfaction and consideration for job change (Blix et al., 1994; Gillespie et al., 2001). According to this study conducted by Blix et al. (1994), which investigated the contributing factors in developing occupational stress among university teachers, heavy workload was the most frequently cited reason for considering job change and female teachers were more likely to consider job change as a result of job stress more than their male counterparts. Job-stress can affect teachers' emotions. A major finding of some research on teacher emotions has shown that teachers' emotions are inextricably linked to teachers' well being, identity and emotional management in teaching (Schutz and Zembylas, 2009 cited in Day and Lee, 2011). Emotions are a significant dimension in teachers' lives, especially in times of large-scale educational change and reforms (Ibid.). It was obvious through the expressive gestures teacher use during interviews that their emotions are further intensified, they declared this explicitly. They attribute their failure to attend workshops and

conferences to their heavy workload, which allows them no time to register for any self-development programmes.

> ''Time is the enemy of freedom. Or so it seems to teachers. Time presses down the fulfilment of their wishes. It pushes against the realisation of their wants. Time compounds the problem of innovation and confounds the implementation of change. It is central to the formation of teachers' work.'' (Hargreaves, 1994: 95)

Teachers' perceptions of time are crucial. Teachers take time seriously, experience it as a major constraint on what they are expected to achieve in their classrooms as they are caught up in a spiral of intensification and bureaucratically driven initiatives in the development and change process (Hargreaves, 1994). Moreover, time is a fundamental dimension through which teachers' work is constructed and interpreted by themselves and by their administrators as they devise and develop new programmes (Ibid.). However, Hargreaves adds that time-related misunderstandings do exist between administrators and teachers and this dilemma is endemic to the distance there is between their two worlds, a distance which needs to be eradicated. According to Hargreaves (1994), the solution to this impasse is to explore the divisions between administration and teaching, between development and implementation, and the ultimate postmodern solution is to give more responsibility and flexibility to teachers in the management and allocation of their time. By doing so, time may no longer be the enemy of teachers, but their supportive companion. Accordingly, there is an urgent need to respond to teachers' demands for changing curricula and time allocated for instructions.

A different finding that can be also linked to the manageability of workload is the low standards of the infrastructure and the physical environment of the classroom.

Finding 10: Physical environment was considered a real burden, hindering teachers from having an interactive classroom conducive to a learning atmosphere.

Most teachers have reported their unease about fixed chairs, broken data shows, and unmanaged ac conditions. These physical obstacles impact on teacher

experience while their instructions can add to the pressure on teachers and affect their instruction (Evans and Nation, 2000).

It is evident that physical environment of the classroom will have direct effects upon language learning. The literature is in support of this argument, for example, Candlin and Mercer (2001), contend that the classroom can, in theory, be regarded as an experimental laboratory, especially in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) through the investigation of the natural order of acquisition of certain grammatical morphemes up to the identification of learning strategies and so on. Candlin and Mercer go also to suggest that most views of language education are based on the assumption that social interaction plays a central role in learning processes and productivity. This interaction in a language-learning setting will not be achievable in a regimented classroom with fixed chairs that lack the application of efficient technology advancements (Ibid.). Accordingly, it is important for the natural setting of instruction (classrooms) to be equipped with all the facilities and advancements that enforce academic gaining and aid learning.

It can be noted that all the above factors could eventually affect negatively teachers' perceptions and motivation towards their ELT practices and self-efficacy and agency, which the next finding reveals.

Finding 11: Teachers' self-perceptions and motivation decreases as soon as they start teaching.

Through the application of all instruments in this study, there appeared to be a general consensus that teaching in EFL classrooms has become more burdensome and time demanding due to excessive paper work and non-instructional activities, having to adapt the curriculum to state standards, and the pressure teachers feel to prepare their students for department-wide summative assessment.

Research in cognitive-behavioural psychology shows that emotions are closely associated with feelings, are connected to the central nervous system and produce involuntary expressive reactions (Fox, 1993). Apparently, teachers' perceptions are cognitive and affective, i.e. they are related to thoughts as well as to feelings (Brown, 2000). Byrnes and Kiger (1994), report that teachers'

perceptions can facilitate or serve as a barrier to learning English. They also highlight the importance of teacher's perceptions and attitudes in order to better work towards constructive change. Teachers are processors of information and decision-makers in their own lives, their interpretations of the situation lead to specific emotional reactions, so their feeling of sadness or anger is associated with their belief that something of value has been lost or that they are being humiliated or treated unfairly (Fox, 1993).

Furthermore, according to observational theory, Bandura (1971) demonstrated that behaviours are acquired by watching others (the model: teacher, parent, friend or mentor) display behaviour. In the educational field, we can see that the model here (the teacher) demonstrates a behaviour and the learner tries to observe and imitate it. Thus, the teacher is a role model whose behaviour can be easily copied by students. And her behaviour is shaped and affected by her perception which, in turn, plays a significant role in shaping students' perceptions towards learning. Thus, it is essential to help teachers enjoy what they are doing in order to boost their self-perceptions of professionalism and worthiness and be able to convey that to their students.

Another key finding that might affect teachers' perceptions and motivation as well as belittle their self-image and power is:

Finding 12: The marketing of education might be a reason for the deterioration of the power of teachers.

Although public HE is free for Saudi students, it excludes low achiever students and distant learners from the right to free education. Some teachers believe that the notion of enforcing some students to pay fees made them feel if they are paying for high quality goods, and this made teaching career more demanding.

It seems that as more students are required nowadays to pay fees, this might give some of them the notion that they should receive something good in return, as if they are metaphorically 'shoppers at a supermarket', choosing what they want, and are welcomed and respected at all times, no matter what. Now, the notion 'the customer is always right' applies to teaching; students are always right but teachers are the first to be blamed. I used this metaphor as a way to picture the notion I got from teachers descriptions while interviewing them about

their current role as teachers. According to Côté and Levine (2002) higher educational settings have changed in late modernity in terms of a pervasive move towards a business model, or the 'student-as-consumer' model of education. They also indicate through their empirical investigations that approaching education as something to be served and consumed not only affects the teacher, but also hinder students to develop their agentic personality attributes (ego strength, purpose-in-life, internal locus of control, self-actualisation, and ideological commitment) and encourage various forms of passivity as students expect to be served.

However, I concur with Hargreaves that *"Schools are not businesses. Children are not products. Educators are not usually out to make a profit. Schools and corporations, however, are not absolutely unalike"* (Hargreaves, 1994: 22). Although, there are some common characteristics between corporations and large schools, in terms of huge numbers of staff, delineated hierarchies of command, demarcation of roles and tasks and challenges to achieve consistency and coordination (Ibid.), this corporate analogy should not include making profits as this clashes with the ultimate goal of education.

Moreover, it is essential here to refer to the notion of marketing of education, as advocated by Freire (1970) cited in Robinson (1994), and which led to change towards the role and image of teachers. According to Freire, this notion suffocates the vision of teacher autonomy and empowerment and affects the way teachers perceive themselves and their profession. I agree with Freire and I see that this also affects the way that students approach their teachers. It can justify why currently some unprecedented offensive acts towards teachers committed by their students have been witnessed. For instance, in 2013, Saudi society saw two incidents that indisputably illustrate this revolutionary change in teachers' empowerment. It happened that one female Saudi teacher got beaten by her female students at a class with no justifiable imputes to such deed. It was the first time in the Saudi educational context such incident happened. Students were not charged for their deed, only suspended for three days from the school. Another shocking incident took place in a male school where a male teacher was stabbed to death by one of his student for asking him to go to the headmaster's office. In a country where teachers used to be regarded as gurus, the occurrence of such incidents reveals how low the role of the teacher has deteriorated.

It is crucial to highlight here that education is a complex series of appreciated experiences that involves interaction with others and with ideas, artefacts and processes, education is of eminent and profound importance to any society (Hussey and Smith, 2010). Hence, we should invest in educating peoples' minds and souls (not money revenues) and then education will repays us with interest.

Another finding that could extend teachers' negative perceptions of disempowerment and pulling together as a formal body is the lack of programmes that allow them to reflect what they see or believe works best for them and their students.

Finding 13: Teachers lack programmes that could encourage them to reflect their own views.

The study revealed that EFL teachers are not being helped to air their views. For instance, there is no regular meeting to discuss urgent issues, there is no online diary or blog that could help teachers to get together and express their emergent needs or thoughts or reflect on implemented procedures. According to Dewey (1933), it is blindness to act without questioning our received reality, so teachers should be provided with a sense of freedom to reflect at least sometimes because teachers can be educational leaders who learn from others and take directions at times. Nevertheless, Dewey concludes that it is arrogance to question everything all of the time because too much thinking leads sometimes to indefinite conclusion and wandering among multiple choices. What we want to achieve is a balance between reflection and routine because a certain amount of routine is necessary to keep our lives manageable (Dewey, 1933; Zeichner and Liston, 1996).

In addition, teachers' reflections need to be appreciated and have an impact. According to Aoki (2002), teachers find it difficult to reflect if it does not have an impact in the real world, as this affects their motivation and their orientation will change depending on how much impact they feel.

Furthermore, as was suggested by Zeichner and Liston (1996), institutional constraints, such as heavy work load and accordingly lack of time, and pressure on teachers to cover a required and broadly defined curriculum leave teachers with no time to reflect because of the necessity for them to act quickly in this fast

paced, constraining environment. This best summarises the situation inside most Saudi higher institutions. However, helping teachers to reflect and translate their reflections into actions, and get to know each others' experience by opening a channel between them, such as an online blog, and frequent meetings in order to enable them to learn from each other could help their practice. With better understanding of their colleagues' experiences and stresses, teachers can help one another and work more effectively as a team (Cockburn, 1996).

As we call for more teacher inclusion and reflexivity, this requires more collaboration and cooperation between faculty members and their administration, which the next finding reveals.

Finding 14: Teacher collaboration and school as a learning community is perceived to be more effective for teachers.

According to the literature, the educational context in which teachers are situated plays a major role in shaping their perceptions and behaviours (Kindsvatter et al., 1988). A staffing survey database for 1987-88 and 1993-94, conducted in the United States, examined the relationships between perceived workplace conditions and morale and career choice commitment, is in support of this conclusion. This study states that having supportive workplace conditions that socialise teachers into a collaborative and participatory working atmosphere, where teachers participate in decision making, is most strongly related to higher morale, stronger commitment to teaching, and intention to remain in the profession (Weiss, 1999). When teachers enjoy a great deal of what they are doing and feel happy about their workplace environment, they will be more productive. Therefore, teachers need to work in an environment which is encouraging them to be productive and enthusiastic about what they are doing. Since the social environment plays an important role in shaping teachers' perceptions towards their practices, it is essential that those in educational policy-making understand that and help to create interactive workplace environment for teachers that embrace teachers like a second home.

Furthermore, collaboration is an integrating principle of action, planning, culture, development, organisation and research (Hargreaves, 1994). According to Hargreaves, the principle of collaboration has come to comprise a *metaparadigm* of educational and organisational change in the postmodern age. Throughout his

examination of issues involving leadership, change and the working lives of teachers, he indicates that collaboration is the productive solution to a world in which problems are unpredictable, demands and expectations are intensifying, and solutions are unclear. Hargreaves (1994: 245), considers collaboration as a solution because it embodies the following principles and more:

- **Moral support**: Collaboration permits vulnerabilities to be shared and aired and overturn people's failures and frustrations that accompany change.

- **Improved effectiveness**: Collaboration encourages risk-taking, greater diversity in teaching strategies, and improved senses of efficacy among teachers as self-confidence is boosted by positive feedback and encouragement.

- **Reduced overload**: Collaboration allows sharing of the burdens and pressures that stem from intensified work and accelerated change, so that individual teachers and leaders do not have to shoulder them all, in isolation.

- **Political assertiveness**: Collaboration enables teachers to interact more confidently and assertively with their surrounding system.

- **Increased capacity for reflection**: Collaboration in dialogue and action provides sources of feedback and comparison that prompt teachers to reflect on their own practice and reformulate it more critically.

- **Opportunities to learn**: Collaboration is a central principle of organisational learning as it increases teachers' opportunities to learn from each other. It is a powerful source of professional learning, and in collaborative organisations, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

- **Continuous improvement**: Collaboration encourages teachers to see change not as a task to be completed, but as an unending process of continuous improvement

Indeed, the promise of collaboration is extensive and diverse, it has been proposed as a solution to many areas of challenge which educators are having to face, especially in the context of restructuring and of educational improvement because of the way it promotes shared reflection, professional learning and the pooling of collected expertise (Ibid.).

To sum up, it can be noted that education development policies in Saudi HE have been shown to adjust relative to the needs of modern society. However, although

they accept the need for the expansion of education, policymakers are still unwilling to accept the necessary changes in the distribution of power to include different stakeholders in policy or curricula formation to match modern social changes. For example, after twelve years of suggested reforms, we still have a teacher-proof curriculum which encourages memorisation, when we are in urgent need for higher-order learning processes to cope up with the development of the changing world around us.

> ''We are still suffering from that nineteenth-century heritage: a divided system, relying on coercion rather than the desire to learn, with an outdated curriculum which eventually divides young people into academic sheep and vocational goats [...] Standards are still much lower than they could be.'' (Lawton, 1996: 119)

The former statement by Lawton best captures the real problem that the Saudi HE system is still facing in this new era.

6.3 Summary of Chapter

This chapter provided a discussion of the data which emerged, giving an insight to the focus of this research and informing the research questions (see page 98-99). The participants' reflections revealed how teachers struggle to establish independent self agency (which addressed the first and third research questions). In addition, the participants' reflections also emphasised the importance of teacher empowerment, the lack of effective CPD programmes and reflective practice opportunities (which addressed the second and fourth research questions). In the following chapter, implications and limitations of this study are considered, together with provision of some recommendations concerning the issues stated above.

Chapter 7

Conclusions, Reflections and Further Research

''Knowledge from which no benefit is derived is like a treasure out of which nothing is spent in the cause of God''

(Prophet Mohammad)

7.1 Introduction

The main research issues pertaining to difficulties faced by the new generation of pioneer female Saudi EFL teachers regarding influences from workplace culture and concepts of learning, which the findings of this study reported in the previous chapters, raise several important discussion points. To help guide the discussion, this chapter refers back to the research questions that the study seeks to explore. Firstly, a brief summary of the findings pertaining to a particular research question will be provided, which will be followed by a clarification of the results with reference to the literature and theory. At the end of the chapter, limitations of the research are acknowledged and recommendations made for further research. It is hoped that the findings and analysis from the study provide an important platform in understanding EFL teachers' perceptions, views and needs and the factors that affect their ELT practices.

7.2 Addressing the Research Questions

As this chapter sets out a detailed analysis of the research questions addressed in this study, let us begin by recalling the key research questions, briefly summarising the findings of each and the nature of their contribution to the literature.

Research Question (1):

What are the experiences and perceptions of the pioneer new entrant female Saudi EFL teachers towards teaching English as a foreign language in HE?

Research confirms that perception of teaching is one of the most direct influences on the quality of teachers' practices (Burgoon, 1990; Giles and Coupland, 1991; Timperley and Robinson, 2001; Karabenick and Noda, 2004). According to the data gathered and the findings generated, the majority of the participant teachers in the selected institution had negative perceptions concerning current teaching practices and showed their desire to be engaged with curriculum development and assessment implementation. At the same time, teachers expressed their limited access to CPD programmes, as they are burdened with heavy workloads with no time allocation for research or professional development.

According to this research study, it can be said that the top-down approach taken by the department has a significant impact upon teachers and the way they perceive EFL teaching. According to Plato's Republic (cited in Connell, 1985), in order to rule, one has to act as a guardian. The same applies to the central reality of workplace life where the current streaming system has an impact on teachers. Teachers do not need to be chained and guarded, instead they need to be guided and sharpened to promote the competitiveness of the system.

Research Question (2):

What are teachers' perceptions of their department's English Teaching Culture?

A particular theoretical position underpinning this thesis at its core is the conception of a complex, dynamic relationship between school workplace, social structure and individual teachers. The influence of the HE social context pervades everything in the university and classrooms, and awareness of such an issue is therefore a significant contributing element of reflective teaching (Schön, 1987; Pollard et al., 2005). The decisions and actions which teachers make in their working lives are constrained by social structures, power relationships, and by the historical processes which brought in such structures (Pollard et al., 2005). On the other hand, each individual teacher has a unique sense of self derived

from her personal history or biography which will react to such social structures in a variety of ways:

> ''Some in powerful positions might wish to close ranks and defend themselves by suggesting that their position is inherited by right or earned by merit. Some among those who are less fortunate may accept the social order or even aspire to success in its terms. Others may try to contest it for, of course, to be able to question existing social arrangements is a fundamental right in our democratic societies.'' (Pollard et al., 2005: 76)

This seems right, especially in some societies where it might be even harder to contest the social order or be able to question its structure, and it is this position which my study endeavoured to investigate. This study explored female Saudi EFL teachers' beliefs and perceptions of their current ELT practices. This involved the exploration of their views about their teaching practices and the cultural experiences of their workplace environment. I undertook a critical review of ELT in HE in Saudi Arabia utilising critical reflexivity and my local social knowledge as a means of interrogating English teaching practices, related texts and research. Several factors at macro/micro levels were found to influence teachers' perceptions and the teaching processes of EFL teachers in Saudi HE contexts. Research, such as Burgoon, 1990; Giles and Coupland, 1991; Timperley and Robinson, 2001; Karabenick and Noda, 2004, shows that social organisations and education policies employed by educational institutions have consequences for teachers' perceptions and practices, which this study also reveals. For instance, some of the major findings were that Saudi EFL teachers do not have a voice in curriculum formation or development, are not helped to reflect their own views, and lack in-service training. These problems can be attributed to the lack of supported programmes provided by the department that encourage teachers to come together, share their opinions, learn from each other's experience and develop themselves as professionals.

> ''The teacher of the future is described as a reflective practitioner, who constantly develops the practical theory on the basis of which successful educational decisions are made. This action oriented theory needs to be based upon the teacher's beliefs about the central concepts: human beings, knowledge, and learning.'' (Björklund, 2008: 35)

Björklund also goes on to contend that in order to make this possible, the teacher needs to become a creator, an initiator, an active agent with the ability to develop her own profession in accordance with the general directions of societal change, with the will and capacity to take part in societal discussions in order to actively affect the direction of development. It is suggested that mutual communication between different actors at various levels in the Saudi educational context needs to be developed. Overall, I believe that this new generation of Saudi EFL teachers has a degree of free will in acting and in developing understandings; such understandings can lead to challenges to established social structures and thus to future development and changes (Pollard et al., 2005).

Research Question (3):

What are the perceived obstacles and challenges Saudi EFL teachers face in providing high quality ELT?

As part of the objectives of the KAFSP's development plans, women in Saudi Arabia today are vigorously pursuing HE and professional careers, and seeking to be active members of society, where their roles are defined in terms of what they can offer for their country's social, cultural, as well as economic development (MoHE, 2010b). Nevertheless, bureaucracy is a major obstacle in HE in Saudi Arabia; for instance, the system is centralised and there is no clear venue or process for change that sets milestones towards development (Alamri, 2011).

The study of teachers' remarks and classroom practices reveal them to be strongly dedicated to teaching, however, their sense of service is strikingly distinct from their beliefs and needs. Teachers were found to feel frustrated and face many obstacles and challenges to providing high quality school EFL teaching. Some of these challenges are:

a) Teachers' lack of autonomy and empowerment;

b) The insufficient availability of effective CPD programmes for teachers was reported;

c) Building up reflective communities and reflective practice is not encouraged;

d) Lack of technical support and advanced classrooms.

All the above-mentioned obstacles affect teachers' perceptions and how they see themselves. They have a negative professional image and are hindered in aiding students' attainment. This also affects teachers' motivation and predisposition towards teaching in general and causes job dissatisfaction. Research has shown that teachers' perceptions and their sense of autonomy and empowerment enhance their agency, efficacy and motivation (Simpson, 1990; Robinson, 1994; Lawton, 1996; Britzman, 2003; Dee et al., 2003; Brindley and Crocco, 2009). Accordingly, it is essential for progress to occur to enable teachers to be active agents in their departments, to give them the space to share their experiences, propose changes to the central reality of most Saudi HE institutions, and contribute to the ongoing development of teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia.

Research Question (4):

How is empowerment being implemented within the Saudi context?

Perhaps the most significant challenge for the empowerment of Saudi teachers is to change the cultural and professional adoption of the concept which stereotypes the teacher as the implementer of a syllabus that is supported by approved textbooks, and instead to accept them as designers of the curriculum. In addition, in most if not all Saudi higher educational institutions, there is a lack of teacher autonomy. Everything is predesigned starting from the choice of syllabus to the type of assessment and corrections process. Moreover, the concept of having teacher unions or associations does not exist in Saudi HE. Hence, teachers' voices are not heard. Saudi EFL teachers lack the interactive channels and programmes that allow them to get together with likeminded people and reflect upon what they see as professionals.

The challenge of this research was not to initiate a debate on how much freedom to allow for the teacher to create her own individual practices, but how important it is for the teacher to have the freedom, space and agency as a human practitioner to help develop Saudi students as international citizens of the world, using English as their lingua franca. The study has revealed that female Saudi EFL teachers have no freedom to design the curriculum they want, or the type of assessment that fits their students' needs. It can be deduced from the reflections of the teachers that they strive to construct a good image of themselves in front of their students as they lack power.

In recent years, research shows that some of the most exciting school and curriculum developments have come from subject-based initiatives, often resulting from networks of teachers meeting together through national as well as international subject associations and networks (Pollard et al., 2005). It is significant, as this study reveals, to empower teachers to become agents of educational policy change, which would enable them, in turn, to make a positive contribution toward the development of education, especially when we think of the teachers under study as those who have worked hard to develop their subject knowledge in leading countries around the world.

In addition, a number of research studies have demonstrated that empowering teachers as active agents in their workplace, soliciting relevant professional partnership and providing the necessary professional development support for them helps to increase their job satisfaction, organisational commitment, self-determination and to decrease on-the-job stress (Simpson, 1990; Britzman, 2003; Dee et al., 2003; Brindley and Crocco, 2009). Hence, a teacher needs to have a space of freedom with her students as a role model who is always close to them and more acquainted with their diversity and needs.

Research Question (5):

What are the extent and nature of existing EFL services and CPD programmes provided in their HE departments?

According to the findings of this research, teachers showed their awareness of the importance of CPD programmes, however, they reflected that they lack efficient in-service training. Research has shown that teachers' CPD is significant for their self and professional development and helps to raise awareness of their own practices (Clarke and Erickson, 2003; Hussain, et. al., 2009; Kennedy and Lee, 2010).

It is essential here to point out that different societies place slightly different emphases on teacher CPD. For example, in Japan, where the system is centralised, the focus is on the selection and retention of teachers; Japanese beginning teachers are appointed for a one-year period and they are required to attend a compulsory one-year induction programme (Kennedy and Lee, 2010). Like the novice teachers, experienced teachers are offered further training throughout their professional career. In China, teachers are provided with many

CPD programmes, ranging from induction, research, preparing lesson plans, and other activities such as classroom observation, talks, workshops, seminars, as well as having the possibility of going abroad for training or visits to other school systems (Ibid.).

By contrast, in Saudi Arabia the study revealed that there are no sufficient in-service CPD programmes planned for teachers, no peer observation, lesson study,[29] nor any kind of action research or case-based pedagogy. Research shows that teacher development and curriculum development are closely intertwined and each builds on the other (Hargreaves, 1994). Developing teachers and their competency would lead to the enhancement of their practices, self-efficacy and curriculum development. When we think of the humanitarian aspect of learning, we should think of teachers as learners, too. They are always in need of further training as the field of education is developing constantly. As a researcher, my point of view is that I agree that through providing a channel of efficient and effective in-service training programmes, teachers as well as CMs and anyone involved in the cycle of education can have the opportunity for sustainable development.

Research Question (6)

How do Saudi EFL teachers perceive themselves dealing with possible tensions that arise from existing workplace policies?

From the close examination of the perceived experiences of new entrant Saudi EFL teachers who have had the opportunity to learn from different educational contexts, I connected with broader problematic issues of education and development in Saudi Arabia. The results indicate that Saudi EFL teachers express frustration with their work situation, and that the pre-defined curriculum policy, the traditional role of teachers and lack of CPD still very much dictate the educational settings in which these women operate.

Teachers reported their sense of overburden and stress. Occupational stress is a result of two main factors: demands and control (Humphreys, 1993). Where demands are high and control is low the result is a high stress job, but a low

[29] A process where teachers grouped in grades and small groups, engage in studying a learning unit, developing lesson plans, searching for available learning materials and then assessing and reflecting on the lessons (Kennedy and Lee, 2010).

stress position occurs when the demands are low and control is high (Ibid.). In most Saudi higher institutions the demands are high and control is low which can create a high level of stress. Humphreys indicates that if control procedures are increasing in schools, so also are the demands made on teachers, these demands principally come from any educational system that puts the emphasis on performance in examinations as the main criterion for successful teaching, which is the same situation in most Saudi education institutions. However, education is not just about achievement in examinations. Surely, of equal importance is the emotional, social, physical, behavioural, spiritual and creative development of students (Ibid.). Educational research increasingly advocates that the emotional development of students and teachers in the classroom and school is of primary importance (Ibid.). In order to help teachers give their best, they need to feel empowered and embraced in a welcoming climate, which praises them as individual educators and appreciates their contributions. It is essential to report here that communicating expectations for a collaborative learning community is low, therefore, there is a need to develop new policies and procedures to maximize the likelihood of a positive and effective learning climate for teachers.

Research Question (7)

How does highlighting such aspects aid teachers to seek more improvements?

Education, of all the fields of social sciences, has the potential to make a contribution to policy debates and change social policy (Burgess, 1985). This study showed there is a cry for closer professional connection between teachers and CMs, and that there is a crisis in the relationship in terms of power and collaboration.

Developing university teaching is a collection of reflections on policy and practice by contributors from different background and contexts (Evans and Nation, 2000), and here I provided the female Saudi EFL teachers with a means of allowing them to air their views and ideas on the practices of current English language teaching in HE in Saudi Arabia. Hence, teachers as contributors to knowledge building have sufficient scope to ensure that diversity of ideas and experiences are provided in order to change university teaching (Ibid.). I strongly believe that *"In teaching, the work is never over, more can always be done,*

things can always be improved'' (Hargreaves, 1994: 16) and this is only a preliminary platform for teachers and educators to reach joint vision and insight.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

The major limitation of this study was the small sample of participants. However, I believe that I had achieved theoretical saturation once I had a diverse sample of nine EFL teachers, with whom I had spent a considerable amount of time over a long period of data collection and data analysis. In addition, teachers' willingness in giving virtual responses cannot be assumed, especially with regard to this sensitive topic that brought together teachers alongside their CMs. However, being an insider researcher helped me to establish good rapport with my interviewees and build a relationship of trust, enabling me to represent their voices since I understand the politics of the institution, something which would normally take an outsider a long time to acquire.

Furthermore, data collection was scheduled to occur over an eight-month period. However, after I experienced some technical obstacles designing the blog, this period exceeded fourteen months. Data obtained from this instrument were unusable due to the low rate of response. Also, during interviews there were many strong communicative messages which were unspoken, through the participants' facial and body movements that I was not able to capture, as I was unable to capture them on video tape due to some cultural limitations. This is only the perception of the researcher as I cannot verify or triangulate them.

Moreover, as was suggested by Stenhouse (1970), in mounting education research and development, we shall in general do better to deal in hypotheses concerning effects than in objectives. He argued that such an approach will encourage us to be much more tentative and less dogmatic, as we will be more aware of the need for corrective adjustments rather than statements of objectives which may make us assert that we know where we are going without fear of contradiction from others.

7.4 Contribution to Knowledge

The first contribution of this study is the light it sheds on EFL teachers' perceptions and practices in Saudi HE. The study started in 2012: a literature search of books and articles published since or before then was considered, and found only a very small number of papers which tackled the new generation of Saudi EFL teachers. Again, a few have tackled practical issues (e.g. Al-Seghayer, 2005; Alatis, 2007; Alamri, 2011; Alresheed, 2012; Liton, 2013), and others have focused on theories or practice from other countries (e.g. Al-Khatib, 2006; Elyas and Picard, 2013). This study is the first to look in depth at the new generation of EFL teachers' perceptions and practices in the context of Saudi HE institutions; it therefore supplements the limited literature on EFL teachers and EFL teaching and practices.

Another contribution of this study is its research design, which took care to involve teachers together with some representatives of administrative and management staff and thus provided a wide perspective on the same phenomenon. The research method of individual and focus group interviews enabled teachers to come together to express what they felt and to reveal their wants and needs. In addition, the study was designed to help teachers to be reflective and through the semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions and the drawing activity which accompanied them. It is considered that all these measures were a good attempt to help teachers to reflect, analyse their own teaching practices and have their voice heard.

The third contribution made by this study is the application of a content analysis grid for the analysis of visual data. Although the idea was adopted from Hartas, (2010), a number of amendments have been made to include other dimensions in the analysis of data and the resulting adapted grid could be used for future research.

Last but not least, it could be proposed that this study offers significant insight for other countries who are conducting or trying to conduct similar sponsorship programmes or reforms to engage teachers more and who may want to adopt or adapt some of the research tools or findings for their own purposes.

7.5 Recommendations

It is hoped by this study to provide some feeling of possibility. Possibility here means the recognition that there is something desirable and positive. When possibility is present, people proceed from the belief that things can be made better, and that issues can be resolved, but when it is missing, people focus on what they want to avoid, may resist new ideas, and be reluctant to make suggestions (Ghaye, 2011). People should consider new possibilities for their practices and their institutions. They should consider a 'What is missing' strategy to create possibility instead of 'What is wrong'. However, when it is hard to imagine new possibilities, you can ask 'What if?' and this can help move the focus from seeing obstacles to perceiving new opportunities (Ibid.). For example, in response to the statement 'It is hard to achieve mutual understanding', ask 'What would we achieve if we could reach a mutual understanding?' This recognition of what might be achieved or possible helps people's sense of commitment because they acknowledge that this thing is feasible (Ibid.). Mutual understanding happens when each person is understood and understands others. When it is present, people value and learn from the differences among themselves, but when it is missing, people feel misunderstood and disrespected (Hargreaves, 1994; Weiss, 1999; Ghaye, 2011). In working environments, things work out better when people reach an understanding of others' needs and expectations before even setting goals or planning.

In order to empower Saudi teachers in this promising foreign scholarship programme, the following points must be considered:

- Adopt a new policy of supporting school-based curriculum development programmes based on a combination of bottom-up and top-down processes within schools, having a teacher or group of teachers as 'initiators' and giving them the opportunity to develop their own curricula rather than attempting to enforce them to follow pre-packaged programmes which might not be appropriate to students' needs.

- Establish educational reform in relation to pedagogy towards more student-centred classes and active inquiry-oriented learning away from rote learning and drilling.

• Generate a more systemic approach to an infrastructure that would promote teacher collaboration, learning and inquiry in order to reach a mutual understanding.

As different stakeholders are involved in shaping education policy and process, it is essential to address them in my recommendations individually.

For the Government

It is no exaggeration to say that without well educated happy teachers, Saudi EFL teaching will not move steadily towards a moderately developed system. Teachers' beliefs influence decisions about curriculum and instructional tasks. Although teachers' perceptions and beliefs are not easily changed, experiences and continuous reflection through systematic CPD programmes could lead to changes in teachers' perceptions and then to changes in teaching practices (Kennedy and Lee, 2010).

It is essential here to highlight the fact that the huge number of Saudi pioneer graduate students who have been granted higher degrees from leading universities from different parts of the world, and the current political situation in the Middle East, will provide extra stress to officials on giving more freedom in HE in Saudi Arabia (Alamri, 2011). However, this should not preclude officials from opening the doors to change, which could then lead to overcoming any obstacles. It is suggested that respecting and supporting the professionalism and empowerment of new entrant teachers to make decisions in their own classrooms that best meet local and state goals, while also holding teachers accountable for how this is achieved, is the best channel for providing a healthy education atmosphere (Hargreaves, 1994).

One of the main goals of this research is to enable teachers to develop their practices and be acquainted with the knowledge required in order to help in the development of future generations. This study shows that the stereotypical role of the Saudi teacher is as a curriculum implementer rather than a curriculum designer, and this is a significant issue that needs to be overcome. It is essential for the Saudi government represented in MoHE to:

- Implement a new Act to redefine the role of leadership in schools and involve teachers more.

- Decentralise authority and decision making to site level; develop more diverse and differentiated roles for teachers; and introduce a broadened system of accountability (Hargreaves, 1994).
- Radically restructure educational institutions to become sites for curricular experimentation including through regular input from students and teachers (Nicholls and Hazzard, 1993 cited in Hansen, 1995).
- Individualise teaching and learning (engage teachers with the broader issues of curriculum change and reform).
- Recruit sufficient teachers with credentials which could help to minimize their workload.
- Integrate teacher development needs with career development and the provision of incentives.
- Follow up teachers' professional development programmes focusing on developing practice.
- Encourage the establishment of teacher associations or unions which would aid teachers to share their experiences and boost their sense of professionalism.

For CMs

CMs, as representatives of administrative authority, should make it a priority to debate and engage with teachers concerning what realistically ELT is expected to deliver. Much attention is required regarding administrative issues, CPD programmes, curriculum development and in the area of testing. Therefore, the following are required:

- Induction programmes for new entrant teachers to help to offer resources, communication and support.
- Enhancing teachers' understanding and reflection through the implementation of activities, such as peer observation, lesson studies, action research or case-based pedagogy.
- There should be collaborative preparation of lessons, talks and workshops.
- Actions based on the notion that leadership is not about producing guarded people but guiding them.

It is essential here to note that everyone on the staff contains a rich store of ideas, insights and experiences and this vast resource must be recognised

(Easen, 1985). And in order to accelerate the initiation of a practice development cycle, we need a combination of bottom-up and top-down processes within the institution, having teachers as 'initiators' and school administrators as 'gatekeepers' (Kennedy and Lee, 2010), essentially allowing teachers to have a leading role in curriculum development.

For Teachers

This research gives voice to a new generation of female Saudi teachers who are considered pioneer in the sense that they have had the chance to learn from different contexts, develop their subject knowledge and became active agents capable of developing their own practice and that of other teachers and bringing about change to the reality of ELT in Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, teachers are responsible for bringing new insights to their current field. In fact, the responsibility of developing education involves all people engaged in the field. Teachers have a massive duty and a major role in developing future generations, imbuing them with all the tools necessary to enable them to have a prosperous future. Hence, it is essential for Saudi teachers, especially those who are pioneers, to:

- Appreciate their responsibility which goes far beyond academic enrichment.
- Believe in their agency and self-regulation processes which harness effective change in academic institutions.
- Understand that professional development is a shared responsibility.
- Value the fact that education is a lifelong learning process and so is teaching.
- Use more communicative activities, such as group work, role-play, games, and surveys to enhance student interactions and communicative competence in L2.
- Try to promote creative thinking, autonomy and learning strategies.

It can be said that teaching can be more rewarding when teachers value their work and agency and work collaboratively to deliver new innovative insights, look always for developing the education field and make learning an enjoyable experience.

For Further Research

In the light of the study findings, the following topics might be worthy of further research:

- A nation-wide research study is needed to understand the impact of any CPD programmes provided. A number of issues related to the quality and the success of quality teacher training programmes also needs immediate attention.
- Further research is needed on how to structure an enhanced learning and collaborative environment to support teachers' belief change.
- A further area which would be worthy of research is to investigate differences in beliefs between novice EFL teachers and experienced ones, to ascertain whether there are any paradoxes in their beliefs about ELT.
- Study the output of ELT with reference to the qualifications of teachers.
- Study quality in HE institutions with reference to academic programmes, planning and administration.
- Although evidence from the literature indicates that perceptions and beliefs are gender independent (Chan, 2003), further study tackling male Saudi EFL teachers might be required to widen the horizon for more debate and wider perspectives.

In addition, I am acutely mindful of the fact that in Saudi Arabia, the problems that teachers face are pervasive across the different phases, and that equal attention needs to be given to primary and secondary teachers.

7.6 Reflections on the Research

> ''Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention.'' (Francis Bacon, quoted in Blaxter et al., 2010: 100)

I believe that this research has been written to be read as a whole with diligence and with consideration for its legitimate argument. This research was a journey that needs to be told in its entirety, although each part of it has much to say.

The other issue I will bring into discussion is the manner in which data were gathered and analysed. The reporting of qualitative data analysis does not provide sufficient insight into the procedures through which data were analysed (Barnard and Burns, 2012). The fieldwork of this research relied on semi-structured interviews, focus groups, drawing activity and non-participant observations with a sample of 12 Saudi female EFL teachers and their CMs in the field of HE in Saudi Arabia. All the data collected from the teachers and their CMs were transcribed immediately after each interview and observation, filed under each teacher's name, and kept as Microsoft word documents. The focus group drawing activity and my hand-written observation notes were analysed manually using the categories produced from other data. As a way to account for any loss of data, the analysis of data took place during and after the data collection. After the examination of the transcripts collected from these methods, a synthesis was made of the data that emerged from all these sources. As data collection progressed throughout the year, more data were generated, however, another process of re-examining occurred after the data collection period ended. I was then able to cross-check different sources of data for recurring themes and this also enabled me to ensure validity across data. Finally, verification of data was achieved via member checking. This constructivist qualitative paradigm helped me to best understand the socially constructed reality from EFL teachers' perspectives participating in this study.

Furthermore, a key audience which this study addresses is EFL teachers and policy makers. By policy makers I mean officials and administrators who operate at all levels of decision-making and service delivery in central and local educational institutions. I believe that *"policy is implemented and therefore to an extent made and remade in the daily practice of teachers and other professionals"* (Burgess, 1985: 111). In this research, I have tried to develop a discussion which explores the problems teachers face and I have brought some of the CMs into the picture in order to make links between qualitative research and educational policy. As a qualitative social researcher, I wanted to share the views of teachers and develop ways of analysing and presenting my work which commends it to policy makers. By engaging with teachers and asking them about their reflections on issues around autonomy and empowerment, I found it quite

liberating for them to just be involved in that process of reflection that could be translated into actions, and sowing the seeds for a more open space for them. After all, there is significant potential for qualitative research to have an impact upon not only educational policy but also social policies and to uncover problematic issues (Ibid.).

In fact, throughout this research journey I was aware of a kaleidoscope of different perspectives, which added a lot for me on both a personal and a professional level, widened my knowledge, and made me a better researcher. For instance, having the opportunity to interview teachers with whom I share many interests was a significant learning experience for me. Interpersonal relationships with teachers played an important role, especially during data collection, which helped to create an atmosphere of mutual trust between me and my interviewees so that openness of exchange was reached. I cannot presume that I know a great deal now, instead I can say that I have started to grasp the tip of the thread that will lead me –as I hope- to know more about different perspectives and gain better understanding of social matters.

7.7 Concluding Remarks

It was aimed by this study to highlight the power of workplace culture in teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards their own educational settings and practices. This study provided me with opportunity to reflect on my practice as an EFL practitioner, in addition, it helped me to understand better teachers' views about ELT and their needs for more involvement and development. Although the study did not involve a large sample, it is necessary to acknowledge that the findings nevertheless provide food for thought for other practitioners in other institutions. The findings of the research project can be distilled to two main aspects: 1) Significant obstacles: Teachers play a major role in any educational construct, and no one can ignore their role in any reform, or reconstruction. Therefore, they need to be empowered, to be able to reflect and analyze their performance in order to be able to modify their behaviour on how to teach and what to teach (Tiberghien et al., 1998).

2) Hope to progress: Curriculum is the backbone of any educational institution, therefore, it is crucial to design a modern curriculum that helps to equip future generations with all the tools that shape them for future life and development,

allowing more freedom for teachers to build upon their own choices, in addition to enhancing their in-service programmes. This study gives opportunities for teachers to share and voice their experience, preferences and needs and should be continued to act as a participatory model for EFL teachers' involvement and development. The major aim of my research is not to produce definite conclusions, but leaving any conclusion open-ended, leading to the possibility of other dynamic interpretations. Hence, my sincere hope is that my efforts may contribute something to the understanding of the role of teacher not only in the Saudi context, but also in the wider world. I hope that this research may act as a starting point for wider discussion for future research and stimulate others whose personal knowledge and experience are different from mine to advance their research or build on my research.

Afterword

New resolutions have been applied after this thesis was completed:

Firstly, after the death of King Abdullah, the founder of this foreign scholarship programme, in 2015, the new King Salman has announced that the KAFSP programme will continue until 2020 as was recommended by the late king. However, King Salman has excluded from this scholarship programme any scholarships to other Arab countries. In addition, both the MoHE and Ministry of General Education have been amalgamated into one organisation, which is known as the Ministry of Education.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Conditions for Working Women in Saudi Arabia

SAUDI LABOUR LAW

Issued by Decree M/51, dated 23/8/1426 H, 2006

PART IX

EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

Article (149):

Taking into consideration the provisions of Article (4) of this Law, women shall work in all fields suitable to their nature. It is prohibited to employ women in hazardous jobs or industries. The Minister pursuant to a decision by him shall determine the professions and jobs that are deemed detrimental to health and are likely to expose women to specific risks; in which cases, women's employment shall be prohibited or restricted under certain terms.

Article (150):

Women may not work during a period of night the duration of which is not less than eleven consecutive hours, except in cases determined pursuant to a decision by the Minister.

Article (151):

A female worker shall be entitled to a maternity leave for the four weeks immediately preceding the expected date of delivery and the subsequent six weeks. The probable date of delivery shall be determined by the physician of the firm or pursuant to a medical report certified by a health authority. A woman may not work during the six weeks immediately following delivery.

Article (152):

During the maternity leave, an employer shall pay the female worker half her wage if she has been in his service for one year or more, and a full wage if she has served for three years or more as of the date of commencement of such leave. A female worker shall not be paid any wages during her regular annual leave if she has enjoyed in the same year a maternity leave with full wage. She shall be paid half her wage during the annual leave if she has enjoyed in the same year a maternity leave at half wage.

Article (153):

An employer shall provide medical care for female workers during pregnancy and delivery.

Article (154):

When a female worker returns to work following a maternity leave, she shall be entitled, in addition to the rest periods granted to all workers, to a rest period or periods not exceeding in aggregate one hour a day for nursing her infant. Such period or periods shall be calculated as part of the actual working hours and shall not entail any reduction in wages.

Article (155):

An employer may not terminate the employment of a female worker or give her a warning of the same while on maternity leave.

Article (156):

An employer may not terminate the employment of a female worker during illness resulting from pregnancy or delivery, and such illness shall be established by a certified medical report, provided that the period of her absence does not exceed one hundred and eighty days. The employment of such female worker may not be terminated during the one hundred and eighty days preceding the expected date of delivery in the absence of one of the legitimate causes provided for in this Law.

Article (157):

A female worker shall forfeit her entitlements under the provisions of this Part if she works for another employer during her authorized leave. In such event, the original employer may deprive her of her wage for the duration of the leave or recover any payments made to her.

Article (158):

In all occupations and places where women are employed, the employer shall provide them with seats for resting.

Article (159):

(1) An employer who employs fifty female workers and more shall provide them with a suitable place with adequate number of babysitters to look after the children under the age of six years, if the number of children reaches ten and more.

(2) The Minister may require the employer who employs a hundred women and more in a single city to set up a nursery, either on his own or in conjunction with other employers in the same city, or alternatively to contract with an existing nursery to care for the children of the female workers who are under six years of age during the work periods. In such case, the Minister shall set forth the terms and conditions regulating such facility as well as the charges imposed on the female workers benefiting from service.

Article (160):

A female worker whose husband passes away shall be entitled to a fully paid leave for a minimum period of fifteen days as of the date of death.

Adopted from: http://www.the-saudi.net/business-center/labor_law.htm

Appendix II: Aims of Teaching English Language in HE in Saudi Arabia

The general objectives are:

1- To afford the Saudi student a window on the world.

2- To contribute to student's intellectual, personal and professional growth.

3- To cultivate the student's critical thinking as a useful adjunct to intelligent reading of English texts.

4- To enable student to acquire the necessary linguistic competence required in various life situations.

5- To provide student who joins the university or other higher education institutes with an adequate knowledge of English to help him/her in their future studies.

6- To provide students with the linguistic basis that would enable them to participate in transferring other nations' scientific and technological advances that can enhance the progress of their nation.

The specific objectives are:

1- To help the Saudi student gain a reasonable mastery of the four language skills which are:

• Listening with understanding to spoken English;

• Speaking current English correctly with the proper stress and intonation;

• Reading with understanding English texts that vary in difficulty from adapted and simplified material to the original in an abridged form;

• Writing a connected passage on a subject of a descriptive or a discursive nature.

2- To stress the instrumental value of learning a foreign language as a useful tool for cultural as well as social and economic communication.

3- To foster in the student an interest in reading so that they need to be prepared to read reference books, periodicals and pamphlets bearing on their future field of specialisation.

Adopted from: http://www.savap.org.pk/journals/ARInt./Vol.4(1)/2013(4.1-11).pdf

Appendix III: Letter to the Head of the Institute

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

University of Nottingham
School of Education
Jubilee Campus
Wollaton Road
Nottingham NG8 1BB
United Kingdom

Dear ELI Vice Dean,

I am currently a PhD student at the University of Nottingham in England. I am involved in a research project concerning the perceptions and practices of new EFL teachers towards teaching English language. The title of my research is ''The Experiences and Perceptions of the New Generation of Female Saudi EFL Teachers: How Do They Manage Current English Teaching? A Qualitative Study of One Higher Education Institution'', aiming to explore teachers' perspectives and aspirations when it comes to teaching English as a subject, for instance, do they want to apply in Saudi Arabia what they have acquired abroad? These aspirations will be of great benefit, especially in an age where higher education in Saudi Arabia is undertaking many developmental reforms. The study is performed as partial fulfilment of the requirements of my Doctorate degree. Teachers' perception in this research will provide useful information on this topic. I would like to ask you for the favour of granting me a chance to conduct this study in your Institute.

In the study, teachers will be asked to participate in individual semi-structured interviews, focus groups, classroom observation and online blog. This research obtained official research ethics approval from the School of Education of the University of Nottingham in December 2012. Teachers' participation in this research is strictly voluntary. All data from this study are confidential and anonymous and will be used for research purposes only.

I look forward to your support and cooperation. Should you have any enquiries, I can be reached at the following:

Mobile: 07553535223
Email: ttxasal@nottingham.ac.uk

Yours sincerely,
Abeer Sultan Althaqafi

Appendix IV: Participant Consent Form

GENERIC PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project Title: *The Experiences and Perceptions of the New Generation of Female Saudi EFL Teachers: How Do They Manage Current English Language Teaching?*

Researcher's name: Abeer Sultan Althaqafi.
Supervisors' names: Dr. Anne Convery. 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 in the research.
- 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 audiotaped during the interview.
- I understand that data will be stored and then eventually destroyed 3 years after the PhD Thesis is submitted. Data from the interviews, focus groups and classroom observations will be kept in a secure location, where only the researcher, her supervisors, and examiners will have access to it.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisors 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** ……

Contact details

<table>
<tr><td>Researcher: Abeer Sultan Al-Thaqafi
School of Education
University of Nottingham
Jubilee Campus, Wollaton Road
Nottingham NG8 1BB
+44(0)755 3535223
ttxasal@nottingham.ac.uk</td><td>Main Supervisor: Dr. Anne Convery
School of Education
University of Nottingham
Jubilee Campus, Wollaton Road
Nottingham NG8 1BB
Tel 00 44 (0)115 951 4428
anne.convery@nottingham.ac.uk</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">2nd Supervisor: Dr. Kaye Haw
School of Education
University of Nottingham
Jubilee Campus, Wollaton Road
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Tel 00 44 (0)115 951 4510
kaye.haw@nottingham.ac.uk</td></tr>
</table>

Research Ethics Coordinator: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

نموذج موافقة على المشاركة في البحث العلمي

عنوان البحث: التصور الذهني والتجارب الشخصيه للجيل الجديد من معلمات اللغه الإنجليزيه وكيفية تعاملهن مع معطيات التعليم الحديثه

اسم الباحثة: عبير سلطان الثقفي

اسم مشرف البحث: آن كونفري

- لقد قرأت ورقة (معلومات عن بيانات المقابلة الشخصية) وقد تم شرح طبيعة وغرض البحث لي وأنا افهم وأوافق على المشاركة.
- أفهم الغرض من البحث ومكانتي فيه.
- أفهم بأنه يمكن للبيانات التي يتم جمعها أن تنشر لكن لن يمكن التعرف عليّ وان بيانات البحث المتعلقة بي سوف تظل سرية .
- أفهم بأنه سوف يتم تسجيل هذه المقابلة صوتيا على شريط كاسيت .
- أفهم بأن البيانات سوف تخزن ثم تتلف بعد ثلاثة سنوات من حصول الباحثة على الدرجة وإلى ذلك الحين سوف تحفظ في مكان آمن لا يمكن لأحد سوى الباحثة أو مشرفها أو لجنة الممتحنين الوصول إليها .
- أفهم انه يمكنني ا لاتصال بالباحثة أو مشرفتها إذا احتجت إلى معلومات أكثر حول البحث وبأنه يمكنني الاتصال بمنسق أخلاقيات البحث العلمي في كلية التربية بجامعة نوتنجهام ببريطانيا إن أردت أن أقدم شكوى بخصوص مشاركتي في هذا البحث.

الاسم.....(مشاركة في البحث)

التوقيع.....التاريخ.....

عناوين الاتصال:

- الباحثة: عبير سلطان الثقفي

تلفون:+44(0)755 35 35223

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- المشرف الثاني: كي هو

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- منسق أخلاقيات البحث العلمي في كلية التربية بجامعة نوتنجهام:

educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix V: How Literature Informed the Formation of Questions Used During Data Collection Process

Literature (Main authors)	Interview questions
Teachers must know the art of communication, understanding others' needs and requirements and their ability to learn from experience (Hussain et al., 2011). Recent research in the educational field demonstrated that teaching is not just a cognitive or technical procedure but a complicated and even elusive personal and social set of embedded interactions and practices that involve the whole person (Britzman, 2003; Olsen, 2008).	1. Teachers' perceptions of EFL teaching and its practices 1. What are your experiences of teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia? 2. How do you perceive the teaching of the English language? 3. What is your understanding of the requirements of this profession? 4. In your opinion, how do you think the English language is best learned? 5. What makes a successful language classroom for you?
Teaching in its own is a very complex and demanding profession; it is a profession, which exalts service above personal gain (Goodings et al., 1995). Britzman (2003), claims that teachers are born not made, and real learning begins once novices arrive in their classrooms.	6. In what way has your study abroad contributed to a change in your own teaching practices?
Curriculum experiences are no longer confined to the classroom. There is an increasing gap between 'official' school knowledge and 'real' world knowledge (Kennedy, 2005; Marsh, 2009). A truly democratic society requires a curriculum which the students and teachers have the right to comment on and contribute to (Brundrett and Silcock, 2002). Brundrett and Silcock describe the partnership approach or 'co-constructive teaching' as an approach which gives formal party to teachers and learners.	7. How do you, as a new entrant to the teaching profession, perceive the curriculum and its practices? 8. Do you think the current English language curriculum can help in the aspiration to create interactive learning experiences? In what way? 9. How do you perceive the adopted assessment system? Does it measure what it is supposed to measure? How do you know?
In Saudi higher institutions, the textbook is the curriculum; it provides the core content for teaching as well as the teaching methods (Al-Seghayer, 2005).	10. What do you think of the role of the textbook? And how extensively do you use it in your classes? 11. What are the teaching method(s) you adopt with your students? And what do you think is/are the best teaching method(s) that fits your students' needs?
Teacher research cannot be disconnected from issues of professional	2) Teachers' perceptions of CPD

development of the teacher, or of at least some of the teacher's school colleagues (Clarke and Erickson, 2003). This link between teacher research and professional development implies valuable products. These products involve new understandings, ideas, insights and advice not only for teachers, but also for their school level administration, system level officials, as well as university-based educators (Ibid., 2003).	12. What are the extent and nature of existing EFL services provided in your school, in terms of continuous professional development programmes, seminars and conferences? 13. Do you think your CPD needs have been met? Why/ why not? 14. What is required to meet your CPD needs?
To have a voice means to be reflexive and reflexivity is a social scientific variety of self-consciousness (Delamont, 1992). Reflection is important, and some might acknowledge that they do not really know how to get the best from it. According to Ghaye (2011), reflective practices help us understand the links between what we do and how we might improve our effectiveness. According to Hayes (2011), teachers should be seen as reflective learners, arguing that teachers must be self-reflective, understanding that their development occurs over the course of their careers.	3) Teachers' perceptions of favourable or unfavourable conditions of their workplace policies and their sense of empowerment 15. How would you describe your school's workplace policies? 16. In your view, what are the major challenges facing the development of effective EFL teaching? 17. How do you assess the quality of teaching, administration and planning in your institute? 18. In your opinion, what are the areas that require intensive development in the system of EFL education? 19. How does highlighting such aspects aid you as a teacher to seek more improvements?
There has been a thoughtful shift of teachers from being transmitters of knowledge to facilitators of knowledge, due to this paradigm shift, implementation of new educational policies, innovations and reforms have been made in different contexts (Frost et al., 2000). Cullingford (2009), stated that the more independence educational institutions and teachers have, and the less interference from outsiders, the better they perform. Kelly (2004) advocates that the quality of any educational experience depends largely on the work of the individual teacher and any outside attempts at controlling their practices must be doomed to failure.	20. What does the change in the education system mean in practice for you? 21. How much freedom do you have as a teacher practitioner to build on your own choices about teaching the English language? 22. Do you feel you have a role to play in contributing to your school development? If so, what role? Do you see any problems in fulfilling this role?

Appendix VI: Typology of Each Question Used During Data Collection Process

The following tables demonstrate the major themes that have been generated based on the pilot study findings together with the type of each interview question used in this study, based on Spradley's (1979) typology:

Table 1: Typology of the semi-structured interview questions for the teacher

Themes	Interview Questions	Type
Teachers' perceptions of EFL teaching and its Practices	1. What are your experiences of teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia?	Descriptive
	2. How do you perceive the teaching of the English language?	Structural
	3. What is your understanding of the requirements of this profession?	Descriptive
	4. In your opinion, how do you think the English language is best learned?	Descriptive
	5. In what way has your study abroad contributed to a change in your own teaching practices?	Structural
	6. How do you, as a new entrant to the teaching profession, perceive the curriculum and its practices?	Descriptive
	7. Do you think the current English language curriculum can help in the aspiration to create interactive learning experiences? In what way?	Structural
	8. How do you perceive the adopted assessment system? Does it measure what it is supposed to measure? How do you know?	Contrast
	9. What do you think of the role of the textbook? How extensively do you use it in your classes?	Contrast
	10. What are the teaching method(s) you adopt with your students? And what do you think is/are the best teaching method(s) that fit(s) your students' needs?	Structural
	11. What are the extent and nature of existing EFL services provided in your school, in terms of continuous professional development programmes, seminars and conferences?	Descriptive
Teachers' perceptions of CPD	12. Do you think your CPD needs have been met? Why/ why not? What is required to meet your CPD needs?	Contrast
	13. How would you describe your department's workplace policies?	Descriptive
	14. In your view, what are the major challenges facing the development of effective EFL teaching?	Structural
Teachers' perceptions of favourable or unfavourable conditions of their workplace policies and their sense of empowerment	15. How do you assess the quality of teaching, administration and planning in your institute?	Descriptive
	16. In your opinion, what are the areas that require intensive development in the system of EFL education?	Structural
	17. How does highlighting such aspects aid you as a teacher to seek more improvements?	Descriptive
	18. What does the change in the education system mean in practice for you?	Descriptive
	19. How much freedom do you have as a teacher practitioner to build on your own choices about teaching the English language?	Contrast
	20. Do you feel you have a role to play in contributing to your school development? If so, what role? Do you see any problems in fulfilling this role?	Contrast

Table 2: Typology of the focus group questions for the teacher

Themes	Focus Group Questions	Type
Teacher's empowerment	''Teachers here are only parrots; they have to repeat what is in the textbook. Why do we have to obtain a PhD while we don't have the chance to apply or use what we want?''	
	1. In an ideal world, what changes would you like to see to the curriculum, to enable you to use or apply some of your professional knowledge and experience. Is any of this possible?	Descriptive
	Practically, in our current situation, what can you do to implement small changes?	Structural
Helping Teachers to be reflective	''[...] It is not an easy task for EFL teacher, I lack freedom with my students. I always feel like there is an eye on me, we cannot negotiate together what we shall discuss tomorrow or next week.''	
	2. How do you at present reflect on what you do? Do you talk to anyone about your work? Can you make any changes to your practice as a result of this discussion?	Contrast
	Do you know the term 'reflective practitioner'? If so, what do you understand by this term? What would need to happen in order for you to develop into a reflective practitioner?	Structural
The excessive use of textbooks	''The textbook is very important, it guides us while we're teaching, especially in our institute, without the textbook we will be lost.''	
	3. What do you like about using a textbook? What don't you like about using them? Do you often in your lessons depart from the text book? If not, why not? If yes, how do you do this? Are there any parts of the textbook which are not relevant for your students?	Contrast
	Textbooks soon become outdated in today's technological society, so how can teachers keep up to date? What other teaching resources could you use instead of the textbook?	Structural
Development programmes	''We should develop as teachers and be acquainted with all that is new, so we are always in need for more efficient professional trainings.''	
	4. What do you want to get out of CPD programmes? How could you implement your new knowledge in the classroom in your lessons?	Structural
Measuring the willingness to change	5. In your opinion, do you feel as though you are treated as a professional? Are your views listened to? Why don't you think they are listened to?	Contrast
	What needs to happen now, in order for change to take place?	Structural

Table 3: Typology of the focus group interview questions for CMs

Themes	Focus Group Questions	Type
Beliefs about the main role of the Saudi EFL teacher (teacher empowerment)	1. What do you think is the main role of EFL teacher?	Descriptive
	2. Do you believe that the teacher should have total freedom to make her own choices about how she teaches the English language?	Contrast
	Do you believe in the involvement of teachers in policy making? Can you justify your answers?	Descriptive
Helping Saudi EFL teachers to be reflective	3. Do you believe that teachers should interact with you and express their opinions concerning certain issues? What do you do to help teachers to be reflective?	Structural
Development of current CPD programmes	4. Do you believe that education is a lifelong learning process? What can be done to help teachers to be updated with new developments in the ELT field?	Contrast
Beliefs about the main challenges facing the development of EFL programmes	5. What are the major challenges facing the development of effective ELT programmes?	Structural
	6. What role do you, as policy makers and as those responsible for quality assurance, play to help to improve the quality of the ELT programmes?	Structural
Development of current English teaching programmes	7. How do you evaluate the direction and modernisation of the ELT programmes within your English language institute?	Descriptive
	8. What is needed to help to revitalise the role of the teacher as the main actor in the educational system?	Structural

Appendix VII: Pilot Study Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Name: _____ Highest Educational Degree: ____ Date degree obtained: ____

Teaching Post: _____ Years of Experience: ____ Date & Time: _____

Opening Statements

- The researcher: (Name/Affiliation/Address)
- The purpose of my research
- Interview confidentiality

Interview questions for teachers:

1. What is your understanding of the importance of English language as a subject?

2. In your opinion, how do you think English language is best learned?

3. What are the teaching method(s) you apply with your students? And what do you think is the best teaching method that fits your students' needs?

4. How much freedom do you have as a teacher practitioner to build on your own choices about teaching the English language?

5. Do you feel that the current English language curriculum can help in the aspiration to create interactive learning experiences for the learners? In what way?

6. What makes a good language classroom for you?

7. How do you perceive the adopted assessment system? Does it measure what it is supposed to measure?

8. What is your understanding of the requirements of this demanding profession?

9. What are the extent and nature of existing EFL services provided in your school, in terms of continuous development programmes, seminars and conferences?

10. How do you assess the quality of teaching, administration and planning in your institute?

11. In your view, what are the major challenges facing the development of an effective EFL teaching?

12. In what way can experience in teaching the language play a role in changing your own teaching practices?

13. How would you describe your school's workplace policies?

14. What are the areas that require intensive development in the system of EFL education in Saudi Arabia?

15. Do you feel you have a role to play in furthering school development? If so, what role? And do you see any problems in fulfilling this role?

16. What does the change in the education system mean in practice for you?

And other probe questions.

Appendix VIII: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Name: _____ Highest Educational Degree: ____ Date degree obtained: ____

Teaching Post: _____ Years of Experience: ___ Date & Time: _____

Opening Statements

- **The researcher:**

- Name/Affiliation/Address.

- **The purpose of my research:**

This study aims to investigate the perceptions and experiences of Female Saudi EFL teachers. I am particularly interested in those who have had the chance to further their education abroad, towards EFL teaching and its practices within the educational contexts in which they work. I intend by this research to touch upon generic issues and challenges that teachers might want to display and help them to enable their voice to be heard and seek more development and reform.

- **Interview confidentiality:**

* The information and data obtained from the respondents will be accorded a maximum level of confidentiality and the identities of the respondents will not be disclosed in the research.

* In order to avoid any possible loss of interview information and data, I will resort to recording the interviews with a tape recorder.

Interview questions for teachers:

1. What are your experiences of teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia?

2. How do you perceive the teaching of the English language?

3. What is your understanding of the requirements of this profession?

4. In your opinion, how do you think the English language is best learned?

5. What makes a successful language classroom for you?

6. In what way has your study abroad contributed to a change in your own teaching practices?

7. How do you, as a new entrant to the teaching profession, perceive the curriculum and its practices?

8. Do you think the current English language curriculum can help in the aspiration to create interactive learning experiences? In what way?

9. How do you perceive the adopted assessment system? Does it measure what it is supposed to measure? How do you know?

10. What do you think of the role of the textbook? How extensively do you use it in your classes?

11. What are the teaching method(s) you adopt with your students? And what do you think is/are the best teaching method(s) that fit(s) your students' needs?

12. What are the extent and nature of existing EFL services provided in your school, in terms of continuous professional development programmes, seminars and conferences?

13. Do you think your CPD needs have been met? Why/ why not?

14. What is required to meet your CPD needs?

15. How would you describe your department's workplace policies?

16. In your view, what are the major challenges facing the development of effective EFL teaching?

17. How do you assess the quality of teaching, administration and planning in your institute?

18. In your opinion, what are the areas that require intensive development in the system of EFL education?

19. How does highlighting such aspects aid you as a teacher to seek more improvements?

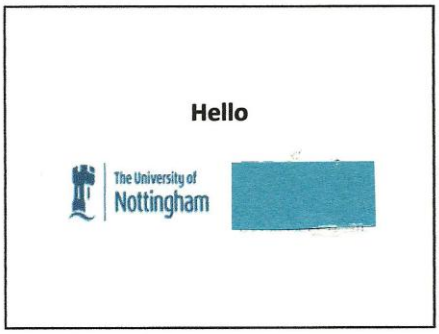
20. What does the change in the education system mean in practice for you?

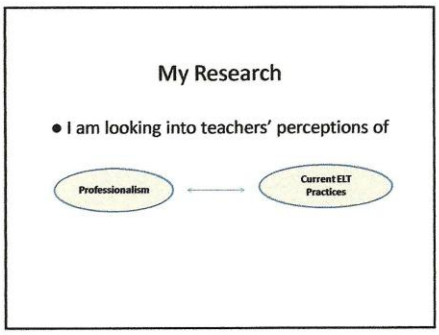
21. How much freedom do you have as a teacher practitioner to build on your own choices about teaching the English language?

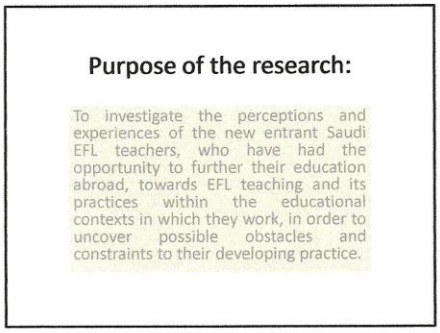
21. Do you feel you have a role to play in contributing to your school development? If so, what role? Do you see any problems in fulfilling this role?

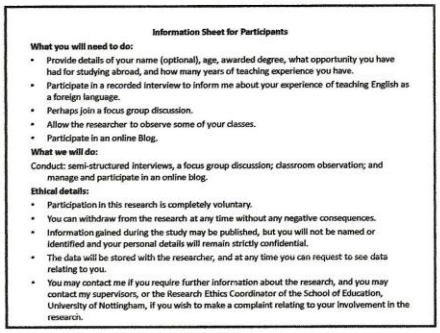
And other probe questions.

Appendix IX: PowerPoint Slides Used during Focus Groups









Information Sheet for Participants

What you will need to do:

- Provide details of your name (optional), age, awarded degree, what opportunity you have had for studying abroad, and how many years of teaching experience you have.
- Participate in a recorded interview to inform me about your experience of teaching English as a foreign language.
- Perhaps join a focus group discussion.
- Allow the researcher to observe some of your classes.
- Participate in an online Blog.

What we will do:

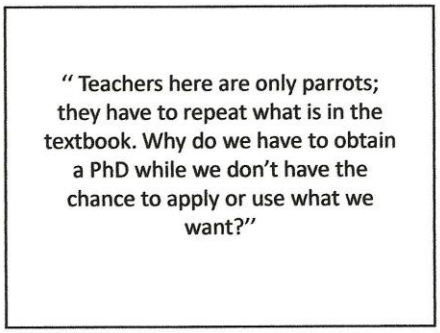
Conduct: semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion; classroom observation; and manage and participate in an online blog.

Ethical details:

- Participation in this research is completely voluntary.
- You can withdraw from the research at any time without any negative consequences.
- Information gained during the study may be published, but you will not be named or identified and your personal details will remain strictly confidential.
- The data will be stored with the researcher, and at any time you can request to see data relating to you.
- You may contact me if you require further information about the research, and you may contact my supervisors, or the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if you wish to make a complaint relating to your involvement in the research.



Consent Form



"[...] It is not an easy task for EFL teacher, I lack freedom with my students. I always feel like there is an eye on me, we cannot negotiate together what we shall discuss tomorrow or next week."

" The textbook is very important, it guides us while we're teaching, especially in our institute, without the textbook we will be lost."

" We should develop as teachers and be acquainted with all what is new, so we are always in need for more efficient professional trainings."

How do you feel as a teacher in SA?

In the space below feel free to express your feeling in drawing, by describing what it feels like to be a Saudi EFL practitioner. Please, portray your feelings of professionalism and involvement, if you can.

Could you please translate your drawings above into words?

My Contact Info.

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Any questions?



Appendix X: Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. Introduction (using PowerPoint presentation, 3 minutes)
    a. Moderator introduces herself
    b. Purpose of the study
    c. Teachers introduce themselves
        i. Obtained degree
        ii. Teaching post
        iii. Years of experience

2. Administration Data Collection (5 minutes)
    a. Data information sheet
    b. Consent form
    c. Confidentiality of the discussion
    d. Microphones and tapes

3. Breaking Ice and Warm-Up Discussion (2 minutes)
    a. Use of some quotes taken from previous teachers' semi-structured interviews, presented in a PowerPoint slides.

4. Subsequent Discussion Section (40 minutes)
    a. Teachers' empowerment
    b. Helping teacher to be reflective
    c. The excessive use of textbooks
    d. CPD programmes
    e. Willingness to change

5. Focus Group Activity Section (10 minutes)
    a. Invite teachers to be creative and portray their feelings into drawings (provide them with example to show what they are required to do)

6. Final Section (5 minutes)
    b. Summary of thoughts/reaction to discussed points
    c. Wrap-up
    d. 'Thank You' cards and chocolate

Appendix XI: Focus Group Interview Guide

Date: _____ Venue: _____ Time: _____

Teacher (1): _____ Teacher (2): _____ Teacher (3): _____

Part 1: Background Information

Teacher 1:	Teacher 2:	Teacher3:	Teacher 4:
Age □ 25 – 30 □ 31 - 35 □ 36 - 40 □ 41 - 45 □ 46 - 50 □ Above 50	**Age** □ 25 – 30 □ 31 - 35 □ 36 - 40 □ 41 - 45 □ 46 - 50 □ Above 50	**Age** □ 25 – 30 □ 31 - 35 □ 36 - 40 □ 41 - 45 □ 46 - 50 □ Above 50	**Age** □ 25 – 30 □ 31 - 35 □ 36 - 40 □ 41 - 45 □ 46 - 50 □ Above 50
Highest Educational Level □ Certificate of Education (or equivalent) □ Bachelor Degree □ Master Degree □ Doctoral Degree □ Others (please specify): _____	**Highest Educational Level** □ Certificate of Education (or equivalent) □ Bachelor Degree □ Master Degree □ Doctoral Degree □ Others (please specify): _____	**Highest Educational Level** □ Certificate of Education (or equivalent) □ Bachelor Degree □ Master Degree □ Doctoral Degree □ Others (please specify): _____	**Highest Educational Level** □ Certificate of Education (or equivalent) □ Bachelor Degree □ Master Degree □ Doctoral Degree □ Others (please specify): _____
Teaching Experience □ 1 – 5 years □ 5 – 10 years □ Beyond 10 years	**Teaching Experience** □ 1 – 5 years □ 5 – 10 years □ Beyond 10 years	**Teaching Experience** □ 1 – 5 years □ 5 – 10 years □ Beyond 10 years	**Teaching Experience** □ 1 – 5 years □ 5 – 10 years □ Beyond 10 years
Your teaching Post □ TA □ Lecturer □ HP □ AP □ CC	**Your teaching Post** □ TA □ Lecturer □ HP □ AP □ CC	**Your teaching Post** □ TA □ Lecturer □ HP □ AP □ CC	**Your teaching Post** □ TA □ Lecturer □ HP □ AP □ CC

* TA= Teacher Assistant. HP= Helping Professor. AP= Associate Professor. CC= Course Coordinator

Appendix XII: Non-Participant Structured Observation Guide

Name: _____ Highest Educational Degree: _____ Date & Time: ___

Teaching Post: _____ Years of Experience: _____ Class Level: ___

Descriptive Notes:-
*** Allocated time:** *** Physical setting:** *** No. of students:** *** Teaching method:** *** Role of the teacher:** *** Role of the textbook:** *** Extra activities:** *** Student-teacher interaction:** *** Student-student interactions:**
Reflective Notes:-

Appendix XIII: Focus Group Drawing Activity for Teachers

How do you feel as a teacher in Saudi Arabia?
In the space below feel free to express your feeling in drawing, by describing what it feels like to be a Saudi EFL practitioner. Please, portray your feelings of professionalism and involvement, if you can.

Could you please translate your drawings above into words?

Appendix XIV: Content Analysis Grid of Participant-Generated Images

Image Number: Age of Participant: Years of experience in HE:	Degree: Place of acquired degree:
Category	**Count and Comments**
Perspective/types of images (tactile/manipulated/3D representation)	
Simplicity/complexity	
Locational and spatial positioning	
Use of colours	
Symbolism	
Size of image of the teacher	
Representation of self	
Display of emotion	
Textual amount (balance between text/image)	
Textual content (text spoken by the figure)	
Degrees of certainty/uncertainty)	
Permanent and transient displays	
Researcher's interpretation of the image:	

(Adopted from Hartas, 2010: 209)

Appendix XV: An Extract from a Transcribed Pilot Study Interview

Pilot Study Semi-Structured Interview Transcript with a Teacher

Interviewer	Introduction
Interviewer Q 1	What is your understanding of the importance of English language as a subject?
Teacher	English language is an important subject to be learned, it is used as a lingua franca that is needed in order to communicate with the world around us.
Q 2	In your opinion, how do you think English language is best learned?
Teacher	Through interaction and through allowing a great deal of teacher/student and student/student relationships and interactions. Through getting students to interact with each other, get them talk and feel the language.
Q 3	What are the teaching method(s) you apply with your students? And what do you think is the best teaching method that fits your students' needs?...
Teacher	Well, I can say there is no one specific teaching method to be applied or stick to. The teacher should decide what the method that best suits students' needs and that best suits the intended skill to be taught.
Q 4	How much freedom do you have as a teacher practitioner to build on your own choices about teaching the English language?
Teacher	Not that much [laugh]. Actually, there is a limited area of freedom, for example, when it is related to curriculum there is not much freedom, we have to stick to the topics in the curriculum, you just can add to it an extra worksheet and the assessment is summative.
Interviewer	Since you have mentioned assessment, let me ask you about assessment, are you satisfied with having summative assessment?
Teacher	No.
Q 5	How do you perceive the assessment system adopted? Does it measure what it is supposed to measure?
Teacher	In fact, it is good to have summative assessment. I mean the correction procedures are easy, the teacher does not need to correct exam papers manually, it is done electronically through computers and this saves time and energy. But what I do not like about assessment, I mean summative assessment, is that I think it is unfair for students.
Interviewer	What do you mean unfair?
Teacher	I mean, it does not truly measure students' progress. Both weak and good students could get good marks because they are only multiple choice questions.
Q 6	What about curriculum, do you feel that the current English language curriculum can help in the aspiration to create interactive learning experiences for the learners?
Teacher	No.
Interviewer	Why? Could you elaborate more?
Teacher	We teach mainly rigid topics from textbooks without interaction. There is no creativity at all unless you can get access to the internet and show some clips from YouTube but the data projectors do not work most of the time.

Interviewer	What about coming up with new strategies and engaging students more in the preparation of the lesson?
Teacher	Yeh, I try to do that sometimes, but we have to focus on the workbook and that takes most of the classroom time…
Q 7	What makes a good language classroom for you?
Teacher	What makes a good language classroom? A well-equipped classroom with a data projector and new technologies is essential in language teaching. And I think we should allow students to use their mobiles phones, tablets, I Phone and Galaxy, but they are not allowed to use their mobiles inside classrooms according to institute regulations. So I think the use of technology is very important. And also I think having an interactive classroom environment plus exposure to a lot of English practices is important.
Q 8	What is your understanding of the requirements of this demanding profession?
Teacher	Teaching is a very demanding job, but a teacher needs to be passionate about her job and be able to transform that to her students. We should make the learning experience fun for our students. I believe that teaching is a way of communication, first and foremost. I mean be able to communicate your thoughts to another group of people and this is the main concept of teaching.
Interviewer	Wow. That's wonderful.
Q 9	Let me ask you now about CPD (continuous professional development). What are the extent and nature of existing EFL services provided in your school, in terms of continuous development programmes, such as seminars and conferences?
Teacher	There are a number of workshops held at the beginning of some semesters. I aim to attend international workshops and conferences, but my workload does not allow me. Once I wanted to attend an international conference in Liverpool, but the first thing said to me when I told my course coordinator (name) was ''How come, you go and you leave your teaching load, your students' (learning) will be delayed.'' The general atmosphere is not encouraging to pursue further courses or personal development. They don't encourage you to do so. We as teachers need to develop and be up to date, so we are in need of new continuous development courses and programmes, but if you ask them to provide a useful workshop or programme, they put the burden on your shoulders and ask you to look for it and bring it for others. And I have a work load that hinders me.
Q 10	How do you assess the quality of teaching, administration and planning in your institute?
Teacher	Not encouraging. They don't consult or even ask us about any resolution they make and this is so wrong because they should do so as we are in the field, teaching and interacting with students, therefore, we should be consulted in the first place.
Q 11	In your view, what are the major challenges facing the development of effective EFL teaching?
Teacher	The traditional notion of the chalk and board way of teaching. We need to catch up with the world and new advancements and be a version of what we see in different international universities abroad.

Q 12	In what way can experience in teaching the language play a role in changing your own teaching practices?
Teacher	Experience helped me a lot. It helped me to learn from my previous mistakes and avoid them in the future and be a better teacher...
Q 13	How would you describe your school's workplace policies?
Teacher	Overall, they are not that bad, but there are too many instructions and rules, why is that? I am the most important one, who should be responsible for decision making in my school, but I am being deprived of such a duty. I am not the one who decides to mark student DN [denial] from the course although I am the one who takes a register every day. I also cannot mark my students' summative exams or even see their grades as the exams are computer based and only course coordinators can see the grades. I teach my students throughout an academic term without knowing their grades or who got A or F. And accordingly I cannot put my accreditation on the final grade manifest. Have you ever seen or even heard a teacher in any university, who cannot give accreditation to her final class marks sheet
Q 14	What are the areas that require intensive development in the system of EFL education in Saudi Arabia?
Teacher	Teachers should be more appreciated. Also, the application of new technology should be enhanced. There should be an inclusion between traditional teaching methods and new technologies. In addition, we should enhance critical thinking leading to and supporting intellectual growth.
Q 15	Let me ask you now, do you feel you have a role to play in furthering school development? If so, what role? Do you see any problems in fulfilling this role?
Teacher	Not really.
Interviewer	What do you mean 'not really'?
Teacher	I don't have much of a role to play as a practitioner teacher now. I mean, I do not have much freedom outside the classroom, but inside my classroom I feel a big responsibility towards the students I teach. I have to be their role model as a person first and then as pedagogical teacher. I don't see any problem with this role because my students are respectful.
Q 16	What does the change in the education system mean in practice for you?...
Teacher	Too many things need to be changed. There should be a change at some point, but I don't know when. For example, we need less work and more inclusion for the teacher...
Interviewer	Is there anything else you would like to add or comment on?
Teacher	Thank you and all the best with your study.

Appendix XVI: An Extract from a Transcribed Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-Structured Interview Transcript with a Teacher

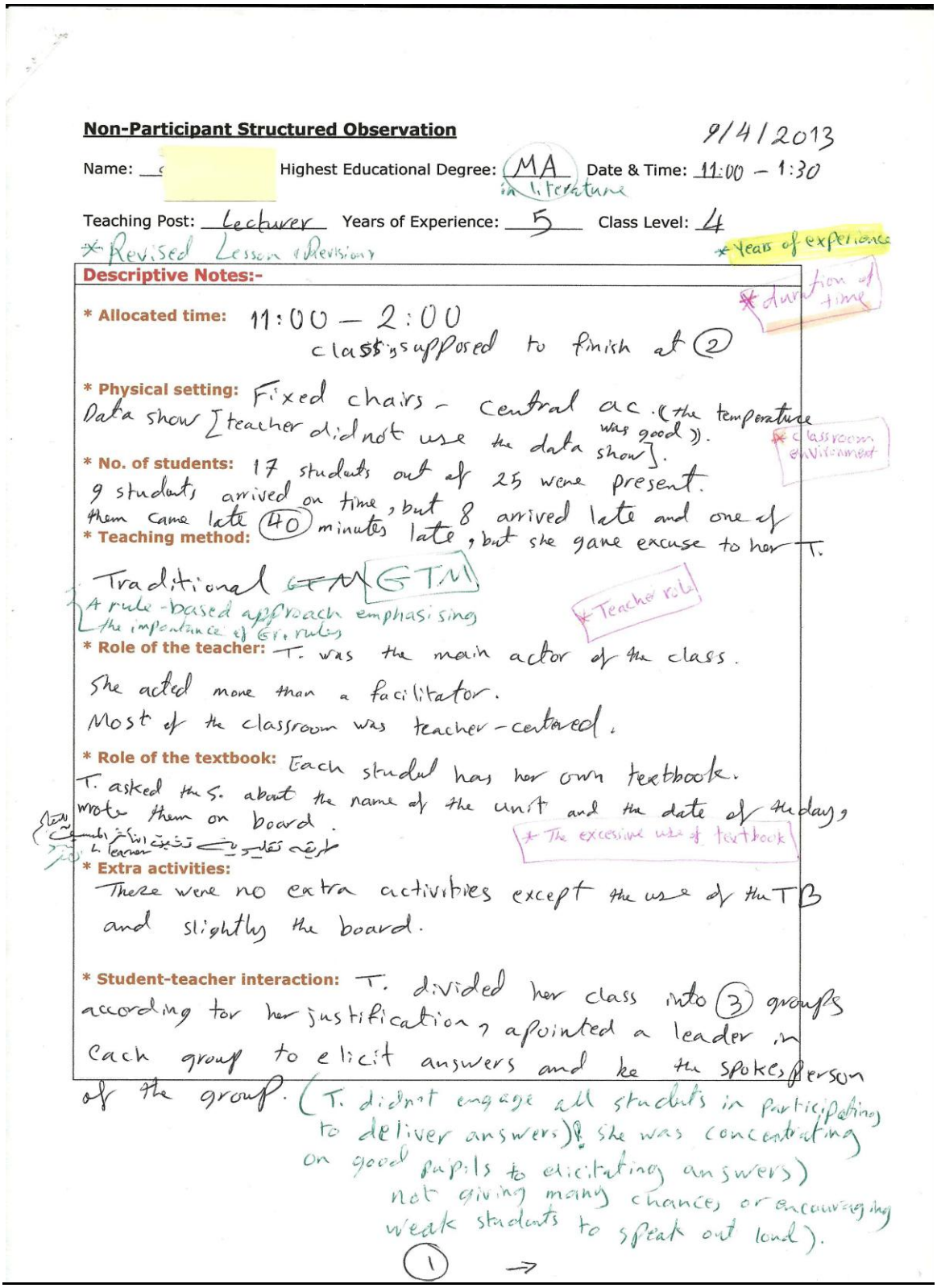
interviewer	Greeting + introduction using information sheet for participants.
Q 1	What are your experiences of teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia?
Teacher 1	Teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia is totally different from what I was taught abroad. The application and the reality are different from what I have learnt. The Saudi teacher has no say in making decisions or ability to decide on her own practices. Even in assessment we have no role, we cannot set or choose assessment procedures or even check exam questions…
Q 2	O.K, then how do you perceive the teaching of the English language?
Teacher 1	It is not that rewarding, the level of the students is generally weak and you have not much to do as a teacher because of policies that are implemented.
Interviewer	And I need to ask you your opinion about English language as a subject, do you think it is an important subject to be taught in HE in Saudi Arabia?
Teacher 1	In my opinion English is an important subject to be learned, but in our institute the teaching of it is not rewarding due to many factors: first is the long period of instruction, in addition to other many Arabic subjects the students need to undertake, such as Math and other subjects. Students spend too much time at the university, they stay until 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and this is too much for a girl in our society. That doesn't work in our society socially. She needs someone to pick her up and she needs to spend some time with her family because we are a family society, so most schools should finish at 2 o'clock as in other fields of work. And this will also give her time to practice at home.
Q 3	I need now to ask you about your understanding of the requirements of this profession 'teaching profession'?
Teacher 1	Every language teacher should have a degree besides having a good personality, understanding students' backgrounds and abilities, and be patient. She also should know about students' learning styles.
Q 4	In your opinion, how do you think English language is best learned?
Teacher 1	Through a suitable environment that encourages students to learn. Like allowing students to study abroad in an English speaking country.
Interviewer	Would that be possible?
Teacher 1	Yes, why not. We had the chance to learn abroad.
Interviewer	Yes, right, perhaps you mean exchange students.
Teacher 1	Yeh, I mean we can send them (students) to study in some English speaking countries as exchange students.
Q 5	What makes a successful language classroom for you?
Teacher 1	Having movable chairs because most of the classes have fixed chairs. Also, the data projectors in some classes do not work or I can't get access to the internet. We do not also have Smart boards.
Interviewer	Why don't you suggest such thing to your administration?
Teacher 1	I did, I have suggested it and asked the Institute admin to solve these issues and install Smart boards in the classrooms, and we are

	still waiting for a positive reply.
Q 6	In what way has your study abroad contributed to a change in your own teaching practices?
Teacher 1	I have learnt how to deal with students more accurately on the psychological level. I know more now about the psychological issues of the language learner and I am aware now that each of my students is a different person with different needs and a different way of thinking. I have also learned to design a curriculum, and how to utilize technology in a more useful way.
Interviewer	What are some of the experience(s) that you have learned from abroad that would like to apply in your institute?
Teacher 1	[…] Reading from magazines with my students and discussing new words and up-to-date issues instead of having rigid passages from textbooks.
Q 7	How do you, as a new entrant to the teaching profession, perceive the curriculum and its practices?
Teacher 1	It is a teacher-proof curriculum in which the teacher has no say.
Q 8	Do you think that the current English language curriculum can help in the aspiration to create interactive learning experiences? In what way?
Teacher 1	It is just a curriculum; it has nothing to do with Saudi Society. It has nothing to do with our culture.
Interviewer	How do you go about teaching foreign culture in the curriculum?
Teacher 1	I often ignore anything that does not go with our culture or does not match it. But since every girl has an I Phone or Blackberry, they know everything and they can discover new things on their own.
Q 9	Now, I would like to ask you about another topic: 'assessment' How do you perceive the assessment system adopted? Does it measure what it is supposed to measure? How do you know?
Teacher 1	Currently we conduct three midterm exams (one test is writing, the second is for speaking and the third is general multiple-choice questions).We used to have paper based exams, but now we conduct computer based ones and that is better because students are no longer obliged to stay for a long time waiting for their colleagues to finish then be dismissed together...
Interviewer	Do you think this multiple choice exam measures real student progress?
Teacher 1	No, it does not. It is observable that even weak students get good marks because the questions are very easy for them because the English course is 4 hours and it is heavily weighted in students' GPA, and we do not want this to affect them. Besides the Institute is seeking academic accreditation and law students' achievements can affect its status. Also, I want to add that 6 weeks to finish a module is not enough and you can see that the level of students doesn't improve...
Q 10	What do you think of the role of the textbook? How extensively do you use it in your classes?
Teacher 1	The textbook is a tool, it is a helping tool to aid you as a teacher, but you shouldn't rely totally on it…
Interviewer	How heavily do you use it in your classroom?
Teacher 1	We used to follow the textbook page by page, but after introducing the students' learning objectives (SLOs) scheme, we can choose some tasks from the textbook that are conducive to assigned

	learning objectives. Actually, somehow we still depend on textbooks about 60%of the time I would say.
Interviewer	Do you have to stick to textbook topics?
Teacher 1	Yes, I have to, I am obliged to do so according to school policy.
Interviewer	Do you think your students are attached to their textbooks?
Teacher 1	Students feel that that they need something to refer to.
Q11	What are the teaching method(s) you apply with your students? And what do you think is/are the best teaching method(s) that fit(s) your students' needs?
Teacher 1	What do you mean by teaching methods?
Interviewer	The way in which you teach your students, whether it is communicative or task-based learning approach for instance.
Teacher 1	What it is supposed to be, it should be communicative teaching. Well, I will talk about this from two angles. All concentration is on students. Students come from public schools and they are used to a spoon-feeding style. We try to help them to deduce the information and use the book to assist them.
Interviewer	Have you studied or get to know about teaching methods while you were studying abroad?
Teacher 1	We studied many theories, but teaching in most English classes should appear to be fun to students in order to help them to like English, as it is a second language.
Q 12	What are the extent and nature of existing EFL services provided in your school, in terms of continuous professional development programmes, seminars and conferences?
Teacher 1	We have lots of workshops provided during term time for teachers, but there is nothing for students.
Q 13	Do you think your CPD needs have been met? Why/ why not?
Teacher 1	No, not really.
Q 14	What is required to meet your CPD needs?
Teacher 1	More workshops, seminars and allowing us to attend international conferences.
Q15	How would you describe your school's workplace policies?
Teacher 1	It is not flexible. Everything is planned ahead and imposed upon the teachers.
Q 16	In your view, what are the major challenges facing the development of effective EFL teaching?
Teacher 1	Students' motivation, pressure and having lots of subjects to cover. I also do not feel like am a free practitioner on my own with my students. I do not deal with students as much as I deal with the Institute. Everything is provided for students by the Institute, starting from the set of dates, curriculum, assessment, everything. I feel I am only a link between Institute and its students.
Q 17	Overall, how do you assess the quality of teaching, administration and planning in your institute?
Teacher 1	We have a good number of excellent teachers, but the real problem lies in the way administration's directives There is no option for teachers, everything is imposed upon them. For example, we as teachers are not satisfied with the number of instruction hours. Having 18 English teaching hours for students each week, besides 5-6 other subjects they have to attend is too much for students. Having students come to university daily from 8-4 o'clock is hard for them, we feel that as teachers, but we can say nothing about it...

Q 18	In your opinion, what are the areas that require intensive development in the system of EFL education?
Teacher 1	Probably curriculum. Also, foundation year students are required to learn intensive English and this is not possible in an Arabic speaking country, so we should allow our students to go abroad for a period of time to study English in a native English speaking society.
Interviewer	And now let me ask you how does highlighting such aspects aid you as a teacher to seek more improvement?
Teacher 1	This will help us get rid of policies which are not working and seek more improvements.
Q 19	What does the change in the education system mean in practice for you?
Teacher 1	There is a definite need for a change, but also it is very important to know how to deal with people psychologically when change happens or to see what they think. Lots of change happened, but nobody asked us what we think of applying it the first place. I believe that it is better to go back to the old way of having two academic terms instead of having four modules per academic year...
Q 20	How much freedom do you have as a teacher practitioner to build on your own choices about teaching the English language?
Teacher 1	I have no freedom, but I can bring extra material for my students. Every tiny detail is specified for teachers, there is no freedom. Even the topic of the reading circle with my students is chosen for me, even the time for it is set ahead and I have to follow.
Q 21	Do you feel you have a role to play in contributing to your school's development? If so, what role? And do you see any problems in fulfilling this role?
Teacher 1	Of course, the teacher has a role. In my opinion, I think teaching is a relationship between the student and the teacher, but what is happening in reality is that the teacher is only a link between the Institute and students. O.K I am a practitioner teacher, but I act according to the Institute rules not according to my rules...
Q 22	At the end of this lovely conversation with you, is there anything else you would like to say or to add?
Teacher 1	I just hope that teachers will have a fuller role in all this and this is it. And I hope I was helpful.
Interviewer	Yes, you were. Thank you so much.
	Thanks and goodbyes.

Appendix XVII: A Sample of a Non-Participant Classroom Observation



Non-Participant Structured Observation 9/4/2013

Name: [redacted] Highest Educational Degree: MA in Literature Date & Time: 11:00 – 1:30

Teaching Post: Lecturer Years of Experience: 5 Class Level: 4

* Revised Lesson (Revision)

* Years of experience

Descriptive Notes:-

* duration of time

*** Allocated time:** 11:00 – 2:00
class is supposed to finish at (2)

*** Physical setting:** Fixed chairs - central ac. (the temperature was good). Data show [teacher did not use the data show].

* classroom environment

*** No. of students:** 17 students out of 25 were present.
9 students arrived on time, but 8 arrived late and one of them came late (40) minutes late, but she gave excuse to her T.

*** Teaching method:**
Traditional ~~GTM~~ GTM
A rule-based approach emphasising the importance of Gr. rules

* Teacher role

*** Role of the teacher:** T. was the main actor of the class.
She acted more than a facilitator.
Most of the classroom was teacher-centered.

*** Role of the textbook:** Each student has her own textbook.
T. asked the S. about the name of the unit and the date of the day, wrote them on board.

* The excessive use of textbook

*** Extra activities:**
There were no extra activities except the use of the TB and slightly the board.

*** Student-teacher interaction:** T. divided her class into (3) groups according to her justification, apointed a leader in each group to elicit answers and be the spokesperson of the group. (T. didn't engage all students in participating to deliver answers), she was concentrating on good pupils to eliciting answers) not giving many chances or encouraging weak students to speak out loud).

(1) →

Note
{T. didn't engage her students to speak E while they were trying to answer the exercise}.

*** Student-student interactions:**
S. were mostly silent at the beginning of the class. But when T. get them into groups works, they get more involved and active. S. discuss the given task* (only some excercises from their TBs). Most of Ss. discussion were in Arabic. T. engaged in one particular group more than others.

Reflective Notes:-

- T. started with greeting the Ss. and taking the attendance.
- T. asked about absent Ss. and the reason why; if somebody know. (positive attitude)
- T. didn't allowed Abayah during class time.
- The lesson title was about: A trip to a Museum.
- T. didn't talk about lesson objectives or write them on board.
- T didn't engage Ss. or attract their attention to the idea of the lesson, e.g. telling them a story or so.
- T. started the lesson by asking Ss. to open their TBs. pointing to unit (4), asking them to read the "title" and explain it.
- T. checked if all Ss. have their TBs. (* imp. of TB ??)
- T. asked ss. whether they have been to a museum before & Ss. gave answers. One S. talked about Egypt and the museum she had been to. [S. spoke in Arabic but the T. didn't stop her or asked her to speak E.
- Some Ss. said they don't like going to museum, but they love shopping. [the teacher didn't interact with them, instead she moved on and asked "what are the things you shouldn't do at a museum?"
teacher wrote down the ~~word~~ should (auxiliary verb) on board and start giving examples, trying to help teacher to know its usage.
- T. stated on board where the auxiliary verb [should] can be used.
- T. wrote also a sentence in the board:-
{You are allowed to chew gum in class}
- T. explained the sentence in Arabic, then she introduced the negative form (not) and the place of it in a sentence.

→ (2)

- T. introduced should / must / have to / ought to using examples.

- T. didn't encourage Ss. to come up with their own examples, instead she asked Ss. to open their TBs. to page (8) and start reading exercise 1 + 2 silently and try to find answers. (10) minutes were given to students to try to answer it individually.
- Ss. were allowed to use their mobiles to translate some words. (This contradicts what T. said in int. / Use of Arabic was dominant)
- T. asked Ss. about the meaning of new words, they replied her in Arabic and she didn't encourage them to try to explain it in English.
- After the (10) minutes, T. started to elicit answers from Ss. orally and didn't write the answers on board.
- Ss. were calling the T. Miss and raising their hands if they want to answer.
- All Ss. were encouraged to participate. T. knows her students' names even some of their family names.
- T. asked ss. to work in pairs or groups as they wish and it was hard for them to move because the chairs were fixed. So it was easier for them to work in pairs.
- Ss. were asked to go through a number of exercises in their workbooks as a way to enhance their understanding.
- Ss. were given (10) minutes to try to answer ex. with their colleagues silently, then they will be asked to answer collectively. {it was noted that ss. discuss the ex. among themselves in Arabic}
- T. was monitoring her class while they were answering ex., engaging more with some individuals or (pairs) more than others.
- After (10) m. or so T. started to elicit answers also without writing on the board.
- T.

(3)

- T. also introduced other rules [stress - Past Participle] explain them and setting some eaample without engaging Ss. or write them on board.
- Ss. were following the T. in doing the ex. in their WBs. {T. was answering most of the ex. and correcting Ss. in her own as they were too many exs. to cover}.
- T. didn't allow enough time for Ss. in their own.
- {eye contact of the Ss. were mainly directed to the TBs.}.
- After finishing with ex. T. relate the lesson role to Ss. Cultune and talked about Religious duties: What must/should be done or should not/must not be done.
- The variation of Ss paticipation was good as they are in the same level.
- There was no any variation in the choice of ex. or group work.
- data show was not used effectively.
- real classroom objects were not used to.
- By the end of the lesson T. pointed out the important ex that might come in the exam.
- Ss. were not advised to do any follow up ex. or task in their own to find out more about the use of the auxiliary verbs in E. or form their own sentences, or even google more uxiliaries and build up their own vocabulary.
- Overall, it was not a well-paced lesson, Ss. were not given enough time to review Qs and then be able to answer.
- Ss. remained seated for more than (2) hours and T. didn't encourage student to student interaction.

relate ss. to real l.f

influence of the summative assessment

contradicts what teacher have reported during interviews

(4)

Appendix XVIII: An Extract from a Transcribed Focus Group with Teachers

1st Focus Group: Discussion with Teachers

Interviewer	Introduction using PowerPoint slides
Interviewer	First of all, I would like to discuss some quotes with you, these quotes are produced by you, and I want to discuss them with you. The first quote is: ''Teachers here are only parrots; they have to repeat what is in the textbook. Why do we have to obtain a PhD while we don't have the chance to apply or use what we want?'' In an ideal world, what changes would you like to see to the curriculum, to enable you to use or apply some of your professional knowledge and experience? Is any of this possible?
T1	For me, I would like to have a flexible curriculum that could help me to implement varied skills and strategies. We would like to have more flexibility when it comes to the choice of topics and textbooks.
T2	We really want to tailor a curriculum that fits our students' needs
T3	They could provide us with a number of topics and teachers could choose from them depending on the level of the students. Sometimes we can see that students are not happy with the choice of certain topics or the given topic is not related to them.
T2	I think the teacher should be free to choose.
T4	I think it would be more beneficial for us if they provide us with lesson objectives and plans and allow as teachers to deliver them however we want based on our students' needs and capabilities. We should decide what should we teach them or not, based on their needs.
Interviewer	Is it possible to do so?
T4	With this new system, no.
Interviewer	In our current situation, what can you do to implement small changes?
T3	I think we can choose supplementary activities and choose the activities that suit our students and not to teach all the activities as is required.
T2	You know what? We cannot change many things because after all the final exam is unified so all 4000 students need to study the same curriculum. That's why we cannot change anything regarding the curriculum, because this is the policy of the institute…
T4	Not only our institute, the foundation year is unified all over the Kingdom, we cannot do anything about that.
T2	It does not make sense to teach more than 4000 students with different abilities and needs the same materials and topics, this is wrong…
T1	In fact, everything is controlled starting from classroom policy, everything, even the exercises you give in the classroom, you don't feel that you have any authority, honestly speaking.
Interviewer	''[...] It is not an easy task for EFL teacher, I lack freedom with my students. I always feel like there is an eye on me, we cannot negotiate together what we shall discuss tomorrow or next week.''

	How do you at present reflect on what you do? Do you talk to anyone about your work? Can you make any changes to your practice as a result of this discussion?
T1	Yes, from time to time we conduct meetings and focus group discussions with our course coordinators and policy managers.
T2	There is also an end-of-term report and reflection.
T4	But this is only a written form we have to fill in at the end of the term.
Interviewer	Do you talk to your course managers about your work?
T3	Ahh, just my colleagues. My colleagues mostly, I prefer not to talk to my course managers.
T1	Pardon me, talking to our course managers is useless. Even course coordinators, every time I try to discuss an issue with one of them, they keep telling me why don't you know, don't you read about it, they do not know much. I feel they are living in a different world than mine. I am doing the job and they are only sitting behind their desks…
Interviewer	So, do you think there is any mutual understanding between you and them?
T1	No, there is none. Because they do not know about our daily struggle with students or what we go through.
T4	We lack a transparent linkage between us as teachers and them as course managers.
T3	Although some of them are trying hard to do their jobs, most of them are not responsible for the continuous changes. And they struggle like us to keep up with them.
T2	In fact, our course managers arrange some urgent meetings with teachers to discuss problematic situations or issues. For example, do you remember when there was a high rate of failed students in level three, we had a meeting with Dr. (name). They asked us to justify this problem. They also asked us to provide them with some solutions. But all in all, they were trying to say the problem lies with you as a teacher.
T1	If they arrange such a meeting, I do not try to attend because they gather us mainly to blame not to listen to us, most teachers reported the same.
T4	The whole system is wrong, the whole thing. There is a big gap. (Everybody sighs)
Interviewer	O.K I have gained enough feedback in this regard and I would like now to move to another aspect. ''The textbook is very important, it guides us while we're teaching, especially in our institute, without the textbook we will be lost.'' What do you like about using a textbook? What don't you like about using them?
T2	It is…, well, it is good because you will be defined with one textbook and materials, you know the points you need to cover. You can use it as a guide, not to follow it page by page but at least it is there to help you.
T4	I feel the same. I think it should be there in order for us to follow a gradual process in terms of the flow of ideas and chapters…
Interviewer	Do you often in your lessons depart from the textbook? If not, why not? If yes, how do you do this?

T1	Honestly, not that much.
T3	Not very often...
Interviewer	Are there any parts of the textbook which are not relevant for your students?
T2	Yes, there is some content that does not go well with students' culture.
T1	No, this new series of current textbooks is relevant. They are much better than the North Star series or any previous textbooks.
T2	Maybe you are right, but I think they still need to help students to relate to their culture and society. I remember during one of my writing classes, in level two, students were told to write about a scary incident which happened to you...
Interviewer	Textbooks soon become outdated in today's technological society, so how can teachers keep up to date? Especially in this new era which is witnessing new advancements and technologies?
T2	There was.., do you remember the workshop they provided us on how to use a CD inside our classrooms, instead of the paper textbook.
T3	You mean the electronic textbook version besides the paper textbook.
T2	Yes, exactly, all you as a teacher have to do is to upload it on your desktop inside the classroom, then use it. They called it something...
T1	Tools, something tools.
T2	'I Tools' (All teachers yeh).
T4	'I Tools', it was an online programme, you can upload it on your computer. It has all the exercises included in the textbook but you can show it to them on the screen, zoom in on some parts, or play them clips and listen to them (teachers nod).
Interviewer	What other teaching resources could you use instead of the textbook?
T2	I feel that we can use new technologies, such as What's App, Instagram, Facebook, all these applications, especially when we speak about our girls, they are addicted to them. We have to take advantage of that for their own interests. And they can get access to them anytime they want.
T1	Also, we can ask them to join other blogs. We have to refer to resources other than the book.
T3	When I used to study in America, we used to join Blackboard, it is an online discussion board run by one of our professors there. It is online, so you could get access to it anytime you liked and add your comments and thoughts.
T1	Even in Canada, we used to have a discussion board.
T4	We used to report on a blog and listen to some Podcasts too in Britain. The idea is that we should help our students to reflect their opinions and use the language.
T2	We can use these online applications, such as What's App for example, to help students to correct their grammar, for instance. They may also know new vocabulary from texting each other.
Interviewer	That's lovely, interesting comments. And now I would like to discuss another aspect that has been raised by most of you in your interviews. Some of you have reported: ''We should develop as teachers and be acquainted with all what is

	new, so we are always in need for more efficient professional trainings.'' What do you want to get out of CPD programmes?
T1	I want to know effective strategies that could help to teach skills such as writing and how to teach it effectively.
T3	I would like to know more about new technologies and new teaching methods in our field.
T2	Also, I would love to know about how to design a curriculum, an effective curriculum.
T4	We also need to know more around assessment and how to assess students, especially when it comes to speaking assessment. Although we follow some rubrics whilst assessing students, but still you feel that you cannot assess them properly.
Interviewer	In your opinion, do you feel as though you are treated as a professional?
T1	No.
T3	Not really. For example, I want my students to be autonomous and search for information for themselves, but according to policy here you should provide students with all activities because they all have the same final exam. When we were students we were treated more rigidly than this generation.
T1	To be honest, I have never felt like a professional.
T2	(laughs) No one asks you about your opinion or even listens.
T4	Here, all you have are rules and you have to follow them.
T3	Constant rules and new regulations.
Interviewer	Are your views listened to?
T1	(All teachers, no).
T3	You cannot violate the rules of the system, unless you have good justification, otherwise you will be blamed and questioned.
T2	Even if you experience dangerous situations, such as what happened when we had a flood in Jeddah. Students get afraid when we get some rain and most of them freak out and they want to leave the university and you cannot help them with that because you need to get the permission from the institute first, and you are not allowed to let them leave half an hour or 20 minutes early, you will be questioned. I had a situation like that and most of the students' parents were waiting anxiously outside to pick up their girls, and I was figuring out what to do...
Interviewer	What needs to happen now, in order for change to take place?
T3	We need to be the ones in control not the ones who only follow. It bugs me that I am not fully free with my students to talk about the topics we like...
Interviewer	Why don't you think you are listened to?
T1	Because of this hierarchical system.
T2	It is simply that, people who are responsible for implementing new rules should be the ones who experience teaching in the first place, not those who only issue rigid paper-based policies...
T3	There should be a transparent relationship between us and our policy managers and a channel of giving and taking should be there, not only taking.
T4	Also, sometimes they hold a focus group with us to discuss certain issues but in the end they apply what they want regardless of our opinions. And you cannot see or feel any changes accordingly, and

	this leads us to think that our opinions do not matter to them.
Interviewer	But in order for change to take place, what do you think is required to happen?
T2	I wish, and I really wish, to go back to the old system. Having only two terms per academic year instead of four.
T1	I think the subject of English should be optional for students, since not all of them will apply for an English major. Some of them will specialise in Arabic or Religious studies, so there is no need for them to study English...
T1	Now, the outcome expected from students who are going to specialise in English is the same outcome expected to be accomplished by Arabic major students which is unfair...
Interviewer	Now we've come to the end of this lovely discussion, I would like to thank you all for your time and contributions, and I want to ask you if you would like to add anything else before we finish recording?
All teachers	(Thanks, good wishes and goodbyes).

Note: (T)=Teacher

Appendix XIX: An Extract from a Focus Group with CMs

3rd Focus Group: Discussion with CMs

Interviewer	Introduction using PowerPoint slides.
Q 1	What do you think is the main role of the EFL teacher?
CM 1	Facilitator.
CM 4	Yes, facilitator
CM 3	Teachers have lots of responsibility, especially Saudi teachers coming to the EFL field, they have great responsibility because EFL is not integrated from the past, we have only come to know it in this new era…
Interviewer	So you think teachers now act more like a guide for students?
CM 2	Sometimes the teacher is a communicator, too. She communicates students with the outside world because the English language will help them to understand what is going on in the world around them.
CM 4	In addition to what just Drs (name and name) have said, the role of the teacher as an advisor or counselor also very important, especially in Arab world when this language trauma comes up in their (students) minds, and then what we know as language anxiety develops among them, so the teacher's role as a counselor at that time besides being a facilitators is also very important.
Interviewer	So according to you teachers play a big role (interrupted by some CMs).
CM 4	Of course, yes.
CM 1	Not only big but essential…
Q 2	Do you believe that the teacher should have total freedom to make her own choices about how she teaches the English language and be left alone to decide whatever she desires with her students?
CM 1	No.
CM 1	If, sorry if she works in the institute no, but if she is a one to one teacher, it is her own world, but if she works within an institute, then she has to follow and ask for advice when it comes to something out of (..ehh) whatever. (Interrupted by the secretary).
Interviewer	Do you believe in the involvement of teachers in policy making? Can you justify your answers?
CM 4	Yes, I do agree as (name) said. But when it comes to institutional values, it is very important to indicate boundaries for teachers because every teacher comes with her own progress, culture of experience, values, mindset, but the basics have to be the same.
Most CMs	Yes. Exactly.
CM 1	The basics need to be the same.
CM 4	It depends, like if we take one language institute based here in KSA, it definitely would be different from another institute based in London, or US, or in an Asian country or in any other country.
CM 2	We should draw lines for teachers in order to help them, so that they can help their students. They have to stick to the general rules and boundaries of the institute...
Interviewer	But here I am focusing on Saudi teachers who studied abroad and pursued higher education, so now they are acquainted with new teaching styles and knowledge. And when I asked them if they are walling to apply what they studied abroad here and help to develop

	a new curriculum or strategies, most of them replied that they cannot change or do anything as teachers. Most of them have replied and I quote here that ''they are only like parrots, repeat what they have in textbooks''.
CM 3	Somehow, I would say, here in Saudi Arabia, it is the institutional job to... Somehow they (teachers) are restricted,... but the teacher inside the class have the freedom, right. I mean the policy she wants to adopt with her students or the applications of learning, here in this respect she should have freedom and be the master of the class as said earlier, according to students' needs and demands but this is only inside her classroom. And this will be shown by looking at the standards of the students and their level. But outside the classroom, she has to cope with each and everything and whatever the institute is demanding from here...
Interviewer	What about those teachers who have high ambitions and good vision, those who can come up with new teaching strategies and new visions, what do you do to help them to implement their ideas in reality?
CM 1	We help them to implement what they want if we find that promising and beneficial. We always encourage teachers to turn to us if they have new ideas or something inspiring.
CM 3	Yes, teachers have the opportunity to come to us and together we can make changes for the needs and demands of students.
Interviewer	So, according to what you just have said, the teacher can apply what she wants with her students, but what about if the teacher does not want to stick to the topic that is in the textbook, can she apply another topic of her choice with her students?
Most CMs	Yes, why not.
CM 4	Teachers teach the same units but in different ways, for example, last year, I am telling you from my experience, I observed some classes at level 4. They were studying the same topic, 'pizza,' they had a passage on pizza, and I can tell you that I found five different teachers teaching the same passage in five different ways. Everyone came with her own style of teaching. Somebody, one teacher brought a pizza, another come up with a song about pizza ..(interrupted).
CM 1	Pardon me, what I think Abeer is trying to ask if teachers are totally free to choose their own topic for the whole curriculum, yes teachers can do so as long as they deliver the educational objectives we provide with them every academic term.
Interviewer	That is exactly what I was aiming to ask. But this also leads me to ask you about the idea of having a unified textbook in the first place, if teachers can introduce their own topics, why is it that they have to use the textbook every day? Besides, as you know it is costly for students.
CM 1	Yes, a unified textbook.
CM 3	Since we are here at the (name) dealing with foundation year students, usually their level of English is not that good, so students need to have a reference, also the range of topics in the textbook are arranged and designed to develop gradually with the level of students...
CM 1	I see something else, for the foundation year, teachers can stick to the textbook as reference only but inside classrooms they can do

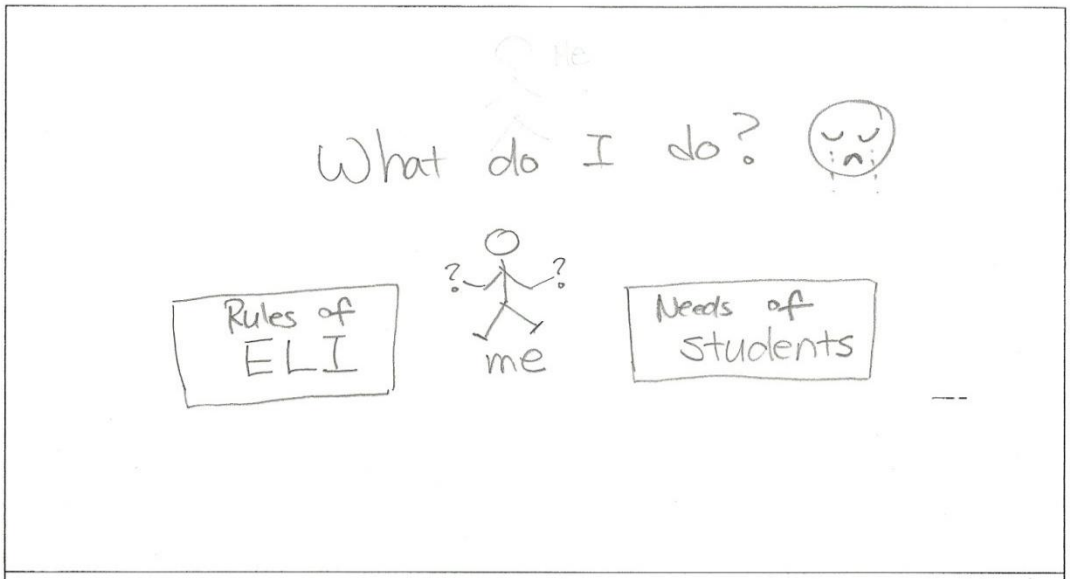
	something else, for example: role play,..whatever, for practicing.
Interviewer	So, you think they still have to have a textbook?
Most CMs	Yes, they must have.
CM 1	Let's say at least 70% of the classroom must be based on the textbook, teachers need to refer to their textbooks because if students couldn't get something from the teacher, at least they can go back to their textbooks if they need guidance. Speaking from 22 years of experience as a teacher and as a former language learner long years ago, I feel safe when I have a textbook with me because I need a reference. And this reference should be the same that my classmates have...
Q 4	Now, let me ask you: Do you believe that education is a lifelong learning process? If yes, how can teachers be supported in their ongoing professional development?
CM 1	Here at the (name), we are trying to help teachers to be acquainted with new teaching strategies, seminars, and we also ask teachers to do peer observation because we think that teachers learn better from each other.
Interviewer	What about if teachers ask you to provide them with workshops on something? What can you do? Are you willing to listen to them?
CM 1	Yes, of course, actually this is what we do at the end of every workshop, we distribute questionnaires to the teachers asking them what they need the coming workshop to be on.
Interviewer	Do you encourage teachers to attend international conferences?
CM 2	Yes, but it is not part of our job (laughs).
CM 3	Actually, there should be two motivations behind that: number 1, to get a certificate, number 2 to get the opportunity to see other people whom are in the same field.
Interviewer	I need her to raise this issue with you, during my interviews with Saudi teachers most of them reported that nobody encourages them to disseminate their research findings or present their previous work. What do you say … (interrupted).
CM 1	This is not true. We established the 'CPD Unit' two years ago and the head of this committee is Dr. (name), and she is trying her best to invite new teachers and all (name of the institute) teachers to present their work or research in seminars or at the (name of the institute) annual conference, but unfortunately most of them don't respond.
CM 2	I think it is an obligation for teachers to let us know about their work and share knowledge with other colleagues. And we are waiting for you and your other colleagues to come back and share your experience with us…
CM 3	Promise us Abeer, when you come back you will do it yourself.
Interviewer	I will, do not worry (if God wills).
CM 3	Let me say something as the head of the Research committee, you won't believe that I just have contacted three new award winning teachers and asked them to participate in this coming (name of the institute) conference, one was (name) who has just been awarded her MA from Leeds University in the UK and two other teachers, I tried with them by all means I could think of, but I am really sorry, really sorry (repetition) that they hesitated to participate, they made excuses and they were not willing to do anything. And I think they are obliged to disseminate their knowledge and share their research findings with their colleagues, after all the [name of the

	institute] sponsored them during their studies. If you do not share your findings, it is not ethical…
Q 5	Speaking about your role, this leads me to ask the following question: What role do you, as policy makers and as those responsible for quality assurance, play to help to improve the quality of the ELT programmes?
CM 3	You mean what we can do to increase or develop the policies here?
CM 1	As a member of quality assurance Committee and we have to work for the development of the (name of the institute), ... but before this , I know something from my experience. Quality and assurance is within my remit but I want to say that responsibility lies upon the shoulder of every individual teacher whether we ask or not...
CM 3	I also would like to say that it is our responsibility to help teachers to be motivated and give more to their careers.
Q 6	Now I would like to ask you, what are the major challenges facing the development of effective ELT programmes?
CM 1	Well, I think …
CM 2	Maybe the lack of cooperation between teachers and us, because … we regard teachers as our eyes and ears, they should report to us if they see that there is something wrong with our current policies, or just discuss with or tell us what could help students to develop and all of us to develop as well.
CM 1	Well, I don't see that there are many challenges we face except the large number of students we receive every term…
Q 7	How do you evaluate the direction and modernisation of the ELT programmes within your English language institute?
CM 3	Perfection is only for Allah, but we are trying our best to be close to perfection.
CM 1	And by the way, we got accreditation last year and many other departments are still working towards achieving this goal.
CM 2	Most, not most, but the majority and I don't want people to say that I am exaggerating, based on all the work and the number of committees we have, most are moving forward rapidly, also by looking to the massive number of staff we have Saudi and international staff members from developed countries of the world, from America, Canada, Australia and Britain. All of them leave the institute with good and positive remarks, thank God.
Q 8	What is needed to help to revitalise the role of the teacher as the main actor in the educational system?
CM 2	I think we can't change the role of the teacher. The teacher has always been the most influential person in the whole educational process and will always be. As we say in Arabic, the teacher could have been a messenger.
CM 1	Indeed, But it is not only our responsibility to help teachers to prove what an important role they have or how important it is to fit in this demanding profession, it is also the role of the teacher to develop as a person and a professional...
CM 3	I think there are two things for the teacher to consider: first, developing her practice and experience, and second, an 'I can' principle, she needs to work with the concept 'I can' in mind, so that she can try creative things with her students...
Interviewer	But can the teacher be totally free to design her own curriculum, for example, or even to take her students out on a trip?
CM 3	Of course, there are some restrictions or lines a teacher can't cross,

	such as taking them outside the university because of some cultural aspects. It's our culture, parents don't easily trust the teacher. Even if they trust teachers, they won't trust people at the mall or whatever...
CM 1	Yeh, parents nowadays are not in favour of the teacher as the situation used to be 50 years ago.
CM 3	Actually, when students can't see their teacher as a role model, they don't deal with her as they should be, so they (students) are looking at the quality of her teaching. To sum up, the quality of teachers and the quality of parents is what makes pupils different nowadays than 20 years ago...
Interviewer	O.K this is interesting, but let me ask you do you believe that teachers are born or made?
CM 3	Both..., in this materialistic world they are made.
CM 1	Made.
CM 2	Made. Teachers are made.
CM 3	For me teachers are born.
Interviewer	So what can we do if we were not teachers by birth? (teachers laugh)
CM 2	(Asking teacher 3) so if teachers are not teachers by birth, they can't become teachers...
Interviewer	We come now to the end of this lovely discussion, I would like to thank you for your time and contribution to my research, and I want to ask you if you would like to add anything?
CM 1	I would like to say that we are here at the (name) university are trying our best to stay in the lead always because we are ranked the second best university in the Arab world after King Saud University, which is also a Saudi university and this is good, but here I would like to say… that with everybody's effort (name) will rank highly within the world's universities too, and this is not too far off, but this needs teamwork and mutual understanding. Teamwork, it's not one's person job or role.
CM 3	Everybody, teachers, quality assurance members, deans and every individual person at the ELI should play her role actively, positively and have a goal, without setting a goal, everybody will be lost.
CM 1	A house cannot be built in one day; everything needs to happen slowly and gradually. And a time will come when everybody's effort will pay off.
Interviewer	Well, thank you so much for the time you have given me and your contribution to my research, I cannot thank you enough because I know how busy you are, especially at this time of the year, God bless you all and thank you.
All CMs	Thank you.
CM 3	You are welcome Dr. Abeer, or doctor to be, and we wish you all the best with your research.
CM 1	We will be waiting for you to come back.
	(thanks and goodbyes)

Appendix XX: A Sample of Teacher-Constructed Images

How do you feel as a teacher in SA?
In the space below feel free to express your feeling in drawing, by describing what it feels like to be a Saudi EFL practitioner. Please, portray your feelings of professionalism and involvement, if you can.



Could you please translate your drawings above into words?

Feel like a sandwich between the ELI and students. We need to follow orders but couldn't give students' needs.

Thank you for your time and effort