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THE IMPACT OF CURRICULUM PRESCRIPTION ON  
ENGLISH TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN  
OMAN

FAWZIYA HAMDAN ABDULLAH AL ZADJALI

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Leeds  
Beckett University for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

June 2017



## **Abstract**

This thesis presents the findings from an empirical research that explored the impact of curriculum prescription on the development of English Language (L2) teachers' professional identity (TPI) in the Sultanate of Oman. This research examined the intertwined concept of TPI from a multifaceted theoretical perspective in order to reach deep insights into the factors that contribute to its development in a prescriptive curriculum context.

Through a qualitative and interpretive research, this study explored the perceptions of L2 teachers on their professional identity through a triangulation of data collection methods. The focus groups with the teachers represented the real sample of state schools in the Omani educational system. The sample was representative in relation to gender (male and female), years of teaching experience and schools (primary, intermediate and secondary or as addressed locally: Cycle-One, Cycle-Two and Post-Basic Education schools). This study also interviewed authorities from the Ministry of Education who worked in Curriculum, Supervision and Training. Additionally, national policy and curriculum documents were analysed qualitatively as part of this research process.

Through the adoption of a qualitative content analysis approach, the findings from this research supported previous research and clearly demonstrated that TPI is not static or rigid- rather it proved to be evolving, dynamic and influenced by the teachers lived experiences. The findings highlighted that not only faith, culture, personality traits and the moral values teachers hold for teaching and learning appear to underpin their professional identity, but their emotions and gender influence this identity as well.

This research makes a significant contribution towards understanding the academic field of EFL/TESOL teacher identity by providing new knowledge regarding what impacts on and contributes to the development of EFL non-native TPI and the extent of this impact on a local and global scale.



## Declaration

I confirm that the thesis is my own work; and that all published or other sources of materials consulted have been acknowledged in notes to the text or the bibliography.

I confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for comparable academic award.

*Fawziya Al Zadjali*

Fawziya Al Zadjali

June 2017

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to Oman's first teacher and leader, who identified the importance of education as a basic pillar for Oman's development and growth: His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Saeed, Sultan of Oman, and to all those who care about education in Oman and beyond.

## **Acknowledgments**

First and above all, I thank Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful for giving me the strength and ability to see this research process through from the beginning to the end.

I owe a deep debt of gratefulness to my supervisors, Dr Nick Sutcliffe and Dr Caroline Bligh for their great support and assistance throughout the whole process of my PhD journey. Their constructive feedback has contributed a great deal to the completion of this thesis.

My special thanks go to the people who surrounded me with their care and love throughout this research journey. I would not have been able to undertake this study without the emotional support of my beloved children: Bashayer, Qais and Hadeel, my husband, relatives and friends in Oman whose continuous reassurance and unfailing encouragement accompanied me throughout this four-year journey. Particularly, to mention my dearest sister Sameera for her sustained care and encouragement and her two little daughters Wurood and Fatima whose presence and visits to me lightened up those difficult times. I am also grateful to my friends here in Leeds: Reemia, Nora, Zainab and Sumaya, whose company made my stay in the UK delightful and entertaining. Of course, special thanks go to my friend Nasreen Akhtar for her sustained encouragement and precious time during my PhD journey.

I am especially grateful for the cooperation, enthusiasm and time of the teachers and all of the participants who agreed to take part in this research, and without whom this work would not have come to life.

Thank you all for believing in me.

Fawziya Al Zadjali





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## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

TPI	Teacher Professional Identity
ELT	English Language Teaching
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
ESL	English as a Second Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
MoE	Ministry of Education
ELCD	English Language Curriculum Department
OWTE	Our World Through English
EFM	English For Me
TTI	Teacher Training Institutes
ITTC	Intermediate Teacher Training College
SQU	Sultan Qaboos University
BA	Bachelor of Arts
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
PIRLS	Progress in Reading Literacy Study
L2	English as a Second or Foreign language
PPK	Personal Practical Knowledge



## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The result of an increasing volume of research, conducted on an international basis, suggest that it is no longer adequate to recognise a 'good teacher' only in the limited terms of their behaviour in the classroom and by certain competencies they have gained from training sessions (Korthagen, 2004). Consequently, research focus has shifted towards teacher-self, cognition, beliefs and professional identity that determines their behaviour in the classroom (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Korthagen, 2004; Richards, 2008). To quote Varghese et al (2005, p.22):

“In order to understand language teaching and learning we need to understand teachers; and in order to understand teachers, we need to have a clearer sense of who they are: the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them.”

For more than three decades, research on Teacher Professional Identity (TPI) has received a considerable attention within the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) and the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Research on TPI is beneficial as it addresses issues related to the complexity of teaching and learning from both the personal and professional perspectives of teachers. Such research ensures depths of insight into the teacher-self and therefore their professional-self, something that affects the quality of their work in the classroom.

Since the way teachers view themselves influences their professional development and academic learning (Beijaard et al, 2004), this research argues that understanding TPI influences the quality of teacher work because it enables them to develop insights into their professional identity. Thus, the more teachers become aware of their professional identity, the better they become in managing educational change such as reforms and standardisation regimes like curriculum prescription. Therefore, the understanding of TPI helps educationalists and authorities provide appropriate and useful pre-service teacher education programmes and in-service teacher training courses.

Research has found that teachers balance three dimensions into their work. These are (1) the personal dimensions of their social life, (2) the professional dimensions about the teachers' own ideals, the policy and societal expectations of what makes a good teacher, and (3) the situational dimensions about teachers' immediate working environment such as school context, their learners and the curriculum they teach (Day et al, 2006;



Pennington and Richards, 2016). Thus, in order to understand the complex nature of teaching and learning, it is vital to consider teachers' professional identities because teachers appear to be the most influential and ultimate aspect of the teaching-learning process compared to other aspects (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992; World Bank, 2013).

Research on TPI has involved areas such as the impact of teacher beliefs and values on their practice (Nias, 1989), teacher agency (Coldron and Smith 1999) and the characteristics and the nature of teacher identity (Rodgers and Scott, 2008, Flores and Day, 2006). Moreover, research on TPI has studied the factors that influence this identity; the internal factors like values and beliefs and the external or contextual factors such as context and prior experiences as school children themselves (Flores and Day, 2006; Olson, 2008; Rodgers and Scott, 2008).

The review by Borg (2003) on teacher cognition in L2 (English as a Second or Foreign language) contexts is relevant to this research, which also deals with teachers working through a second or third language. Borg's review discovered that 'decision making' has been the most researched area across mainstream educational research in language teacher cognition. This review has also revealed that there was less reference to the contextual factors, which may encourage or hinder teachers' abilities to make decisions. Thus, Borg highly recommends greater attention to be paid to the contextual factors that affect language teachers practice and research to study EFL contexts in state schools with large classes where teachers are non-native speakers of the English language.

While research into contextual factors is limited, there also remains a paucity of research and literature in the impact of curriculum prescription as a contextual factor on the development of non-native English language teachers in non-Western contexts. For example, Reeves' (2010) study on English as Second Language (ESL) teachers was in the USA and Cabral's (2012) study of curriculum types and teacher identity took place in Lisbon. This focus on exploring the influence of curriculum prescription on the professional identity in EFL/TESOL non-Western contexts is a dearth in literature. Thus, the current research has attempted to redress this gap in literature by studying the kind of impact of curriculum prescription can have on non-native English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers who teach in a non-Western country.

Additionally, research on TPI has involved the study of the indicators this identity may consist of. Kelchtermans (1993, 1994) developed certain indicators to make sense of teacher identity; these were motivation, job-satisfaction, commitment and feelings of self-

efficacy. Hong (2010) further developed Kelchtermans' indicators and called them the 'components' of TPI. These components involved teacher emotions, commitment, values, knowledge, beliefs and micro-politics. Although, there have been some attempts by scholars such as Kelchtermans (1993) and Hong (2010) to conceptualise the components of TPI, these are not yet theorised in literature, particularly in relation to the field of TESOL/ EFL. Although, Hong's (2010) attempt to conceptualise the components of teacher identity included essential elements of TPI like beliefs, values, knowledge and commitment, I argue that these components missed out the element of autonomy. If teacher professional development and identity are to be considered, then there needs to be a certain level of autonomy available for teachers particularly in EFL/ TESOL contexts because autonomy links to teacher professional practice (Hargreaves, 2000). In EFL / TESOL contexts, autonomy becomes a key component of TPI because of the high level of bureaucratic control imposed on teachers. This research looks to develop a new theoretical model in which four key components contribute to the development of TPI. These components were teacher (1) beliefs, values and attitudes, (2) professional knowledge, (3) professional commitment and (4) autonomy. These components were developed based on previous work that contributed to the conceptualisation of the components of TPI as discussed above.

The selection of the focus for this study has derived from the term professionalism and professionalisation. Englund (1996) differentiates between professionalism and professionalisation. He defines professionalisation as a society linkage measurement that makes a profession, such as the body of knowledge that they possess, the professional autonomy they have over their knowledge and their responsibility and professional ethics they use with their clients, while he links the concept of professionalism to the qualities, competencies or pedagogical aspects to the teaching as practice. In line with this discussion Hargreaves (2000, p.152) differentiates between the two terms as "Professionalism (improving quality and standards of practice) and professionalization (improving status and standing)".

Since it is not the mission of this thesis to differentiate between these two terms or concepts, they will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis to refer to all aspects that contribute to the development of TPI. Although professionalism is out of this research's scope, it is still very relevant to be considered as it represents the quality of work. Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Hooley (2007) base teacher professionalism on certain factors; these include teachers having professional knowledge about their subject

area and skills, reflected in their attitudes and practice where this knowledge must be based and grounded in current educational research and theory like other professionals in other fields. Therefore, the concept of professional identity in this research is based on the four focus areas that make up TPI. These include teacher beliefs, values and attitudes, teacher professional knowledge, autonomy and commitment. The addition of autonomy is essential for this research as it examines autonomy within a highly controlled curriculum prescription regime.

Since the nature of TPI is correlated, it needs to be studied using the same interrelatedness. This means that for the depth required to understand the professional identity of the target teachers, all of the components of this identity need to be considered in an interrelated way.

Having set the scene for this research, I will now go on to present the motivating factors that underpinned it.

### 1.1 Research Rationale

This research is rooted in both personal and professional reasons. The personal reasons relate to me as an experienced EFL professional and teacher educator who is interested in researching issues related to teacher education, training and curriculum design.

Since I began my career life as a primary English language teacher, I was introduced to the prescribed curriculum and was given a highly prescribed Teacher's Book as it has always been in Oman. The prescribed curriculum told me exactly what to teach, how to teach and how to assess my learners. I found the prescribed curriculum very useful then, and considered it a useful guide for my teaching. Additionally, I benefited from the other components of the prescribed curriculum, such as the teaching materials, the assessment procedures and the course books.

I grew up with a prescribed curriculum in my hand and always thought that it is the best thing that could be offered to teachers of English. After several years of teaching experience and pursuing further studies, I worked for the curriculum department and began to contribute to the development of the national school curriculum myself. I made teachers' instructions very detailed for the curriculum I worked on, so that teachers would

find them beneficial. Curriculum prescription was seen necessary to address the mismatch between initial teacher training and practice or curriculum change and teacher training. Having a prescribed curriculum in Oman is a norm that authorities and practitioners rarely think about questioning.

However, I have always noticed unease from supervisors and curriculum department authorities who visited schools. The worry was about teachers deviating from the prescribed curriculum, particularly the Teacher's Book, and starting to implement their own practices and changes contrary to the instructions defined in the Teacher's Book. This led me to specialise in TESOL teacher education for my Master's degree and only then, I was able to address the concerns I had about teachers deviating away from the prescribed curriculum and the Teacher's Book.

It is normal teacher behaviour to want to deviate from the prescribed curriculum as all teachers hold certain personal beliefs about teaching and learning. These beliefs and values originate from various sources such as teacher childhood experiences and with time, these beliefs and values become solid, robust and hard to change. As a result, teachers sometimes find it hard to adapt to reforms. Therefore, as a response to the new knowledge I acquired about teacher beliefs, I tried to adapt my practice as a teacher trainer and involved tasks that unravelled teachers' beliefs during the in-service teacher training courses I ran (Malderez, 2004). However, I noticed that even my trials did not yield much improvement in teachers' professional practice.

The work-related motives for this research were driven by the national and international evaluation studies carried out to evaluate the educational system in Oman. Being a practitioner at the Directorate General of Curriculum Development, I have always been influenced by the findings from such evaluation studies and they remained at the back of my mind. According to the recent educational system review that was jointly carried out between the Ministry of Education and the World Bank, entitled "Education in Oman: the Drive for Quality" (World Bank, 2013), there were a number of national and international studies which were carried out to measure learner performance and teacher quality in the Omani educational system. Although this document presents the success of the Omani educational system since the 1970s, it commented on the weakness in the quality of education and underachievement of learners.

This situation made me think about the reasons that restrict teachers from improving learner achievement. In spite of periodic curriculum revisions and development, learners

were failing short of attaining the intended outcomes set by the Ministry of Education. After consulting the relevant literature on teacher learning, I developed an understanding that teacher identity can influence their practice (Hargreaves, 2000; Richards, 2008). Thus, I decided to study the concept of TPI and relate it to the context of curriculum prescription.

The educational system in Oman has always been prescribed and this is particularly true for the English language subject. As a foreign or second language the Ministry of Education has always wanted to provide teachers with full support through a prescribed curriculum. In this study, I aimed to question this curriculum prescription norm and explore the kind of impact such a curriculum can have on EFL teachers' professional identity. The motives for this research have been my personal ambition to add to the educational system and policy in Oman by bringing in change and developmental ideas concerning teacher education programmes at both pre-service and in-service levels as well as for curriculum design and development. A number of aims and questions have driven this study as outlined below.

## 1.2 Research Aims and Questions

This research has aimed to explore the impact of curriculum prescription on the professional identity of non-native EFL teachers in a non-Western country. In order to achieve this aim, the following research questions have steered this research:

RQ1: In what ways can the context of a prescribed curriculum contribute to the development of teachers' professional identity?

This research question focussed on the influence and contribution of the prescribed curriculum on the development of the English teachers' professional identity. Whether or not prescribed curriculum plays a role in this development was explored through focus groups and semi-structured interviews with teachers and authorities. This question was investigated in relation to the four proposed components of TPI; these were (1) teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes about themselves and the curriculum they teach, (2) their professional knowledge, (3) their autonomy inside the classroom and (4) the kind of roles and responsibilities they assign to themselves within a context of a prescribed curriculum.

RQ2: Within the context of a prescribed curriculum, how do English language teachers describe themselves in relation to the development of their professional identity?

Since TPI is about the image teachers have of themselves as teachers, this research explores this identity based on Korthagen's (2004) questions that help teachers develop their professional identity. These questions are to do with the self; "Who am I? What kind of teacher do I want to be? How do I see my role as a teacher?" Based on Korthagen's questions about TPI, teacher cognition seems to be reflected in the questions about self "Who am I?" These questions relate directly to teacher cognition represented by the beliefs and values they hold about themselves as teachers as well as about learning and teaching. The question about the teachers' role is more to do with the relationship between teachers and the surrounding context represented in their school administration and environment, the curriculum they teach, the learners and parents they deal with.

Since an individual's identity involves the person's self-image and their awareness of themselves that is based on their beliefs and values about their position as teachers (Pennington and Richards, 2016), this research question aimed to explore the concept of teacher self-image. It aimed to discover how English language teachers in Oman describe and view themselves as teachers within a context of a prescribed curriculum. The data for this question was collected from the focus groups and semi-structured interviews with teachers.

RQ3: What factors influence the development of professional identity for this group of English Language teachers?

This question was about the factors that contributed to the development of the participant teachers' professional identity. These factors were reached from the focus groups and semi-structured interviews with teachers and the semi-structured interviews with the authorities.

### 1.3 Significance of this Research

This work is significant because it has aimed to add some new insights to the field of research on ELT and Teacher Education within an Arabic context by examining the concept of TPI on both a local and global scale.

It is hoped that this research will make a significant contribution towards the understanding of the academic field of TPI by questioning and clarifying its boundaries and identifying its components. These components will be presented in a new conceptual model, which can help TESOL/ EFL teachers make sense of their own professional identity and therefore influence their practice. This model aims to provide theoretical insights into the concept of TPI for TESOL/ EFL teachers by building on existing theories and theorising the components of this type of identity. Practically, this model could be utilised to provide insights to educators in pre-service teacher education institutions and for in-service teacher training courses. The proposed new model has derived from previous work on teacher identity such as Kelchtermans (1993) and Hong (2010).

This research has intended to contribute to the theoretical knowledge of ELT/ TESOL by providing new knowledge regarding the influences on TPI in less researched contexts such as the Arab World, where teachers of English as a Second or Foreign language (L2) are non-native speakers of the English language. Since this research was carried out on L2 professionals in a developing non-Western country (namely Oman), it responded to calls by researchers to conduct more research in non-Western and developing countries (GÜR, 2014; Cheung, 2015). This research also added to EFL/ TESOL research on the area of TPI in relation to the factors that may affect this identity in a context of curriculum prescription, an area that has received less attention from researchers.

At a methodological level, this study is significant because it has implemented focus group interviews as a main data collection method. This is something that makes it unique and different from previous research on TPI, which implemented teacher narratives or utilised focus groups as a supplement to the main findings such as Blignaut's (2008) study. This research has aimed to add to the field of qualitative research methods, the significance of using focus groups as a primary research method to investigate issues related to TPI that require depth and richness.

At a local level in Oman, this research is significant as it revealed a hidden issue by questioning the prescribed English language curriculum and discussing its impact on TPI. Al-Issa (2007) questioned curriculum prescription and centralisation from an ideological perspective and found consensus for having a flexible syllabus for English language teaching in Oman, which would hopefully pave the way for a more communicative type of teaching and enable teachers to become decision makers. However, I argue that before adopting a flexible syllabus or curriculum in Oman, it is vital to conduct empirical research

on teacher-self and identity, because such research would give an indication about the current situation of the teaching force and would pave the way forward in relation to curriculum design, implementation and teacher education in Oman and related contexts. As an outcome of this research and based on its findings, this work called for a new curriculum framework that aims to promote the development of TPI smoothly at both pre-service and in-service teacher education to ensure quality teaching and learner achievement. The proposed framework could be applicable to other related and similar contexts. Thus, this qualitative research has aimed to facilitate some action and influence both policy and practice (Robson, 2011) in Oman and beyond.

As this research has focussed on schoolteacher professional identity, it is the first of its kind in my context, Oman. This makes it significant and unique because to my knowledge there is not a research study that has been carried out on school English language teachers' professional identity in Oman. Although the two studies conducted by Ambusaidi et al (2013) and Chirciu (2014) focus on teacher identity in Oman, they do not target 'English teacher' professional identity in 'school settings'.

The uniqueness and significance of this research is further supported by the scarcity of empirical work focussing on EFL/TESOL teacher identity in neighbouring Gulf States. For example, the study conducted by Rostron (2014) in Qatar focussed on exploring the non-native teacher identity and Throne's (2015) research investigated the professional identity of pre-service ELT teacher educators in higher education settings in the UAE. The only relevant study to the current research is the one conducted by Hasan (2014) on Bahraini school L2 teachers. However, this study's focus was more on teacher beliefs and professionalism. This means that there is still an absence of such research on L2 teachers in the Arab world particularly in the Gulf countries.

I hope that this new and significant research will help to promote change in the educational policy in Oman and the findings will contribute to an overhaul of the current educational system, this us planning the way forward. A proposed curriculum framework that promotes quality teaching and the development of TPI will aid this. Both researchers and teacher educators can make use of the findings from this research to explore issues related to TPI and to plan curriculum and develop teacher education or training programmes.

Having discussed the significance of this research, I will now move on to present the structure of this thesis.



#### 1.4 Thesis Structure and Outline

This thesis consists of seven chapters including the current introductory chapter. The second chapter provides some background information about the educational context in Oman where this study took place. This involves some discussion on the educational system before the 1970s and the reform. The reform discussion provides an overview of the Basic Education system and ELT curriculum design and development in the Omani context. This chapter moves on to talk about teacher education in Oman at both pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher training programmes. This chapter ends with the challenges that face the educational system in Oman.

The third chapter presents a review of the literature on both the concept of TPI and curriculum. The first section discusses the concept of TPI and considers its theoretical perspectives, definitions, characteristics and the factors that influence it. This chapter argues for the theorisation of the components that make up TPI. These components are presented in a proposed conceptual model. The proposed components are teacher (1) teacher beliefs, values and attitudes, (2) professional knowledge, (3) autonomy and (4) commitment. This chapter later provides detailed information on the different types of curriculum and defines curriculum from the point of view of this research. The discussion on curriculum types moves on to include curriculum prescription, which is followed by a section on teacher involvement in curriculum design. The development of curriculum design across decades is also considered with a focus on the role of teachers throughout these developmental stages. The last section on curriculum considers the research carried out on the impact of curriculum on teachers.

The fourth chapter presents the methodology adopted for this research by presenting a description of the qualitative research paradigm that guided the design of this research. This chapter then describes and discusses the research methods adopted for this research and participant recruitment. Later this chapter provides a detailed description of all three data collection methods utilised in this research. This chapter then talks about the piloting stage of the data collection methods. Additionally, this chapter considers the data collection stages and the kind of challenges faced during this process. Then, a discussion on the research quality assurance and its trustworthiness and a presentation of relevant ethical issues follows. Finally, this chapter concludes by discussing the stage of data

organisation, processing and the analysis approach adopted and utilised throughout this research.

The fifth chapter provides the analysis and interpretation of the findings reached from doing this research by providing answers to the research questions. This involves the findings in relation to the components proposed for TPI consisting of teachers' beliefs about themselves (self-image) and about the prescribed curriculum, they teach. The discussion on self-image provides answers to the second research question on how teachers view themselves. This is followed by a discussion on the kind of professional knowledge that teachers hold and a discussion on the level of autonomy that teachers possess within such a context. Moreover, this chapter presents the findings, which relate to teacher commitment represented by their roles and responsibilities. This chapter later provides evidence on the factors that influenced the development of TPI. These include internal factors within teacher-self and external factors that relate to the surrounding contexts. Finally, this chapter considers curriculum prescription benefits and challenges experienced by teachers.

The sixth chapter presents a synthesis of the findings reached from the experience of conducting this research. The discussion covers the role of emotions and personality traits, role model teachers and culture impact on the development of TPI. The findings present teacher professional knowledge and the mismatch discovered between their beliefs and practice in relation to autonomy and English language learning-teaching process. This chapter also includes issues to do with gender differences between teachers and the societal expectations of teachers. This chapter concludes by providing a theoretical perspective of the findings and argues for the conceptualisation of the components of TPI.

The seventh and final chapter of this thesis concludes by providing a summary of the key findings followed by some implications for policy and practice, the contribution of this research and the possibility of generalisations of the findings reached. Finally, this thesis ends by stating its limitations and recommendations for further research and presents the way forward.

## Chapter 2

### CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

#### Introduction

This chapter provides comprehensive background information about the educational context in the Sultanate of Oman where this research took place. This chapter consists of eight sections. The first section begins by providing some general and brief information about the Sultanate of Oman leading to a discussion in the second section about the state schooling educational system. The third section provides some specific information about the reform of the Basic Education system, which began in the academic year 1998/99. The fourth section moves on to present the situation of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Oman in relation to its usage in the country and in state schools. The fifth section presents a chronological account of national curriculum development in Oman. The sixth section considers more specifically the processes involved in teacher education in Oman considering the development of the pre-service teacher education and the in-service teacher training courses. The seventh section talks about the evaluations of the educational system in Oman and the gaps identified and the recommendations made by the different parties involved in these evaluations. The eighth and final section in this chapter concludes by summarising the challenges that face the educational system in Oman.

#### 2.1 The Sultanate of Oman

The Sultanate of Oman is an Arabic, Muslim and oil-producing Gulf country situated in the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula with a land area of 309,500 sq. km. Oman is a young country with a population of 4,159,102 million by 2015 (The annual Educational statistics book, 2014-15). There are eleven governorates and regions in Oman including the capital area Muscat. Although Oman's past is ancient and well-known historically, it is still a developing country because its renaissance began in the year 1970 under the leadership of his Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Saeed. Oman is a neighbour to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Yemen and on the other side of the Gulf of Oman, Iran.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in Oman is one of many governmental ministries in the country and is responsible for all issues relating to schooling education in either state or private schools. His Majesty the Sultan appoints all ministers in the country including the Minister of Education.

As education is the basic pillar of a country's success and development, it is worth providing a brief historical account of the progress of education in Oman.

## 2.2 State Education in Oman

Before the dawn of July 1<sup>st</sup> 1970, Oman's education was limited to Islamic Quran schools and to only three formal state schools with 900 male students. However, after the renaissance of the year 1970, schools began to spread across the country and the target for education was to reach all parts of Oman including mountainous and rural suburbs. This was the responsive action for his Majesty's speech, which declared and emphasised the importance of educating Omanis even if it was under the shade of trees. Therefore, the target for the MoE then was to undertake a campaign to raise awareness about the importance of education and to spread education throughout the country as soon as possible. Consequently, the focus of this stage was on quantity to compensate the loss Oman had had so far.

“Educational Renaissance march started in various states and regions of the Sultanate and with great rush to compensate the loss of the sons of the country increased the number of schools teaching of only three schools of about (900) students in 1970 to (207) schools and about (55752) students in the academic year 1975 / 1976.”

(MoE, 2016)

The focus on the spread of education in Oman or “Education For All” began in the year 1970 and continued up until the year of 1998/99. Education during this period or as referred to locally the General Education, consisted of three stages. These were primary, which involved grades 1-6, preparatory for grades 7-9 and secondary for grades 10-12. For a country that began from nothing, it was inevitable to recruit teachers from other neighbouring Arab countries, as Omanis were not yet available to take their role in the educational system. Various national, political and contextual aspects drove education

during this period. This involved the campaign ran by the MoE to educate Omanis on the importance of education particularly for girls.

As a result of the efforts to increase enrolment and develop state education, Oman has seen two significant achievements:

1. The number of schools has increased to 935 with 448,797 students according to the MoE database in 2010 (Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi, 2012). (See appendix 1 for an updated status on the number of schools, students and teachers).
2. This period witnessed a significant growth in literacy levels through investment in formal schooling and its infrastructure .

Although the phase from 1970 to the year 1998 witnessed major developments throughout Oman particularly in state education, there was a desperate need for the country to rethink its developmental plans and work towards ensuring quality as well as quantity. This need has been highlighted in several sources such as the government's five-year plans and reports by external international organisations such as the United Nations and the World Bank. All of these sources urged Oman to develop citizens who are capable of dealing with a knowledge economy, because this is considered more critical than other natural and physical resources (Muscat Daily, 2013). All of these areas acted as a driving force, which have led Oman to rethink its developmental plans including its educational system.

### 2.3 The Basic Education System/ Reform

Following the call for improved quality in state education and the creation of a critically thinking population ready for the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the education system was reformed. The Basic Education system, or the reform, began in the academic year 1998/99 and has been defined as,

“a unified State-provided education to all the Sultanate's children who are at school age, a 10 years long period works on the provision of-the basic educational needs of information and knowledge, skills, and the development of attitudes and values that enable learners to continue education, training orientation and their willingness and capacity and that their education aims to meet the challenges and

circumstances of the present and future aspirations, in the framework of comprehensive community development”.

(MoE, 2016)

It was hoped that the ten years of free Basic education schooling for all boys and girls in Oman would equip learners with all of the required knowledge, skills and qualities to become capable and independent citizens who were able either to join the work sector or continue their further education through a two-year Post-Basic education programme. The two Post-Basic education years were to enable students to join universities in order to be fully equipped to serve their country and contribute to its development. The general objectives of the reform were as follows:

- reinforce young Omanis strong and proud belief in Islamic principles and behaviour, as well as pride in their country, their Gulf heritage, and the Arab world;
- value the diversity of the world’s people, cultures, and ecosystems;
- understand and actively promote equity, justice, peace, and the protection of the environment in their community, Oman, and the world;
- care about the physical, emotional and spiritual health as well as that of the others
- pursue healthy, purposeful lives and develop good work habits and basic life skills;
- acquire knowledge and skills in all areas of the curriculum, including skills in questioning, investigating, critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making;
- apply the learned skills to further studies, work, leisure, daily living and a lifelong of learning;
- use a variety of technologies, demonstrate an of technological applications, apply appropriate technologies for solving problems related to their daily lives, and promote transliteracy;
- raise to critical awareness of various forms of arts, and participate in creative activities and expression
- raise awareness of global issues within the curriculum;
- use English to support, reinforce and consolidate topics in other subject areas;
- present English as an international language and as a means of communication

(English Language Curriculum Framework, 1999, pp. 7-8)

Based on the above objectives it is clear that the reform in the academic year 1998/99 has brought in substantial changes to various components of the educational system. These

changes have included the school system as a whole, the school curriculum and assessment procedures as well as teacher training.

The school system in the reform encompasses 10 years of Basic education followed by two years of Post-Basic education. The Basic education schools ran into two cycles. Cycle One being grades 1-4 and Cycle Two for grades 5-10. Children entered grade 1 at the age of six.

The reform's basic changes involved moving away from traditional teacher-centred methodology to the adoption of a more learner-centred approach and learning that included technology information.

As well as changing the composition of schools by bringing in learners at 6 years-old, the reforms also changed the composition of the work-force by bringing large numbers of female teachers into the Cycle 1 schools. Female teachers taught mixed classes of boys and girls together for the first time in Oman because authorities believed that female teachers were more suitable to teach children of this age.

“The feminisation of administrative and teaching personnel in the first cycle of Basic Education (Grades 1-4) is now complete. The rationale here is to make the learners feel secure psychologically at this early age, and to motivate them to learn in an appropriate climate that meets their needs and supports their progress in further development, especially during this critical period of transition from home to school.”

(Basic Education, 2001, p17)

The exception being some rural areas where the application of this system was not possible for various factors such as the availability of female teaching staff and many others that are out of this research scope.

As well as making changes to the number and gender of teachers, the reform also altered the age of learners, the subjects taught and the length of the school day. For the first time, English was introduced from Grade 1 when children were aged six-years instead of grade 4 when they were nine or ten. Children in Cycle One schools learnt English daily, or five times a week for a period of 40 minutes, new subjects were introduced such as Information Technology and Life Skills and the reforms ensured children had access to resource centres with computers, books and other learning materials.

Additionally, the introduction of field teachers for Cycle One schools meant that the same field teacher would teach Arabic, Islamic studies and Social Studies, referred to as 'Field One', 'Field Two' - Mathematics and Science was taught by the same teacher, whereas the third field, 'Field Three', English was taught by teachers of English. These changes meant that the class teachers, who used to teach grades 1-3 in the General Education system, were replaced by field teachers for the whole of Cycle One. This division of schools and teachers had been established in order to reinforce the concept of whole child development, incorporating the development of children's linguistic, physical, intellectual/cognitive, social and behavioural skills through the adoption of a learner-centred approach.

The reform system gradually expanded over the years of application. At the start of the reform, there were only two Basic schools in Muscat and the same applied to some other governorates and regions in Oman. The gradual expansion of Basic Education schools had been deliberate in order to develop expertise of the new system within schools and the MoE as a whole, so that teachers learn the new practice from each other. The number of schools that implemented Basic Education expanded yearly resulting in the gradual fade-out of the General Education schools. As a practitioner who lived the experience of Basic Education, I was honoured to be appointed one of the first two senior English language teachers in Muscat, in one of first two Basic Education schools established in the academic year 1998/99.

After four years of children being in Cycle One schools, boys then went to Cycle Two boys' schools taught and led by males, whilst the girls progressed to Cycle Two girls' schools taught and led by females. Cycle Two consisted of grades 5-10. These five years of schooling continued what children learnt in Cycle One schools and further developed their linguistic, physical, intellectual/cognitive, social and behavioural skills as well as other technological and computing skills.

A two-year Post-Basic education followed Cycle Two and included grades 11-12. Post-Basic education presented core and elective subjects and through the two-year programme it was hoped that learners would further develop the Basic skills, knowledge and attitudes they developed through grades 1-10. The skills during this two-year programme focussed on employability and career planning skills such as the development of more technological, communication, work related, problem solving and social skills. At the end of grade 12 learners sat a national exam for all subjects in which they are



awarded a grade that acts as a base for holding the Diploma in Secondary Education (the equivalent of A levels in the UK). Only then, could students apply to national and international higher education institutions.

The Basic Education Reforms introduced a lot of radical changes to the state education system which challenged the beliefs, practice and identity of teachers in Oman. As this present research is concerned with English Language Teaching (ELT), it is noteworthy to discuss the situation of ELT within the educational system in Oman.

#### 2.4 ELT in Oman

English is the first official foreign language in Oman. Many fields such as economy, media, education and industry utilise English as their domain and medium for communication. Thus, English in Oman is akin to success at either a personal or a professional level. Omanis learn English to pursue higher education, to travel abroad, for cultural analysis, communication in non-Arabic speaking countries and to get a white-collar job, which is promoted through Hollywood films and other English-speaking programmes (Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi, 2012).

The introduction of the English language as a separate subject in education since 1970 with the command of his Majesty the Sultan, demonstrates the status and recognition given to English as a crucial requisite for the country's development and modernity (Richards, 2015). The royal directives towards learning the English language derive from the Islamic principles, which relate to peace, harmony and to the importance of communicating with other nations around the world (Atkins and Griffiths, 2009).

While the status of ELT is supported by his Majesty the Sultan and is accepted as a requisite for global communication, in reality, English is rarely used outside school. Arabic – the mother tongue – is the language used by most learners at home by Omani children as well as other languages. Peterson (2004) says that most of the Omanis are bilingual as they speak more than one language at home, which is true for the most common bilingual tribes in Oman such as Suahili, Balushi and Zadjali. This case of limited English language usage is true for many state schoolchildren in Oman. Learners learn English in schools and they see it utilised within the context alongside Arabic such as on road signs, satellite channels, car number plates, on TV, in cinemas, on the internet and so on. This cultural

exposure to English language is supposed to help learners cope with the English language course books in school.

Overall, within government and the general culture of Oman, ELT in Oman is highly appreciated and is considered vital for educational success. The English language curriculum framework (1999) states about the role of ELT in the reform,

“The Government of Oman has embarked on an ambitious new programme of educational reform and development, with English Language teaching being identified as pivotal to the successful achievement of the reform.”

(English Language Curriculum Framework, 1999)

As a response to the importance given to learning the English language from the renaissance in 1970, the MoE has considered ELT to be a vital part of the curriculum. Therefore, the English language curriculum in Oman has undergone stages of development, which must be considered, if we are to provide a realistic account of the educational development in Oman.

## 2.5 Curriculum Development

During the General Education phase, English was taught from grade 4 at the age of nine or ten. The English language curricula used during the General Education period were “English for the Arab World”, “English for Oman” and “Our World Through English” (OWTE). The two former curricula were written and produced by Longman in England (Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi, 2012), but the latter OWTE was written and produced in-house within the MoE in the Curriculum Department. This adoption of the strategy of a local or in-house curriculum was because the ministry wanted to meet the needs of its learners and context as well as developing expertise within its departments for Omani staff to be capable of writing materials themselves.

Although the first in-house built-in curriculum OWTE was suitable for its own time, it could not meet the demands of modernity and rapid technological changes as it was considered very teacher-centred while the educational trends were rapidly moving towards learner-centeredness and communicative teaching and learning approaches. Moreover, the content and skills that ought to have been learned through the OWTE curriculum were seen as limited to the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands. Al-Toubi (1998, cited in Al-Issa, 2007) found

that OWTE does not prepare learners to communicate in the English language as the activities were controlled and the curriculum lacked authentic materials.

As the government embarked in the reform stage, and the Basic Education goals and objectives were set – because ELT is a key tool for the success of the reform – it was inevitable to develop the ELT materials and make them responsive to the achievement of the reform plans and goals.

Consequently as part of the 1998/99 reforms, the English Language Curriculum Department (ELCD) embarked on the development of a radically new prescribed ELT curriculum that aimed to achieve a more learner-centred and communicative approach to teaching and learning. To do so, the department hired native English language speaking experts in curriculum writing and all efforts were made to produce the new Basic Education English language curriculum, entitled English for Me (EFM). EFM consisting of a Class Book, a Skills Book, a Teacher's Book, a Teacher's Resource Pack and a Class Resource Pack.

As it has always been the situation in Oman, EFM was and is still a centralised, prescribed curriculum and is considered the only course book teachers are allowed to use. It was hoped that by developing the curriculum with EFM, it would provide opportunities for learners to develop their English language skills actively and communicatively in a balanced manner by integrating the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. EFM brought significant changes to English language learning in Oman such as the introduction of English from grade 1 at the age of six for 40 minutes daily (Al-Zedjali and Etherton, 2009). The experts hired for the development and authoring of the new curriculum EFM ensured its appropriateness for the Omani context and the developmental needs of both learners and the country. However, in line with the authorities and experts thinking then, a decision was made to delay the introduction of English language literacy (reading and writing) to the second year of schooling in order to avoid any kind of interference with the mother tongue Arabic language literacy skills development (Al Zadjali, 2010; Al-Zedjali and Etherton, 2009). This meant that children only did the oral/ aural skills of the English language in their first year of schooling. In the second grade children were introduced to the English language literacy through sight word recognition approach using word cards and the alphabet names were taught instead of sounds as well as the use of some top-down reading strategies such as guessing meanings from contexts using visual clues (Al-Zedjali and Etherton, 2009).

The pace at which the reforms were implemented in schools placed great challenges on the writers and developers of the new curriculum. ELCD staff were busy producing the needed curriculum for each grade yearly as children who finish one grade and moved onto the next grade, needed books to be ready by the beginning of each academic year. This situation created a high demand and pressure on staff in the curriculum department. Feedback about curriculum implementation was collected from senior teachers and supervisors and the ELCD promised that these comments would be taken into consideration when periodic revisions would take place.

At the same time that the new curriculum was being developed and implemented, problems with its efficacy arose. As the reform unfolded and years passed, Cycle Two teachers noticed that children who joined them in grade 5 lacked competence and proficiency in the English language particularly in reading and writing. Thus, an organisation called Canedcom International was invited by the MoE in 2004 to evaluate Cycle One of the reform. The findings from this study showed significant lack of competence in the English language proficiency levels for Cycle One leavers. As a response ELCD took an immediate action and introduced, a revised version of the Skills Book for grade 1, which contained some elements of phonics and more focus on letter sounds (Al-Zedjali and Ethernton, 2009). The new revised skills book focussed on pre-reading and pre-writing skills for the first semester, and then in the second semester it introduced the alphabet letters followed by the five vowels towards the end of the book (Al Zadjali, 2010).

Although teachers welcomed the revised grade 1 skills book because it was better than the old skills book that neglected the role of phonics in English language learning, this benefit was limited and the ministry began to search for other options to develop learner literacy levels.

In the year 2006 a project called the Integrated Curriculum was introduced in four Cycle One pilot schools in Muscat that aimed to develop literacy levels in both Arabic and English language (Al Zadjali, 2010). I participated in this project as a member responsible for the development of the English language materials as part of a team and later as a director of the Young Learner Department, which was responsible for this project then. The project adopted a holistic approach to learning by bringing back the class teacher for Cycle One schools instead of field teachers. The approach adopted for both Arabic and English language literacy development was phonic-based. The focus of the English

language materials was on the development of children's phonics, recognition of grammatical and functional words and shared reading using enlarged storybooks. The research conducted to evaluate the project proved significant development in children's literacy levels in the pilot schools (Ambusaidi, 2007, Al-Zedjali and Etherton, 2009) and that simultaneous bi-literacy did not affect children's literacy learning negatively, instead children were able to easily code-switch between the two languages Arabic and English (Al Zadjali, 2010).

Soon after, the Integrated Curriculum was stopped because of many reasons, out of the scope of this research. As such, the curriculum development continued starting from Cycle One. Revised versions of each grade curriculum have been developed based on the success of the Integrated Curriculum project books and the project's course books have been utilised as a base for the revised Cycle One Basic Education course books. This meant that the revisions for higher grades curriculum was delayed as writing the Basic and Post-Basic education materials took around twelve years.

During the reform years, curriculum development was fast and radical. New, heavily prescribed curriculum materials were written and implemented with the belief that they would support teachers during this time of challenge and change. Although there was the pressure of yearly curriculum writing for each grade, ELCD did not forget the English language teachers who would teach the new curriculum. Thus, in 1996 ELCD thought further the capabilities of the English teachers who would teach the new Basic Education curriculum and developed a workable plan for them.

## 2.6 Teacher Education in Oman

Since the 1970s when Oman's formal education began and throughout this period, nearly 90% of the teaching staff for all subjects including English were expatriates (Atkins and Griffiths, 2009) from neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Algeria, India and Britain. This is an expected situation for a country, which began from nothing. With time this situation has changed as Omani teachers outnumbered their expatriate counterparts except for some male Post-Basic education schools, where there are still expatriates teaching English instead of Omanis.

### 2.6.1 Pre-service Teacher Education

Omani pre-service Teacher Education began in the year 1977 with the establishment of the (male and female) Teacher Training Institutes (TTI) which awarded a two-year diploma of teaching qualifications for Omanis who held the preparatory certificate levels to become teachers of different subjects including English. These TTIs were transformed to become Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges (ITTC) in the year 1984, which were again transformed later in the mid-90s to become Colleges of Education that offered a four-year Bachelor degree of Education (Ministry of Higher Education; Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi, 2012). The first cohort graduated from these colleges of education was in 1998. Later in 2007, as the teacher supply became sufficient to fulfil the needs of schools, a decision was made to transform these education colleges to Colleges of Applied Sciences (Ministry of Higher Education). This meant that teacher supply was dependent on the only state university in Oman, the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and from abroad. The opening of SQU in 1986 was one of the country's most valuable achievements and its School of Education currently produces teachers for all subjects including English.

Furthermore, some Omani's prefer to get their teaching degrees from abroad or from neighbouring Arab countries such as Jordan, Egypt, UAE and even from English speaking countries like Britain, America and Australia. This means that the majority of English teachers are a mixture of Omanis who hold a Bachelor degree from the previous colleges of education, from SQU and from abroad, or diploma holders who were trained locally in either teacher training institutes or colleges. As the plans for the reform started to unfold, authorities at the Ministry and particularly ELCD thought that diploma-holding teachers would find it a challenge to teach the new reform curriculum or the EFM. Therefore, an upgrading plan took place for all in-service Omani diploma-holding English language teachers.

### 2.6.2 In-service Teacher Training

As a prerequisite to the reform, a plan was made to upgrade all Omani English language diploma holders to the level of a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Based on this plan, a contract was signed between the MoE in Oman and the University of Leeds in the UK to equip around 1050 Omani diploma-holding teachers with a three-year in-service BA programme in the field of TESOL

particularly teaching young learners through the communicative approach. However, this number decreased to become only 921 teachers due to reasons such as teacher retirement, personal circumstances and transfers (Atkins and Griffiths, 2009).

The in-service BA (TESOL) programme with Leeds University is considered one of the major achievements of the MoE in Oman for its English language teachers. Experts in the field of second language learning and teaching, research and teacher development externally evaluated the BA programme over four stages of its ten-year life span. According to Atkins and Robinson (2009), the independent evaluations related to the following areas:

- 1) Course management and academic standards.
- 2) Quality of teaching materials used, the teaching itself and the assessment procedures
- 3) Evaluating research.
- 4) An overall summative evaluation of the impact of the BA programme outcomes on teachers practice and student learning.

All of these evaluations reported positive and successful findings in relation to their focus areas. For example, the findings demonstrated that there was a link between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practice. However, there were also some recommendations, which were suggested by the evaluators and actions that took place by either the University of Leeds or the MoE to improve the needed situations (Atkins and Robinson, 2009). The findings from these external evaluations showed significant progress in the teachers' knowledge and understanding of both teaching and learning process as well as research and teaching young learners (Atkins and Robinson, 2009). Generally, the summative independent evaluation indicated that the BA programme influenced positively on the teachers use of English, in being more flexible about their teaching and on their adaptation of curriculum to meet student needs and interests. This shows the positive impact the BA programme had on the in-service teachers in relation to their classroom practice and professional development.

In addition to the BA programme, in-service teacher training took place and local methodology courses were developed for preparing teachers to teach EFM. The ELCD hired native speakers of English to train teachers for the reform in all regions in Oman except for a remote region (Al Wusta). Recently, in-service teacher training has developed and eventually Omanis took over the field of English teacher training within the MoE. Those Omani teacher trainers are given the chance to do further studies and gain Masters

or PhD degrees from Britain or other English speaking countries as part of their professional development plan.

Additionally, a new Specialised Centre for Professional Training of Teachers has been established in the year 2014 in order to support the Basic Education Reform. In order to strengthen the capabilities within the Centre and compete with international standards a contract has been signed with Finland University for academic support services such as research and teacher development until February 2017 (Finland University).

As discussed earlier, all efforts were made to equip teachers with the needed skills, knowledge and attitudes to enable them to handle the reform curriculum successfully, yet as with any newly implemented system, the Basic Education reform had its own challenges.

## 2.7 Evaluation of Education in Oman

In order to increase the significance of its educational systems, Oman participated in many international studies as part of a comprehensive evaluation framework for the whole reform. For example, in order to measure its progress against the expected learning outcomes and in comparison with other educational counterparts based on some international standards, Oman has embarked in some international tests such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). The MoE has also invited the World Bank to conduct some review studies of the educational system. All of these actions act as part of the Ministry of education's comprehensive review plan of its educational system together with the Education Council (Muscat Daily, 2013).

As the outcomes of any reform only unfold after several years of its application, the Omani Basic Education reform has gradually unveiled a number of achievements accompanied with some challenges. The achievements were numerous, such as the increase in school enrolment for learners and the building of new schools as well as the continuous efforts to 'omanise' the teaching jobs across the country. Also, the focus on the quality of education, which began with the reform itself. In spite of the Ministry of Education's successful efforts towards the development of state education in Oman, challenges were imminent.



A number of national and international evaluations and assessments of the educational system evidenced and documented these challenges. For example, the Sample Based National Assessments, which took place between the years 2006 until 2009, targeted grades 4, 7 and 10 in the subjects of English, Arabic, Maths, Science and Social Studies. This large-scale assessment involved all eleven regions and governorates in the country and had a sample of 6,817 students from both General Education and Basic Education from state schools and 173 students from private schools in Oman. The 2008/09 tests that targeted grade 4 learners, found that student performance was lower than the expected level by the government except for English reading and writing. This is a surprising finding for English as children's lower literacy proficiency levels were the most common issue that was noticeable and touchable by teachers and authorities. The findings also showed that girls outperformed boys in all subjects across all regions. The findings from the same tests conducted in the years 2006/07 and 2007/08 for grades 7 and 10 showed that students did not reach the expected level of them although the Basic Education learners performed better in Arabic than their counterparts in General Education schools. Similarly, the findings indicated that girls outperformed boys. In tests for grades 7 and 10 English levels were lower than the expected level (World Bank, 2013). As these national test items were developed locally by the ministry staff expertise, the ministry did not want to make rash conclusions based on the findings solicited from national tests. Rather there was a need to conduct some international and external evaluations of the new system to ensure its attainment of the expected outcomes.

In the year, 2004 Canedcom International carried out a large-scale evaluation of Cycle One Basic Education. This study targeted grade 4 learners in 51 state schools in all 11 regions and governorates and in 12 private schools in Oman. The study covered the subjects of English, Arabic, Maths and Science. The findings from this study demonstrated that Oman scored lower or below its international counterparts for one academic year. This meant that our grade 4 learners were performing behind international levels according to international standards. However, these results could be justified that in 2004 the reform was still in progress and curriculum was still new to most of the teachers as it is commonly agreed that proper teacher implementation of reforms develops with time based on the fact that learner achievements is accumulative and evolves with time too. Thus, the follow up of the reform implementation continued and researchers within the MoE made every effort for external parties such SQU researchers, to embark upon a number of studies to evaluate both the reform and curriculum.

Examples of these studies was the study carried out by AL-Maskri et al (2012); Hilal (2012); AL-Mahrooqi and Denman (2014) and Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012).

Additionally, as part of the ministry's comprehensive review of its educational system collaborative work was undertaken with a number of international organisation to measure the progress within the reform. For example, the World Bank's evaluation in 2008, the UNESCO (2008) evaluation of the Arab World Titled 'Sharpening our tools', the UNICEF (2012) Annual Report for Oman, and very recently the World Bank (2013). All of these international evaluative studies indicated that in spite of the success Oman has achieved within its educational systems, there are still some challenges that need to be addressed.

"The key challenge facing education sector in Oman is to improve the quality of student learning outcomes and that enhancing quality and relevance should be the Government's main priority in education".

(World Bank, 2013, p. 23)

## 2.8 Challenges Facing the Reform

### Under Achievement of Learners

The underachievement of learners in English language proficiency levels has resulted in school leavers' lack of some key and critical skills; something which resulted in the necessity of taking a foundation year in higher education institutions (Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi, 2012). I argue that the quality of teaching and learning provided by teachers play a crucial role in ensuring the quality of education. Thus, teachers seem to have a key role in the achievement or underachievement of learning outcomes.

### Teacher Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills

According to the World Bank (2013), teachers' lack of pedagogical ability is due to a reduced focus on teaching, learning and assessment and insufficient prioritisation of the teaching of curriculum areas. A number of reasons that relate to both pre and in-service teacher training causes this situation.

Although, teacher lack of pedagogical capacity is attributed to the surrounding context that teachers work within, I believe that we need to acknowledge that teacher pedagogical skills are part of their professional knowledge, which is again part of their professional identity and beliefs about self. It is fundamental to consider how teachers think and therefore act in their classrooms in order to be able to decide on the quality of their teaching.

The question that arises here is, “What is teacher priority in Oman?” and the answer to it may entail various reasons. For example, teachers might be teaching for exams, the curriculum might not be responsive to the assessment procedures and that there must be something there in this prescribed curriculum that caused teachers to deviate from its topics and prioritise other work instead. This research aims to explore the impact of curriculum prescription on English language TPI and therefore, contribute relevant knowledge regarding teacher pedagogical knowledge and deviation from the controlled or prescribed curriculum.

## Conclusion

This chapter has provided relevant contextual background information about the Omani educational system through a historical account of the development of formal education in Oman since the 1970s to date. This chapter has also presented a detailed account of the Basic education reform adopted in the year 1998/99. This involved the reform rationale, aims and objectives and a description of the system as a whole. This chapter then specifically considered ELT in Oman. Another historical account of curriculum development in Oman across years has been presented followed by teacher pre-service education and in-service training. This chapter discussed the evaluation of the educational journey in Oman and talked about its achievements as well as its challenges. This chapter ends by locating the current study in the right position in relation to its role within the Omani educational system and its contribution to development and overcoming of these challenges.

The next chapter provides a review of the relevant literature to the concept of TPI and curriculum.

## Chapter 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This research specifically focuses on exploring ways in which the prescribed curriculum in Oman might influence the development of English as a Second or Foreign Language (L2) teacher professional identity (TPI).

This literature review therefore critically discusses the available and related literature to the concept of TPI and curriculum prescription particularly in relation to the impact of curriculum prescription on the development of TPI. This review endeavours to explore critically the status of both areas in the field of educational research and literature particularly in the domain of TESOL/ EFL. This is to make use of the previous work in the same field in order to position the current study in the most suitable location. Throughout this review and wherever suitable some reference to other disciplines such as sociology and psychology is made particularly where educational research stems from these disciplines.

As TPI is rooted in teachers' childhood experiences when they were schoolchildren themselves and develops across teachers' career lives (Beijaard et al, 2004; Cheung et al, 2015), it becomes crucial to understand the relationship between TPI and teachers' daily practice. I claim that understanding TPI is essential if we are to develop professionalism in teachers and teaching.

This literature review consists of three sections. The first section provides a comprehensive explanation on the concept of TPI or teacher identity with each being used interchangeably in this research. This involves positioning this research within a theoretical perspective and realigning it with research on TPI in relation to the definitions given to it, the characteristics that differentiate it from other concepts and the factors that influence this type of identity. In order to place this research theoretically, this section explains that TPI is a societal activity, a personal role and an interrelated concept. I argue that a multifaceted approach to understand EFL/TESOL TPI is best because this approach matches the nature of this identity and that adherence to only one theoretical view does not contribute to a complete understanding of this identity. Thus, TPI in this research context is explored through a multidimensional perspective.

In the second section, I argue that there are certain components which make up TPI and which are crucial as to making sense of that TPI. A proposed conceptual model presents these components. The development of this model was based on the theoretical perspective that underpinned this research (constructivism), which believes that knowledge is a social reality that is constructed based on individuals' experiences and interpretation of the surrounding events. Thus, I constructed the proposed model based on my own understandings and knowledge as a researcher and educator, my professional experiences and the extensive literature review that I carried out for this research. The proposed TPI components model consists of four areas; (1) teacher beliefs, values and attitudes, (2) teacher professional knowledge and skills, (3) teacher autonomy and (4) teacher commitment. I argue that it is these components together that help teachers make sense of their professional identity.

The third section focuses on curriculum particularly prescription of curriculum whilst also providing a brief history of the development of curriculum design models since the twentieth century. This section also considers teacher's role and involvement in curriculum design and discusses how teacher role gradually becomes limited with educational regimes such as standardisation and centralisation. Additionally, this section considers the available research conducted in different contexts on how curriculum in general and curriculum prescription in particular can influence TPI. Finally, a special focus on the impact of curriculum prescription on EFL/ TESOL teachers in various non-native speaking countries relates to the context of this research.

### 3.1 Teacher Professional Identity (TPI)

Various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, philosophy and later education have studied the complex phenomenon "identity" from different perspectives such as functionalism, cognitivism, symbolic interactionism and post-structuralism. All of these efforts have served to identify the complex nature of identity that is constructed across one's life under certain influences (Cardoso et al., 2014).

The concept of TPI has arisen as a separate issue over the last thirty years. Beijaard and colleagues highlighted it as early as 2004 (Beijaard et al, 2004). This was a result of the shift of focus in teacher education research towards a more constructivist theoretical perspective (Richards, 2008); consequently, teacher research has gone beyond teaching

and learning to consider research agenda that focuses on teacher-self, teacher cognition, beliefs and identity (Freeman, 2002; Pennington and Richards, 2016).

A review by Cardoso et al (2014) claims that professional identity has mainly been investigated in the field of teaching and nursing in Europe, South and North America and Australia. However, this review seems to have missed out the attempts of some other researchers from other continents in the world, who have tried to investigate this concept. These include Xu (2013) who conducted a study in China, Abednia's (2012) work in Iran, Blignaut's (2008) findings in Africa, Ambusaidi et al (2013) who explored this subject in the Middle East and Chirciu (2014) who carried out research in my homeland Oman.

This literature review considered the concept of TPI in relation to its theoretical perspectives, definitions attached to it, the characteristics of this identity and the factors that affect its construction and development. The section on TPI concludes by proposing a conceptual model of the components TPI may consist of.

### 3.1.1 Theoretical Perspectives

According to Beijaard et al (2004), TPI was researched in relation to three areas; these were (1) the formation of this identity, (2) its characteristics and (3) teacher narratives or stories of their identities. These three areas reflect the theoretical perspectives of the modernist, post-modernist and post-structuralism (Beijaard et al, 2004; Cardoso et al, 2014). While the modernist viewed the self as autonomous and authentic, the post-modernist and post-structuralist saw the self in terms of how individuals tell their stories and organise their experiences based on the different contexts and times they are involved in (Beijaard et al, 2004). These theoretical perspectives are interpreted through four views; these are the psychosocial, discursive, narrative and dialogic (Zare-ee and Ghasedi, 2014).

From a psychosocial perspective, teacher personality or personal traits are essential to the growth of their professional identity. However, the discursive perspective gives more weight and value to teachers' past and present experiences as well as their plans on the formation and development of their professional identity. From this view, we can infer that teacher's prior experiences as learners themselves, their daily teaching and their plans shape who they are today and therefore affect their classroom practice. The narrative

perspective on teacher identity originates from teacher life and social situations and from the different roles one takes in real life situations, such as being a mother, a head teacher, a teacher, a colleague and a friend. Accordingly, social interactions in teachers' lives such as in their homes seems to play a fundamental role in the process of the formation of teacher identity. Finally, the dialogic view refers to teacher talk and the way teachers define their role in different interactional situations (Zare-ee and Ghasedi, 2014). According to this perspective, the teachers' identification of their roles vary according to the different interactional situations in which they are involved; and it is these interactions that give rise to the construction of teacher identity. This means that language is an important tool for identity construction, something that goes alongside the sociocultural theory. The question here is: "Which language should it be for L2 teachers?" and whether teacher definitions of their roles are enough on their own to understand their professional identity.

Based on the above discussion, it appears that TPI has been studied based on certain theoretical views, which influence the findings reached. As this research is concerned with the professional identity of English language teachers in a non-Western context, it aimed to study this type of teacher identity by adopting a blended approach. The blended approach refers to researchers' utilisation or blend of more than one theoretical perspective to explore the issue under investigation. This approach aligns with the current trends in studying language teacher identity. More than ten years ago, Varghese et al (2005) called for this type of blending approach in order to study language teacher identity and very recently, Trent (2015) echoed this and called for a multifaceted, multidimensional and integrated model to study language teacher identity. In support of the above calls, I consider the nature of language teacher identity as complex in that it cannot be explored by the adoption of merely one theoretical perspective. This is because each perspective seems to consider only one part of this identity. Consequently, I argue that L2 TPI needs to be studied from more than one perspective in order to fully understand this intertwined type of identity.

This call to adopt a multifaceted approach is supported by the research community. For example, Wenger's (1998) communities of practice and situated learning theory to understand teacher identity has been criticised for not taking into consideration or theorising the role of power in teacher identity (Trent, 2015; Varghese et al., 2005). Moreover, Varghese et al (2005) criticised Wenger's (1998) communities of practice and situated learning as it only focuses on how teacher identity develops within group practice

neglecting the other ways that contribute to identity development. In addition, limitation of Wenger's theory lies in his description of the three elements that constitute the communities of practice, which does not necessarily reflect the actuality of teacher education situations.

Another example of theory to study teacher identity is the role of discourse as seen by post-structural theorists such as Bakhtin. According to narrative research, voice, language and discourse can be used to understand teacher identity. However, it is worth mentioning that teacher identity is not only about language and discourse. Teacher identity is a socially constructed activity, thus it requires other methods or theoretical models to understand it besides discourse (Varghese et al, 2005). I argue that restricting research to language and discourse analysis may not be sufficient to reach the required depth to understand L2 teachers, particularly if research is conducted through the English language, which might become a barrier in itself for L2 teachers to express themselves.

Varghese et al (2005) convincingly justify their call for blending more than one theoretical perspective to study L2 TPI. One of these reasons can be professional and maybe social marginalisation of teachers inside and outside of their schools. Moreover, the critical position of the non-native speakers of English language teachers worldwide, which has come under scrutiny and inspection as these teachers, have been analysed and compared with their native-English-speaking colleagues in higher education settings. Therefore, I support the argument raised by Varghese et al (2005) and Trent (2015) that the adoption of only one theory does not meet the nature of the area being investigated – in this case L2 TPI. Therefore, I adopted an integrated and a multidimensional theoretical perspective to study the professional identity of L2 teachers in Oman.

As it is not the intention of this research to go into details about all of the available theories for studying teacher identity, I will confine the theoretical perspective for this research to the most relevant concepts from theories, which are suitable for studying L2 teacher identity.

From a multifaceted theoretical perspective on studying the L2 TPI, this research brings together some relevant concepts to study this identity and adopts these concepts as its theoretical model. These concepts are described below.



## **A Societal Activity**

The social identity theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986) emphasizes how individuals' personal traits and their cognition can affect their interaction with others in their group. This theory also suggests that the image of the self develops in relation to the group an individual belongs to in their society. This is called "in-group" in social identity theory. The concept of belonging to a group helps members develop self-esteem through their membership of their group in society and therefore compete with other groups. This research does not intend to adhere to the entire concept and beliefs of the social identity theory as it has its own views on groups and categorisation that leads to issues such as racism, which are irrelevant to this research. However, this research adopts the concept of belonging to a group which is in this case the L2 teachers' belonging to the TESOL/EFL community in non-native contexts, who teach the same prescribed curriculum. This makes them belong to a group with unified aims and similar views.

Mead's (1934) work on the identity theory describes identity as the self that rises and develops through social communication in social settings. This means that the role of social settings is crucial for identity development. Mead (1934) differentiates between the "I" self and the "Me" self. The "Me" self is something that formulates earlier in one's life through social interaction and represents someone's former experiences based on their interactions with their society. The "I" self is a representative of people's present and future, which is creative and flexible and responds to the "Me". In this research, the "Me" self refers to teachers' prior experiences from childhood when they were schoolchildren themselves. According to Lortie (1975), teachers develop the picture of who a teacher is from their prior experiences by going through such experiences themselves and to the beliefs teachers hold about themselves as L2 teachers and about teaching and learning of the English language. The "Me" self may be challenged in pre-service teacher education programmes and transforms to support the situational self or the "I" self. According to Nias (1989), the situational self allows individuals to adapt to different situations. Thus, through their experience of higher education, teachers' views of who a teacher is might adapt through the situational self or the "I" self, but the substantial self "Me" is core and may not allow this adaptation to happen. This interpretation of self as being a social aspect which responds to situations, is relevant to this research because the view of who a teacher is can be linked to social life experiences and also to the professional social life such as teachers' practice and how they view teaching and learning.

Moreover, Erikson's (1968) psychological chronological description of identity as it develops and changes across one's life in social contexts, relates to this research because it helps with exploring how different generations of teachers describe their professional identity.

According to Gee (2000), identity is about the kind of person the individual is in a given society or a specific context. This means that identity is an ongoing process, which differs depending on the context the person experiences. Gee identifies four types of identity. These identities are, (1) the nature identity that refers to who a person is naturally such as being a twin, (2) the institutional identity that refers to the position an individual takes in a society, (3) the discursive and (4) the affinity identity. The discursive identity represents dialogue, talk, and the way an individual is recognised by others based on their behaviour. The affinity identity is about belonging to a group in a culture that shares unique experiences and practices. The last two identities relate closely to this research because it is about how L2 teachers describe themselves (self-image) through a focus group interview and how they see their role and self within a culture of curriculum prescription.

Giddens' (1991) concept of identity refers to the reflexive identity that is affected by the interaction and negotiation, occurring in a certain society or context. This theoretical view of identity influenced by the interaction in a particular context is relevant to the current study as teachers use the English language to negotiate and discuss issues related to their professional identity in a focus group setting where they might influence each other's views. Also Giddens' theory of identity or "structuration" views individuals as agencies of social structure and change; with the term "agency" referring to the capacity one has to act in the world or the active role one takes in a society and in this case teachers' role while teaching the prescribed curriculum.

### **A Personal Role**

The concept of role in the identity theory by Mead (1934) states that each individual has a personal identity "I" or a role in his or her society in which he or she performs according to that role. Although the individual who belongs to a certain group acts within their perceptions, each member of the group is unique and therefore perform to achieve a personal and an individual role.

“Although it is important to examine how a person categorizes herself or himself as a member of a group, it is also important to observe the role that the person enacts while a member of the group. For example, group belongingness maybe a function not only of self-categorization (Hogg and Abrams, 1988) but also of assuming a high-status role in the group”.

(Stets and Burke, 2000, p. 228)

The role that teachers take in order to teach the prescribed curriculum and how they describe it forms a major interest in this research context together with the views of authorities and policy documents on teacher role. Teachers negotiate their professional roles between themselves in focus group interviews where their beliefs, values and attitudes about their roles shape the selection of language they use to describe their self-image. This justifies the importance of viewing TPI in relation to the role teachers take in their profession.

### **An Interplay**

For the sake of the back-and-forth interaction during the L2 TPI construction and reconstruction process, I highlight the concept of interrelation or interplay between the different identities as described by Trent (2015). According to Trent's (2015) multidimensional model, TPI construction is an interplay between three types of identities that interact together to form the L2 TPI. These are the discursive identity, the experiential identity and the negotiated identity.

The discursive construction of identity refers to the influence of discourse and the kind of language teachers use to talk about their values, beliefs and attitudes and the way teachers or others explicitly position teachers in relation to their professional commitment. This involves the use of modality and evaluation explicitly. Trent says that people or teachers use modality to commit themselves, such as the use of modal verbs “should” “must” and the use of modal adverbs such as “possibly” in their discourse to indicate their obligations, their priorities and realities. Although Trent (2015) utilises the term discursive identity to describe teacher talk and discourse, some other scholars limited the discursive perspective to teachers' prior experiences, present and future plans as discussed earlier. It is notable that Trent (2015) separated between discourse and language in his model which basically should have been united together as they both refer to the kind of language teachers use to construct or describe their identity.

The experiential construction of the identity in the model advocated by Trent (2015) depends on Wenger's (1998) theory of situated learning and communities of practice. It is about the engagement with others in a community and the role of emotions in this construction, the ideal imagined world that teachers have for themselves which is away from the immediate experiences and the alignment or the coordination between teacher identities and the wider organisation such as schools. This means that TPI is a matter of interaction between teacher construction of the discursive identity that is integrated with their practice in school or their experiential identity as well as the negotiated construction of identity.

The negotiated construction of identity or agency, views the construction process as dynamic and not isolated within an individual. This brings up the question of teacher agency or the role of the teacher (the intrapersonal) and the interpersonal and institutional construction of teacher identity.

Regardless of term usage, the whole concept of interplay in Trent's (2015) model reflects its title, it shows the integration and the multidimensionality between various identities or sub-identities of teachers. Trent's model links directly with the focus of this research, which is the interplay in the development process of TPI in a context of curriculum prescription focusing on the components that make up L2 TPI. These are teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes about themselves as teachers represented by the language or discourse they use to describe their self-image, and their beliefs, values and attitudes about the curriculum they teach as well as how teacher view their role and responsibility which reflects the L2 agency. The practice or the experiential construction of identity as termed by Trent (2015) represents teacher alignment between their professional knowledge about teaching and learning and the prescribed curriculum they teach. The negotiated identity refers to the level of autonomy that teachers have, which is their active role in the teaching practicum.

To conclude, this research investigated the concept of L2 TPI from a multifaceted theoretical perspective, which views this identity as a societal activity, as a personal role and an interrelated process of interaction between different identities of which the teacher's self consists.

Different researchers associate different meanings and definitions with the concept of TPI based on their perspectives and adoption of theory. The next point explores these meanings in detail and identifies a definition to how this research defines TPI.

### 3.1.2 Definition of TPI

In spite of the extensive research carried out on the concept of TPI in general and in the field of ELT in particular, there is still a dearth of agreement amongst researchers on a unified and distinct definition for this concept. This is not surprising as TPI appears to be interrelated and intertwined, which makes it hard to define.

Although there is not yet a consensus on a proper definition of TPI, there is an agreement amongst researchers that this concept is multiple, multifaceted, multidimensional and dynamic. Additionally, it is agreed that teacher identity construction and development goes through an ongoing process that develops with time as a result of the interaction teachers have with their environments (Beijaard et al, 2004; TSUI, 2007; Rodgers and Scott, 2008; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Izadinia 2012; Lee, 2013; Cardoso et al, 2014; Cheung, 2015). For example, Flores and Day (2006, p. 220) define TPI as “an ongoing and dynamic process which entails the making sense and (re)interpretation of one’s own values and experiences”. Lasky (2005, p. 901) adds, “Teacher professional identity is how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others”.

In relation to language teacher identity, Pennington and Richards (2016) mentioned language teacher identity as one of the dimensions that are central to expertise in language teaching and define it as:

“Thus, identity as a language teacher includes a sense of having specialized knowledge and expertise and of being part of a larger profession and what this represents, such as certain standards, ethics, and accountability for performance in teaching.”

(Pennington and Richards, 2016, p. 16)

Recently, Barkhuizen (2017) provides a definition of language teacher identity that is wide and provides a summary of all the previous attempts to define this concept. Barkhuizen views language teacher identity as:

“Language teacher identities (LTIs) are cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical—they are both inside the teacher and outside in the social, material and technological world. LTIs are being and doing, feeling and imagining, and storying. They are struggle and harmony: they are contested and resisted, by self and others, and they are also accepted, acknowledged and valued, by self and others. They are core and peripheral, personal and professional, they are dynamic,

multiple, and hybrid, and they are foregrounded and backgrounded. And LTIs change, short-term and over time-discursively in social interaction with teacher educators, learners, teachers, administrators, and the wider community, and in material interaction with spaces, places and objects in classrooms, institutions, and online”.

(Barkhuizen, 2017, p.13)

Based on the previous relevant work on language TPI, this research chooses to define TPI as a concept that is ongoing, dynamic and multifaceted, entails sub-identities, evolves across teachers' career lives, and is influenced by internal and external factors, which teachers experience throughout their social and professional lives. This concept also relates to how teachers see themselves as L2 teachers and to the kind of beliefs, values and attitudes, they hold about themselves as teachers. In addition, for the purposes of this research L2 professional identity includes their professional knowledge, their roles, responsibilities, and the kind of autonomy they possess in relation to their work.

Although there is not a definite unified definition for the concept of TPI, there are certain characteristics of this identity that contribute to providing a better understanding of it.

### 3.1.3 Characteristics of TPI

Based on the review by Beijaard et al (2004) and the review by Cheung (2015) in the field of L2 teacher identity, the characteristics of this type of identity include the involvement of both person and context, the evolving nature, sub-identities and agency.

The involvement of both the person and context in TPI indicates that teacher identity is multifaceted by its nature, is a process of change and is influenced by internal factors such as emotions (Rodgers and Scott, 2008) and external factors such as work context, life experiences and job circumstances (Rodgers and Scott, 2008, Flores and Day, 2006).

The nature of TPI as a flexible and ongoing process is another characteristic that distinguishes this type of identity. Because this feature is about being flexible, transferable and changeable from one context to another, it means that this identity is not only about who the teacher is today, but also it is about who they want to become in the future.

Although TPI can be flexible and ongoing, it can be resistant because of its sub-identities. According to Beijaard et al (2004), the social identities involve teacher ethnicity, race,

gender and culture where the personal identities include their history and biography. These sub-identities need to correspond to each other in order to avoid any conflicts in TPI. The sub-identities relate to the different contexts and relationships with others whom teachers deal within these contexts. For example, when teachers face changes in educational systems such as reforms, their personal self or their prior experiences of teaching and learning may resist the change or the reform but at the same time, the curriculum requires them to do so. This may result in a conflict between the sub-identities of TPI.

Teacher agency distinguishes TPI and refers to the teachers' active role in their professional development process (Caldron and Smith, 1999). This includes all the efforts and professional development activities that teachers undertake in order to develop themselves professionally and to teachers' active role while teaching.

Based on the above features, it appears that the interaction that takes place between teacher-self and the surrounding context develops and consequently influences TPI.

#### 3.1.4 Factors Influencing TPI

Researchers have grouped the factors that may influence TPI as (1) psychological and sociological or in other words internal factors and as (2) historical and cultural or external factors (Cooper and Olson, 1996; Flores and Day, 2006; Olson, 2008; Rodgers and Scott, 2008; Zare-ee and Ghasedi, 2014). For ease of purpose, this research adopted the terms 'internal' and 'external' factors to refer to all of the factors that influence the development of TPI.

Korthagen (2004) believes that human development and therefore professional identity develops through interaction with others and the environment. The separation between the internal and the external factors that influence TPI is not an easy task because most of the research conducted in this area has discovered elements of both internal and external factors as to have played a role in influencing TPI. However, for clarity purposes, the two type factors are separated in this section only to allow a special, comprehensive focus on each type.

## **Internal Factors**

The internal factors derive from perspectives like sociology and psychology. These involve teachers' beliefs, attitudes, views, values and emotions. In addition, personal biography, age, gender (Richards, 2010), self-image, self-esteem, teachers' views of their jobs, motivation, job satisfaction and future plans are internal factors, which may influence the professional identity of teachers (Day, et al 2006; Czerniawski, 2011). In addition to these factors, the academic competence of L2 teachers has been observed to influence the professional identity of L2 teachers (Trent, 2010; TSUI, 2007; Wu et al, 2011; Pennington and Richards, 2016). The tensions L2 teachers have within themselves between their hopes and ambitions can influence their professional identity too (Samuel and Stephens 2000).

Some of these internal factors have been researched more than others in various contexts. This section closely considers teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes, motivation, emotions and tension between sub-identities as these factors particularly relate to this research context.

### Beliefs and Values

Extensive research examined the relationship between the formation, construction and reconstruction of TPI and teacher beliefs and values. These beliefs and values are found to play an essential role in filtering the new experiences which teachers go through and therefore impact on their practice (Flores and Day, 2006; Beijaard et al, 2004; Goh et al, 2005; Blignaut, 2008).

Research on both early teachers and in-service teacher's beliefs has resulted in similar findings and confirmed the key role those beliefs can play in making the teacher-self and determining teachers' actions (Beijaard et al, 2004; Flores and Day, 2006). For example, when introduced with a new curriculum or policy, teachers, particularly, experienced teachers, find it hard to accept the new policies and curriculum, as was the case in the study conducted by Blignaut (2008). These teachers' beliefs and values resisted the change and caused them to continue to implement the practice they used to, such as summative assessment and teacher-centeredness. This suggests that teachers adapted the curriculum according to their experiences, beliefs and understandings, which takes us



back to the identity theory and the role of “Me” that resists change and this conflict between teacher sub-identities.

A similar research by Nias (1989) found that teacher values and beliefs played an important role in the way they performed their work. Nias found two types of values. Firstly, teacher values about education related to their moral, social and religion and they put these into action by loving and caring for their learners. Secondly, the standards that enabled teachers do their job as required. Furthermore, Nias found that the “substantial self” which makes teachers resistant to change represented by their beliefs, values and attitudes developed together with their “situational self” which enables change to take place. This finding highlights the role of interaction and interrelatedness of TPI as discussed in Trent’s (2015) model and the influence of teachers’ beliefs and values on their practice.

Finally, in the field of ELT, Goh et al (2005) studied the relationship between beliefs and practice and found that language teachers’ sense of self can affect their self-efficacy, motivation and confidence. This confirms the huge influence of teacher’s beliefs and values on their work.

The significance of all three studies listed above lies in the influence of teacher beliefs and values on their practice. This influence happens by either holding onto those beliefs or resisting change as in Blignaut’s (2008) study, or by utilizing these beliefs, values and morals to care for their learners and hence influencing their practice as in Nias (1989) and Goh et al (2005). This confirms the role of teacher beliefs and values as a key component of their professional identity.

### Motivation

A number of researchers have investigated the relationship between motivation and TPI, for example, Nias (1989), Kelchtermans (1993), Schepens et al (2009), Canrinus et al (2011), Day et al (2006) and in the field of ELT Goh et al (2005). All of these researchers discovered that motivation played a role in the formation and development of TPI and therefore influenced teachers’ practice.

Motivation can derive from factors within the self or those from outside of the self or in other words from internal and external factors. Intrinsic and altruistic motivation represent the ones within the self. These types of motivation have been observed to be closely related to teaching (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011; Salifu and Agbenyega, 2013).

Intrinsically and altruistically motivated teachers have an internal desire to educate people, to communicate knowledge and values in order to serve a wider community (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011). The sources for this intrinsic motivation according to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), relate to the educational process such as their learner development and achievement in terms of their behaviour and performance, and the subject matter which teachers' value and follow for their professional development. The subject matter issue is relevant to L2 teachers because teachers are keen to develop their linguistic and methodological skills in order to succeed as non-native L2 teachers.

### Emotions and Self-perceptions

According to Hargreaves (1998, p. 835), "Good teaching is charged with positive emotions". As teachers' emotions are linked with the context, understanding teacher emotions helps an understanding of teacher-self and how teachers' emotions and perceptions of self can be reasons for resistance and self-transformation (Zemblyas, 2003).

Research on teacher emotions is extensive in literature. For example, in relation to curriculum change/reform and teacher emotions Hargreaves (1998) interviewed thirty-two committed and innovative teachers who taught grades 7 and 8 in four different schools in a district close to Toronto in Ontario Canada. The analysis of the individual interviews depended on searching for references to emotions in teacher talk. The words or text found were categorised into themes such as emotional responses to change in their curriculum and emotional relationship with learners. The findings demonstrated that emotions influenced teacher's professional lives and there was no great difference between male and female teacher emotions. In addition, the findings revealed that educational change influenced the way teachers respond to their teaching practice, and proved that teacher's feelings for their learners filtered that change because they cared about their learners. The participant teachers welcomed curriculum change with enthusiasm because teachers felt emotional about meeting their learner needs and boosting their enthusiasm. However,

teachers' positive attitudes towards curriculum change could be attributed to the fact that those teachers were committed as mentioned by Hargreaves (1998). The implication of this study relates to the role of teacher emotions as a key driving force for their practice and decision-making, particularly emotions towards their learners.

Van Veen et al (2005) research on an experienced and enthusiastic Dutch teacher in the Netherlands had a cognitive psychological focus on emotions. The reform affected this teacher's personal and professional identity. However, this teacher's enthusiasm was later put at risk because of the workload assigned to her by the reform such as the number of profiles and other administrative work she had to do. Although this was a small-scale research on one teacher, the findings confirm how sensitive teacher emotions can be, particularly with enthusiastic teachers. The studies by Hargreaves (1998) and Van Veen et al (2005) researched committed and enthusiastic teachers, something that opens the agenda for researching emotions of those teachers who are less committed and/or less enthusiastic.

As a response to the above statement, although being on Science teachers, this research is still relevant to the present study. Through a qualitative study, Hong (2010) studied the perceptions of pre-service and beginning teachers about leaving the job. This study also aimed to identify professional identity factors of pre-service and beginning teachers. The participants were graduate Science teachers of a Secondary Science Teacher Certificate Program at South-eastern University in the USA. This mixed method research deconstructed TPI into six factors. These were value, efficiency, commitment, emotions, knowledge, beliefs and micro politics. Eighty-four teachers completed the survey and twenty-seven teachers in four groups at different stages of teaching had semi-structured interviews. The findings demonstrated that the pre-service teachers had a naive and idealistic view of teaching dropout and that most teacher burnouts were emotional. Although perhaps the participants in this research were not necessarily as the most appropriate for the focus of this research as it would have been better to question burnout with experienced teachers, still this study provides further evidence of the critical and crucial role of emotions in teachers' practice and decision-making regardless of their years of experience or subject area.

The studies reviewed demonstrate that emotions guide teacher work, their enthusiasm and decisions. They also highlight that most teacher emotions are intrinsic (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011) which stem from their inner feelings towards their learners. However, all of

the above-mentioned studies took place in Canada, the Netherlands and the USA with teachers of various subjects, not ELT or TESOL teachers.

In the field of ESL, Reis (2015) argued that emotions form a vital part of the professional identity of non-native L2 teachers through the examination of the role of emotions in teachers' professional lives and identities and argues for the theorization of emotions in teachers' professional lives.

In the field of ELT Golombek (1998) and Benesch (2013) examined the role of emotions in teachers' lives and found that teachers' emotions inform how they understand their practice. Golombek's study provides evidence for the link between L2 teacher emotions and their practice. The Personal Practical Knowledge (PPK) of the participant teachers found to be emotional, personal, situational, moralistic and dynamic. Additionally, the findings revealed that L2 teachers' emotions are more than just feelings, but rather are integrated into their understanding of teacher knowledge and practice.

Also in the field of EFL/TESOL Golombek and Johnson (2004) conducted research on three experienced L2 teachers in three different institutions at university and school level in the USA. The findings from the narrative accounts of teacher journals highlighted an interlinked connection between teacher cognition and emotions that forced those teachers to use mediational tools to help them with the externalization of their experiences. Narratives allowed teachers to draw on various sources such as their peers, experts, journals and external theories to help them understand themselves as teachers and therefore their teaching. Although this study focussed on the use of narrative accounts as a cultural tool to understand teacher emotions, it confirmed and supported the findings of previous studies on the positive role of the influence of L2 teacher emotions on their practice.

Also in the field of ESL and in the same vein of narration, Ben Said (2015) studied the role of emotions in teacher emerging identity. The role of emotions through narration discourse showed how an ESL teacher constructed her identity through reporting her personal and peer experiences about challenging episodes. One young Chinese ESL teacher began to work in engineering and then moved to work in a childcare centre as a part-time job. The role of the motivational experience from the childcare centre affected this teacher's emotions positively and encouraged her to obtain a qualification in teaching (PGDE). Although this teacher was surrounded by negative conceptual categories and impressions about teaching from her family, friends and peers, she kept away from the external

pressure because of her emotional motivation. In a similar study Nias (1989), in a longitudinal project that lasted for ten years in England and Wales, found that teachers incorporated large amounts of emotion, cognition and daily life into their work.

From the findings of the above research, it appears that emotions play a significant role in teacher practice including L2 teachers. Most significantly, the findings from previous research highlighted that emotional effect on teacher's work is similar, regardless the variables, such as field of specialisation, context of work, teacher age, teaching experience or gender.

### Tensions between Sub-identities

The sub-identities of TPI are one of the characteristics that distinguish this identity. A large amount of research has explored the internal factor of tension between teacher sub-identities and the different profiles teachers have.

Pillen et al (2013) researched TPI tensions in relation to the changing role from being a student to becoming a qualified teacher. The participants who completed the questionnaire in the Netherlands were three hundred and seventy-three pre-entry teachers who were final year students from teacher education institutions and teachers with 1-5 years of teaching experience teachers. The teachers were from primary, secondary and vocational schools. The questionnaires consisted of 13 tensions. The findings identified six profiles: care-related tensions, views of significant others, responsibility related tensions, tension-free teachers and troubled teachers. Tensions within the profiles of the pre-entry teacher role observed from when the participants were students to when they became teachers. Data from forty-two of those teachers who completed the questionnaire twice revealed that tensions are subject to change given the support needed by others. This means that tensions between sub-identities are a normal process of TPI development particularly at the beginning of their career lives. These tensions are subject to change with time. This confirms the fact that TPI is dynamic, relational and situated and that it is possible to change the "Me" self as in Mead's theory with the presence of a strong and a motivated "I" self.

In the field of ESL, Farrell (2011) explored the negotiations between multiple identities of three experienced female native English-speaking ESL college teachers who had over 15

years of teaching experience. The ESL college teachers in Canada met over a two-year period and reflected on their work with the researcher, who facilitated those meetings. This qualitative, exploratory and descriptive research with the Canadian teachers consisted of twelve group meetings with a two-hour duration for each meeting and some follow-up meetings with the teachers. This study explored teacher roles explicitly from teacher direct speech and inferred from their talk. The researcher identified sixteen roles and grouped them into three main cluster roles: these were teachers as professionals, as managers and as acculturators. Teachers found that balancing between these identities was difficult. For example, they preferred to be professionals rather than to fulfil other roles because being a professional is closer to their practice. The acculturator role is unique to ESL teachers in Canada because teachers are supposed to customise students to the learning culture over there. Although ESL was the context for Farrell's research, teachers were native speakers of English. The findings from this research support the notion that even native ESL teachers of English do face certain tensions throughout their career lives.

Yayli (2015) in the field of TESOL explored how L2 teachers construct their identities in Turkey, Istanbul. The three L2 teachers (two females and one male) were undergraduates and MA students. One participant had school experience and the other two were from private institutions and universities. The data collected through teacher qualitative statements in a survey. The six themes stemmed from those statements were followed up by interviews. Using the qualitative content analysis, the findings showed that the most dominant identities were the Muslim and Turkish identity with being English teachers; this caused the participant teachers tension between their sub-identities to try and manage what they do in their practice because the materials they taught did not reflect their religious and national identity.

The significance of the three studies mentioned above by Pillen et al (2013), Farrell (2011) and Yayli (2015) appears to be in support of the existence of tensions between teacher sub-identities or multiple identities. For example, tensions found to be related to care about learners, to how others view teachers' responsibilities, to the kind of roles expected of teachers and the ones related to teachers' religion and national identities.

As the existence of the sub and multiple identities forms an essential internal factor that interferes in teachers' work and a factor that distinguishes TPI, it is noteworthy that these

sub-identities develop with time given appropriate support and their need to harmonise together rather than conflict (Beijarrrd et al, 2004).

Following the discussion of the internal factors that influence TPI, the next section considers the external factors.

### **External/Contextual Factors**

There seems to be some consensus on the role of both internal and external factors that influence teacher identity and therefore their practice. The external or contextual factors refer to the surrounding context that teachers interact with continuously. For example, teachers' prior experiences as learners and pre-service education, societal expectation of teachers, in-service training, school culture such as the curriculum they teach and their school administration and colleagues and even the policy context in which they work (Flores and Day 2006; Izadinia, 2012; Cabral, 2012; Xu 2013).

#### Societal Expectations of Teachers

TPI can be viewed either as an image of self as to how teachers see themselves (Nias, 1989; Kelchtermans, 1993), self-imposed view or as to how others see them and what meanings others give to teacher image or role; in other words, others expectations of teachers (Tickle 2000). Tickle also adds that what teachers see as important in their professional lives is influenced by their prior experiences and the expectations of others. Additionally, the conceptions of teacher image formed by others as an accepted image for teachers. These expectations can become factors that influence TPI either positively or negatively, particularly if those expectations are high and demanding. As an example of community expectations of L2 teachers relates to their possession of a significant level of English language that enables them to comprehend the English language usage in various fields.

In their studies, Connelly and Clandinin (1999) and Goh et al (2005) found that institutional expectations, such as those of schools or the prescribed curriculum, influenced teacher pedagogy and classroom practice. In addition, the findings highlighted that based on curriculum expectations of the teacher's role, participants experienced

dilemmas and a mismatch between their identities and the curriculum they taught. This provides additional evidence of the expectations that create tensions between teacher sub-identities.

To my knowledge, there has not yet been a specific study to investigate societal expectations in the field of TESOL or EFL except for Cheung's (2008) quantitative study, which aimed to develop a scale to investigate in-service TPI in Hong Kong. This study made some links to the kind of interaction between teachers' views and the meanings they give to themselves, and to how others see them in a society. Cheung's study drew on the context of Hong Kong, which does not consider teaching as a profession equal to other professions such as medicine. Although there was some reference to the societal expectations of TESOL teachers in Cheung's study, it mainly focussed on the development of a scale to measure TPI. I believe that in-depth discussion for a concept like TPI in TESOL/EFL contexts is crucial to discover its components and the factors that influence it, including the societal expectations of these teachers.

### Prior Experiences

The individual's prior experiences of childhood can influence their beliefs about how teachers should look and act. These beliefs then influence those individuals who decide to become teachers and influence their performance when they practice teaching. This influence can continue throughout their career life. Lortie (1975) coined the prior experiences from schooling and pre-service teacher education as "apprenticeship of observation". The influence of prior experiences or the "apprenticeship of observation" on teacher identity has been widely proved by research (Richards, 2010; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Olsen, 2008; Flores and Day, 2006 and Tickle 2000).

Flores and Day (2006) researched the influences that shaped and reshaped teacher identity. They discovered that teacher personal and professional history, their pre-service experience and the teacher training programmes influenced, shaped and reshaped the participant teachers' identities. Similarly, Beijaard et al's (2000) quantitative research on teachers' perceptions of their professional identities demonstrated that factors such as context, experience and biography influenced teacher perceptions without any significant difference between these factors. Although the latter research was quantitative, which might be an inadequate agenda to research a sensitive issue as professional identity, the



former study by Flores and Day on new teachers was longitudinal and lasted for two years. The significance of both mentioned studies lies in their findings, which provide evidence of the influence of prior experiences on teachers' practice.

### Culture and the Caring Teacher

The culture in which teachers perform their practice appears to influence their professional identity (Flores and Day, 2006; Samuel and Stephens, 2000; Lasky, 2005). For example, Lasky (2005) conducted a mixed method research in Canada on the development of TPI during a period of educational reform through a survey, interviews and analysis of some policy documents utilizing a sociocultural perspective. The findings revealed that school culture has influenced and shaped teachers' professional identity throughout their career stages. This influence of school culture being the participant teachers who stated that their responsibility was to teach the curriculum and develop children as a whole. These findings provide evidence on the positive impact of school culture on teachers during reform stages. The positive implication of school culture can influence teachers and create caring teachers.

Caring 'about' learners' academic levels and social behaviour and development (Day, 2009) observed as being part of teacher-role. For example, Flores and Day (2006) found that the role of caring for learners was significant for the participant teachers who had positive past experiences when they were school learners themselves. This provides evidence of the influence of the positive apprenticeship of observation represented by teachers' prior experiences from childhood. However, there is lack of research on the impact of negative prior experiences from childhood on teacher self and practice.

O'Connor's (2008) study is only one notable study that addresses the concept of a caring teacher by exploring how teachers manage and use their emotions to care for and care about their learners in their professional work. This qualitative and interpretive study implemented purposive sampling and recruited three mid-career secondary school humanities teachers during the period of a socio-political change where new professional standards were introduced in New South Wales in Australia. The two in-depth semi-structured interviews held with each teacher, were analysed using a descriptive qualitative analysis of teachers' lived histories and experiences. The findings demonstrated that teachers engaged in caring behaviour towards their learners. The teachers based their

caring behaviour on their beliefs, on their teaching role and on their positive professional relationship with their learners. The significance of this study lies in teacher beliefs about their role towards their learners and their professional relationship with them as being the motivational factors in caring for their learners.

In the foregoing discussion, I have discussed and explored the concept of TPI in relation to its theoretical perspectives, definition, characteristics and the factors that influence it both internally and externally. The next section moves on to consider the components of TPI and argues for conceptualisation of these components.

### 3.2 Components of TPI

Although the work on TPI is not in its infancy, it still lacks conceptualisation of certain areas such as the components of this identity. There were some efforts by researchers to tackle this such as Mockler (2011), who developed a model to form a concept of TPI across a teacher's career life and joint work of Cheung (2008) and Jebiril (2008) who developed models to measure TPI.

Day et al (2006) discovered that teachers balance between three dimensions in their daily work. These are the social dimension, the professional dimension and the situational dimension. These involve teacher's life outside school, their own expectations of what constitutes a good a teacher and the policy expectations of a good teacher and their immediate working context. Mockler (2011) developed a model to conceptualise TPI in order to understand the formation and reformation of identity across the career lives of teachers. I believe that the findings of Day et al (2006) in relation to the three dimensions teachers balance helped shape the model proposed by Mockler (2011). The non-linear model of Mockler (2011) consists of three domains. These are the personal experiences, professional context and external political environment.

The efforts mentioned above focussed on the conceptualisation and measurement of TPI. However, what constitutes TPI still lacks clear definition and understanding and therefore theorisation. Although Kelchtermans (1993) conceptualised the components of teacher identity, the educational field still lacks a fully developed conceptualisation of the components of TPI for EFL/ TESOL contexts.

Because TPI evolves through teachers' developing perceptions of themselves and in synergy with professional experiences and interactions with their context, Canrinus et al (2011) associated TPI with some indicators that translate this interaction; these are job satisfaction, occupational commitment, self-efficacy and change in level of motivation. Once again, I believe that the four indicators identified by Kelchtermans (1993) who studied teachers' lives and how they develop professionally helped shape Canrinus et al's (2011) identification of their five indicators. These are self-image, self-esteem, tasks perception, job motivation and future perspectives.

In the year 2010, Hong identified some factors in TPI of pre-service and beginning teachers. These factors were value, commitment, emotions, knowledge, beliefs, and micro politics. Likewise, Abednia (2012) developed another model for TPI but replaced Kelchtermans self-esteem with self-efficacy for its importance and correspondence with the identity theory focuses on the roles of individuals.

All of the above-mentioned efforts to conceptualise either TPI or its indicators/components have involved key areas relating to L2 teacher professional work. For example, teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes, commitment towards their work, knowledge and how they view themselves professionally.

As previous research into the field of TPI, did not consider the impact of curriculum prescription on TPI in L2 contexts, this research aims to address this gap and study the impact of curriculum prescription on L2 TPI in a non-native or EFL context. In order to do so, I split the tangled concept of TPI into four components and developed a model for the components of TPI in EFL/TESOL contexts. The proposed model includes teacher beliefs, values and attitudes, their commitment as teachers, the professional knowledge they hold and the level of autonomy they experience over their work. I argue that all of these areas can contribute to developing the identity of L2 teachers.

The four elements in my model of TPI are centred on the idea of teachers as professionals. Webb (2002), Öztürk (2011) and Hooley (2007) highlighted the qualities one needs to become a professional. These qualities include the completion of a widely accepted, registered course of study, which develops a large level of talent, knowledge and skills in their profession, uses a body of updated knowledge to support their work and develops autonomy to make decisions regarding their work.

Richardson and Placier (2001) say that TPI is related to the perceptions of teachers by others such as colleagues, students, parents and who affect the responsibility, attitudes and behaviour as well as to the knowledge that teachers have. All of these features contribute to the meanings given to a professional identity. Additionally, Englund (1996) and Carr and Kemmis (1986) argue that a profession need to involve certain characteristics such as a breadth of research based knowledge, commitment to the work through meeting the ethical codes of conduct and the ability to take autonomous decisions.

In this respect, Carr and Kemmis align with the opponents who do not consider teaching as a profession because teaching does not seem to meet the conditions required for a profession. However, with ELT, the situation appears to be quite different. Borg (2006) researched the distinctive characteristics of L2 teachers, which differentiates them from other subject teachers. The findings demonstrated that L2 teachers are distinctive in areas related to the nature of the language and content they teach, which goes beyond the mastery of the four skills, vocabulary and grammar to involve cultures and communication skills. Additionally, the distinctiveness of the L2 teachers according to Borg (2006), relates to the language L2 teachers operate through while teaching, which is neither their first nor their mother tongue language. In a close scope to what distinguishes L2 teachers and in relation to ELT, Richards (2010) argues convincingly that ELT is a profession because of its unique features. The specialised knowledge base that teachers need to possess, which is obtained either from academic study and/or from experience, backs up the argument for ELT as a profession. Additionally, ELT is a profession because entering it requires membership based on entry requirements such as qualifications and certain standards set for L2 teachers. In this regard Richards explains,

“Becoming an English language teacher means becoming part of a worldwide community of professionals with shared goals, values, discourse, and practices but one with a self-critical view of its own practices and a commitment to a transformative approach to its own role”.

(Richards, 2010, p. 119)

Since the current study specifically considers the concept of teacher ‘professional’ identity, I argue that being a professional teacher depends on the components TPI may consist of. For this purpose, I developed a conceptual model for the components of TPI. The development of this model was a result of the intensive literature review in the area of TPI. This is to contribute to the educational fieldwork and theoretical perspectives on this

concept. This research adds to what previous researchers already established in relation to TPI and aims to contribute to theorise the components of TPI by developing a model that enables L2 teachers to make sense of their TPI.

### A Conceptual Model for L2 TPI Components

Conceptual models represent researcher's own thoughts, views, understandings and beliefs about the topic being researched. Researchers construct conceptual models from his or her own understandings of the world regarding the area under investigation and/or from the review of the literature in order to place the study in the right category (Maxwell, 2013).

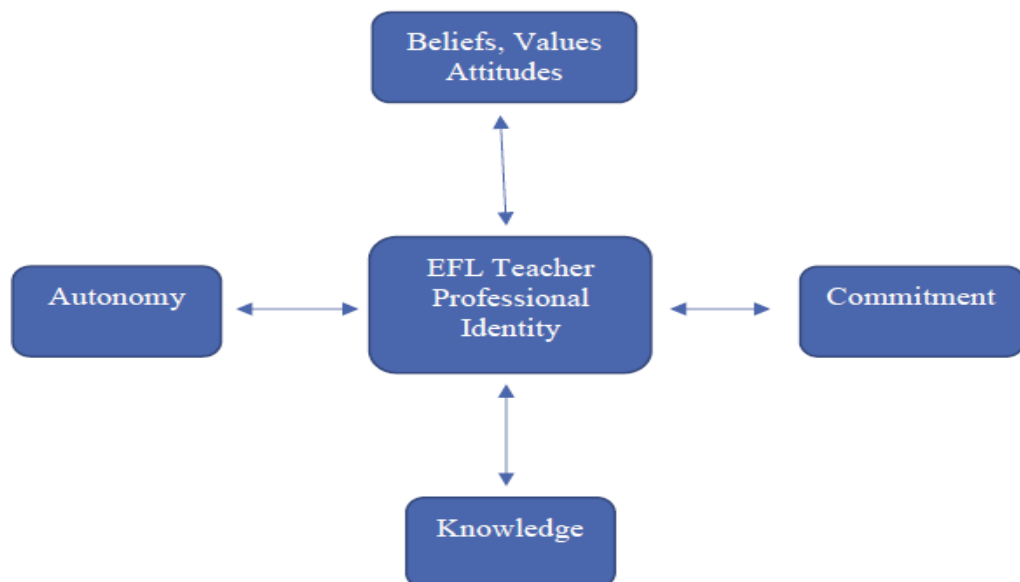


Figure 3.1: A proposed conceptual model for L2 Teacher Professional Identity (TPI) components

I developed a conceptual model to understand the components for TPI completely (Figure 3.1). This conceptual model has been derived from the discussion in literature on TPI and from the previous efforts of researchers in this field. The conceptual model developed in this research uses some of Kelchtermans' (1993) components; these are self-image, task perception and self-efficacy represented by teacher's beliefs about themselves and their

professional commitment such as their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, this model uses teacher knowledge, beliefs and values as well as commitment because these influence TPI according to scholars such as Borg (2003), Lasky (2003) and Hong (2010).

The conceptual model (Figure 3.4) of components that contributes to how L2 teachers can make sense of their professional identity consists of four interrelated areas. These are teacher beliefs, values and attitudes about themselves as teachers (self-image) and their beliefs about teaching and learning. The second component of the conceptual model is autonomy that is considered as a key component as it reflects teacher ability to take decisions in relation to their work inside or outside of the classroom and/or on the curriculum they teach. I added the element of autonomy as autonomy becomes crucial in highly controlled contexts that adopt curriculum prescription as their educational regime. The third component is teacher professional knowledge, which includes their subject knowledge and pedagogical skills needed for teaching. Finally, teacher commitment to their work as this involves teachers' professional role and responsibility. The four components are interrelated and the arrows for each component reflect the dual role of each component as they influence or are influenced by TPI.

The four areas in the model are the proposed components for making sense of EFL/TESOL TPI are described separately below.

### 3.2.1 Teachers Beliefs, Values and Attitudes

Borg (2003) defines L2 teacher cognition as what teachers think, believe and know and as the relationship of this with what they do inside the L2 classroom. Teacher beliefs tend to be tacit and may restrict their understanding and adoption of new knowledge they meet throughout their careers (Pajares, 1992; Borg, 2003; Malderez, 2004). Therefore, during pre-service teacher education programmes the hidden beliefs of student teachers need to be brought up to the surface and comprehended so that these hidden beliefs do not obscure teacher learning and development (Maldereze, 2004; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992). This could be achieved through the implementation of reflective activities and mentoring. Butcher (2000) explains that new teachers' beliefs and values need to be confronted through special kinds of mentoring programmes where teachers' professional roles would be enhanced.

Teacher beliefs in my model are divided up into two groups. The first group of beliefs are the ones related to teacher-self such as the image they hold for themselves as L2 teachers. The other group of beliefs in this model relate to teacher beliefs about issues related to teaching and learning of the English language and to the curriculum they teach. The beliefs that teachers hold about teaching and learning originate from their prior experiences from childhood either as schoolchildren or from their pre-service teacher education experiences. Lortie (1975) titled these kind of beliefs as “apprenticeship of observation”.

### 3.2.2 Teacher Knowledge

Teacher knowledge has gone far beyond the mastery of subject matter and teaching methods to embrace a wider perspective of knowledge teachers need to possess; these encompass knowledge of self, learners and their parents, the teaching environment, administration and the community (Louise et al, 1989; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999).

Ben-Peretz (2011) analysed nine papers from the “Teaching and Teacher Education” journal that focus on the concept of teacher knowledge between 1988 and 2009. The aim of the analysis was to find how teacher knowledge is defined in literature, what modes of inquiry researchers used and what the implications of teacher knowledge were for practice. The emphasis of the analysis was Shulman’s (1986) definitions of teacher knowledge. The findings of the nine papers demonstrated that several definitions were associated with the concept of teacher knowledge, and some of these definitions included societal aspects and personal knowledge. The findings also highlighted that academic or professional contexts play an important role in shaping teacher knowledge such as the school setting in which the teachers work. The most popular mode used to enquire about teacher knowledge was qualitative and interpretive. The findings also concluded that the nine studies were carried out in Western culture and the author asserted that there was a need for similar studies from other cultures as well. The only study reviewed by Ben-Peretz (2011) on teacher knowledge in relation to curriculum was the one conducted by Edwards and Ogden in the year 1998, which focussed on the demands of primary teaching with a focus on curriculum subject knowledge. This provides evidence of the lack of research in the area of curriculum in relation to teacher knowledge, which is one of the components of TPI.

The link between the personal and professional teacher-self led researchers to develop concepts such as the PPK (Persona Practical Knowledge) which was coined by Connelly and Clandinin in 1988 based on their interest on teacher knowledge. They argued that teacher knowledge experienced in contexts or formed by the teachers themselves involves knowledge about themselves, their learners and their teaching situations.

This view of teacher knowledge or PPK led to the development of the concept “teacher professional knowledge”. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) express that teacher professional knowledge involves many varieties of components and is affected by the relationships between people, places and things. This means that teacher professional knowledge appears to be relational and situational as it is influenced by different contexts. This confirms it being an essential component of L2 TPI.

According to Shulman (1987), teachers seem to possess a special and unique body of knowledge that relates to their work, which no one else owns. This knowledge does not merely represent a technical image about teaching; rather it reflects the teacher sense in the teaching and learning process (Shulman, 1987). The knowledge about when learners need support or encouragement, the knowledge about the lesson to be delayed or not and so on represent a tacit type of knowledge that is known as teacher intuition (Louise et al, 1989).

Teacher knowledge was described long time ago by Shulman (1986; 1987) and was grouped into seven types of knowledge. These are as follows:

1. Subject matter content knowledge, which refers to the amount of subject matter organisation that appears in teacher’s minds about the subject, they teach.
2. General pedagogical knowledge such as the teaching strategies about classroom organization and management knowledge that only teacher own about teaching that subject matter content knowledge or in other words the methodology of teaching.
3. Pedagogical content knowledge: the combination of both content and pedagogy is crucial to teaching knowledge. This involves teacher ability to marry the content they teach with the appropriate teaching strategies that serve it.
4. Curriculum knowledge such as knowledge of the teaching materials to be used in class. Teacher knowledge of alternative curriculum may involve their knowledge of varieties or alternatives in relation to assessment of teacher competence.
5. Knowledge of learners such as learner characteristics and needs.
6. Knowledge of educational contexts such as school administration



7. Knowledge of educational values such as the theoretical principles, values and historical and philosophical backgrounds of education.

All of these types of knowledge can make up teacher professional knowledge. The professional knowledge referred to by Shulman may be considered as a key component of TPI because teachers go through different stages of development before they reach the level of professionalism in their knowledge.

To sum up, teacher knowledge involves the integration of both the overt and covert knowledge about themselves within teaching and learning. The mastery of the different types of this professional knowledge is an important area of their professional identity. This research makes use of Shulman's (1986; 1987) definitions of teacher knowledge. Thus, teacher professional knowledge in this research involves: their familiarity and mastery of the subject they teach (English language), knowledge about suitable teaching methods, learners' needs, teaching context, knowledge of self (professional identity) and knowledge of the curriculum they teach as well as the principles, aims and philosophy that underpin this curriculum.

Having described two components of the proposed model so far, I will move on to discuss the third component of the proposed model.

### 3.2.3 Teacher Autonomy

Autonomy links strongly to other components of TPI. Teachers who can make proper decisions regarding their work are viewed as professionals in their careers. Teacher's ability to become autonomous links with some internal and external factors that influence their work.

Teacher autonomy could be viewed at an individual or collective level. The individual level is about teachers taking decisions and planning their own individual work such as their daily lessons and about their learners. The collective level is wider and involves teacher contribution to the planning of the educational system such as planning of a national curriculum. Teacher autonomy has been discussed in literature in relation to many factors, such as the level of autonomy needs to be given to teachers over their work, the benefits and risks of teacher autonomy and the openness and transparency of the educational

systems over teacher autonomy. The addition of teacher autonomy as one of the components for this study is necessary for the given context of curriculum prescription.

Öztürk (2011) based on Friedman (1999) discusses aspects of teacher autonomy. These are the pedagogical aspect (curriculum development and student teaching and assessment) and the organisational aspect (staff development and budget planning etc.). This research limits teacher autonomy to the pedagogical aspect, as these are closer to teachers' daily practice. For example, Hargreaves (2000) says that teacher professional development could be encouraged by providing autonomy for teachers over their work. Castle (2004, p. 7 quoted in Öztürk, 2011) state "teacher autonomy will equip teachers to be curriculum creators not just curriculum enactors".

In spite of the voice of some educationalists such as Hargreaves (2000), teacher autonomy is still debatable in many contexts particularly regarding the level of autonomy that should be given to teachers. This includes the context of this research.

The qualitative research conducted in Turkey by Öztürk (2011) to analyse the History curriculum for teacher autonomy as part of curriculum reform in order to locate the place of teacher autonomy in overall goals and curriculum principles and to explore the space for freedom allowed to teachers over planning of content and teaching methods. The research revealed that the new curriculum fails to provide signs or construct teacher autonomy and power within its programme, in spite of some flexibility in the instruction given to teachers. The new curriculum provides some autonomy for teachers over planning the teaching methods and activities, however, it does not specify clearly the level of autonomy teachers have over the teaching methods and activities. This situation in Turkey is similar to many educational contexts particularly in non-western contexts where educational systems are standardised to ensure the quality of education for learners. Consequently, teacher autonomy is limited.

Another example of research on a highly prescribed national curriculum again in Turkey was the study by GÜR (2014) who found that teachers thought that they had the space and freedom to make change and adapt and that there were no restrictions imposed by curriculum prescription or the guidebook. However, the findings also showed that those teachers were significantly dependant on the curriculum they teach, which is not strong on helping teachers to change or adapt. GÜR attributes these findings to teachers, who never experienced being autonomous, so they do not understand what autonomy means. The findings from this research on teacher autonomy shows how critical the situation can

become if teachers follow guidebooks without thinking of their role in the learning and teaching process.

In Iran, Abednia (2012) conducted a qualitative research on a critical EFL course on TPI. This study observed three shifts in the participating teachers' professional identity. These shifts involved teacher autonomy where a shift has been observed of teachers become more critical and autonomous because of doing a course that focussed on TPI. This research finding appeared to be cutting-edge for how dynamic, relational and situational TPI can become and on the significant role of teacher education and training programmes in influencing TPI.

Based on the above reviewed research about autonomy in prescribed teaching contexts, teacher autonomy appears to be vague, blurred and hidden. The extent to which teachers become autonomous is still questionable in these contexts and teacher understanding of what autonomy involves still requires further clarification. Thus, the inclusion of autonomy as one of the components for L2 TPI seems to be essential in highly controlled educational contexts such as the Omani context.

#### 3.2.4 Teacher Commitment

Teacher commitment represents that ongoing professional support, concern and care for learners which teachers commit themselves to while doing their work and to being serious and loyal to their work (Day et al, 2005; Schepens et al, 2009; Nias, 1989; Troman, 2008). Teacher personal responsibility according to Berliner (1988) only occurs when teachers start making decisions over their work.

The longitudinal study by Nias (1989) found that teacher commitment was about the level of care and support they think teachers should have for their learners and that committed teachers are loyal and serious about their work. Similarly, Kelchtermans (1993) in his qualitative research on TPI used the term "Task perception" to refer to commitment. He interviewed ten experienced Flemish primary teachers whose experience was between 15-25 years. He asked them to define their jobs. The findings highlighted that teachers' task or commitment was in their dedication for professional development and on their relationship with their students. The significance of both studies by Nias (1989) and

Kelchtermans (1993) relates to care and support teachers provided for their learners and their relationship with learners that caused teacher dedication towards the work they do.

Similarly, Vozzo (2011) carried out a narrative research to investigate her role as an educator, who supports research teachers and how that role of contribution has shaped her professional identity as an educator. She found that work with one of the research teachers for four years, has helped to shape her own professional identity. The shaping was represented through her professional commitment to the ongoing support, care and success she affirmed the research teacher with, commitment to mutual learning, reflection and advocacy of research as a way of learning.

However, Day et al (2005) argue that teacher commitment goes beyond teacher practice like caring for their learners and being dedicated to their work to involve their beliefs and values regardless of the circumstances they go through because these values and beliefs are the drivers for teacher commitment. In support of Day et al's (2005) argument, I believe that teacher commitment stems from and is led by their beliefs and values to prove the interrelatedness nature of TPI.

To conclude, teacher professional commitment is seen as part of teacher's professional identity, which is linked not only to their practice as teachers, but also it includes principally led and ethically underpinned beliefs and values. In this research, teacher commitment is in extricable interconnectedness with teachers' principled beliefs and their professional identity. This element of commitment within their professional identity is represented in how teachers see their roles and responsibilities towards their learners, the learning-teaching process and in relation to their ongoing relationship with the curriculum.

Having discussed the four proposed components of L2 TPI may consist of, I will now move on to consider the school curriculum in the next section.

### 3.3 Curriculum

The term curriculum is diverse and can be defined differently according to various contexts. While some educationalists define curriculum as the programme of activities for education or the plan for education, others view it as the activities for learning (White, 1988; Graves, 1996; Ross, 2000).

The wide view of curriculum includes societal constructed activities that may result in the transformation of individuals while the narrow view of curriculum can be at the level of the blue print or prescription that guides teaching and learning of what to be learned in national prescribed or predefined curriculum (Graves, 1996; Ross, 2000; Kelly, 2009; Richards, 2013). In this regard Richards (2015) defines curriculum as

“Curriculum is a broader term than syllabus and refers to an overall plan for the teaching of a subject: it may include the statements of the goals and objectives of a course or group of courses, the content of the programme and the sequence in which the content will be taught (i.e. the syllabus), the teaching procedures and learning activities and resources that will be used, the means used to assess learning and the means used to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme”.

(Richards, 2015, p. 569)

Moreover, curriculum can be overt or covert. The pre-defined and approved curriculum for implementation in schools or universities is referred to as the overt curriculum. Ross (2000) defines the hidden or covert curriculum as all that is unintentionally passed onto learners during the process of education.

The term curriculum is sometimes overlapped with the term syllabus depending on the context it is being used. For example, in Britain curriculum refers to the total content and aims of the educational system or school while in the United States of America curriculum refers to the content of a certain subject. To avoid such conflict, this research only considers the term curriculum, thus, it is best to define how this term is used in this research. The term curriculum in this research adopts Kelly’s (2009) definition of curriculum, which refers to the description of the overall plan of each subject. This includes the underlying principles, goals, aims, outcomes and objectives as well as the content (the learning), the methodology (the teaching), the assessment and evaluation procedures.

According to Richards (2013), any curriculum in the field of language teaching and in this context the ELT curriculum consists of the input, output, syllabus, methodology, processes and learning outcomes. Input refers to the linguistic elements or content to be included in a course and output refers to the learning outcomes and to what learners can do by the end of a course such as language proficiency. Syllabus refers to the organisation of those linguistic elements or content in certain units that enable teaching and learning of those elements such as vocabulary, grammar etc. The term process refers to the teaching methods and classroom activities, while methodology refers to the type of procedures and

techniques used by the teacher in classrooms. How these curriculum components are used, depends on the type of curriculum.

As this research focuses on teachers and TPI working with prescribed curricula, it is worth discussing the leading curriculum design models implemented in different contexts from the twentieth century across to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### 3.3.1 Models of Curriculum Design

Curriculum design has undergone stages of development and variation across decades in different educational contexts such as in the UK and the USA based on certain values, ideologies and theoretical perspectives. Curriculum design has been considered for long by various educationalists whose work left a significant imprint in the field of curriculum design, such as the work of Tyler (1949), Taba (1962) and Stenhouse (1975) as cited in White (1988), Nunan (1988) and Richards (2001;2013).

The logical design of any language curriculum would be to decide on its inputs, develop its processes and measure its outputs; however, these elements are designed in certain ways that reflect the theory underpinning each curriculum. ELT curriculum design was influenced by work on language curriculum design. The stages that ELT curriculum design went through across decades could be classified into two major stages of development; these are the product-based design and the process-based design. Table 3.1 provides a synthesis of the available literature that tackled these two models in relation to the period of implementation, the features of design type, examples of such design and the approaches that align with each design as well as the key leaders or pioneers who called for each design.

	<b>Product-based model</b>	<b>Process-based model</b>
<b>Period</b>	1940s-1960s	Late 1960s and 1970s- to date
<b>Features</b>	Interest in product of education (the What) Technical and scientific Focus on ends rather than means Objective and subject driven Traditional Linear and graded content and objectives	Interest in the process of education (the How) Non-scientific and non-technical Focus on means rather than ends Skills driven Teacher and learner role and autonomy are key
<b>Examples of curriculum designs</b>	Structural curriculum Subject-centred curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• theme-based</li> <li>• concept-driven</li> <li>• notional-functional</li> </ul> competence-based standard-based i.e. CEFR	Learner-centred curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• negotiated</li> <li>• problem-based</li> <li>• process-based</li> <li>• integrated</li> <li>• procedural</li> <li>• situational</li> </ul>
<b>Approaches</b>	Audiolingualism: TPR TBL ELT structural syllabus Communicative language teaching (communicative competence)	Procedural syllabus SLA Discovery learning Active learning
<b>Key leaders</b>	Tyler (1949) Taba (1962) John Dewey ( Kerr (1968)	Stenhouse (1970- 1975) Wheeler (1967) Krashen &Terrell (1983) Piaget (1967) Bruner (1966 ) Silkbeck (1984) Prabhu (1987)

Table 3.1: Curriculum design models

### **The Product-based Model**

This type of curriculum stemmed from the applied linguistic theory and approach to education. This curriculum carried various titles such as ends-means, content-based and objective-based curriculum. These titles represented the nature of this model, which depends hugely on the goals and aims specified at the start of curriculum design process. The product-based model reflects the prediction of educational outcomes prior to its

implementation. This model was hugely based on the work of Tyler in 1940s titled “Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction”, which was later refined and developed by Taba in the 1960s (White, 1988; Nunan, 1988, Kelly, 2009; Richards, 2001, 2013).

The classical objective-based curriculum model that Tyler proposed in the 1940s consisted of four key stages of development. These are as follows,

1. Specification of the general aims, the long-term aims and the short-term specific objectives.
2. Decisions on the subject matter, content or input ought to be learned by learners and the organisation of that content in order to accomplish to the predefined aims and objectives.
3. Decisions on the learning experiences or the teaching methods and the organisation of these.
4. Decisions on the evaluation systems and assessment procedures.

This product-based model moves in a linear and graded process as it begins by making decisions over the input or the content ought to be learned, which means that it requires a certain level of subject matter knowledge in order to plan its syllabus (White, 1988; Richards, 2013). This classical model of Tyler was and is still valued by various countries around the world as it reflects a systematic and organised approach to curriculum development, particularly in contexts where curriculum is centralised and prescribed by governments. However, this curriculum was criticised for its sequential nature, for its ends-means and for the delay of evaluation and assessment until the end (White, 1988; Nunan, 1988).

In the field of ELT, this product-based model is known as a forward and backward design (Richards, 2013), where the learning outcomes or the content are defined and followed by the methodology and assessment. Although Richards (2013) differentiated between the backward and forward curriculum design, I believe they both fall into the product-based model.

Examples of such models are the audiolingual method represented by the Total Physical Response (TPR), the structural approach to ELT and the communicative language teaching (CLT). The teacher’s role in this design is a transmitter of knowledge, who models language use and explains rules. This design is very popular in many parts of the world particularly that it is linked with competency-based instruction and standard-based instruction or standardisation regimes. The teacher’s role in this type of design is to



organise learning experiences for their learners. A very popular example of the content-based model or the backward design is the Common European Framework for Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Richards, 2013). The prescribed curriculum investigated throughout this research context in Oman reflects the product-based model. This involves the decisions on the overall expected outcomes of the learners and the curriculum development process, which includes the agreement on the content that ought to be acquired by learners, the teaching methods and assessment procedures. The Omani curriculum differs slightly in relation to assessment procedures, which are not left to the end but rather are presented as ongoing formative as well as summative types.

Towards the mid and end of the 1960s, the product-based model or the ends-means curriculum was developed into versions that tried to improve the linearity of the Tylerian model. According to Nunan (1988), the integrated curriculum model developed by Wheeler (1967) differed from the Tylerian model in the selection of learning experiences prior to the selection of content and the integration of the learning experiences with the content. The other element that distinguished the integrated model was that evaluation fed into the selection of aims and objectives. Additionally, Kerr (1968) developed an interactive model of curriculum, which included four elements; these were objectives, evaluation, knowledge and school learning experiences. This was the initial stage for the presentation of the process-based curriculum.

### **The Process-based Model**

The process-based curriculum was an outcome of theories related to child development and growth in learning by scholars such as Stenhouse, Bruner and Piaget whose work influenced the field of ELT and ELT curriculum design. The influence of learning development and child growth and development theories as well the work on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) highlighted the fundamental role of interaction in learners' cognitive development. Thus, the focus of curriculum design differed from focus on pre-defined objectives to focus on learner understanding.

This type of curriculum defined general principles for teachers in order to guide the direction of curriculum. Teachers implementing this curriculum found it close to their practice because they were not tied to the achievement of short-term objectives, but instead teachers were autonomous to decide for their learners. The process-based

curriculum focuses on procedures instead of content or the achievement of behavioural outcomes. This meant that teacher involvement in curriculum design was valued.

A popular example of the process-oriented curriculum was Stenhouse's (1975) publication as cited in Nunan (1988) and Ross (2000), which consisted of three elements:

1. Planning: The planning involved decisions on the principles of content and teaching strategies, sequence of content and individual differences.
2. Empirical study: The empirical study involved decisions on the principles for students' progress evaluation and guidance on curriculum implementation in various school settings.
3. Justification: Included the formulation of aims.

The process-curriculum by Stenhouse highlights the role of the teacher as a decision-maker and focuses on "what happens in the classroom" rather than "what ought to happen" as in the product-based model. This thinking led to the emergence of the learner-centred curriculum that refers to situations where education, content and processes are driven by the nature of the learner such as age, interest and so on.

Scholars such as Krashen and Terrel in the 'Natural Approach' promoted the process-based model or the Central Design as referred to by Richards (2013), where general goals are set such as general basic writing skills. This means that there was no need to pre-define the goals intended to be achieved; rather learners' needs led the whole process of curriculum design. This process-based model is very learner-centred, activity-based and led by experiential learning. It is about what teachers want their learners to do during lessons. According to Richards (2013), an example of the central design or the process-based model would be the first version of Task Based Learning (TBL) where language-learning goals are general and not linked to a certain context. According to Richards (2013), "Dogme" is another example of the central design, which was developed by Scott Thornbury. Dogme derived from film industry and means performing without a script or rehearsal. For education, it means that teaching is based and built on the interaction between teachers and their learners, that learning is experiential and holistic and that there was not any pre-planned syllabus for teachers to implement and follow. This means that there is a high reliance, weight and trust given to teacher competence particularly teacher professional knowledge and experience.

Learning according to the process-based model is situational (Wenger, 1998) which is not about the mastery of the pre-planned and determined outcomes rather learning means the construction of new knowledge that resulted because of participation in a certain context.

### **The Situational Model (School-based Curriculum)**

This model derived from the process-based model of curriculum design. Scholars such as Stenhouse (1975), who valued the teacher role and decisions of the curriculum they teach promoted this situational or school cultural curriculum design. Later this view was further expanded through projects such as the one proposed by Silkbeck in the 1980s. According to White (1988), this situational model comes between the product and the process-based models as it prioritises the curriculum-planning context, which is the school in this case.

The school-based curriculum advocated by Silkbeck begins by the analysis of the situation or the school context, and then objectives are defined based on the analysis outcome. Based on the objectives, decisions are made about the teaching-learning programmes. Teachers put these programmes into practice and implement them and then evaluation of such curriculum takes place at the end. This model means that schools and teachers are autonomous to make their own curriculum based on given principles and the needs of their school culture. However, issues such as teacher lack of design expertise and teacher lack of knowledge and skills remained as a challenge in the face of such design (Huizinga et al, 2013).

In order to re-think the nature of the Omani prescribed ELT curriculum investigated by this research, it does not appear to either fall into the category of process-based model or match the specifications of the learner-centred curriculum. This contradicts the claim from the MoE that the ELT curriculum utilised is learner-centred.

To conclude, this section discussed the two main types of curriculum design since the twentieth century. Based on this understanding, there seems to be a dichotomy between what is expected of teachers in the two designs. As many contexts call for teacher's role to be a facilitator, yet they adopt the product-based curriculum design model, which as we saw labels teachers to the level of being organisers of learning experiences not facilitators. A facilitating role of a teacher appears in the learner-centred design, which does not appear to be adopted by many contexts nowadays including Oman. There

seems to be a trend for an adoption of an eclectic design that follows rigid curriculum designs yet calls for teacher flexibility and facilitating for learning. This outcome is due to a context, which strives for quality achievement by the adoption of standardisation, centrality and prescription of curriculum. Therefore, teacher role in Oman, has become vague, particularly their involvement in curriculum design and development.

### 3.3.2 Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Design and Development

“Teachers can and should be involved in written curriculum development at various levels: (1) at the national level, writing learning outcome statements and preparing materials and textbooks; (2) at the regional and local levels for use in area schools, such as language specific and culturally relevant materials; and (3) at the classroom level, preparing lessons and instructional materials for the daily lessons they teach, in response to current student needs”.

(UNICEF 2000, p.18)

The above call from the UNICEF invites teacher involvement in curriculum design and development at various levels. However, teacher involvement in curriculum design at a national, regional and school level depends on many factors. For example, the kind of preparation and education teachers received from the pre-service institutions and the overall educational system adopted by the whole country. The educational policy determines the level of contribution expected of teachers towards the design and development of curriculum. In contexts where policy is quite flexible, teacher contribution to curriculum development might be higher than in contexts with less flexibility. The discussion of teacher involvement in curriculum design and development links with teacher identity and therefore affects their authority and role in having ownership over the curriculum they teach.

As some educationalists viewed Tyler’s curriculum as a top down approach, explicit calls to include teachers and schools in curriculum design escalated such as Hilda Taba’s call in the 1960s to curriculum development process. As a result, to this call many contexts responded to this including Britain and held schools responsible for their work in the early 1970s (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996; Hargreaves, 2000).

During the period between 1970s until 1988, teacher involvement in curriculum design was still present in both the American and British educational systems. Ross (2000) says that by the end of the 1970s, British local authorities had more influence on schools and

curriculum and they gave specific guides to teachers on aspects of the curriculum and classroom materials. The focus of the early 1980s was on educational change and fostering learning, this resulted in more bureaucracy over curriculum systems (Geijsel and Meijer, 2005). Wood (2004) says that before 1988, the amount of control and centralisation was different in the UK as there was more autonomy and freedom to the school culture and teachers to decide on the “what” and “how” to teach and assess. This reflected the school-based curriculum design phase.

In the mid of 1980s in spite of all the bureaucracy, authorities and researchers viewed teachers as decision makers and meaningful agents of change not as objects or targets in the design of school organisation (Geijsel and Meijer, 2005). For example, the UK national curriculum introduced in 1987 was seen as a curriculum that builds on teacher professionalism in their classes by allowing them to use their own imagination and experiences because it does not lay down how lessons should be taught nor specifies the school timetable (Helsby and McCulloch, 1996).

Freeman (2002) calls the period between 1980 and 1990 the decade of change because teachers were viewed differently. The focus during this period was more on the role of beliefs, hidden pedagogy and curriculum, apprenticeship of observation, teacher PPK and teacher prior knowledge that shaped their learning through apprenticeship (Freeman, 2002). In addition, during this period schools were considered as professional communities that were responsible for their work (Geijsel and Meijer, 2005).

From the above discussion, it is apparent that teachers and schools received guidelines and acts from local authorities and governments about curriculum design and development until the 1980s when modernity took place. This resulted in a change of educational aims and expectations, something that affected curriculum design and questions like whose task it should be to design the curriculum based on educational aims and standards began to rise. By the end of 1980s, teacher role in curriculum design was minimised as more bureaucracy increased and standardisation systems began to take place. This created the debate over teacher authority on curriculum design. The debate over teacher involvement in curriculum design and development is still continuous. While some scholars supported teacher contribution to curriculum design, others were against such a perspective. For example, Fullan (1982) who supports teachers' genuine contribution to curriculum reform development, called for their contribution to go beyond the involvement of sitting on committees since this includes a minority of teachers and

consigns the vast majority to the passive role of receivers only. This view of Fullan gives more credit to teacher involvement at the curriculum planning stage. In line with Fullan, Howells (2003) emphasises the necessity of teacher involvement in curriculum design and argues that teachers are marginalised from curriculum development.

Additionally, some educationalists thought that standardisation took away teacher authority, status and decisions making about what they do inside their classes such as Hargreaves (2000), others believed that standardisation and prescription of curriculum benefited both learners and teachers based on the support they provide the teachers with. In this matter, Hargreaves (2000) explains the impact of such situation on teachers

The results, with which teachers have had to deal, have been centralized curricula and testing regimes that have trimmed back the range and autonomy of teachers' classroom judgement, and a market-inspired application from the corporate sector, of systems of administration by performance management (through targets, standards, and paper trails of monitoring and accountability)

(Hargreaves, 2000, pp.168-169)

The more bureaucratic the educational systems have become, the more centralised and prescribed curriculum and testing regimes have become.

### 3.3.3 Curriculum Centrality and Prescription

The adoption of a standardised or central regime for education in any context results in the adoption of a national curriculum to ensure that quality of education is provided to all learners across the country. This standardisation in some contexts requires teachers to teach one central national curriculum. In this case, curriculum becomes prescribed if all its contents are pre-defined in advance by authorities.

Curriculum prescription refers to the specification of the aims and objectives that ought to be achieved by the parties involved in the learning-teaching process as well as the principles and the methodology that underlie that particular curriculum. Additionally, prescription refers to the content that ought to be learned by learners inside or outside of the classroom, the teaching methodology that should be employed by teachers, the assessment procedures to be applied to measure learner progress and all of the teaching resources to be implemented. The Omani policy documents introduce its curriculum according to the following view of prescription:

“Within the model of the Omani concept of Basic Education, and according to current educational trends, the curriculum includes all the learners’ experiences in school and out of school. Whether curricular or extra-curricular, in addition to the programme or content of study. This extended concept of the curriculum also encompasses ways of interpreting and applying the curriculum through its operational constituents in order to integrate all the elements of planning and implementation involved, and to empower the entire process.”

(Basic Education, 2001, p. 10)

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages to standardisation or to centrality of educational systems. In this research, the terms standardisation and centralisation are used interchangeably. The advantages of this kind of system appear to be linked with learner development and achievement of educational aims (Ball and Cohen, 1996) as it is assumed by such systems that all learners would get similar chances of education and content and so this would lead to having similar national outcomes. Hargreaves (2000) adds that after the 1980s or during the decade of change, teachers lost some of that autonomy as national curriculum started to flourish in a belief that it would ensure learner development. As Oman adopted a centralised system, this means that visitors to any English language classroom of a certain grade in any region in Oman would be able to see similar teaching and learning taking place. In this way, the Omani context represents curriculum centralisation and prescription as well as demonstrating product-based curriculum design as discussed earlier.

The disadvantages of centralisation involve controlling and prescribing teacher practice, which can lead to the decline of the quality of education (Caldron and Smith, 1999). Stone-Johnson (2013) states that curriculum prescription affects teachers as they lose control over their work. He adds that recent research argues that standardisation undermines teacher authority and autonomy, as well as challenging their personal and professional identities.

Although the level of standardisation differs between countries, examples of well-known standardisation systems were the ones introduced in developed countries after their teachers have experienced years of autonomy. Such examples include the British National curriculum in 1998 and the American “No Child Left Behind”. The latter was a very top-down prescribed system, as teachers were guided to what they teach something that constrained teacher professionalism (Stone-Johnson, 2013). The “No Child Left Behind” was considered the creation of the first compulsory accountable national structure; this accountability held schools and districts responsible for student

achievement (Polikoff et al, 2014). Teachers' roles according to this policy transformed to become agents for knowledge transmitters rather than engagement in being creative and developing their own curriculum as they did before (Stone-Johnson, 2013).

As standardisation systems were introduced, researchers could not wait to study the impact of such systems on teachers. A study reported by Helsby and McCulloch (1996) to investigate the relationship between professionalism and curriculum control in Britain. They refer to professionalism as teacher status in relation to having their rights in their classrooms. They carried out their study in Lancaster city in England and involved all teachers who taught children aged 14-18 in three schools. They combined their wide-scale survey with semi-structured interviews to gain teachers views on the area being researched. The findings demonstrated that standardisation has weakened teacher sense of confidence regarding coping and decision taking. Similarly, Ball and Cohen (1996) state that curriculum prescription is appreciated for its ability to shape learner learning and development but this type of curriculum can de-professionalise teachers as it takes away autonomy and decision making from them. This identifies a quite negative impact of standardisation on teacher authority and status inside the classroom as they lose control over decision-making because they need to follow the decisions made by the national curriculum authorities.

Another study carried out in a European influenced country (Turkey) in relation to curriculum prescription and teacher autonomy was the study by Öztürk (2011) discussed earlier in this chapter. The findings from this study demonstrated that although the new curriculum provided some autonomy over planning the teaching methods and activities, it did not specify clearly the level of authority teachers could have over the teaching methods and activities.

The significance of the above three studies relates to the negative impact of standardisation and curriculum prescription in relation to the de-professionalization of teachers regarding their autonomy, level of decision-making and confidence. The impact on teacher autonomy appears to be quite negative within such a system according to the findings of the above research. This places a question on the role expected of teachers in the classroom within this type of educational system and how much teachers can be involved in the curriculum they teach.



The next sub-section explores the impact of curriculum on teachers (particularly curriculum prescription) focusing on the research conducted in the field of ELT and TESOL in relation to TPI where possible.

#### 3.3.4 Impact of School Curriculum on Teachers (L2)

The impact of the school curriculum has widely been researched in relation to how beneficial it is for learner development, the learning situation and the achievement of aims and objectives. However, the impact of school curriculum on teachers faces a scarcity in literature. This research aims to redress this gap by exploring the impact of curriculum prescription on teachers, specifically in relation to the development of their professional identity.

Existing Research on the impact of school curriculum on teachers focuses on various areas such as curriculum enactment, reforms and curriculum change, teacher cognition, teacher professional knowledge, teacher learning, teacher autonomy, commitment, professionalism and recently, on teacher identity.

The majority of research has been on curriculum enactment. For example, Nias' (1989) large longitudinal study in England and Wales had a major impact on teacher self and identity research. The study that lasted for ten years was conducted. It aimed to explore the relationship between teacher identity and curriculum enactment. Between the years 1975-1977, ninety-nine teachers were interviewed; these were 30 male and 69 female teachers. In addition, twenty-two of these teachers kept diaries once a week for one term. The researcher (Nias) was the participants' course tutor. After ten years, specifically in the year 1985, fifty of those teachers were interviewed. In addition to the interviews, diaries were kept and some school visits with unstructured classroom observations were conducted at both stages of the research. Using the grounded theory and thematic analysis the data revealed some interesting and beneficial findings. The findings from this study supported previous studies that demonstrated teacher values and beliefs played an essential role in how they do their work. This study provided evidence on the influence of teacher beliefs, values and epistemology on their professional action. This means that the participant teachers influenced the curriculum they teach by bringing in their beliefs and values into their teaching.

Similarly, Cabral (2012) investigated the relationship between teacher identity and the enacted curriculum, focussing on how and to what extent, TPI was influenced by the model of curriculum they taught. The participants in this qualitative and descriptive research were three elementary pre-school teachers in Lisbon who used three different types of curriculum in three different schools. The curricula used in these schools were Waldorf pedagogy, MEM (New School Movement) model and one school had no specific curriculum model to follow but fostered self-esteem, autonomy and responsibility in its learners. The data was analysed inductively using content analysis. All three teachers expressed attachment to their school and the curriculum they taught. The teachers acted in a motherly manner, saw themselves as secretaries because they prepared things for their learners and as role models for their learners. This last role belonged to the teacher with no curriculum. This study supports the view that teachers are influenced by the curriculum they teach.

In addition, Wu et al (2011) investigated TPI and beliefs about the curriculum and instructional practice. Three heritage language teachers participated in this study in a Chinese community based school. The findings from this qualitative case study disclosed that teachers had a weak sense of professional identity because their job was voluntary or part-time. The Chinese language teachers in the community school in America had a weak professional identity because the language they teach represented a minor status in the USA context. This study also demonstrates that teacher identity can come to be influenced by the curriculum they teach.

The significance of these three studies lies in the mutual impact and influence between teacher beliefs and values and the curriculum they teach. In Nias' study, the beliefs and values held by teachers played an essential role in their practice as they acted based upon them. The opposite happened in Cabral's and Wu et al studies, where the teachers were affected by the curriculum they taught and therefore acted based upon that. Additionally, the language taught by the teachers in the Wu et al (2011) study influenced their professional identity. This shows the mutual influence between both the teacher and curriculum and the impact of this mutual relationship on TPI. Although, this relational impact is significant, these studies do not specifically demonstrate the impact of curriculum prescription on teachers.

## **Impact of Curriculum Prescription on Teachers**

The findings from the study carried out in the USA by Connelly and Clandinin (1999) on the role of subject matter knowledge on the construction of teacher identity demonstrated that the prescribed curriculum became part of a teacher's identity and was welcomed by teachers. Although this study showed that the prescribed curriculum had a significant influence on teacher identity as there was mutual interaction between the three participants and the prescribed curriculum they taught, the participants in this study experienced dilemmas and mismatch between their identity and the curriculum they taught especially to what the curriculum expects to be their role. Teachers in this study constructed their identity through knowledge about the subject they taught. Even though the findings from this study may sound quite positive in relation to the influence of curriculum prescription on the development of teacher knowledge, the dilemmas experienced by teachers reflected their adherence to their beliefs and experiences or in other words adherence to their professional identity.

Blignaut (2008) completed another similar study on the enactment of a prescribed curriculum, which explored teacher thinking in relation to teacher interpretation of a new curriculum – C2005 – and its implementation in putting policy into practice. This qualitative, explorative and interpretive study was carried out in South Africa. The C2005 was highly prescribed in terms of policy and instruction, but vague on content as teachers were asked to develop their own content to match the expected outcomes. The C2005 called for integration of content, which was based on eight learning areas not on traditional subjects. The participants were three grade nine teachers from three different secondary schools. The findings showed that teacher practice was influenced by their epistemologies; for example, they adapted the curriculum according to their experiences, beliefs and understandings. They did not teach this curriculum according to the policy. The teachers implemented a teacher centred approach not what C2005 advocated, as they preferred summative assessment and were not designing their own programmes nor integrating knowledge as requested by the policy. Teacher response to the new curriculum policy was complex. This demonstrates that the prescribed curriculum-C2005-did not influence the teachers practice because their professional identity was robust and rejected the reform.

Both of the above studies revealed that teachers who were asked to teach a prescribed curriculum could not leave their experiences and epistemologies or their identity aside;

rather, they incorporated these into their work, even if this meant changing some of the policy as happened in Blignaut's (2008) study. Another example is the teachers in Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) study, who faced a dilemma between what they saw as their role and what the curriculum asked them to do. These findings support the inference in the previous section above on the impact of curriculum on teachers. A conclusion could be drawn here about the mutual influence between teachers and the curriculum they teach, though the influence of teacher beliefs and values on curriculum seems to be bigger than the influence of curriculum on them according to the research findings of Blignaut (2008); Nias (1989); Connelly and Clandinin (1999).

Having discussed the impact of curriculum prescription on teachers, I will move on to the next point and consider the influence of ELT curriculum prescription on L2 teachers.

### **ELT and Curriculum Prescription**

The research carried out on the impact of curriculum prescription on L2 teachers is quite recent in educational research. The findings of this research either supported the benefits of curriculum prescription for language teachers or argued the opposite that it took away their authority and autonomy.

Reeves (2010) studied teacher learning from scripted instructions or curriculum. This eighteen-month ethnographic and descriptive study with ESL teachers in a rural Midwestern town in the USA revealed that the participating teachers benefited from the one-sided dialogue with the scripted instruction even if it was at the level of language learning and teaching. The language teachers used the scripted instruction as a mediation tool to learn about language and language promoting professional growth such as teaching methods designed by experts, introduced teachers to new strategies (Reeves, 2010). However, it could be argued that teachers may have only developed general pedagogical knowledge from this scripted instruction, which may not necessarily be applicable for their classes.

Reeves (2010) argued convincingly that scripted instructions follow the behaviourism theory, thus it does not support teacher development because it controls teacher talk and action and therefore controls their thinking, as there are no dialogue opportunities given to

teachers. This argument might mean that L2 TPI can negatively be affected by the curriculum they teach.

Another recent longitudinal study by Allard and Doecke (2014) examined the tensions between TPI and standardisation regimes. This research focussed on how L2 teachers negotiated the tensions between the standardisation regimes “curriculum, professional standards for teachers, teaching and testing” and their developing sense of identity as ELT teachers and the kind of professional knowledge these new teachers bring with them. The study participants were early career English teachers in a state school in Queensland in Australia. The educational system in Australia moved to the adoption of one national curriculum with one vision and one platform but delivered in different ways. The findings from this study demonstrated that teacher professional knowledge was socially constructed and shared within the school community. Although these findings seem to be common for a profession like teaching given that teacher identity is socially constructed, this study emphasises the role of the school community to overcome tensions between standardisation systems and TPI. However, this study did not present new understandings nor significant findings in relation to how standardisation regimes can influence L2 TPI. In addition, the participants from this research were early career teachers with less teaching experience.

Although not specifically related to curriculum prescription, Goh et al (2005) examined three aspects of teacher cognition, (1) the relationship between teacher knowledge and their beliefs in relation to concepts about teaching English skills and grammar, (2) suitable teaching strategies and (3) learner needs and motivation of primary and secondary L2 teachers in Singapore. This descriptive and explanatory study involved a large number of teachers of whom 2.752 filled in the questionnaires from 150 schools and some selected participants were involved in semi-structured interviews. Teachers tried to balance between their beliefs about English language teaching and learning together with the complexities of the daily practice and their situational expectations of them. Teachers thought that they had sufficient knowledge about the syllabus and were confident of this knowledge, though they privileged reading and writing over oral aural skills. The findings from this research demonstrated L2 teachers were confident to implement the new syllabus although they did not fully articulate its principles.

The difference between Goh’s study and the study by Wu et al (2011) mentioned in (3.3.4) on the Chinese heritage schoolteachers relates to the language being taught. The English

language teachers in Goh's study were confident about the language they taught unlike the teachers in the Wu et al study. This confidence might have a link with the reputation of the language being taught in certain contexts. English language is perceived as key to educational success around the globe. Consequently, this status of the English language impacts on the identity of the teachers who teach it and the community these L2 teachers belong to such as the field of TESOL.

In a study, closer to the scope of the present research GÜR (2014) conducted a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews and examined whether teachers work had been transformed or not, how, and whether they felt pressure to make decisions inside the classroom. The study took place in Ankara in Turkey and involved twenty primary, middle and secondary school teachers from different subjects such as Turkish language, social studies, technology, design, English and natural sciences from different years of experience, gender and schools. The findings revealed that teachers did not consider the guidebook as a control of their profession, but rather they believed they had space for making decisions about implementing change and adaptation and that they did not necessarily follow the guidebook. The teachers did not see curriculum prescription as a constraint for their profession rather they found it useful and saw inspectors and parents' interference as a constraint. Those teachers did not question the role assigned to them in the prescribed curriculum. The researcher explained that the teachers in Turkey have never experienced being autonomous or the age of autonomous professional (Hargreaves, 2000) so they are not aware autonomous teachers.

This situation of L2 teachers never experiencing autonomy is very similar to the Omani educational context and to many developing countries. However, the study by GÜR (2014) focussed on mainstream subjects more than L2 teachers and only involved one male English teacher. As a result, it is not reasonable to make generalisations from its outcomes.

So far, we have observed that teacher identity is represented by the teachers' beliefs, values and knowledge. These same factors influenced the teaching practice of teachers, likewise teachers were influenced by the curriculum they teach whether the curriculum is in the field of ELT, and the curriculum is prescribed or not. Examples of research demonstrated that L2 teachers were positive about curriculum prescription and benefited from it in different contexts. The benefits of curriculum prescription related to teacher

learning, confidence and knowledge. However, the research reviewed did not specifically focus upon the impact of curriculum prescription on the development of TPI.

## Conclusion

This literature review extensively examined the concept of TPI by considering its theoretical perspectives, definition, characteristics and the factors that influence it.

The research on L2 TPI involved areas such as teacher knowledge, emotions, beliefs and values, cognition, multiple identities, past experiences, school culture and curriculum. However, this broad and intensive review revealed the lack of research on the impact of curriculum prescription on the development of TPI in EFL/TESOL contexts.

The work done by Mead (1934) and Erikson (1968) on the concept of identity state that identity is an ongoing and dynamic image about who a person is and the way this self is influenced through interaction with others in one's environment. The fieldwork on TPI, describe it as the self-image that is relational, flexible and changeable and is affected by the surrounding contexts and through interaction with others (Beijaard et al, 2004; Korthagen, 2004).

This review presented input on the development of curriculum design since the twentieth century to date. The three main curriculum design models reviewed were (1) the product-based model, (2) the process-based model and (3) the situational or school-based model. The discussion of the models involved the features of each design, the key leaders of the designs and provided examples of curriculum types and approaches that implemented such designs.

The review on teacher involvement in curriculum design and curriculum prescription demonstrated that teachers started with being autonomous and had the freedom to make choices and develop their own curriculum for years, but later with the development of societies and the economic growth more bureaucratic processes was placed on educational systems and standardisation began to emerge. This change resulted in more control over the teacher's work, which meant that teacher involvement in curriculum design, and development became less and their role was limited to teaching a prescribed curriculum that is part of a completely centralised and standardised system.

Based on this change in teacher autonomy and role, educational research has changed focus from research on teaching and learning to embrace more research into teacher-self.

This literature review has identified the gap in research on TPI, namely the conceptualisation of the components of TPI. To achieve this purpose, a conceptual model has been developed for those components based on emerging understandings of this area through critically evaluating prior studies.

Using the developed conceptual model components as focussed areas for this research, the next chapter discusses the methodology implemented, in order to investigate the impact of curriculum prescription on L2 TPI in the Omani context.



## Chapter 4

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This chapter is a reflective account on the decision making process over the methodology adopted for this research. This chapter first presents the qualitative research paradigm in order to place this study within its theoretical framework. In addition, this chapter provides a detailed account of the data collection methods implemented in this research followed by a description of the participants and the recruitment stage. Moreover, the piloting stage and the impact of that on the data collection methods is discussed together with the data collection stages and the challenges faced. This chapter presents an evaluation on the quality of both data collection methods and trustworthiness of the research paradigm. This chapter concludes by discussing the analysis process and methods implemented throughout this research.

#### 4.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is well known for its in-depth understanding of certain issues related to participants in the social world through the flexible nature of its design, richness of data and its distinctive approaches to data analysis (Snape and Spencer, 2003). According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is the type of research that focuses on the views of the participants and is conducted in a certain natural setting where researchers are considered to be the key tool for data gathering. The beauty of qualitative research lies in its flexible, evolving and rising design. This permits flexibility to take place during the research process.

The present qualitative and explanatory research set out to explore the impact of curriculum prescription upon the development of English as a Second or Foreign language (L2) teacher professional identity (TPI).

## 4.2 Research Paradigm and Design

Since all research is underpinned by certain philosophical and theoretical stances, qualitative research is underpinned by either ontology or epistemology. Ontology refers to the knowledge that needs to be explored and the existence of that knowledge. However, epistemology refers to our understanding of knowledge and how that understanding or reality is reached in the social world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Duberley et al, 2012; Ritchie et al, 2013).

Since this qualitative research is concerned with the aim of constructing new knowledge, it adopted the epistemological philosophy into its design. This view considers teachers as the source of knowledge about their professional identity and probably the prescribed curriculum they teach. Accordingly, these beliefs and knowledge of TPI required exploration and interpretation.

Based on Ritchie et al (2013), the epistemological philosophy has a number of views about how knowledge is acquired. One of these views maintains that knowledge is best acquired inductively where evidence is collected first and then based on that evidence, knowledge or theories are formed. Another differing view states that knowledge is acquired deductively, where a hypothesis about certain knowledge is formed first, then evidence is collected to prove it or not. However, Balikie (2007) cited in Ritchie et al (2013) claims that this view to qualitative research is very simple and arguable because qualitative research is more than simply being deductive or inductive. Balikie argues convincingly that even with the inductive approach when knowledge is supposed to derive from the evidence there is some element of influence from previous research or literature that is embedded in the research process such as forming the research questions and focus.

In line with Balikie's view, the mode of inquiry utilised for this research was both inductive and deductive. I argued that all research to some extent is influenced by more than one source and that total objectivity in social research is hard to obtain, because no research starts from a blank sheet. Therefore, there is often some influence from either previous research in the field being researched or from the research questions formed as researchers decide on what they want to research before the research begins. All researchers have got some background knowledge about the area under investigation either from their previous or current education, experiences or the context they belong to. Thus, the focus of this research was deductive as it was decided upon before the data

collection commenced. This research was also inductive because the focus was reshaped by the research process and findings. The focus of this research was developed based on my understanding of the educational context in Oman and on the literature review, I carried out. Snape and Spencer (2003) say realistically,

“Although qualitative research is often seen as an inductive approach, it is not a singularly defining characteristic of qualitative research. Inductive reasoning is used in other forms of enquiry and the processes of sampling and generalisation from qualitative research involve both induction and deduction”.

(Snape and Spencer, 2003, p. 14)

The philosophical assumptions researchers hold about how they see truth and reality is significant because this theoretical perspective guides the research process. There is more than one theoretical perspective that could be adopted by researchers depending on the nature of their research. For example, the positivist or behaviourism theory argues that the world is as measurable and predictable as science, so people behave in a predictable way, thus it is possible to observe the world objectively without any influence from the researcher. Post-positivism believes that the world and people's behaviour are undefined or vague; thus, meanings are changeable and could be interpreted by who is saying them depending on the time and context.

The interpretivism methodology believes that reality is out there, it is multiple, socially constructed across time and places and that it exists but it needs to be explored (Cresswell, 2002; Duberley et al, 2012). It views people as human beings who have knowledge and minds. The knowledge of those people is influenced by the existing context or the social world they belong to. People's minds interpret the experiences and events they encounter, and based on that interpretation they construct meanings and understandings; this view values human minds. Constructivism viewpoint derived from the interpretivism methodology, which believes that people construct meanings from the surrounding events, experiences and the relationship between different sources (Wisker, 2008). For this, I adopted the interpretivism and constructivism as the theoretical position for this research.

The interpretivism and constructivism epistemology guided the design of this research. The adoption of the constructivism as a position for this research specified the role of participants' responses or the constructed reality by the shared investigation of meanings and seeking explanations between 'me' the researcher and the participants. This is to discover the development of L2 TPI and the impact of the prescribed curriculum on

teachers from the views of both teachers and authorities (Snape and Spencer, 2003). Similarly, constructivism as a position views knowledge as culturally located and contextually constructed. Therefore, the teachers identified their own professional identity in relation to the curriculum they teach. This was obtained through the data collection methods which intended to unpack truth and reality represented by the participants' knowledge, views and understandings constructed from their own lived experiences, events and relationships with the surrounding contexts (Wisker, 2008; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013).

#### 4.3 Research Methods

As well selected methods lead to more accessibility of the truth, the decision on which data collection methods to implement for this research was crucial. As for interpretivistic qualitative research, interviews provided the required level of depth and richness to the data. Silverman (2000) explains that interviews provide both "external reality" which is linked to the facts or events being explored, and "internal experiences" that refers to the participants' feelings and personal understanding and meanings.

According to literature, the concept of teacher identity and/or TPI was researched using various research methods. The reviews by Beijaard et al (2004); Izadinia (2012); Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) and Cheung et al (2015) demonstrated that methods such as interviews, biographies, journals, blogs, focus groups, teacher narratives and reflection were utilised as data collection methods to study this concept. Since this research sought originality and depth, it exploited interviews at both a collective and individual form (Newby, 2014). The collective interviews were represented by the use of focus group interviews as the main data collection source for teachers in order to explore the impact of curriculum prescription upon TPI. Focus groups interviews as a tool to understand TPI has been used by previous research at both primary and secondary level.

This research also implemented semi-structured interviews with authorities from the MoE and with some teachers whenever needed. The supplementary data collection method implemented in this research was the analysis of the curriculum and MoE policy documents. These methods are discussed in more detail below.

### 4.3.1 Focus Group Interviews

Focus Groups are types of interviews that run between a well-trained and skilled professional who acts as a guide and a group of participants with similar backgrounds based on certain criteria. The group shares a discussion of a pre-determined topic with a professional guide or researcher. The qualitative data is generated from what the group says about the selected topic through their involvement in a focussed discussion (Morgan, 1998; Krueger and Casey 2009; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013).

Focus Groups were initiated by market research in the 1950s because of business expansion and market research awareness of the importance of staying close to people. Later in the 1980s, academics began to learn from business market research and started to rediscover focus groups interviewing after a long delay for more than three decades, which was because of researchers being occupied with quantitative research methods and assumptions about reality (Krueger and Casey, 2009).

#### **Why Focus Groups?**

This research implemented focus group interviews with the English language teachers as a main data collection method for a number of reasons.

Above all, was the appropriateness of focus groups for qualitative constructionist research because of the flexibility and views of participants being controlled by themselves, unlike other research methods where participants' views are controlled by the researcher (King, 2004; Robson, 2011; Grbich, 2012), and so reflecting the theoretical perspective of this research. Likewise, focus groups enabled me as a researcher to discover teachers' shared beliefs, understandings and views, gain new insights, facilitate participants in listening to the views of others, and therefore rethink their own views and experiences. In this regard King (2004) states,

“Focus groups are a valuable way of gaining insight into shared understandings and beliefs, while still allowing individual differences of opinion to be voiced. They enable participants to hear the views and experiences of their peers, and cause them to reflect back on their own experiences and thoughts.”

(King, 2004, p. 258)

Moreover, focus groups save researchers time and enable the collection of large data in less time and cost (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). Focus groups also allow interaction for clarification during the interview on the responses given by the participants and enable researchers to solicit rich and large data in the participants own words with the possibility of researchers to react and build on the responses given by the participants. Similarly, focus groups are useful to understand shared and common knowledge, thus it is considered an excellent way to understand cultures (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Furthermore, Krueger and Casey, (2009) say that focus groups are useful to improve and develop certain situations in organisation and to provide insights onto certain issues such as needs analysis, policy making, assessment of certain issues because focus groups can help guide decision making.

### **Features of Focus Group Interviews**

There are certain features for focus group interviews that need to be part of any focus group interview. These are as follows:

- Focus groups must be conducted over a number of times in order to compare and contrast participants' opinions until saturation is reached.
- The number of people involved per group should be reasonable between 4 -10 participants, in order to provide time and space for everyone's view to be heard and shared. The smallest focus group may involve three participants.
- The participants involved in a focus group interview should to be homogenous; this means that they share similar characteristics determined by the purpose of the study. This homogeneity helps people discuss the shared topic that forms the basis of the focus group interview (Krueger and Casey, 2009). Thus, in this research each focus group interview participants shared similar years of teaching experience and gender.
- As the role of the interviewer is to coordinate and engage with the group being interviewed, a moderator would be a more suitable term to describe the researcher role in focus groups (King and Horrocks, 2010). The focus group moderator needs to have certain skills in order to enable them to manage the interaction within the group properly. These are based on being an active listener. This incorporates a level of interaction such as to get involved in the discussion at a certain level that does not interfere with the flow of the discussion and at the same time to be able to share opinions and thoughts with the group. In addition, the moderator needs to reflect good listening skills by perhaps

paraphrasing what members say in order to ensure meaning clarity of what is being said and to reflect the feeling of the group members because interaction involves expressing feelings on certain issues. Lastly, a moderator needs to summarise occasionally what goes on in the interaction in order to get the group to hear and understand what is being said and discussed (Kruger, 1998c; King and Horrocks, 2010).

Although focus groups sound favourable for the achievement of depth in the data being collected, it has been criticised and has its limitations equally as any other research method. Focus groups are criticised as they may not tap into emotions of the participants and that participants can intellectualise or make up answers or even represent themselves as reflective and thoughtful. This limitation could be controlled by adding variety to the questioning techniques used for the interview such as the addition of some activities (Krueger and Casey, 2009). For example, I used A4 paper to draw the scale of 1-5 to help teachers imagine it and enable them to respond to question number 7 adequately without having to intellectualise their responses because of uncertainty.

The other criticism aimed at focus groups relates to their data and results, which could be insignificant and cannot be depended upon (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990; Krueger and Casey, 2009). However, this is the case with any qualitative data collection method and this could be controlled by the adoption of more than one research method to ensure validity and trustworthiness. Krueger and Casey (2009) say that controlling the size of the focus group and the interview time would raise the quality of the data obtained. This also means the smaller the group, the better the results can become.

In addition, the other limitation of focus groups is generalisation. The data collected might be biased if there was a dominant member amongst the group and because of their nature as being open-ended, the interpretation and summarisation of the data collected might be difficult (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). However, these limitations are concerns that might apply to any other research method and triangulation of data collection methods might be a solution. The moderator, who needs to be equipped with certain skills to be able to distribute the participation chances between participants, should control the dominance of a member in a focus group. This way, each participant gets to answer all the questions equally (Krueger and Casey, 2009).

## **Focus Group Interview Questions**

According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013), focus group interview questions are similar to the individual interview questions in terms of structure; such as the involvement of initial questions, in depth, and follow up type of questions. The type of questions used in focus groups can have a big impact on the participants' responses. To listen to the heart or to the brain or both is a dilemma. Krueger and Casey (2009) say, "We have found it helpful to include both thinking and feeling questions, because together they provide better understanding" (Krueger and Casey, 2009, p.50).

According to Krueger (1998b) and King and Horrocks (2010), the type of questions to be specifically used for focus groups involve,

- Opening or introductory questions to commence the interview, transition questions to move the interview focus from one area to another, key questions to explore the important areas the research is intending to explore and ending questions to end the interview smoothly.
- Think-back questions to set a context for participants and help them talk about their personal experiences.
- Open-ended questions should be linked to recent experiences and events because they unpack what is in participants' minds and allow them to decide on the direction for their responses.
- The questions should sound comfortable and conversational.
- The use of probes and prompts such as short comments or questions to further stimulate the discussion.
- The use of a flexible interview guide dependent upon the researcher's personal preference and the methodological traditions used in the research. Interview guides may include topics to lead the discussion and allow the discussion to proceed in a planned and organised way.

Having discussed the focus group interview usage for qualitative research, I will now move on to consider the use of semi-structured interviews as the second primary data collection method in this research.



#### 4.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are considered to be individual qualitative research data collection methods (Newby, 2014) as they facilitate the exploration of participant's knowledge, their behaviour, attitudes and beliefs; this includes what people know, do, think and feel (Arksey and knight, 1999; Robson, 2011). This type of interview is flexible and has the potential to provide detailed data and further explanations if implemented properly by researchers.

Qualitative interviews need to be located within the theoretical perspectives of the research in relation to the beliefs adopted about reality and knowledge (King and Horrocks, 2010). In addition, the design of the semi-structured interviews needs to match what the whole research aims to achieve and reflects the research nature and perspective. Qualitative interviews are places where knowledge becomes available. The type of knowledge sought by the researcher is crucial and lays the rationale behind the decision of conducting interviews in qualitative research as well as the epistemological stance they take.

#### **Why Semi-Structured Interviews?**

The use of semi-structured interviews matched the design of this research, as the data required related to understanding participants' perceptions of the prescribed curriculum and its impact on their professional identity. In addition, semi-structured interviews required active listening in order to provide space for participants to express their perceptions over the prescribed curriculum. Semi-structured interviews assured participant privacy and flexibility with less distraction from others.

The flexibility in semi-structured interviews can become a limitation sometimes as it may affect the participant's responses to the same question, something that can reduce comparability between the data (Cohen et al, 2000). Flexibility might also get some participants to differ from the original point being discussed and move on to discuss irrelevant points. However, researchers could control such limitations by careful use of probing questions, explanations and repetition or rephrasing of questions and judgement of answers provided.

The style of questioning in qualitative semi-structured interviews is essential in determining the findings reached. The questions need to be open-ended in a way that focus on the participant's personal experiences using non-leading questions because the researcher seeks to build rapport with the participants. Consequently, high levels of anonymity and confidentiality are expected (Seidman, 2006; King and Horrocks, 2010; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). This research made use of semi-structured interviews with authorities in order to discover realities about curriculum prescription and the impact of this on TPI by focusing on teacher beliefs, values and attitudes, knowledge, autonomy and commitment. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were carried out with some teachers as a happenstance substitute of some focus group interviews that did not happen.

In addition to the usage of focus groups and the semi-structured interviews as the two main data collection methods, this research employed document analysis as a supplementary data collection method in order to triangulate the data collection methods.

#### 4.3.3 Document Analysis

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for examining and evaluating both printed and electronic documents (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Documents involve texts and images or visual and audio-visual documents which are detailed without any intervention from the researcher (Bowen, 2009; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013).

Document analysis goes through a similar process as other qualitative research methods. The process involves both content and thematic analysis. The content analysis is the stage of organising the data or the information found in the documents into categories that relate to the research questions and focus. This is then followed by the thematic analysis that includes the examination and interpretation of the data (Bryman, 2004; Bowen, 2009). The thematic analysis stage is very similar to the thematic analysis used in other types of qualitative research methods. It involves careful examination, re-reading of the data documented. This may involve the use of the pre-defined codes that are used for the other data collection methods particularly if the documents serve as supplementary tools for triangulation of methods (Bowen, 2009).

The analysis of documents in this research harmonised with the other data collection methods and implemented the qualitative content analysis process until themes were developed from the pre-defined focus areas. The focus areas for document analysis in this research included, (1) teacher knowledge, (2) teacher autonomy and (3) teacher commitment (role and responsibility). According to Bryman, (2004) documents could be interpreted by researcher's pursuit for the meaning of the text from the perspective of the person or the organisation that wrote it. This requires some understanding of the context in which the document is written.

In order to understand the context in which this research took place, it is crucial to understand who the participants were as they form an integral part of the research context.

#### 4.4 The Participants

The participants involved in this research were L2 teachers who teach in state schools and authorities from the MoE and from Muscat governorate Directorate of Education.

Twenty-six L2 teachers volunteered to participate in the focus group interviews, however, the actual data implemented in this research comes from twenty-two teachers only; this excludes the novice teachers with 1-5 years of teaching experience. The reasons behind the exclusion of the novice teachers become clear as this chapter proceeds. The sample of participants came from different school levels as some teachers teach in Cycle One schools (primary), Cycle Two schools (intermediate) and Post-Basic Education schools (high or secondary). Furthermore, the participants were both male and female and from a range of teaching experiences. The division of teachers in the focus groups was based on their years of experience and gender. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the data collection methods used with the teachers.

Methods	No of participants	Gender	Years of experience
Focus groups	19	Male & female	6-14 years and 15+ years
Semi-structured interviews	4	Male & female	1-5 years
Semi-structured interviews	3	Male & female	15+ years

Table 4.1: Data collection methods with teachers

The initial plan was to conduct six focus group interviews based on three types of teaching experience. The first group was novice teachers whose teaching experience was between 1-5 years, the second group was with teachers whose teaching experience was between 6-14 years and the third group was teachers with more than 15 years of experience from both genders. However, the first group of novice teachers was hard to obtain and as a result, these groups were replaced with semi-structured interviews (Details of this challenge is discussed later in this chapter). Table 4.2 below provides specific information about the L2 teachers' who actually participated in the focus group interviews.

Gender	years of experience	Number of participants	Nationality	Province of teaching within Muscat	Type of school	Classes taught
Male	6-14 years	4	Omani	Rural, costal, urban	Cycle 2 , Post-Basic	Grades 7,8,10,11
Female	6-14 years	7	Omani	Rural, costal, urban	Cycle 2 , Post-Basic	Grades 3,4,5,7,8,10,11, 12
Male	15+ years	5	Other Arabic and non-Arabic nationalities	urban	Cycle 2 , Post-Basic	Grades 10,11,12
Female	15+years	3	Omani	Rural, urban	Cycle 2 , Post-Basic	Grades 6,7,8,10,11,12

Table 4.2: Focus group participant information

Regarding the interviews with the authorities, the participants selected were from the main directorates within the MoE as these directorates work was close to the teachers based on the nature of their work. These included the Curriculum directorate, the Supervision

Department at Muscat governorate Directorate of Education and the Main Training Centre at the Ministry (henceforth 'Curriculum', 'Supervision' and 'Training' respectively). Table 4.3 explains the number of participants per directorate within the Ministry.

Department	No of participants	Gender
Curriculum	2	Male
Supervision	2	Male & Female
Training centre	1	Female

Table 4.3: Interview participant information

The process of participant selection began by setting exact specifications or criteria for the needed participants such as gender and years of teaching experience for focus groups and the ministry directorates before the recruitment process began (Krueger and Casey, 2009).

#### 4.5 Recruitment Process

The sample recruited for this research through a non-probability and purposive sampling as the participants were selected on purpose based on certain criteria decided by the researcher (Silverman, 2000; Cohen, et al, 2011; Grbich, 2013). The purposive sampling for qualitative data has two roles, (1) setting boundaries for researchers to know their limits and scope and (2) to create a frame to help confirm or qualify the processes of the study and therefore only interview people who are significant to the research (Bryman, 2004; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The use of the purposive sample in this research was illustrated in the representative sample in terms of gender and experience. King and Horrocks (2010) state that diversity is the most common factor for sampling in qualitative research and it is better to have one or two aspects fixed. This means that researchers need to control one or two aspects of the group criteria, such as their age and gender and allow variety of other factors (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Although purposive sampling can provide great depth to qualitative research because of its nature, it does not necessarily represent wider

populations and could be regarded as being biased because of its deliberate selection of participants (Cohen et al, 2011). However, I argue that the selection of the sample depends on the research topic, nature and aims; thus for an intertwined topic like TPI which requires involvement of different teachers from both genders with certain experiences, the purposive sampling becomes a necessity and thus is inevitable.

For carrying out this research, I sought assistance from the Ministry database and a pool of teachers' names was generated in collaboration with that directorate. Later these names were randomised in order to minimise bias. I classified the names according to gender and years of experience. I developed the list of names more than once, as there were some teachers, who backed out from the study. I contacted the teachers via email whilst I was here in the UK. I deliberately chose teachers whom I did not personally know, in order to avoid bias and raise the level of objectivity, reliability and trustworthiness of this research. Seidman (2006) states that interviewing friends effects the interview outcome as interviewer and the interviewees assume that they understand each other and therefore do not seek clarity. The other reason for avoiding interviewing the teachers I knew relates to my position at work. Teachers know that I work for the Curriculum and had they known me personally, that might have influenced the kind of responses they gave and their comments may have turned to be more flattering than providing a real account of their experiences. I sent the research information and the consent form to all participants at the time they agreed to take part in this research via email. The challenge was with the teachers who did not have emails and I had to use alternative social media channels to contact them such as the popular messenger app for smartphones, WhatsApp.

The recruitment of the authorities was significantly easier and less challenging than it was for the teachers. Based on my professional network consisting of my social and work relationships, I contacted those authorities directly via social media with ease and arrangements were subsequently made. Although, I personally knew the authorities as most of them were my colleagues, there was no chance for this relationship to interfere and influence the kind of responses they gave me for many reasons. For example, some of them work in departments other than mine, so it was fine for them to say what they thought about the topic. Regarding the two participants from Curriculum, their job titles, the department, they work for and their understanding of the importance of transparency of research made them respond and express their thoughts about the topic objectively. After the recruitment stage, I conducted both the focus group interviews and the semi-

structured interviews. The next section provides a description of the content of the interviews prepared for both teachers and authorities.

#### 4.6 Description of Focus Groups Interviews

After a rigorous search in the available literature for the kind of questions that suit focus groups, I devised an interview plan or guide (appendix 2). The development of the focus group interview questioning guide presents the kind of questions selected in order to achieve the research aims and answer its questions (Krueger and Casey 2009; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Table 4.4 presents a snapshot from this interview plan.

Questioning route	Question	Type of question & purpose	Areas investigated	Tool used
Opening	Tell me..... your name how long have you worked as teacher about your school ( type, size....) classes you teach	Descriptive : General opening information Factual information about individuals		
Introductory (the professional self/identity)	I am the type of teacher who.....	Contrast: To help them think about extreme issues (themselves as teachers)	Beliefs about how they see themselves as professionals (Who am I?) (What is my role?) responsibility and commitment.  Reflection on their roles as teachers	Self-reflection

Table 4.4: Focus group questioning guide

The interview plan consisted of an introductory prompt (welcome and thank you), some basic information about the research, some ground rules and myself. The ground rules included the use of mobile phones, the clarity of voice, right or wrong answers and the importance of interaction. These ground rules were important as they put the participants at ease and explained the most important issues related to the study. The focus group interview questions were based on the following research focus areas:

- A. Teacher beliefs about self as a teacher (self-image) and beliefs about the prescribed curriculum
- B. Teacher professional knowledge
- C. Teacher autonomy
- D. Teacher commitment (role and responsibility)

Having described the content and process involved in the development of the focus group interview questions, next I am going to describe the semi-structured interviews.

#### 4.7 Description of Semi-Structured Interviews

The development of an interview guide is flexible and depends on researchers own desire and the methodological traditions implemented, therefore, interview guides should not be rigid and force the interview into one direction; rather, they need to include topics that allow for the flow of discussion (King and Horrocks, 2010).

The development of the semi-structured interviews guide (appendix 3) for authorities from the MoE was based on similar focus areas as the ones used for teachers. These areas were about the perceptions of the authorities on curriculum prescription, how they saw the teachers' role, responsibilities and knowledge within the context of a prescribed curriculum. Table 4.5 below provides a description of the semi-structured interview guide based on Leech (2002) and Spradley (1979).



No	Question	Type of question	Purpose of question/action
		Introduction about the research topic and aims.	To put the participants at ease. To introduce the topic, the type of questions will be asked and to remind them of confidentiality
1	Tell me about your <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job title</li> <li>• Qualifications</li> <li>• Background</li> </ul>	Introductory questions	To get them started in a less threatening way.
2	Could you give an overall idea about the current English language curriculum that is being used by teachers nationwide?	Grand tour question	For the participants to give a verbal explanation about something that is very familiar to them.
3	What does a prescribed curriculum mean to you?	direct language question  Probing questions	To get the reply in the participants own words/own way of describing something  To follow up what they said and to get more details about the point being discussed

Table 4.5: The semi-structured interview guide

In order to reduce the subjectivity element from the sample, a piloting stage took place before the real data collection commenced.

#### 4.8 The Piloting Stage

The piloting stage was undertaken here in Leeds with some of the Omani postgraduates and research students from the University of Leeds. The participant selection process began after the finalisation of both interviews guides and structure. I contacted the School of Education at Leeds University in order to get access to the Omani postgraduates and

research students. The university was very cooperative and circulated an email to call upon all Omanis who study at the School of Education and urged them to contact me in order to volunteer for the piloting stage.

Based on that call, I received an acceptable number of participants who showed willingness for participation in the piloting stage. Omani colleagues started to contact me via email and I contacted some of them using the different means of social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook. As part of the arrangements, I agreed with the volunteering participants on conducting a focus group and a semi-structured interview. After agreeing on the time and place, I met with the participants in one of the halls in Leeds University and we ran the focus group interview.

#### 4.8.1. Piloting of the Focus Group Interviews

The focus group interview was carried out with a mixed gender and mixed years of experience group, because of the available number of participants here in Leeds. However, the group represented the real sample in terms of diversity in gender and years of experience. Table 4.6 below explains the voluntary participants.

No	Gender	Current status	Teaching experience
1	Male	PhD student	5-15 years
2	Male	PhD student	5-15 years
3	Male	PhD student	5-15 years
4	Male	Masters student	5-15 years
5	Male	PhD student	1-5 years
6	Female	Masters student	1-5 years

Table 4.6: Pilot participants

According to the above table, the participants had different years of experience and were mixed gender because it was difficult to find more participants or do more than one focus group interview due to the number of Omani students available in Leeds. Therefore, I ran the focus group interview (appendix 4) and recorded it using video and audio recording. Based on the piloting stage of the focus group interview some amendments and

modifications took place in the structure of the focus group interviews and in the interview questions. These are explained below.

- I updated the interview guide sheet I used by writing the candidates' names on each page. That helped with taking notes during the interview and moving from one question to another.
- The ground rule that said, "Speak each at a time" made the participants sit still and wait for others to finish what they had to say before they could get started, this made the interview become quite boring. When I noticed that, I invited the participants to contribute their views whenever they feel like doing so and not wait to be invited without any interruption to the person speaking. Only then the discussion started to become real and lively.
- "I am the type of teacher who...." question was fine; however, I thought that it needed a follow up question in order to determine why teachers described themselves the way they did.
- I noticed that I summarised and paraphrased what some participants said quite often. I was not sure whether this was a good strategy to implement in focus group interviews or not, so I decided to read more about the role of the moderator. I then discovered that it is good to do so in focus group interviews as this becomes part of the analysis process and most importantly as a validation for the data. This is because participants get the chance to hear back what they say, something that allows them to reflect on their utterances and allows others to contribute their views to this as well.
- I noticed that paraphrasing or repeating and simplifying questions whenever needed helped the participants to understand the questions better.
- I should have defined the words "curriculum", "prescribed" and "centralised" to the participants because I found myself explaining the meanings of centralised and prescribed curriculum based on their facial expressions that looked puzzled. I also had to explain curriculum because one of them misunderstood it and asked for clarification.
- When I noticed that the participant's responses were becoming very general, I drove the conversation back to the original question. For example, "Remember we are talking about your feelings about . . ."
- "How do you see your role using this kind of prescribed and centralised curriculum?" I adapted that question slightly to ask them to describe it with one word only, because I felt that they expressed their views about the role in the previous question.

- The question about the scale, I had to draw the scale and put 1-5 on it in order to make it easier for them to understand. However, the professional development question was long and difficult because professional development means different things to different people.
- “What are the strengths of using this type of curriculum for you as a teacher?” They counter-questioned me: “Strengths in terms of what!?”, And I felt that they had just answered it within the ranking question. This made me think of revising this question.
- “Would you rather have a less prescribed curriculum than the current one?” They questioned the word “less”. Their query made me rethink this question.
- Gender was fine to the participants all and no one seemed to be shy to express their views from both genders. However, the participants expressed that they would have felt more relaxed without the video recording of the interview. Thus, I decided to use audio recordings only for the real focus groups.

The above reflections lead me to modify the focus group interview guide and questions (table 4.7) and get them ready for the real interviews in Oman (appendix 5).

2.	What made you or helped you become who you are now or become the teacher you just described?				
3.	Think about the centralised and prescribed curriculum that you teach, what role has this curriculum played in making you who you are today?				
4.	How different are you as a teacher now from when you first started teaching? <b>Probes</b> What differences? What has helped you do/ achieve that?				

Table 4.7: Focus groups interview questions

The next task I had to do in relation to piloting of the data collection methods was to pilot the semi-structured interviews with one of the Omanis as well.

#### 4.8.2 Piloting of the Interviews

I managed to find an Omani PhD student from the University of Leeds who agreed to take part in the piloting stage. After the arrangements of place and time, I managed to do the interview in my university and I managed to record the interview using audio equipment. The interview went well and smoothly, so I decided not to modify any questions and go ahead and interview the real participants.

#### 4.9 Data Collection Process

Gaining access to participants through gatekeepers might become problematic in some organisations because gatekeepers are the ones who hold authority over the participants and may grant or deny access to them (King and Horrocks, 2010, p. 31).

The data collection process began by the preparation of the paper work and contacting stakeholders in Oman via email in order to ease access to teachers and authorities. Thus, I wrote a letter to the Studies Office at the MoE and filled in a form about my research aims, and purpose, the participants and the future of the data collected as well as the ethical issues (appendix 6). I supported my request with a letter from my supervisor that explained my need to collect the data required for the specified participants (appendix 7). As a result of all of this communication, I received a registration number of the approval letter via email from the same office at the ministry that permitting my entry to any school or department within the Muscat governorate belonging to the MoE.

After this stage of gaining permission from gatekeepers, I went to Oman for the purpose of data collection. The data collection split over two stages. The first stage was between April and May 2014 and the second stage was in the summer during the month of August 2015.

All of the interviews were undertaken in the English language, because it is acceptable within the MoE to use English with the English language teachers, supervisors, trainers and officials, for various reasons. As these practitioners specialized in English, this means that they did their degrees through the medium of English. This makes English the easiest mode for professional communication with the participants as they are used to expressing

their views and to using the educational terminology related to teaching and learning in the English language. In addition, English is the language of instruction for teaching in Oman and for conducting post-lesson discussions between teachers, senior teachers, supervisors and trainers. It is also noteworthy to mention that English teachers feel proud of their command of the English language and always seek opportunities to develop their usage of it. In fact, it would be peculiar if the interviews were conducted in the Arabic language with these participants, because it would go against the norm. Thus, using the English language to undertake the interviews was a typical practice in this context.

#### 4.9.1 Stage One in Oman

The first stage for the data collection was between the months of April and May 2014 in Oman. This stage involved running two focus group interviews with the male group with 6-14 years of experience and the female group with over 15 years of experience. In addition to conducting semi-structured interviews with novice male and female teachers with 1-5 years of experience, female teachers with over 15 years of experience and with a male teacher with over 15 years of experience. All of the interviews were recorded and then saved electronically. In addition to the teachers' interviews, all of the semi-structured interviews with the authorities were covered during this period. The selection of the time of year was deliberate as this was a stable period for teachers because they were not busy with exams or invigilation. I had a timetable for the interviews and all my participants knew about their turn for the interview. The interviews were conducted in my office at the Directorate General of Curriculum due to reasons of ease of access for the participants and the quiet nature of work environment conducive for good quality of recording. My colleagues were welcoming of this research and no disruption to their working day took place. Each participant was sent two reminders about their scheduled interview time. I sent them the first reminder a week before their time and the second reminder was the night before their actual time. I followed the same reminder process for the interview participants as well. All individual and focus group interviews were audio recorded.

#### 4.9.1.1 The Interviews

The semi-structured interviews with the authorities went smoothly, because they highly supported me and made sure that I get the data I needed. Thus, the interviews took place in various places based on convenience, such as in their offices, my office and in other departments. All of the interviews were recorded and then saved electronically.

#### 4.9.1.2 The Focus Groups

The focus groups were the most demanding task in relation to the amount of arrangements required. Although, my research required data from only teachers, I discovered that there was a senior teacher in each of the focus group interviews or at least a newly appointed senior teacher. This was due to the shortcomings in relation to updates in the database system within the governorate's Directorate of Education. The original plan and arrangement was to run six focus groups. However, not all plans unfolded accordingly. Table 4.8 presents the original and alternative plans I had to take.

Original plan	Result	Reasons	Alternative plan
Male 1-5 years of experience	Not achieved	Apologies	Semi-structured interviews
Female 1-5 years of experience	Not achieved	Apologies	Semi-structured interviews
Male 6-14 years of experience	Achieved		
Female 6-14 years of experience	Not achieved	Cancelled	Postponed for future
Male over 15 years of experience	Not achieved	Apologies	Semi-structured interviews
Female over 15 years of experience	Achieved		

Table 4.8: Stage one interviews

As it is notable from table 4.8, of the six focus groups that I had originally planned, I was only able to conduct two, as one of them was cancelled and the other three focus groups were replaced with semi-structured interviews based on the participants' arrival. Therefore, the one-to-one interviews with the younger teachers were a happenstance

substitute for the focus groups that did not happen. The reasons behind this situation are discussed below as challenges faced the data collection process.

#### 4.10 Challenges of Stage One Data Collection

On top of all the arrangements and facilities I aimed to put in place in advance of the expected focus group participation, some unavoidable challenges did emerge and changed my plan.

Challenges in interviewing focus groups arose for various reasons. For example, apologies from participants the night before their day, the same day of the interview or even no show was one of the key challenges that faced the focus group interviews. The issue of apologies is linked with teacher motivation. This refusal to contribute to this research may mean that teachers do not appreciate research and are not fully aware of the need for conducting educational research. This may also indicate that because teachers were too busy and very much immersed into their daily work and thought that participation in any extra activity other than teaching would waste their time. This might mean that their intrinsic motivation might be low because of their heavy schedules in schools.

The other challenge was the \*location of the interview. I chose my office as I thought that it is more feasible, quiet and easy to access.

However, I discovered that teachers do not even know where the curriculum directorate is and I had to spend time on the phone describing the \*location for some of them. I even had to give a lift to one of participants to and from the interview place.

The other challenge that I somehow anticipated and kept in mind was the number of participants. I expected some apologies so, I arranged for five and six participants for each group. However, based on the reasons stated above, I ended up with either one or two participants for some groups. Thus, my alternative solution and plan –which I was prepared for – was to run semi structured interviews and keep these saved for later if needed.



As a result, to this stage of data collection, I came back to the UK with different types of interviews with the teachers and authorities. Then, it was the right time to reflect on the focus group interview questions and modify them accordingly.

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#### 4.11 The Development of Focus Group Interviews

The development of the interview questions is a process that began at the piloting stage, during and after the first stage of the data collection process.

During the focus group interviews I realised that teachers did not understand the definition of prescribed curriculum or at least not as I see it. Therefore, I responded to that immediately during the interviews and explained it to them after getting their views on it. My strategy was either to ask them for their views of the prescribed definition or define it to them myself and I only proceeded with the interview after I made sure that they understood what I meant. Moreover, the scale question about the extent to which they think prescribed curriculum contributes to their professional development (Question No 7) was long and teachers found it very hard to understand, so I had to show it to them physically by drawing a scale or a line on a piece of paper.

After the focus group interview questions with the teachers, I realised that some of these questions such as question number 7 needed some modifications. Modification of the focus group interview questions is a normal process for focus groups and is considered part of the analysis process (Kruger and Casey, 2009). Therefore, I modified the questions that were hard to understand by teachers and replaced the ones I thought did

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<sup>1</sup> In Oman, there are no conventional addresses like the UK. Therefore, due to an absence of fixed street names and postcodes, it requires one to describe nearest landmarks or prominent buildings and give directions from there.

not play a big role in gathering the needed data to answer the research questions. For example, questions number 4, 10 and 11 were interesting but led to nowhere whereas the data needed to answer the research questions. Thus, these questions have been modified with some new questions about teachers' views of their roles and responsibilities using the prescribed curriculum. It is interesting to ask these types of questions directly to the teachers rather than inferring their roles and responsibilities from the whole interview. As this research progressed and after the analysis of the interviews had been carried out during the first stage, the focus group interview questions were modified slightly to meet the research focus and answer its question fully. (See appendix 8 for the modified version of focus group interviews).

After the modification stage, the focus group interview questions were ready for the second stage of the data collection process.

#### 4.12 Stage Two in Oman

This was the second and final stage of the data collection process in Oman. This stage took place during the month of August 2015. This was again a suitable time of year to interview teachers before they get busy with the arrival of learners and the start of the academic year. Thus, my plan for this period was quite different than stage one.

##### 4.12.1 Focus Groups

As a preparation for this stage, I contacted Supervision and asked for their support. I got this idea from stage one as one of the teachers was asked to volunteer to my research by her supervisor and I noticed that the teacher contacted me herself and was very proud that she has been nominated by her supervisor to contribute to this research. Thus, I decided to ask for the help of the supervisors to complete the focus group interviews. At Supervision, I met with all my old colleagues who were more than happy to see me and provided me with the support needed. I decided to do four focus group interviews instead of the ones I missed the year before. The requested groups were:

- Male 1-5 years of experience
- Female 1-5 years of experience

- Female 6-14 years of experience
- Male over 15 years of experience

Supervision was keen to help and assigned the task to one of the supervisors to write a letter to all schools in Muscat asking teachers to volunteer according to the criteria sent. However, for the second time teachers respond to the participation call was weak. After a long wait and follow up with Supervision, I managed to do only two successful focus groups. These were:

- Female 6-14 years of experience
- Male over 15 years of experience

The reluctance from the novice teachers to contribute to this research was incomprehensible. The obvious and ideal situation would be to have novice teachers who are more motivated than their older colleagues are; however, the situation was different in Oman. My interpretation of teacher reluctance to participate in this research could relate to their professional identity that is still evolving and as new comers to the educational field, they might not appreciate the importance of research to the development of education. Another reason could relate to the Arab spring period that sparked in Tunisia, followed by Egypt and then moved to the Gulf States. Consequently, some of the Arab spring's breeze hit Oman slightly and small protests began in January 2011 and ended in May of the same year. The issue of unemployment was one of the issues that people in Oman protested against. Earlier signs of teacher unemployment protests began in late 2010

“For example, in late August 2010, around 250 qualified teachers had protested in front of the Ministry of Education in Ruwi, demanding jobs and complaining that Arabic-speaking expatriates were being hired before Omanis. The ministry though, insisted that the Omani candidates were not “up to the mark as reflected in their entrance test results”<sup>7</sup> ” (Worrall, 2012, p.99).

Unemployed teachers were amongst those few who staged protests in Oman. Peaceful Green Marches that expressed loyalty to the Sultan and requested some changes in various fields then followed the protests. As a result, the wisdom and flexibility of the Sultan handled the situation by absorbing the frustration (Abdullah, 2012) and issuing a number of royal decrees as a respond to the Omanis demands. This resulted in the employment of a significant number of redundancies amongst those teachers who did not meet the job requirements. The new teachers I targeted for this research could have been

from this group of teachers who were employed at that period, who were quite negative and pessimistic about the future and so they may have decided not to take part in an optional activity such as my research. This may help to explain the reluctance of some new teachers that I approached to participate in this research.

After a long wait, the supervisors managed to find me two new male teachers who welcomed participation in my research, however, the number was not enough for a focus group. As a final trial, I went to one of the male schools personally and asked to meet the new teachers. The senior teacher who welcomed me was a new teacher between 1-5 years of experience did not mind the contribution; however, he did not meet the criteria set for the teachers because of his title.

Thus, as a result, I managed to conduct two very productive and interesting focus group interviews with the teachers. This added up to the total number of focus groups conducted in this research and made them four. Finally, I decided not to use the interviews I did in stage one with the novice teachers because of the limited number of the participants. The limited number of the novice participant teachers was a challenge and made it incomparable with the other focus group interviews. Therefore, the participants of this research will only be the teachers with 6+ years of experience.

Having conducted the available focus group interviews, I then focussed on the documents I needed to use for my research whilst I was in Oman.

#### 4.12. 2 Document Search

The selection and collection of the needed documents went through a formal process within Curriculum particularly from my former department "Curriculum Studies and Development Office". One of the features of this department or office is the library that contains the documents related to curriculum. This includes ministry policy documents, studies, reports, theses, magazines and journals. From this library, I collected a number of books and documents for study and selection. After borrowing a number of books from this library, I did an intensive review of them to choose the best that talk about teachers and curriculum. Finally, out of all, the documents selected as the key documents to be analysed were the 'Basic Education Theoretical Framework', the 'English Language Curriculum Framework' and the introduction section for some 'Teacher's Books' from

different levels. The particular grades for the Teacher’s Books selected were based on their availability online from the Omani educational portal website. The document details are presented below in Table 4.9.

No	Title	Year	Source
1	Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman	2001	Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Education
2	The English Language Curriculum Framework	2010	Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Education Directorate General of Curriculum Development
3	Teacher’s Book Grade 7B		Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Education Directorate General of Curriculum Development

Table 4.9: Curriculum and policy documents

Documents analysis in this research was used as a supplementary method for the purpose of triangulation of methods in order to increase the level of objectivity and credibility to the research as well as reduce bias (Denzin, 1970 in Bowen, 2009). The next section is going to consider the trustworthiness of this research.

#### 4.13 Research Quality Assurance –Trustworthiness

Unlike quantitative or scientific research, the acceptance of the trustworthiness of qualitative research has faced various challenges due to the variety in its paradigms and nature, therefore, different frameworks and appraisal tools have been established and proposed to ensure and raise the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Denzin, 2009). Out of many frameworks to assess the trustworthiness of qualitative research, researchers commonly use Guba’s (1981) four criteria of trustworthiness; these are credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability. Although Guba’s criteria were more focussed on positivism and natural science research, social science qualitative researchers adopt these criteria either fully or partially. For example, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) say that the criteria to be used for evaluating the constructivist-interpretivism paradigm within the qualitative research are trustworthiness, credibility, transferability and confirmability.

#### 4.13.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the internal validity of the research and the true value where researchers present an accurate and exact picture of the issue under investigation. The study investigates what it actually intends (Cohen, et al, 2000) through the adoption of well-established research methods and triangulation methods. This research benefited from more than one research method, something that ensured its internal validity. Moreover, I discussed and revised several drafts of the focus groups and the interview questions with my supervisors until satisfaction to ensure the validity of both data collection methods. Validity of both focus groups and semi-structured interviews was enhanced by my familiarity with the context and putting the participants at ease by encouraging them to freely express their views and opinions. This requires researchers the possession of high standard and professional abilities and skills to run successful interviews. As a professional, experienced MoE member of staff and researcher and based on my earlier experience of conducting interviews at work, I was able to conduct high standard interviews successfully. The participants conveyed this to me as they expressed their high satisfaction with the interview sessions and their delight of the experience they went through. The attendance of some professional development sessions that were arranged by my university also helped to raise my standard in running productive and high quality academic interviews. In addition, the piloting stage and the consequent incorporation of changes raised the issue of validity and truth of the data collection methods. In addition, the exact speech or statements of the participants were used to ensure transparency and credibility of the research. Silverman (2000) states that one of the validation strategies for interviews is where all of the interviews are addressed using the main theme and transcription method in order to facilitate comparison between participants. This was represented in the use of the same mode for transcription and data analysis approach for all methods in my research. Finally, the use of focus groups allowed for the interaction of the researcher for clarification during the interview on the responses given by the participants. All of these actions helped raise the credibility level of my research.

#### 4.13.2 Transferability

This refers to the generalisation of the research, which means that some conclusions could be drawn for a bigger population based on the findings reached from the

representative sample in the research (Bryman, 1988). Although achievement of generalisation is a demand in qualitative research due to the variety of paradigms it adopts, researchers strive to achieve generalisation at reasonable levels. To achieve this, Guba (1981) enlightens that researchers should provide sufficient detail of the context for the reader, so that readers would be able to decide if they can apply the findings to similar contexts.

This research provided very detailed information about the context of the Omani educational system, the position of English language teaching, curriculum development and teacher education at both pre and in-service level in chapter two. Moreover, a detailed description of the participants added to the depth provided about this research context. Indeed, the details provided about the whole research process raised the chances of transferability of this research as the process becomes transparent to the reader.

The participant teachers in this study shared similar situations as other English language teachers in Oman. For example, they have similar pre-service teacher education, the same in-service training courses; they teach the same curriculum and implement the same assessment procedures. Accordingly, the chance for the application of the findings from this research to other governorates in Oman is high and in some other similar contexts may become even possible too, given similar contexts and circumstances.

#### 4.13.3 Confirmability

This criterion refers to the level of objectivity where the findings reached are data bound or data oriented rather than being a representation of the researcher perspectives. Although in social science research this aspect is negotiable as researcher total departure from the research is unachievable as I argued earlier, yet objectivity needs to be ensured and the findings must reflect the data collected not the researcher perspective. The researcher needs to admit their own "predisposition" (Guba, 1981), so decisions made regarding methods, the research design and researcher role and position must be clearly stated in the research design as these represent the beliefs of the researcher. This has been taken into consideration throughout this research.

#### 4.13.4 Position and Role of the Researcher

The debate regarding positioning researchers in relation to their research is still continuous, however, Cousin (2010) argues that there is a shift in debate from minimising subjectivity of researchers to more about how to bring the researcher self into the research process.

Following Cousin's (2010) argument for the call against total objectivity and setting the researchers bias and biography aside, researchers should use their researcher self as a research tool.

“The self is not some kind of a virus which contaminates the research. On the contrary, the self is the research tool, and thus intimately connected to the methods we deploy.”

(Cousin 2010, p.10)

This means that instead of researchers thinking of how to minimise and avoid subjectivity, they should bring in their researcher selves into their research through reflexivity.

Since this research is based on the interpretivism paradigm, which considers the researcher and the social world impact on each other, the facts and values addressed in the research are not distinct from the influence of the researcher perspectives and the social knowledge is explored and understood using the participants' views and the researcher understandings (Snape and Spencer, 2003). Therefore, as a researcher I adopted a reflexive role. King and Horrocks (2010) talk about two types of reflexivity, namely the epistemological and personal reflexivity. The former refers to all of the assumptions about the knowledge of the world that have been utilised to plan the research in all its stages. The latter refers to all the personal interference that researchers bring with them to their research. These include all the beliefs, understandings, experiences, interests and identities that guide the researcher throughout the research process. Although these two views on reflexivity reflect psychology, the reflexivity stance seems to match the nature of this educational research. Although, this constructivist research does not necessarily adhere to any traditional conventions by its nature, reflexivity has influenced it all the way through. This included all the stages of this research such as building the conceptual model, planning the research structure,



developing the research questions, the data collection methods and the analysis methods implemented.

Since reflexivity is the position I took in this research, I acted as an insider without much interference on the participants' views and perceptions. Therefore, in focus groups for example, I took the moderator's role to lead the group in order to maintain the flow of the discussion, by asking relevant questions and prompting the group discussion with an open-minded manner (Savin-Baden and Major 2013).

Finally, besides the research trustworthiness, it is noteworthy that the quality assurance of any research is determined by its ethical considerations.

#### 4.14 Ethical Considerations

The consideration of ethical issues is crucial for all research including social sciences and humanities research.

“Whatever the specific nature of their work, social researchers must take into account the effects of the research on participants, and act in such a way as to preserve their dignity as human beings: this is their responsibility to participants.”

(Cohen et al, 2011, P. 84)

In order to adhere to this research ethics, my identity as a researcher, the research purpose, aims and procedures were revealed to all participants through the documents presented to the ethics committee at the university in order to get the ethical approval.

##### 4.14.1 Research Approval

This research highly considers and abides to the ethical policy and guidelines stated by Leeds Beckett University. The University Ethical Committee approved the ethical related issues for this research and approval was obtained (appendix 9). Since this research relates to people, it was classified as a stage two type of research where trust becomes key to research ethical consideration (Silverman, 2000; Cohen et al., 2011). This research met the ethical principles by Diener and Crandall, (1978) cited in Bryman, (2004). These principles involved the research not to cause any form of harm to its participants or the

researcher, not to assault the privacy of others, not to include any dishonesty or deception and to use proper consents. These principles were ensured by filing in the ethics forms and getting these approved by the university.

#### 4.14.2 Participant Information and Consent Forms

The participants were made aware of this research and assured anonymity, privacy, confidentiality and freedom to withdraw at any stage of the research process without feeling obliged to present any reasons. This information was disclosed to the participants in an oral and a written form through the information sheet and consent form right from the beginning. I asked the participants to read, understand and sign the consent form (appendix 10), which stated clearly the research title, the research focus and the researcher details including contact number and email. The consent form played a key role in the achievement of the ethical procedures as it reassured the participants about their anonymity and of their optional and voluntary participation and to their right to withdraw from this research. The consent form also explained that the interviews would be recorded and kept safe until a certain time in the future and dissemination of the research findings.

As part of assuring the achievement of a highly ethical research, the participant information and consent form were considered as a gate to the achievement of that purpose. The participant information sheet (appendix 11) provided the title of the research, information about the researcher and the university the research belongs to. The participant information sheet provided some key information about the research such as the reasons for carrying it out, the selection for participation, their status as volunteers, the research process, the destiny of the data collected, their privacy and anonymity.

#### 4.14.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

This research took into consideration participants' dignity, interest, anonymity, privacy and confidentiality during all stages of the research process. All of the names used in the transcripts are pseudonyms and there was no reference to any of the participants' identity at all stages of this research.

As the previous section provided information on research trustworthiness and its ethical considerations, the following section considers the way in which data was organised and processed for analysis.

#### 4.15 Qualitative Data Analysis

The basic style for qualitative data analysis involves certain stages that are quite similar in literature, yet have different titles. These stages involve the management of the data, the description and the interpretation of data. The management of the data involves the familiarisation stage (Spencer et al 2013). Familiarisation involves the researcher reading their raw data or transcripts and identifying areas or topics that seem to interest them and are linked to the research topic (Spencer et al, 2013; King and Horrocks, 2010). The familiarisation stage according to Spencer et al (2013) involves the topics that are of interest to the researcher in relation to the participants' views, perceptions and experiences as well as the methodological issues such as the flow of the interview, the atmosphere of the interview and the ease or difficulty with the issues raised. Charmaz (2006) suggests that researchers should ask themselves some questions when coding their data. These questions include, what is happening? What is being said or done by people, what the statements or actions take for granted and the role of context and structure in supporting, maintain or changing these statements (p 94-95). The different tools presented in literature with regards qualitative analysis vary in their shape, but meet in their objective. For example, qualitative analysis could be achieved using frameworks presented by Spencer et al (2013), template analysis (King, 2012) and other forms of basic thematic analysis, which match in their process but differ in their shape or layout.

Thus, in order to illustrate the basic qualitative analysis, a summary of this process is be presented below utilising the three stage process by scholars such as Miles and Huberman (1994) and King and Horrocks (2010). These stages are the descriptive coding, the interpretive coding and defining the overarching codes.

##### **The descriptive coding stage**

The descriptive coding stage involves a number of steps. First, researchers need to read their data transcripts in order to familiarise themselves with what is being said, without attempting to code it at this initial stage. Then they move on to highlight certain texts in the

data that tells the researcher about the participants' views, feelings or experiences in relation to the topic under investigation. These texts could be highlighted using coloured pens and writing comments in margins or using computer based software for ease matters, such as CAQDAS programmes (Spencer et al 2013). However, I believe that the decision regarding the usage of such programmes depends on the number of data researchers have. The final step in this stage is to go through the comments that researchers wrote about their highlighted text and define descriptive codes. These descriptive codes should be relevant to the data without attempting to find out the theoretical reason behind what they said (King and Horrocks, 2010). The descriptive codes could be a word or a short phrase and they need to be closely related to the participant comments and explain what they said (Miles and Huberman 1994). Then, researchers go through their comments and descriptive codes and redefine them if necessary. Then researchers should move on to the second transcript and follow the same procedure used for their first one and so on. They need to keep redefining and developing new codes if necessary until they think they have good descriptive codes. Only then, researchers would be ready to move on to the next stage of the data analysis, which is the interpretive coding. Another way of treating this stage is by adopting a certain tool to do this. The tool I adopted for this research was coding matrices (see pages 131, 132 and 131). The use of coding matrix was considered as a supporting tool to help make the analysis process more structured and systematic. This first stage of coding the data can be very time consuming and may lead to mistakenly code every and each piece or comment in the raw data. Thus, I kept the priori themes that I had for this research in mind and handy in order to control my codes and avoid coding unnecessary comments or data that does not help to answer the research questions or achieve the research aims. Having said so, this did not mean that I was not open to new or emerging codes that appeared in the data. I used to add the new emerging codes to the descriptive codes I have already established. As King and Horrocks (2010) suggest I went through my comments and descriptive codes and redefined these wherever needed based on the emergence of new codes. After getting the descriptive codes sorted out, the data analysis spiral moves on to the next stage, which is the interpretation stage.

### **The interpretive coding stage**

This stage of coding is all about going back to the descriptive codes and trying to interpret them. Researchers need to go through their descriptive codes and group them if similar and try to define them according to what they mean to the researcher by making

interpretive codes. However, it is advisable not to make the interpretive codes based on any theory that the research is driven by, because that will affect the whole analysis process later on. It is enough to interpret the descriptive codes and see what they mean.

Then the same process of interpretive coding should be applied to all transcripts until researchers feel they have spent enough time doing that before they move on to the final stage of the data analysis.

### **The overarching themes**

During this final stage, researchers draw on the interpretive codes they have from the data and define these in a theme that is abstract and relevant to the study's theoretical framework depending on the nature of the study. This stage could be done by grouping - if relevant- the interpretive codes that relate to a certain concept or theme.

Qualitative data analysis can be either descriptive or interpretive depending on many factors such as the research nature, design and aims. Since this qualitative research was underpinned by the constructivism approach, it adopted interpretive techniques for the data analysis. Therefore, the data in this research was analysed using the qualitative content analysis approach following a structured process focussing on finding out the meanings, the ideas and concepts of what is being said.

#### **4.16 Organisation of the Data, Processing and Analysis**

The analysis of the focus group and the semi-structured interviews was carried out using a two-phase approach based on Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Miles and Huberman (1994). The first phase was vertical analysis, where each interview was analysed separately and the second phase was comparative or horizontal analysis through cross-case analysis where researchers look for common similarities and differences in the data being analysed. The two-phase approach has been implemented for the analysis of both; the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups as the comparison within and across data ensured validity and credibility of the research (Silverman, 2000; Robson, 2011) and provided more in-depth insights into the data being analysed. In order to keep up to date with the analysis methods, I initially tried to utilise NVivo as a data analysis organisational tool.

## **The experience of NVivo**

After the transcription of all interviews, the data was ready for analysis; the decision was on how to go about it, manually or electronically. I thought about both options and reached a conclusion after examining the benefits and drawbacks of both formats. I decided that to use NVivo as an organisational tool for collected and transcribed data, because I wanted to try this tool and update my current knowledge about software and technology usage. Therefore, I attended two training sessions in my university about using NVivo and spent a few days exploring the Internet regarding the usage of NVivo to analyse qualitative data. I found various video clips from QDS on YouTube, which were extremely useful. After a few days when I felt satisfied with the amount of knowledge I got about using this programme, I started with my project, opened the resource file and uploaded all my recording and transcripts in separate files within the internals folder. NVivo required the creation a set of themes before I even began my analysis process. Although, I used NVivo at the start, I decided not to continue with it because I did not want to rush conclusions and form themes right from the beginning. Therefore, I analysed the data using the qualitative content analysis approach and made use of NVivo differently at later stages of the analysis process such as in a form of word search. However, I later realised that the use of NVivo should take place after the manual analysis or the familiarisation of the data stage took place and codes are formed based on the preliminary analysis.

### **4.16.1 Qualitative Content Analysis**

Qualitative content analysis is an analysis approach that aims to understand subjects' experiences of issues, the meaningfulness and the significance of the communication. It goes beyond word count to cater for meanings, concepts and ideas in text (Newby, 2014) and to utilise an interpretive approach to unpack the underlying meanings of the data (Dörnyei, 2007). Although it began in quantitative research, content analysis found its status in qualitative research and is now recognised as qualitative content analysis. Newby (2014) describes it as:

“This is a set of procedures that can be applied to any message medium (text, spoken words, actions video recordings) to identify what is being communicated, by whom and to whom. It is considered with the significance and meaningfulness

of the communication. Thus it is concerned not just with words but also on the concepts and ideas being communicated.”

(Newby, 2014, p. 448)

This means that qualitative content analysis is far beyond the frequency of word occurrence, where the more a phrase occurred the more value it gets. This was the initial understanding linked to content analysis because it was utilised mostly in quantitative research (Dörnyei, 2007). Qualitative content analysis is more linked with meanings of words, the interpretation and the identification of meanings in words by the researcher. Additionally, qualitative content analysis has the focus of enquiry as one of its features, which can either be an exploration of a trend or a pattern or even a difference between two issues. According to Dörnyei (2007), the main difference between the quantitative and qualitative content analysis is the latter processed inductively where the categories used in the analysis are not predetermined. However, recent views on qualitative research allowed both inductive and deductive approaches to be utilised, which means that some categories might be predefined Newby (2014).

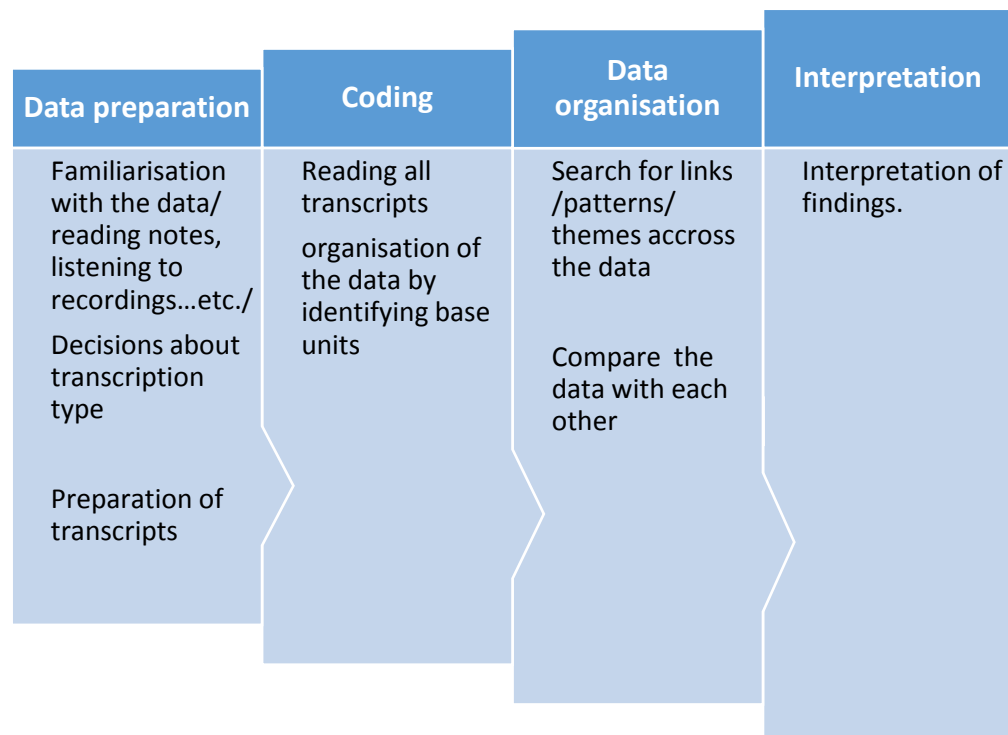


Figure 4.1: Qualitative Content Analysis Process

I developed and constructed the above model of the sequential steps involved in the analysis process (Figure 4.1) based on Newby’s (2014) description of the qualitative

content analysis process. This process is similar to other processes in qualitative research. It begins with data preparation including decisions about the type of transcription to be used and the data selection after the familiarisation with the data stage. Then, the coding stage begins by identifying base units in the data in order to organise the data in a way that enables the researcher to extract the information from it. Miles and Huberman (1994) say that coding organises the data by combining it for ideas, themes, categories for comparison and analysis. These codes are then assigned titles or name that link to the issue being discussed. The coding stage according to Newby (2014) can be either deductive or inductive. Deductive coding is based on pre-defined codes that are available out there and researchers use them, or codes could be deductive where the researcher devises the coding system before the analysis takes place; this is based on existing knowledge and theory. Besides, codes can be inductive where they emerge from the data. After the coding stage, the data is organised, where links and themes across the data are searched by the researcher, through in-case and across-case comparison of the data with each other. Finally, the interpretation of the data takes place. I found the qualitative content analysis flexible and manageable for my research particularly for focus groups, thus I decided to implement it as a framework for the analysis of all the data that I had collected.

#### 4.16.2 Transcription

As a first stage of the data preparation process, a decision must be made about transcripts. Transcripts are considered rigorous data in qualitative research because they capture what has been said exactly. Therefore, transcripts are considered more accurate and detailed than other tools as they enable researchers to capture human interaction scientifically and are open to revisit and further detailed check analysis (Hammersley, 2010). Although the process of transcription is essential for any research, researchers rarely refer to this process when writing about their research, rather they only give a statement or two saying that the audio or video recordings were transcribed (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999).

Hammersley (2010) explains that transcription is about the researcher's construction of what has been said regardless the format of transcription either a word-to-word type such as in linguistics and sociology fields or as chunks as in other qualitative type of research. Lapadat and Lindsay (1998; 1999) argue convincingly that the choice about the kind of



transcription to be implemented is led by the theory underpinning the research. Thus, the research paradigm determines the approach adopted for transcription. As this research is based on an interpretivism-constructivism paradigm, it required listening to the whole or the general view of each participant and focussed on the meaning of what the participants said more than their choice and use of certain types of discourse.

Therefore, as an initial data analysis stage and after I familiarised myself with the data by listening to the recordings more than once and reading my interview notes, I decided to implement the abridged type of transcription to my data. I adopted the abridged transcript approach for both the focus groups and the semi-structured interviews. For this type of transcript, Krueger and Casey (2009) explain that the focus is on the relevant conversations and comments to the research focus. They add that in abridged transcripts things like the introduction, and the researcher questions, the irrelevant comments or off task, comments would not be transcribed as the focus here is on the relevant and useful portions of the interview. As this approach to transcriptions met the nature and focus of my research, I decided to use it throughout.

The transcription process I adopted for this research involved more than one stage. During the focus group and semi-structured interviews, I kept notes of each interview. I tried to make my notes as detailed as possible by expanding each section on the questions forms I used. I also was aware of the importance of keeping a lively discussion with the participants as I wrote these notes and I did not look busy writing notes while the participants were expressing their views. This happened at an acceptable level. Later I listened to each interview more than once in order to get an overall impression of each and to familiarise myself with the conversations. After I reached satisfaction with understanding each group and participant, I started writing the abridged transcriptions and made the data ready for analysis.

#### 4.16.3 Analysis of Focus Group Interviews

Although the use of the focus group interview has been widespread in data collection for a long time, there is still a dearth of a well-defined approach for its analysis. According to Spencer et al (2013), the analysis of focus groups could be either as a whole group or as a participant-based depending on the research nature and questions. However, Spencer et al (2013) provide a convincing rationale for the disadvantages of the participant-based

analysis. These include issues to do with the depth of the individual situation to be explored, the negative effect on the group dynamic or context in which the focus group is carried out and that it is very time consuming to go for the analysis of each participant's contribution.

I analysed the focus groups in this research as a whole group type, yet considered individual views in each group. This means that each group was treated as a unit for analysis without each individual in the group being analysed separately. The whole group analysis allowed scope for the exploration of the group dynamic and the context in which the interview took place. Kandola (2012) says that each focus group needs to be analysed separately to enable comparison between groups. Spencer et al (2013) clarifies that the group interaction in focus groups is crucial and needs to be considered and captured. The interaction may involve the areas of conflict or the disagreement the group had, the non-verbal communication to either agree or disagree with the points being discussed and the level of participation by group members. In addition, the way the group's ideas develop and formed needs to be captured and analysed. Kandola (2012) explains that qualitative content analysis seems to be the most straightforward approach to the analysis of either focus groups, which involve the stages of identifying, classifying and categorising themes by hand, or using software.

Although the analysis of the focus groups was based on the qualitative content analysis, it needed a structured strategy or a tool to ensure its validity and make the process involved more transparent by describing the exact procedure implemented. After searching the available literature on the analysis of qualitative data particularly focus groups (Bertrand et al, 1992; Onwuegbuzie et al, 2009), I discovered that there is not much on the analysis of focus groups in the available literature. Thus, after I compared the available literature on analysing focus groups, I decided to use the approach recommended by Krueger and Casey (2009). This approach seemed to be practical, guided, structured and systematic and could be considered as part of the qualitative content analysis in relation to focus groups because of the uniqueness in nature that is different from other qualitative research methods.

Kruger (1998a); Krueger and Casey (2009) state that the analysis of focus groups needs to be defensible, verifiable, sequential, continuous and systematic. Being systematic means that researchers need to be able to defend their analysis and the strategy they implement by providing enough and sufficient evidence from the data and by articulating

their analysis process. The verification process involves taking notes during the focus group interview, the oral summary of the key points that takes place during the focus group interview and the debriefing with the moderator after the interview immediately and the use of transcripts. Being sequential means that the analysis process begins at the design stage and the recruitment stage where decisions are made around issues such as gender, the size of the group and the probes to be used, in order to gain access to reality. Being continuous means that analysis does not end; analysis begins with the research and continues for example, if a question were not answered properly, modification of this question would take place before the next group is interviewed.

Thus, I found the strategy offered by Krueger and Casey (2009) practical and suitable for academic focus groups and guided me throughout the data analysis process, because I dealt with a group as a whole. However, as with any qualitative data analysis method, there are certain limitations to any approach. The limitation with Krueger and Casey (2009) approach may lie in the challenge of the selection of what counts as a significant comment of what the group members say.

The coding is when researchers come across an idea or an area in the data that is linked to the research questions or focus and label it in the margin. If this area or idea re-appears the same code is attached again where later these labels are revisited and reviewed or even combined (Kruger, 1998a; Krueger and Casey 2009; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The weight that could be given to comments according to Krueger and Casey (2009) depends on certain factors. For example, frequency or the number of times something is said, this is either a frequently said comment by the group or an innovative comment by a member of the group. The other factor is the specificity of the comment with specific details. Also, comments that are expressed with emotions such as anger, passion enthusiasm and so on, and extensiveness of the comment that refers to the number of different people who said that comment.

The analysis process I adopted implemented a structured and systematic approach towards dealing with the raw data using matrices. This process involved a number of stages (see appendix 12 for the sequential steps in the analysis process):

1. Each line in the transcripts was numbered electronically using the word process files.
2. Each transcript was printed on a different colour paper. For example, blue was the colour for male teachers with 6-15 years of experience and pink was the colour for the same group female teachers and so on.

3. I used a matrix and wrote each question from the focus group interviews on A3 sheet. I had 10 questions, so this meant that I had 10 A3 sheets.
4. I wrote the number of each corresponding comment from the transcript in the space provided on the A3 sheet and a short quote from each comment (Figure 4. 10). I decided to do so because I later cut and pasted the comments electronically using the word process document (Figure 4.11). Therefore, I worked with the laptop next to me. I noticed that the strategy of mixing both manual and electronic helped me see the comments clearly and think more about them because I read each comment twice and that made me think deeply about those comments.

2. What made you or helped you become who you are now or become the teacher you just described?	
Male teachers 1-5 years of experience	Female teachers 1-5 years of experience
<p>30 - his brother's case of not being good at EFL he feels sorry for him</p> <p>38 - social personality</p> <p>41 - society in Oman (parents don't care)</p> <p>43 - the situation of Omani graduates who can't find a job.</p> <p>45 - personality to care</p> <p>47. beliefs (logic or common sense) to help care for Ss &amp; the purpose of teaching</p> <p>49 - Ss need some supportive books/ideas so I should plan</p> <p>51. society &amp; what happened before, our culture we are shy so Ss encouraged us to do better</p> <p>53 - Internet we feel it's our role</p> <p>56 - our role to be friendly &amp; communicate</p>	<p>39 Ss need low exam results</p> <p>40+48 Cur forced me to change (lower than Ss level) skills are not presented separately</p> <p>44 my hobby to use computers</p> <p>49 the available materials ready to facilitate our work</p> <p>51+53 Ss personality they are more active &amp; experienced.</p> <p>56</p> <p>58 feel responsible + technology</p> <p>60 Ss expectation of T giving them something</p>
Male teachers 6-14 years of experience	Female teachers 6-14 years of experience
<p>38 - my teacher T who taught me</p> <p>40 - efforts of their old T</p> <p>44. belief that motivation makes people take decisions</p> <p>46 - The situation in Oman in Ss, not motivated coz they are not interested &amp; <del>not</del> not clear about their aims</p> <p>54 - my mentor King beliefs urged me to work hard</p> <p>56 + 58</p> <p>60 my principles &amp; my mentor (previous TT) at Uni inspired me</p> <p>62 + 64</p> <p>71 I love teaching because I enjoy teaching</p> <p>73 as it is like planting small trees to build one day</p> <p>75 I enjoy it</p> <p>77 - his beliefs about Ss being small trees</p>	<p>66 I love EFL (why it has childhood)</p> <p>like teaching ch. from childhood</p> <p>18</p> <p>22+25 we are the oldest</p> <p>27 in our families, they depend on us, our personality</p> <p>29. like to help others</p> <p>31 - help Ss because I also got this problem when I was a child</p> <p>33 - my personality I like to create new things in my life</p> <p>my job</p> <p>35. someone <u>Cur</u> helped me become creative</p>
Male teachers 15+ years of experience	Female teachers 15+ years of experience

Table 4.10: Hand written comments

2. What made you or helped you become who you are now or become the teacher you just described?	
Male teachers 1-5 years of experience	Female teachers 1-5 years of experience
Male teachers 6-14 years of experience	Female teachers 6-14 years of experience
<p>Khalid: Maybe because because some situations happened, in fact I have a brother who is not so good in school and he is in college now ... I feel very bad regarding him in grades 11 and 12 no one helped him no one cares about him at school at that time in fact he faced a lot of difficulties</p> <p>Khalid: social and also sometimes relating to your personality</p> <p>Mazin: Social and our society you know because of the in Oman most parent doesn't take care about students or maybe they take care but students themselves don't care</p> <p>Mazin: as I told you now, the situation here actually when I am looking to others ok who are gradutors after grade 12 ok when I look at grade 12 graduates and they can't find a job or anything ok soooo they look actually miserable</p> <p>Mazin: and also sometimes relating also to our personality some teachers are taking care more about the things not just students actually about everything they do it.</p> <p>Saleh: Ahh actually everyone believe my believes is that by logic you cannot leave someone like that soo its for example leaving someone in the situation so the result would be nothing soo you have achieved nothing. The purpose of teaching is to teach those who needs you who needs caring</p> <p>Saleh: because I feel students need some supportive tasks supportive ideas that's why I need to plan the task</p> <p>Saleh: and also as .....say its something in the society and what happened before , its happened to us before , sometimes because of our culture we are shy a bit and we had teachers who encourage us to do better</p> <p>Saleh: its an internal thing, we feel that this is our role</p> <p>Qais: ahh as .....he mention just now it is our role we are a teachers ok and the teacher should be like that ok he should be like friendly with the student he should communicate with the student he should be a person like that because otherwise he is not a teacher</p> <p>Qais: yes yes of course yes Ahh there are actually two reasons first of all when I was studying at .....university there was a doctor a professor and ...he was telling us always and reminding us that please don't.. when you became a teacher please try your best don't use the stick use any other way because they made a studies in some countries I cannot remember the countries but they said the result of the studies was do not punish the student using the stick you are going to effect the students ok their emotions will be effected and many things you can effect the student so they will not like to learn more and more they will not love the teacher they will not be very friendly with the teacher so I took his advices yeah I took his advices. second of all now in my experience I can see in front of me some teachers they are punish their student by beating them you know and... the students they are coming back to me and they are talking to me honestly and tell me we don't like that teacher that</p>	<p>Nahla: For me it's the curriculum forced me to change especially the old one</p> <p>Nahla: For example for grade 12 the core one not the basic one I believe that its low than the students know I have studied this book since 1999 the same information you know I have taught them how to use the tape recorder they say teacher now you have to teach us how to use (Laugh) there is no tape recorder now there is CD player</p> <p>Hadeel: Coz my hobby is using computers I like to use computers and programmes different programmes this helps me with teaching</p> <p>Nada: Even the available materials nowadays facilitate our work not like several years ago and even</p> <p>Nada: The ministry now is aware of providing materials and technology devices</p> <p>Sameera: And the students personality change they are not like before just those children are more active and more experienced they know everything they know more than us</p> <p>Sameera: Yes when they saw us using the electronic media they themselves involve themselves and they make something for you they make the Instagram last year they make it Instagram account and they like to talk to others about the projects I was surprised</p> <p>Bashayer: Also first of all feeling responsibility of course we want our students to be better than ok before the second thing is as they said technology last year some students ask me or they like criticized the curriculum they said we want like part of the curriculum to be electronic not on the paper because of that they hoped the ministry to change something in the curriculum to make something or at least part of it electronic because as they said we like technology new things</p> <p>Fatima: Always the students are waiting from the teacher a lot even the teacher they are waiting they are expecting for their teacher even some students you think them as lazy and careless they are waiting for you to do something for them to take with their hands yes we see sometimes some students with no even the easiest skill we can at grade 12 but we have to do anything we have to do something for them</p>

1

Table 4.11: Typed comments

Additionally, I kept a review pile for the comments that did not really answer the questions. This meant that these comments were not forgotten with time and I referred to them at later stages of the analysis process. Thus, I had my review and discard piles as I progressed with the analysis of my data.

At this stage I looked at each comment and started to group together the codes that are alike, similar or repeated (Krueger, 1998). This involved the rearrangement of the quotes until I was satisfied about the replies of the participants. This stage involved only the description of how the participants are similar or different.



5. The next step was to write a summary about what each type of group said when they answered each question. For example, I wrote what male teachers said and what female teachers said at each group regarding each question (Table 4.12). I then compared and contrasted across and between the groups by writing the similarities and differences between groups for each question they answered. For example, how the male teachers with 6-14 years of experience are similar or different from the female teachers with the same years of experience and so on.

2. What made you or helped you become who you are now or become the teacher you just described?	
Male teachers 1-5 years of experience	Female teachers 1-5 years of experience
Male teachers 6-14 years of experience	Female teachers 6-14 years of experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• His brothers case of not being good at English and he feels sorry for him</li> <li>• Social and personality</li> <li>• Society in Oman parents and students don't care</li> <li>• The situation of grade 12 leavers not getting a good education or job.</li> <li>• Personality to care</li> <li>• Beliefs, logic or common sense to help and care for students as it is the purpose of teaching</li> <li>• Students need some support, task ideas that's why he should plan his lessons</li> <li>• Society and their experience as learners when they were shy and needed help so their teachers encouraged them to do better</li> <li>• The culture as some students are shy to ask for help</li> <li>• Internal as they feel that it is their role to help their learners</li> <li>• Their role is to be friendly and communicate</li> <li>• Pre-service teacher education and tutor. Also the experience in the school context of the teachers who punish and don't care about their learners.</li> </ul> <p>The reasons behind describing themselves as teachers who care for their learners lie in their personality of being people who care. Also their past experiences of teachers who supported them, their pre-service teacher education and their tutor's advice of being nice and friendly to students played a role in making them who they are. Another reason lies in their social experiences of having family members with learning problems, this gave them the responsibility and the sense of care towards their learners. Also, the situation of parents and students not caring much about their levels or future and seeing the graduates after grade 12 not getting good jobs or education made them become so. Finally it's their beliefs. They believe that they should care because they are teachers and that it is by logic or common sense that they should care and this is their role and responsibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students needs from examination results</li> <li>• Curriculum forced me to change because it is lower than my student's levels and skills are not presented separately from each other</li> <li>• My hobby to use computers</li> <li>• Students personality they are more active and experienced</li> <li>• Feeling responsible</li> <li>• The availability of technology</li> <li>• Students expectations of teachers giving them something</li> <li>• The available materials nowadays facilitate our work</li> </ul> <p>These teachers think that curriculum forced them to be like that and to like change because it does not meet their learners levels and that curriculum does not present each skill separately from the others for grades 1-10. Also students' needs based on their exam results made teachers care and think about their learners more. The other reason is their beliefs about feeling responsible and their hobbies of using the computer. Also, their students expectations of teachers giving them something made them become the teachers they described themselves with and the availability of material and technology around them nowadays.</p>
Male teachers 15+ years of experience	Female teachers 15+ years of experience

Table 4.12: Summaries

6. After that, I read the descriptive summaries I wrote about each group for each question in order to see the themes or the cut across issues. If comments appeared repeatedly, were innovative, if they were specific and provided details, and were said by a number of participants, then this led to the formation of themes.
7. This stage was about the separation between the data and the researcher for a few days. This separation stage helps researchers to see the big picture when they revisit their data after a few days. To attend to this stage, I detached myself from the data for some time and revisited them periodically and that helped me see the bigger picture and even discover more details as I revisited the data repeatedly.
8. Finally, I began writing the analysis findings based on the themes and the interview questions using quotes as evidence. This stage made use of the summaries I wrote earlier.

Having described the analysis process for the focus groups, I move on next to describe how the interview data was analysed.

#### 4.16.4 Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews

The analysis of the interviews was less demanding than the focus groups as they were individual interviews and very common in the field of research. In order to ensure internal validity and credibility of this research, I chose to analyse the interviews using the same method – qualitative content analysis – as I had done for the focus groups. The recordings were transcribed using the abridged approach (Krueger and Casey, 2009) and were made ready for analysis. Each participant was analysed separately and then comparison took place between the interview participants. I followed the criteria and strategy discussed above to analyse the semi-structured interviews.

Document analysis requires careful examining and interpretation equally as any other qualitative data collection methods.

#### 4.16.5 Analysis of Documents

The curriculum and policy documents were analysed using the qualitative content analysis approach as the other two data collection methods. This means that the same focus areas



were sought for in these documents. The focus of the document analysis was on the definition of prescribed curriculum, teacher knowledge, autonomy, role and responsibility expected of the L2 teacher using this curriculum. I made a table with these areas and filled it in accordingly bearing in mind the same analysis criteria utilized in the other methods.

## Conclusion

This research set out to explore the impact of curriculum prescription upon the development of the professional identity of L2 teachers in the Omani context. The qualitative research methodology was chosen for its reliability and appropriateness for this research purpose. The methods chosen for this investigation were focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews with the participating English language teachers and authorities. The policy and curriculum documents were also analysed as a supplementary data collection method.

Since this research intended to construct new knowledge, it required data gathering methods that allowed listening to other's views and beliefs. Therefore, the focus groups and the semi-structured interviews enabled the achievement of this purpose.

This chapter has outlined all the decisions regarding the research type, paradigm, design and the data collection methods. It also described the participants who contributed in this research and the recruitment process involved. The data collection methods were described carefully and clearly together with the piloting stage and the kind of modifications made based on it. The data collection stages and procedures as well as the challenges have all been declared. This chapter has also covered the quality measures for this research and the ethical principles it took into consideration. Finally, this chapter described the data analysis method and the structured approaches implemented to analyse the focus groups, the interviews and the documents. The next chapter presents and interprets the findings reached from all three sources of data.

## Chapter 5

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

#### Introduction

This chapter analyses, interprets and discusses the findings of the data from both teachers and authorities and where applicable, the data from the selected policy and curriculum documents that supplemented them. This chapter presents the findings into themes according to the four focus areas of this research and the themes derived from the data. The analysis of the data adopted the qualitative content analysis approach through an in-case and across-case analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The themes in this chapter drew on the findings reached from all of the three data collection methods implemented in this research. The findings presented in this chapter attempted to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: In what ways can the context of a prescribed curriculum contribute to the development of teachers' professional identity?

RQ2: Within the context of a prescribed curriculum, how do English language teachers describe themselves in relation to the development of their professional identity?

RQ3: What factors influence the development of professional identity for this group of English language teachers?

The findings presented in this chapter may overlap given the multidimensionality of the topic itself along with the interrelatedness of the research questions. For the purpose of ease, the following diagram (Figure 5.1) presents the road map or the structure of this chapter.

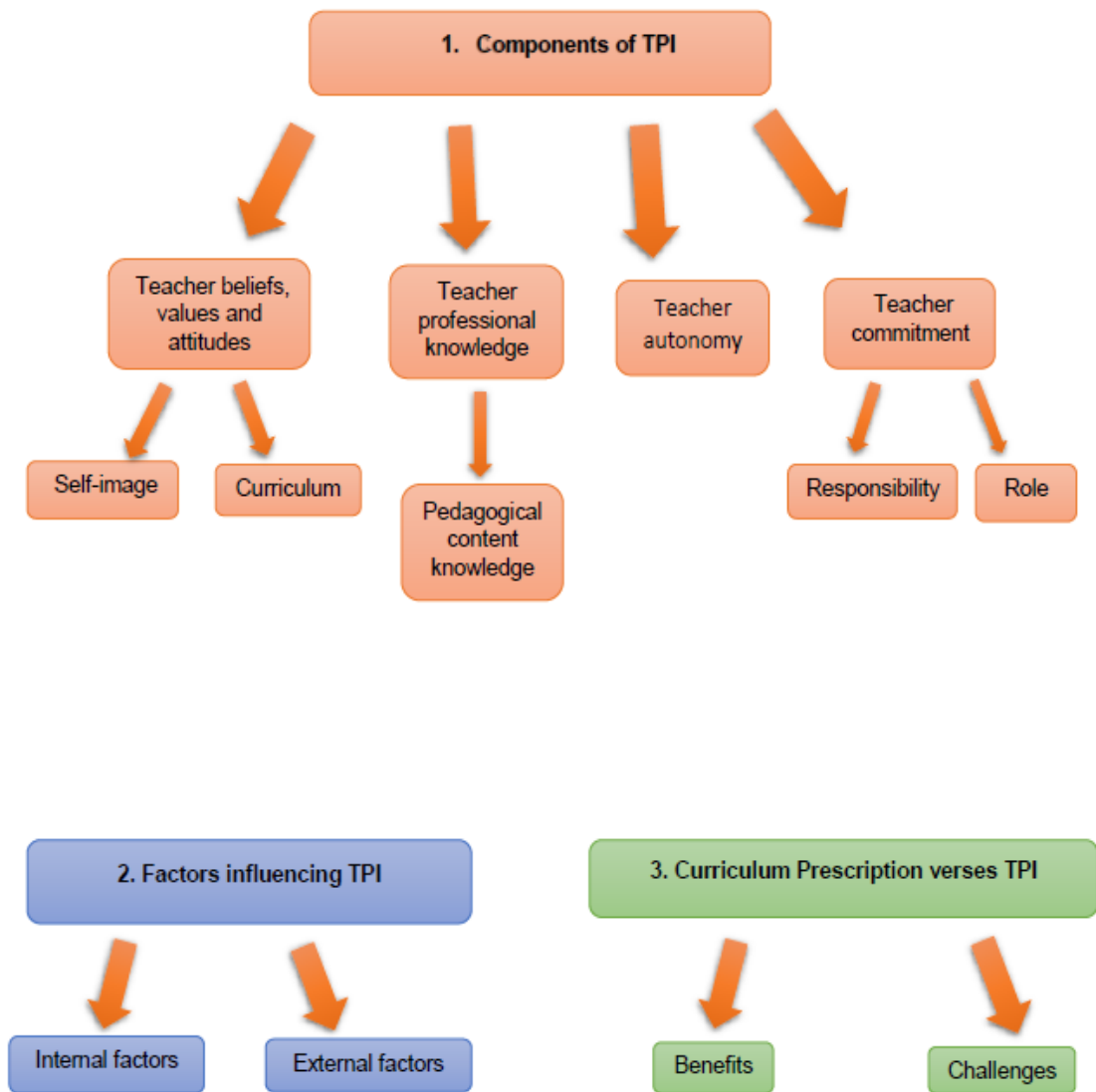


Figure 5.1: Chapter structure

In order to discuss the extent to which curriculum prescription impacts on teacher professional identity (TPI), it was inevitable to first unpack TPI and divide it into components, then to consider the impact of curriculum prescription against each one of these components. The presentation of the findings in relation to the above questions is grouped according to the components of TPI. Thus, this chapter attempts to present the findings related to the components of TPI first because only by - closely considering them can we answer the research question about TPI. These components – (1) teacher beliefs, values and attitudes, (2) teacher professional knowledge, (3) teacher autonomy and (4) teacher commitment – are presented in this chapter in no chronological order.

The first section of this chapter presents the component of TPI initiated with the teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes in terms of teacher beliefs about themselves as teachers (self-image) and their beliefs about the curriculum they teach. The findings on teacher-image revealed four types of images: these were:

1. Care about learners
2. Concern about teaching
3. Passion for teaching
4. Integrity

This section also explores teacher's beliefs in relation to the curriculum they teach and the learning-teaching process. This section presents the findings as positive and negative roles of curriculum.

In terms of teacher professional knowledge, the second point presents the findings that relate to the examination of only one type of professional knowledge, namely, Pedagogical Content Knowledge.

The third point of the first section in this chapter presents the findings in relation to the type of autonomy teachers experienced using the prescribed curriculum focusing on autonomy. The findings are revealed based on the analysis of all data sources utilised in this research.

The fourth point of this section presents the findings from all data sources in relation to teacher roles and responsibilities using the prescribed curriculum. The key role identified by the teachers of English was the facilitator role. This role involved the facilitation of (a) teaching (b) student learning and (c) learner morality. The responsibilities included teacher commitment towards:

- a) Development of learners
- b) Own professional development
- c) Adherence to work ethics

This chapter then moves on to present the findings associated with the factors that influence the development of TPI. The second section of this chapter presents these factors and divides them up into internal and external factors with each including their own specific elements. These factors are:

#### Internal factors

1. Beliefs and values
2. Personality traits

#### External/contextual factors

1. Society, culture and religion
2. Prior experiences
3. Learner needs and school environment
4. Curriculum
5. Technology and availability of materials

In order to answer the main research question about the impact of curriculum prescription on TPI, it became a prerequisite to explore the teachers' perceptions of this type of curriculum for them as practitioners. The third and final section of this chapter discusses teachers' views about curriculum. This section begins by giving an overview of the dual role played by the prescribed curriculum in relation to the development of this identity of teachers. Then, this section presents the benefits and the challenges of this type of curriculum for teachers.

#### Benefits of curriculum prescription:

1. Practical benefits
2. Administrative benefits

#### Challenges of curriculum prescription:

1. Curriculum content
2. Assessment
3. Effects on teachers

## 5.1 Components of TPI

### 5.1.1 Teacher beliefs, values and attitudes

#### **Self-image**

Based on the participant teachers' responses from the focus groups and interviews about the statement they had to complete "I am the type of teacher who ...", the English as a Second or Foreign language (L2) teachers provided replies that represented their beliefs, values and attitudes about how they see themselves as L2 teachers. Their replies indicated an emotionally and socially driven identity with a high level of immersion into their daily work or teaching practice. This will become clearer with examples as this section proceeds.

The significant difference between the male and the female teachers according to the data is that the male teachers expressed a high degree of care about their learners while the female teachers focussed more on their teaching of the curriculum. The male teachers' descriptions of their self-image concentrated more on the importance of supporting their learners develop their academic skills and abilities and their attitudes and social behaviour as well as motivating their learners towards learning the English language. However, the female teachers mainly focussed the description of themselves on their teaching methods and the curriculum itself. The teachers' descriptions of themselves appeared to be mainly influenced by their values, morals, social experiences and emotions, which they utilise into their daily practice represented by their care for learner academic development and concern about their teaching. The participant teachers expressed their passion and integrity for the teaching job. This section presents these findings and evidences them with exact quotations from the interviews.

#### Care 'about' Learners

The findings demonstrated that teachers care 'about' both, (1) their learners' academic levels such as their knowledge, skills, abilities and needs and (2) the development of learner moral and social behaviour. The care 'about' learners used in this research, adopts the views of Day (2009) that goes beyond the adherence to the acts of conduct of

ensuring care and well-being of children to include more of the type of care 'about' learner academic and moral development.

- Learner Academic Skills Development

Many teachers expressed their care about learner level and education. The quotes below represent examples of this type of care. The evidence that teachers provided for their care behaviour was demonstrated in their communication with their learners in a brotherly manner and advice about their future especially in the beginning of the school year, as these two teachers explained:

"I am the teacher who cares a lot about my students . . . in the beginning of every year talking friendly with my students that you are my brothers, I want to improve yourself, I mean I want you to improve yourself in English . . . because your future is in your education."

(Male 6-14)

"I am interested in my students also I mean I take care about them . . . always advising him to work very hard."

(Male 6-14)

The care about learners for this female teacher was linked to working hard, doing her best and through the modifications to the curriculum she teaches in order to enrich learner knowledge. Regarding this, she said:

"I am the kind of teacher who is ready to work very hard to make my students understand the curriculum . . . I'll give you an example at the beginning the basic education when it started I am talking about Cycle 1 there was no phonetics for the children. So they were reading the words like just looking at the words and memorising it . . . so I spent the whole 2 weeks at the beginning just to teach them the phonetics but the results were very good and at the end of the first semester they were able to read sentences."

(Female 6-14)

This female teacher mentioned that she sacrifices her time and put every effort to develop her learners' academic skills, in this regard she explained passionately,

"I am also the type of teacher who sacrifice time and effort just to get her students able to stand up on their hands so at the end I can see my fruit as they say or the hard work I have done the whole year and also I get proud of them"

(Female 6-14)

This teacher's care behaviour was represented in the development of learner knowledge of the content they learn and the skills they ought to develop. She said:

“. . . Yes for example no writing in the curriculum so because I am interested in teaching and I like giving students topics in writing.”

(Female 15+)

Doing their best is how these two teachers described their care about their learner academic skills and knowledge. They stated:

“I am the type of teacher who tries to give the best to his students . . . “

(Male 15+)

“I am the type of teacher who tries my best to enhance my students' level by searching new techniques using for example extra activities to be done in the class or outside the class.”

(Female 6-14)

This teacher expressed that she cared for the development of students' independent learning skills such as taking responsibility towards their own learning,

“I am the type of teacher who give responsibility to students . . . students should have sense of responsibility in the classroom. They have to prepare before they are coming to the class the teacher is not able or cannot give everything for the students the meanings of the words, explaining difficult words explaining grammatical rules every time because they have already take this grammar in previous classes.”

(Female 6-14)

These responses of teachers indicated a high level of teacher care about their learners' academic skills development and success. The type of care these teachers disclosed was linked to communicating with learners and advising them, to working hard, doing their best and developing their learners' knowledge and skills. This caring practice reflects a committed professional identity and an identity that prioritises learners over any other thing. This also reflects a strong academic relationship with the learners. However, this care by some teachers might relate to them wanting their learners to succeed in their exams as expressed by some female teachers.



“I should be creative a little bit try to modify somehow try to follow the structure the assessment finish the curriculum although I believe that some words or some tasks are not important but I don’t want to feel that I missed some of them and they may find it in the final exam.”

(Female 6-14)

“Always I focus at the tense because they always get confuse in the exam.”

(Female 15+)

This image of care about learners’ academic levels might also relate to the expectations of others. It may be affected by the way other teachers see them, other educational professionals see them, how they see themselves and what society expects of them (Tickle, 2000; Day et al 2006). Consequently, the teachers might have seen this image of caring as a face value for them as they do not want others to blame them for their learner failure. The issue of saving face might relate to the females wanting to be ideal in their work and do it properly. In this regard, these two female teachers said:

“Because they will be assessed and you will be blamed.”

(Female 6-14)

“And we don’t want to feel guilty or blamed.”

(Female 6-14)

The findings disclosed that teacher care about their learners’ academic levels was to some extent in accordance with previous research that explored the involvement of both the person and the societal expectation of teacher (Goodson and Cole, 1994; Connelly et al., 1999; Tickle (2000); Goh et al, 2005; Schepens et al, 2009). However, the key finding from this research affirmed the concept of a caring teacher as discovered by Nias (1989), Flores and Day (2006), Day (2009) and O’Connor (2008). The caring teacher cares about their learners’ academic level and education as well as the development of learner morals and social skills. The drive for this care was not solely related to the societal expectations as found in previous research; rather, the caring teacher discovered within TPI goes back to their values and beliefs, which stem from their emotions, social and religious factors. These factors are discussed in detail as this chapter progresses.

The data also revealed that besides care about learner’s academic levels, knowledge and skills, some of the participant teachers also expressed their care about the development of their learner social skills and behaviour.

- Learner Moral and Social Behaviour Development

Day (2009) states convincingly that in addition to teacher possession of knowledge and skills about teaching, they need to care 'about' the development of their learners academic and social skills. Interestingly in this research, some of the male teachers expressed care about the development of learner morals and values. For example, the care behaviour of this teacher was linked to his emotional and social feelings of communicating with learners in a brotherly manner and not punishing them using the stick, which unfortunately was quite common in male schools in Oman during the data collection stage of this research.

“Actually I am the type of teacher that communicate with a student as a father, as a brother, a big brother advisor at the same time and usually I don't like to punish my students because . . . I mean, I am punishing them but I have a different way to punish them like not by beating them by sticks . . .”

(Male 6-14)

In addition to the brotherly tone that indicates an emotional and social type of professional identity the above teacher had, the following teacher also demonstrated an emotional and social type of identity. In this regard, he stated that he understands his learner needs, because of the friendly and an encouraging learning atmosphere he created for his learners by listening to learners' social and personal problems:

“I feel I am the type of teacher who tries to understand the needs of my students and to give them a learning atmosphere . . . to cater to their needs to up lift them from the level which I get them.

There is something else I want to say, I find it comfortable to share with these students their problems whether their personal life or their . . . “

(Male 15+)

This teacher's care to raise his learners' academic levels was represented emotionally through his encouragement of learners to participate in class.

“I would like to encourage all my students even weak ones to join and participate in class I don't like to leave him just like that without speaking some of the students are shy they don't participate because of many reasons but we are trying to encourage them.”

(Male 6-14)

This finding of caring teachers is similar to the finding reached by Nias (1989) who found that teachers' values about education relate to their social, moral, religious beliefs and values, which they put into actions of care and love for their learners. Moreover, the findings of this research relate to O'Connor (2008) who discovered that the caring behaviour of teachers and the motivational factors for care were based on teachers' beliefs about their role towards their learners and their relationship with them acted as the motivational factors for care. Similarly, this research highlighted that teachers' beliefs about themselves stem from their beliefs, values and positive attitudes about morals related to teaching and these were represented in the way they described their caring behaviour towards their learners (Al Zadjali, Sutcliffe and Bligh 2016).

The teachers' care for their learners could link to their own motivation, which influences their learners. In Moskovsky et al's (2012) experimental study on teacher usage of motivational strategies by Saudi teachers' implementation of the ten motivational strategies that were based on D'ornyei and Csiz'er (1998) and Cheng and D'ornyei (2007), findings showed a link between teacher use of the motivational strategies and learner motivation towards English language learning. The key relevance to the current research is that these strategies seemed to be similar to the ones used by the teachers' practice. For example, the English language teachers said that they show care for learners by varying their teaching, meeting their learner needs, encouraging learners to use the English language, recognising their learner achievement, reminding learners about the importance of learning English and relating tasks to learners' lives.

The teachers' use of these motivational strategies within their daily practice might indicate that the participant teachers are motivated teachers because research observed that language teacher's sense of self-image can affect their motivation towards understanding their roles and therefore affect their classroom performance (Goh, et al, 2005). Thus, the teachers' behaviour of care about learners could be attributed to them being motivated and appreciating being L2 teachers.

"I feel I am a motivator.....I like to be a motivator for the students and I want to give them training and help."

"because I feel when I come to Oman I feel that the students majority of the students are not motivated properly because they are not, they are not, I mean some of them of course are not interested and there are not particular about the goal or what they want to achieve in their future so I thought that why I can't give a

motivation when we teach so that they can achieve they can decide a goal they can set a goal they can work for it throughout their education period and then can win that goal”

(Male 15+)

It is worth mentioning that some of the female teachers did express some care about developing their learners’ sense of responsibilities by either believing in them or by assigning them responsibilities or tasks to do. For example, these two teachers expressed,

“I am the type of teacher who give responsibility to students should have sense of responsibility in the classroom they have to prepare before they are coming to the class”

(Female 6-14)

“I am a teacher who believe on my students every teacher have to believe on her students otherwise they will not be able to reach anything, for secondary school students it is important to show them their mistakes to show them not just to hinder or criticise... so they can avoid it later on so we have to show them and we have to guide them at the same time”

(Female 6-14)

In addition to the participant teachers being motivated and caring about their learners’ academic and moral development, they expressed certain concerns about teaching.

### Concern about Teaching

The teachers – particularly the females – appeared to be concerned about their teaching methods and completion of curriculum. The definition of the term ‘concerned’ in this research is based on the linguistic definition given by Cambridge Dictionary, which refers to it as something being important to someone, involving him/her directly, or causing worry to someone. In the case of this research, the ‘prescribed curriculum’ is important to the teachers because it involves them directly and therefore is a source of worry to them.

For example, this female teacher stated that she refuses the routine in the daily-prescribed lessons and likes to change her lessons:

“Yes I am the kind of teacher who doesn’t like the same routine I like to change even with teaching even if it’s the same curriculum like I have been teaching grade

12 core the core one for about maybe 5 to 6 years , the same curriculum, the old one the students I feel that I felt that they felt bored they don't like to go on and to carry on this curriculum so we have to adapt some lessons , I brought some lessons from Basic just to change I don't like the routine I like to change from one year to another even if I teach the same curriculum”

(Female 6-14)

These two female teachers sought changes, modified their teaching methods and strategies, and adopted new teaching methods using technology, other course books and the Internet. In this regard, these two quotations represent these claims:

“I am the kind of teacher who modifies my current teaching strategies and adopt new teaching methods through searching in the web for new techniques and trying also to convey the method that I learned to my colleagues and share ideas together I'm also a kind of teacher who seeks I mean changes in the curriculum through findings supplementary materials to the students I don't stick to the steps and procedures in the teacher's book I am trying my best to make changes.”

(Female 6-14)

“am ready to use other techniques which is not included in the curriculum just to make my students to understand or learn something or learn a skill.”

(Female 6-14)

This male teacher's concern for teaching related to lesson planning and preparation. In this matter, he explained:

“I am the kind of person doesn't like to go to classes without preparation ... today actually was a reading lesson . . . I prepared some questions not the ones included they should answer but other questions to make sure that they actually read and understood the text.”

(Male 6-14)

The type of concern about teaching that the female teachers expressed, demonstrated some kind of worries and immersion into their teaching. Their continuous efforts to change or modify their lessons could possibly indicate either their dissatisfaction with the curriculum they teach or their obedience to their supervisor's continuous requests for curriculum modification.

Both gender teachers expressed their concern about teaching however, most of the female teachers identified this concern explicitly. This situation with the female teachers could either be a consequence of the focus group interview as participants might have influenced each other's views. This is something that is considered quite normal with

focus group interviews. Even if this explicit focus on the concern for teaching was the result of focus group influence, nonetheless the data solicited from the female participants appears to be interesting, because their concern was linked to the curriculum they teach. This could suggest that the prescribed curriculum pressured these teachers to become so, because it limited teachers to certain teaching methods prescribed in the Teacher's Book. This left the teachers inner self in a conflictive predicament between what teachers are asked to do in the curriculum and what they practically want to do in order to motivate their learners. This tension or conflict was between the teachers' personal-self, their beliefs and the school context. Tension between different aspects or sub-identities has previously been researched and findings revealed that tension exists however; it develops and improves with time (Samuel and Stephens 2000; Beijaard et al, 2004; Findlay, 2006; Stephens et al, 2009; Pillen et al, 2013).

The other interpretation to this concern for teaching might refer to the deep level of immersion into the daily practice. Since the discussion of the female teachers' self-image or TPI was mainly focussed on their teaching, this situation may indicate that teaching is occupying a major part of the teachers' personal lives and thus causing them to become very much immersed into their teaching.

Although teachers expressed some concerns about their teaching, they still demonstrated that they were motivated and very positive about being L2 teachers.

### Passion for Teaching

Some of the participant teachers described themselves as teachers who like their job. Interestingly, they appeared to enjoy their role as L2 teachers regardless of the prescriptive context. For example, these female teachers with more than 15 years of experience expressed their emotions towards teaching and one of them said that she felt a sense of achievement whilst being in class.

“I love teaching, I am interested in teaching when I enter my lesson I feel that I am doing something . . . “

(Female 15+)

“I am the type of teacher who I love my job.”

(Female 15+)

Moreover, this older male teacher expressed similar deep emotions towards teaching and used the metaphor of a garden to describe his role as an L2 teacher,

“I am the type of teacher who love teaching . . . yeah . . . I love teaching because I enjoy teaching... as if I was planting some small trees that I will have their fruits one day ....so I love this job because I enjoy it.....and I think that students are like small trees when I get in the class the students especially if the students are good I feel as if I was in a garden full of tress and full of flowers ....really I enjoy it I feel happy”

(Male 15+)

According to Day (2009), teachers' positive feelings towards their job or their passion for their role as educators, is important for the achievement of teacher effectiveness and for ensuring quality teaching. Although the younger teachers in this study did not express their feelings towards their job as explicitly as their older colleagues did, they still think the same because of the description they assigned to themselves which was mainly focussed on their learners and teaching. Thus, instead of saying that they like being English teachers, they explicitly expressed how much they care 'about' their learners and about their teaching. The caring and concern aspects in relation to being a teacher indicated that they like what they did. This links teacher emotion with their professional identity.

Teacher emotions have been observed to influence teacher professional lives such as teachers feeling a sense of responsibility towards the work they do (Zembylas, 2003; Golombek and Johnson, 2004; Van Veen et al, 2005; Rodgers and Scott, 2008; Ben Said, 2015). The findings suggest that the participant L2 teachers' passion for teaching relates to the influence of their emotions on their professional identity. The findings from this research coincide with previous research on the role of emotional influence on teachers' practice, for example, Hargreaves (1998; 2001) discovered that teachers' emotional care for learner lives was the motive for their teaching and that emotions influenced teachers' professional lives particularly their lesson planning. This is because teachers felt that they are meeting their learners' needs. In the field of TESOL/ EFL, Reis (2015) argued that emotions form an integral part of L2 non-native teachers. Additionally, Golombek (1998) discovered that teacher's personal practical knowledge (PPK) was demonstrated as being emotional, personal, situational, moralistic and dynamic. In addition, Golombek' study found that L2 teachers' emotions are more than just feelings; rather they are integrated into their understanding of teacher knowledge and practice. In the same vein, Hong (2010) revealed that teacher dropout or burnout was mostly emotional.

In addition to the participant teachers being emotionally attached to their job, the older male teachers brought up honesty as a description for their professional identity.

### Integrity

The older male teachers with more than fifteen years of experience brought up the issue of integrity and described themselves as honest teachers. This teacher linked his honesty with his Islamic religious morals in relation to Allah (God) watching people's intentions and behaviour. In this matter, he said:

“I am the type of teacher who should be honest . . . who is honest and should be also.....today I am the teacher who is here to teach pupils . . . it's our job and no-one watches us but Allah . . . so this why . . . This why.... I say honesty.”

(Male 15+)

Another male teacher agreed with the religion and honesty parallel in teaching, saying that:

“ .....and honesty towards my job. Of course it is my religion that made me like this.”

(Individual interview: Male 15+)

As honesty was given prominence by two of the older male teachers in the focus group interview and in the individual interview with the Omani male teacher, this highlights the role of L2 teacher integrity on the development of their professional identities. The teachers correlated their loyalty for teaching with their faith and the religion of Islam, whereby Muslims are required to abide by a set of personal ethics and morals, thus upholding honesty in carrying out work be it for a living or general comportment and manners. This demonstrated the influence of religious values and morals on the teachers' professional lives and therefore affected their practice. This finding harmonises with the findings from the research conducted by Nias (1989), who disclosed that teacher' values, morals and religion were interpreted into actions of love and care for learners.

Having identified teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes about themselves or their self-image, which included care about learners, concern for teaching, passion for teaching and integrity, the next sub-section presents the kind of beliefs L2 teachers held for the curriculum they teach and for learning-teaching process.



## Curriculum

The participant teachers' perceptions of the role played by the prescribed curriculum in developing their professional identity, revealed a disagreement between different gender teachers. Whilst the male teachers did not consider the curriculum to have played a major role in contributing to their character and achievement, the female teachers thought the opposite. The female teachers appreciated the positive role of the curriculum in making them who they are, because the process of fulfilling the gaps in the curriculum helped them become concerned about their teaching. However, the male teachers did not consider the curriculum to have shaped them significantly, as they seemed to be of the opinion that curriculum prescription restricted them from being creative. The only issue that both male and female teachers agreed upon was the fact that this type of curriculum is useful for new teachers.

Overall, the data identified a dual role of the prescribed curriculum in relation to the development of TPI.

### Positive Role of Curriculum

According to the female teachers and some of the male teachers, the positive role of the prescribed curriculum was represented by the support the teachers received from this curriculum when they were new teachers. In addition, the same teachers thought that curriculum still equips them with knowledge about teaching such as guidelines, ideas on teaching strategies, lesson objectives and organisation of lessons in units and steps. In this regard, these three female teachers stated:

“It played a certain role since it provided us with guidelines for choosing the appropriate materials that we are going to employ or use in our lessons it also helps us to determine or identify the objectives that we are going to cover and it also helps us to choose assessment opportunity yeah so it's helpful I think.”

(Female 6-14)

“It gives them like all the ideas and the strategies the teaching strategies.”

(Female 6-14)

“Shaping us in positive way I mean as she said . . . .”

(Female 15+)

The description of the positive role by curriculum in making these teachers who they are or in shaping their professional identity was represented by the curriculum providing them with certain teaching skills or general pedagogical knowledge, which means adding to their professional knowledge about general teaching strategies and organisation of teaching content. The role of curriculum in adding to teacher professional knowledge about language and language teaching was noted by previous research such as Reeves (2010kelchtermans).

I believe that this role of the prescribed curriculum is quite limited because effective teaching is not only about equipping teachers with general pedagogical knowledge, but rather teacher professional knowledge needs to be deeper than this and should focus on meeting learners’ needs and abilities. Shulman (1987) calls this type of knowledge “pedagogical content knowledge”. According to Shulman, this is the most crucial type of knowledge that teachers need to possess, which the prescribed curriculum does not seem to be doing.

Whereas the female teachers held positive views on the role of curriculum in shaping their professional identity, the male teachers held opposite views.

### Negative Role of Curriculum

Most of the male teachers stated that they could not see a serious, strong and positive role of the curriculum in supporting the development of their professional identity. The male teachers expressed their views in various ways. The older male teachers used percentages to indicate the level of impact curriculum had on their professional identity.

“Of course I can give credit for 50% to it and 50% is about the nature of the students has made me and I see the typography and all go to the situation of the students their background and there myself for being a motivator.”

(Male 15+)

“Fifty fifty nothing is 100% perfect we all know that nothing in our life is 100% perfect so but to somehow it did.”

(Male 15+)

Two teachers expressed the issue of the curriculum being a constraint, because it leaves less freedom for teachers to do what they wanted:

“As you said it’s prescribed and of course centralised this curriculum is about what I do what I give but it doesn’t give me full freedom to give the best to my students.”

(Male 15+)

“I think that this curriculum constrained me.”

(Male 15+)

In addition, this teacher said that the prescribed curriculum limits teacher creativity; in this matter, he said:

“Even though it will lack you creativity, it will make your creative be very limited.”

(Male 6-14)

Based on the above discussion, it appears that curriculum prescription might hinder teachers and constrain their creativity and freedom. The reasons for this can be found in the nature of the prescription where for example, the suggested methods in the curriculum may not be suitable nor applicable types for learners. This may result in conflict between teacher beliefs and understandings of their learner situations with the curriculum requirements that need to be fulfilled. The statement by this teacher explains this point:

“But as we follow the curriculum and as we are asked to finish at certain time but sometimes I stop teaching I don’t confine myself to the curriculum plan and stop to give more explanation about a task only one task a lesson to help pupils share and this is my target.”

(Male 15+)

This situation of teachers’ perceptions about curriculum not matching their goals or targets gives rise to potential tension in their professional identity. In literature, this is referred to as tension between the person and their context. Most of the previous research that examined tension between the person and context focussed on the tension occurred during the professional identity ‘formation’ process (Coldron and Smith, 1999; Connelly et al, 1999) and tension in the profiles of beginning teachers (Pillen et al, 2013). However, this research highlighted that that tension might occur between experienced teachers’ beliefs and the prescribed curriculum they teach. Beijaard et al (2004) say that teacher

sub-identities need to harmonise rather than conflict, which means that teacher beliefs about teaching need to harmonise with their practice or the curriculum they teach. However, according to the findings, this harmony appears to be lacking in this research.

Generally, it seemed that curriculum prescription did play a certain role in getting teachers to care about their learners and their teaching and therefore modify their teaching methods accordingly. Thus, it supported the development of teachers' general pedagogical knowledge. However, it is not enough to listen to teachers' description of themselves without getting them to reflect on specific examples of their practice. Getting teachers to reflect on their practice helps to get a fuller idea about their daily practice in order to comprehend fully the kind of impact curriculum prescription may have on TPI.

To sum up, the key findings from this section revealed that care 'about' learners and concern for teaching are highly considered by the participant teachers, something that indicated a high degree of teacher immersion into their daily practice, which does not leave enough space for the teachers to think about "learning". This situation might signpost a mismatch in these teachers' understanding about what being a teacher means. I think that the teachers particularly the females only see one side of the coin, which is their teaching, rather than seeing learning and teaching as an interrelated process. The diagram below was extracted based on word frequency query via NVivo in order to sightsee the times teachers mentioned 'learning' as compared to 'teaching' and 'learners'. Although, discourse analysis does not form part of this research, it was useful and interesting to use NVivo as a tool to present some of the findings related to the teachers' usage of certain terms.

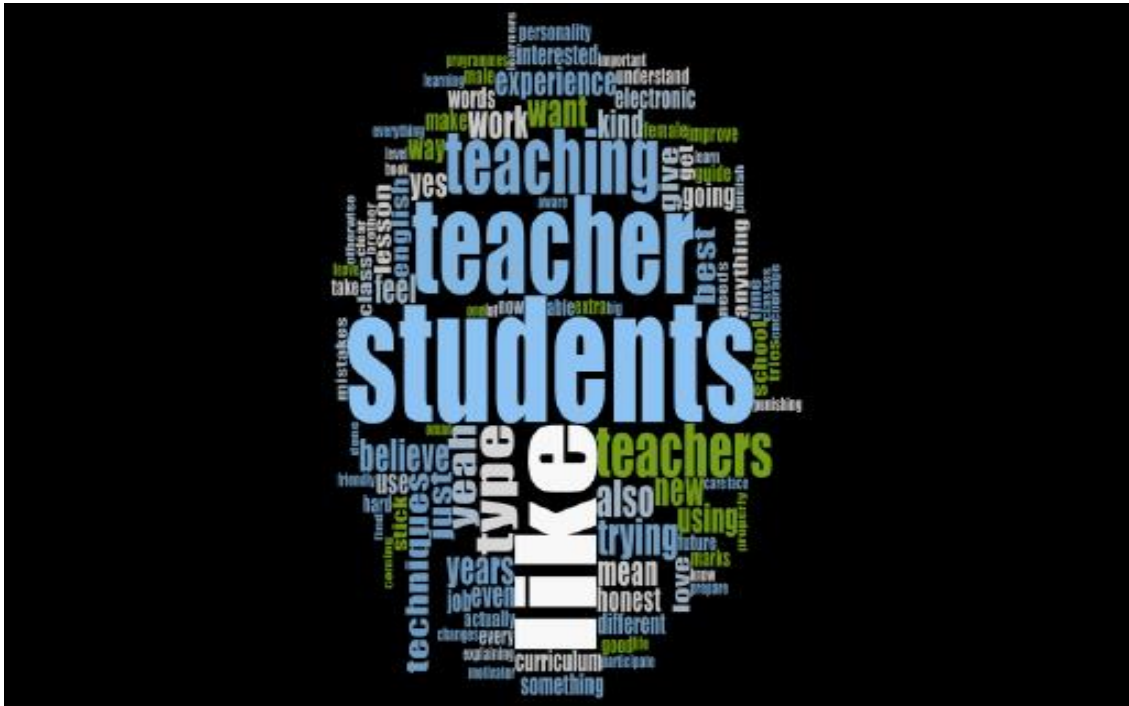


Figure 5.2: Frequency of teacher usage of the terms “students”, “teaching” and “learning”

At a first glance of the diagram in Figure 5.2., it is evident that the terms “students”, “like”, “teacher”, and “teaching” were bigger in size than other terms. This meant that the teachers have used these terms more than other terms in their answers to the first question about self-image. This diagram seems to confirm the kind of relationship teachers, particularly males, had with their learners and the care they gave to them. This diagram also reflects the teachers’ passion for teaching represented by the big sized ‘like’ that appeared in their talk. This provides evidence of the emotional influence on those teachers’ professional identities as they linked their description of themselves to their learners and to their feelings towards teaching.

The frequent usage of the term ‘teaching’ refers to the female teachers’ immersion into their teaching. This diagram also illustrates that teachers rarely mentioned “learning” in their description of themselves compared to their use of the term “teaching”. Thus, based on the view that teaching and learning is an interrelated process, the findings might point to a mismatch between teachers’ beliefs and understanding of their roles as teachers and of the interrelatedness of teaching and learning.

To conclude, this section discussed the beliefs that teachers held about themselves as L2 teachers (self-image) and about the role of the prescribed curriculum in shaping their TPI.

The findings highlighted that most of the male teachers cared 'about' their learners, while most of the female teachers focussed on their teaching. This signals a gender difference and goes against the common assumption or stereotype that widely accepts female teachers as natural nurturers and carers for learners than male teachers (Bullough, 2015). This does not mean that the female teachers did not care about their learners; however, this finding demonstrated that the female teachers prioritised their teaching over their learners when they described themselves unlike their male colleagues and they were much immersed into the daily practice trying to modify it. The findings also revealed that teachers were highly motivated, passionate about teaching and were influenced by their religious morals. These two significant findings bring in the role of emotions, integrity, the personal-self and the social influence onto TPI.

This section discussed the first component of TPI, which was on teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes towards their self-image as L2 teachers and their beliefs on the curriculum they teach including the learning-teaching process. The following section moves on to consider the second component of TPI, entitled teacher professional knowledge.

### 5.1.2 Teacher Professional knowledge

The participant teachers were asked to describe a lesson they taught and explain what they think their learners learned on that day and whether they have adapted their lessons or not. The purpose of this question was to reach deep insights on teachers practice and their professional knowledge in order to compare the teachers' practice with the description they gave about themselves in the previous section. This is to develop new insights about the impact of curriculum prescription on teacher professional knowledge.

Generally, teachers thought that the curriculum they teach does not necessarily meet their learners' levels, needs and abilities. Therefore, all of them adapted their lessons, except for one female teacher who thought her lesson was good enough and there was no need to modify it. Although, nearly all teachers modified their lessons, some of these teachers' modifications were close to the curriculum instructions. Likewise, all of the teachers expressed the importance of relating their lessons to their learners' real life experiences. The female teachers expressed more interest in searching the Internet to enrich their teaching unlike the male teachers. The analysis of the different tasks described by the teachers was based on only one type of teacher professional knowledge, namely

'pedagogical content knowledge' proposed by Shulman (1987) as a fundamental type of teacher professional knowledge.

### **Pedagogical Content knowledge**

According to Shulman (1987), pedagogical content knowledge represents that blend of knowledge between the teaching content and pedagogy or teaching strategy to represent teacher's understanding of how certain topics or issues are to be organised, presented and adapted in order to meet learner needs, interests and abilities.

The analysis of the different tasks taught by the participant teachers revealed two levels of pedagogical content knowledge; these were the theoretical and practical levels. At a theoretical level, pedagogical content knowledge appears to be part of those teachers' professional knowledge and understanding represented by their beliefs and values in relation to their care about their learners and their concern about teaching. This means that the teachers' descriptions of themselves indicated a high level of awareness of the pedagogical content knowledge when they linked the descriptions of themselves to what they do inside the classroom.

However, the practical side of the pedagogical content knowledge does not seem to be fully developed, as this was not necessarily represented by the teachers' behaviour. A summary of the teaching tasks as described by teachers is in appendix (13). Although it is hard to discuss qualitative findings using charts and numbers, I consider displaying a useful tool to present the practical side of the findings according to the focus group interviews.

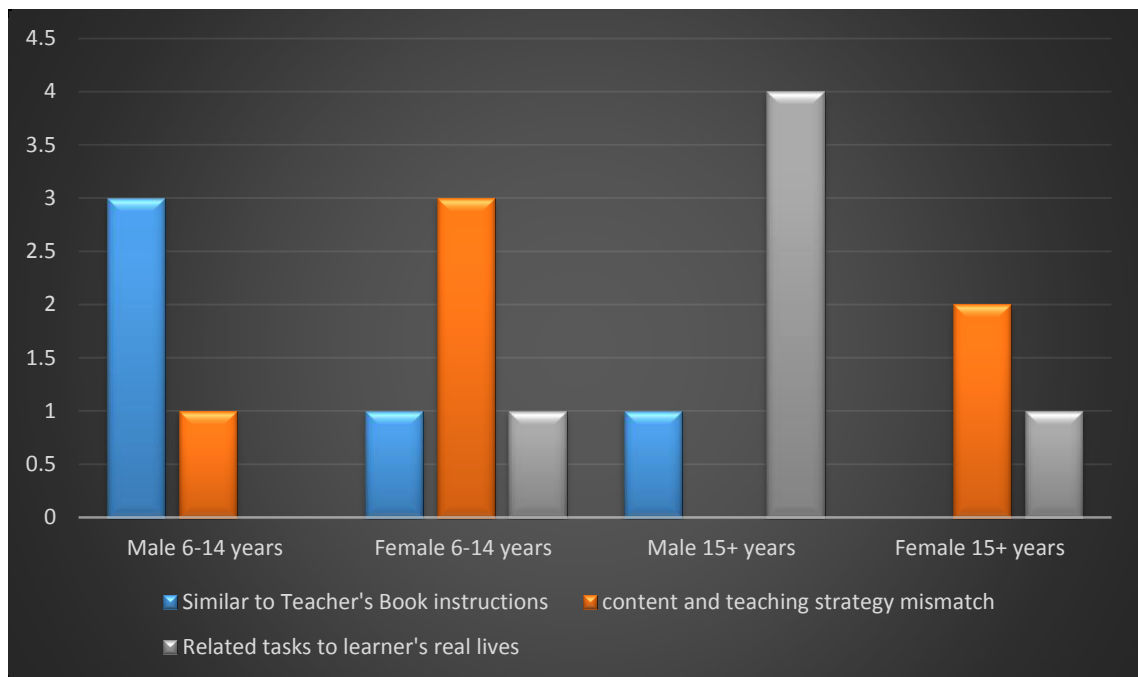


Figure 5.3: Teachers' decisions over prescribed lessons

Based on the analysis of the teaching practice as described by the participant teachers, the chart (Figure 5.3) displays the results of the decisions made by the teachers in the four focus groups. The numbers on the chart refer to the number of teachers in each group.

From the chart in Figure 5.3, it is notable that most of the expatriate male teachers with 15+ years of experience adapted their lessons and made them meet their learners' real life experiences. For example, this teacher's lesson was on writing emails, so he asked all of his learners to send him an email each. Regarding this, he said:

"Yeah which was different from curriculum I just asked them to send me an email . . . yes so just write an email about anything whatever is there . . . And then they sent me some of them the next day they asked me whether I received it or not they were hoping to get remarks like how was it how was the picture how was the happy face there (laughs)."

(Male 15+)

This finding provides evidence of the description the male teachers assigned to themselves as teachers who care about their learners. This care was represented in linking their teaching to learners' lives. It was notable from the description of their teaching that their practice in class matched their verbal description of it.



However, the practice of the Omani male teachers whose experience was between 6-14 years and two of the female teachers from both groups did not necessarily relate to their learners' lives as such. Their practice appeared to adhere to the curriculum instructions, thus as a result their practice was similar to the teaching methods suggested by the prescribed curriculum. These teachers said that they care for the development of their learners academic and social skills by advising them and showing a fatherly and brotherly type of care. This might still be true even if their practice was quite similar to the prescribed curriculum. Making their teaching strategies similar to the prescribed curriculum instructions might confirm that they are working towards care about their learners by selecting the safe side. Those teachers might have decided to take the safer option by staying close and adhering to the required and recommended teaching methods in the prescribed curriculum to achieve their professional identity of care about learners. This is a quite normal attitude to be taken by teachers in such a context of curriculum prescription.

Another rationale could be that the teachers have neither developed the skills, nor held the sufficient knowledge needed for creating their own tasks. This might relate to teacher self-efficacy and confidence. Self-efficacy has been researched for its importance in relation to teacher education and TPI by Stephens et al (2009) who found that student teacher readiness to teach was represented in their self-efficacy and professional orientation. In addition, Goh et al (2005) related self-efficacy to teachers' confidence about their sufficient knowledge of the syllabus. This highlights the significance of teacher knowledge for their self-efficacy and confidence, something that might not be strong enough for the participant teachers.

Moreover, adherence to the prescribed curriculum instructions might be the impact of the prescribed curriculum on teachers as they absorbed the curriculum teaching methods and strategies based on their daily lesson preparations, to the extent that that they could not leave them aside and think of different approaches. This might indicate that even if teachers are motivated to have a go at changing the recommended teaching methods in the curriculum, their confidence to do so might become an issue as well as their readiness for such action and their self-efficacy may not permit such action. Al-Mahrooqi et al (2015) have also observed this adherence to the prescribed curriculum in the Omani context as the target teachers from Batinah-South governorate did not see supplementing materials necessary. This adherence to the course books is attributed by Al-Mahrooqi and her

colleagues to the centralisation and bureaucratic system in Oman, which does not allow much flexibility for teachers.

The mismatch between the content ought to be acquired by students and the teaching strategies implemented by the female teachers, appears to be the most outstanding finding as it shows on the chart. It is interesting to know that teachers who completed more than six and ten years of teaching experience, still found it hard to harmonise between the content and the suitable teaching methods or strategies to ease student learning. This is a most prominent finding because it relates to the female teachers who described themselves as concerned about their teaching and expressed that they modify and change the curriculum through searching the Internet and other resources to supplement their teaching in order to meet their learners' needs. The analysis of the practice of these teachers revealed that they do what they claim, however, the kind of modifications they bring into their lessons appeared to have created an issue of a mismatch between the content ought to learn by learners and the teaching method or strategy adopted by them.

Before I proceed to giving explanations about such a situation, let us first look at the practice of one of these female teachers as an example of how this teacher used a teaching method that did not necessarily reflect the content of the lesson without being aware of this action. For example, Nahla described the adaptation she did to a listening task and said:

“Yeah we adapt a listening lesson with the core curriculum also because I felt the questions are very easy the students are much better than the curriculum they can just guess the answers so I brought a video and I asked them to look and I just give them some questions to answer the questions after looking to the video and then after that they there's like a conversation between 2 people in the video so the listening was there they listened they answered the questions so the objective was achieved...”

(Female 6-14)

Based on Nahla's description of her adaptation, it appears that she adapted a listening task because she thought the comprehension questions given in the course books were easy for her learners and could be guessed by them, so she decided to do something else. This action of standing on learners' needs and knowing their levels was great and reflected her beliefs about care for learners and concern for teaching. However, the teaching strategy she selected for the modification did not match the intended content to be learned. The intended content was 'listening' to some speech not visually watching a

conversation between two. The content was about equipping learners with the skill of listening to the English language not watching a conversation that incorporates body language and facial expressions that aided the understanding of the content being expressed verbally by the speaker, something that makes the listening task even easier for learners. Accordingly, the adaptation made was inconsistent with Nahla’s claim about her reasons for modifications which were about the given questions being easy for her learners as the kind of teaching strategy she selected did not necessarily bring the challenge in, rather it took it away.

Another female teacher from the same group “Hadeel” provided another example of the mismatch between content and teaching strategy.

Hadeel	I am teaching grade 10 there are texts about civilizations full of new words so to prepare for the lesson I asked my students to distribute the text between them and each one of them after they finish reading just make it brief to distribute the information on tables on time place any new words
Me	This was your technique?
Hadeel	Yes and the new words I asked them to bring pictures after, I ask the group to write the meaning of any new word they face another group I ask them to bring pictures about the new words another group I ask them to make the information brief
Me	So this was a task that needed preparation
Hadeel	Yes I asked them to prepare beforehand so when we come to the lesson it was easy for them to understand we didn’t do the reading in class because they were supposed to do the reading at home
Me	So this was different from the curriculum
Hadeel	In the curriculum they ask them to just skim and answer some comprehension questions

Table 5.1: Content and teaching strategy mismatch (Female 6-14)

In the above conversation, Hadeel expressed her concern about the text/lesson by saying “full of new words”. So, she decided to break the text down into chunks and assign it to different groups; and in order to support her students’ understanding of the new vocabulary, she asked them to find some pictures and used these in class. She also asked her learners to read the text at home. Although, this hard working teacher put every effort to bring the content of the text in the course book to her learners’ levels and abilities, the teaching strategy she implemented did not necessarily help to serve this. The content of the lesson was on reading specifically to practice the skill of skimming the text for

information. The preparation the learners did at home by finding the meanings related to new vocabulary and finding the pictures that illustrated meanings, did not serve the content to be learned by students. The modified strategy adopted by Hadeel reflected the level of immersion and narrow vision of the teacher as claimed earlier. This teacher was so immersed in the course book content that she thought the focus of the task was to only comprehend the text about 'civilisations' and learn the new related vocabulary. Hadeel did not realise that the content of her lesson was not the text on civilisations, but rather it was reading and skimming the text and the utilisation of the text on civilisation was just a tool to get learners to develop skimming skills.

This finding of mismatch between content and teaching strategy may have happened for various reasons. The reasons for this mismatch may relate to a dilemma teachers are experiencing between them being concerned about their teaching – perhaps relating to the individual differences between learners – and to the prescribed curriculum they have. So, as a response to this dilemma the teachers seek out tasks that meet their learners' needs and levels and keep on changing and adapting the syllabus. However, teachers do not seem to possess the skills needed for adaptation and creation of their own tasks, something that refers to teacher self-efficacy again (Darling-Hammond et al, 2002).

Another reason could be that teachers feel bored of the same teaching strategies presented to them in the Teacher's Book. Since curriculum is not being changed frequently, this situation caused the L2 teacher to adopt the experiential type of learning into their teaching (Kolb, 1984), where teachers learn from their trail of teaching activities based on their practical experiences. The implementation of the experiential type of teaching is possible given that teachers are clear about how to practice it considering that reflection becomes significant in such practice.

Another key reason here could relate to the lack of teacher knowledge about the general overall benchmarks of education particularly the ones related to the grade they teach. Shulman (1987) described this type of knowledge as the 'knowledge of educational values', which is part of teacher professional knowledge. Interestingly, a few teachers showed some awareness of the overall educational aims in Oman and the achievement of these objectives.

"Of course they can but the whole Oman has got a rule and system one is deviated from other and other is deviated from the other."

(Male 15+)

Moreover, two female teachers brought up objectives as a benefit of this type of curriculum:

“It also helps us to determine or identify the objectives that we are going to cover.”

(Female 6-14)

“The curriculum helps us in like know the objectives see the steps ok have idea what’s in the lesson.”

(Female 6-14)

Another teacher mentioned objectives as her role.

“To guide students and to achieve the objectives of the curriculum.”

(Female 6-14)

As we can sense from the teachers’ words that some teachers were aware of curriculum objectives and/or the educational values. However, some other teachers do not necessarily possess the professional knowledge needed to relate the content of certain objectives or benchmarks to appropriate teaching methods. The knowledge I am referring to here is the educational values knowledge and the pedagogical content knowledge.

Accordingly, it seemed that curriculum prescription equipped teachers with some pedagogical knowledge about teaching the English language. However, the teachers seem to have been transformed by this type of curriculum to teachers who only see their immediate environment instead of considering the whole teaching learning process. In this regard, McBer (2000) links being effective with teachers’ ability to utilize appropriate teaching skills to match their lessons, which is ‘pedagogical content knowledge’.

“More effective teachers make the most of their professional knowledge in two linked ways. One is the extent to which they deploy appropriate teaching skills consistently and effectively in the course of all their lessons – the sorts of teaching strategies and techniques that can be observed when they are at work in the classroom, and which underpin the national numeracy and literacy strategies. The other is the range and intensity of the professional characteristics they exhibit – ongoing patterns of behaviour which make them effective”.

(McBer, 2000)

Teachers cannot be entirely blamed for their lack of pedagogical content knowledge, because in addition to not being properly prepared to adapt and create their own lessons during their pre-service teacher education stage, the one-size-fit-all prescribed curriculum

exacerbated this situation. Teachers view the prescribed curriculum as a safeguard and therefore, do not dare to depart it and if they do so, this results in struggle, which ends up with inappropriate practice.

The analysis of the pedagogical content knowledge of the teachers revealed a correspondence between what they said in relation to the role of curriculum in making them who they are and the description of their teaching practice. They believed that curriculum gave them some general pedagogical knowledge by stating that it did play a positive role by giving them ideas about teaching. Additionally, the 'inadequacies' of the curriculum forced these teachers to pay more attention to their learners' needs and abilities; hence, they alter their teaching to meet these needs. The L2 teachers seem to have developed general pedagogical knowledge that relates to the management of the teaching strategies about classroom organisation and the methodology of teaching instead of developing the knowledge for the selection of the most appropriate teaching strategies, which match the content they intend to teach.

In a nutshell, teachers' professional knowledge particularly their pedagogical content knowledge and educational values do not appear to be fully developed regardless of their teaching experience. At a theoretical level, the teachers seemed to understand and believed in this type of knowledge. However, these teachers' behaviour in the classroom did not necessarily correspond with what they believed in. There seems to be a discrepancy between the teacher's beliefs about professional knowledge and their actual practice. This created a narrow type of vision which prohibited the teachers from seeing the whole picture of the learning-teaching process or, in other words, what needs to be achieved and how.

This section focussed on professional knowledge – the second component of TPI – and we now progress to the discussion of the next component, autonomy.

### 5.1.3 Teacher Autonomy

The participants' perceptions of teacher autonomy within the context of curriculum prescription were sought from both, their exact responses to the question about autonomy and through inferences from the whole interviews.

The issues arose from the data on autonomy were either in favour or against the role of curriculum prescription in supporting teacher autonomy. The male and female teachers with 15+ years of experience thought that the current curriculum supports the development of teacher autonomy, because of the variety it provides teachers with, such as opportunities to modify, adapt and add to their daily practice. They thought that their adaptation and modification of the curriculum contributed to feeling autonomous and that autonomy only comes with time and experience. However, both these sets of teachers agreed that the heavy content, the number of units and assessment procedures, the time needed to cover the curriculum created a burden and a restriction for their autonomy.

“Yes because autonomy can’t be taught following the teacher’s book but the teacher’s book may guide the teacher to give extra activities you can overcome the prescribed activity and if you have extra time more time you can give more.”

(Male 15+)

The perceptions of the younger female and male teachers with 6-14 years of experience on the role of curriculum to support teacher autonomy varied. Although most of the younger females thought that curriculum does not support teacher autonomy, since it provides everything to the teacher, they still thought that teachers needed to gain empowerment and manifest their professional identity. Likewise, the younger male teachers’ views varied on teacher autonomy; whilst one of them saw curriculum prescription as a source for serving teacher creativity and being vigorous, others thought that it restricted teacher creativity and therefore does not necessarily aid teacher autonomy because it guides and controls teacher work. It was fascinating to witness the interaction and the disagreement between the group members because this deepened the discussion on autonomy.

“Everything is there and you cannot it’s not very flexible for us but you can also at the end as I said again it’ our students’ needs and the things that are applicable for them you can adapt classes you can do things.”

(Female 6-14)

Generally speaking, all teachers appeared to be autonomous within the boundaries of the four classroom walls. Although curriculum is prescribed, nearly all teachers adapted, modified and added their own experiences and knowledge to their teaching practice. As this finding seems positive, the kind of modifications these teachers brought into their lessons are diverse as discussed in the previous point (5.1.2). The decisions teachers took were not only based on the fact of adaptation and not creation or real design of tasks,

but rather these decisions did not match with the content they intended to teach. This could be indicative of the fact that teachers were not allowed to create their own tasks but were asked to keep with the curriculum boundaries particularly with Teacher's Book instruction, only being allowed to modify it slightly.

To convey these boundaries or control over teacher work, the example below demonstrates a case of a teacher who created her own syllabus for a few weeks and received blame by authorities as expressed by one of the teachers.

198.	Sameera	I just want to add something one of the teachers in my school when she receive the students in grade 3 they don't know the alphabet letters so she decided for the whole month she just teach them the letter sounds and how to read and she has like attacked by everybody from the supervisors from the headmistress
199.	Me	Why?
200.	Sameera	Because she lost time three weeks
201.	Bashayer	She left the content
202.	Me	So this is an example of teachers are not autonomous
203.	Sameera	Yes because she was making outside activities not from the books
204.	Hadeel	Sometimes we feel that we need to stop it. Stop these two books and get my students aside and start something different they need then I can continue with them
205.	Nada	Sometimes you feel that

Table 5.2: Example of being autonomous (Female 6-14)

Authorities had a variation of views and attitudes on the issue of teacher autonomy within curriculum prescription. The authorities from curriculum thought that autonomy is available throughout this curriculum; however, it is limited to a certain level and develops with experience.

“We are not against but of course there are some borders which they cannot exceed which they need to stick to but at the same time we encourage teachers to be innovative to be autonomy and to think creatively.”

(Interview 2- Curriculum)

“Autonomy is still there every now and then within the semester itself or within the year the school year teachers are always asked to give some extra activities whenever there is possibility to do that ... Of course it's not like ... allowing



teachers to do whatever they can do to achieve the goals . . . but whenever there is a chance teachers can give or use whatever they can to support the curriculum

(Interview 1- Curriculum)

“I think the instructions in the Teacher’s Book are the sort of support or one of the support that is given to teachers besides like you know training courses the supervisory visits and the meetings and so on .. so I think I would see the instructions in the teacher’s book from that perspective. ..of course by time teachers get experience on the curriculum first and then when they come to understand the methodology, get confidence, deal with different levels of student, move from one stage to another then by default I think they would feel like they can do some decisions, like some shortcuts, some rearrangements reordering of activities you know and so on”.

(Interview 1: curriculum)

This exemplifies that curriculum authorities perceive teacher autonomy at the level of the availability of chances and within the adaption and modification of tasks. Other authorities’ views and attitudes on autonomy varied too. Two authorities from Supervision and Training thought that the current curriculum does not support teacher autonomy if implemented as it is, because of its nature of prescription and implicitness about autonomy for it not giving options to teachers to select from and not supporting teachers with strategies about how to become creative and autonomous.

“Of course not, to be honest with you not at all . . . because it does not help learners to be autonomous, then how can it help teachers to be autonomous something set up before telling them just follow this ok it does not say this is one method but if you think that your students will need another method you have the right to adapt your own. It doesn’t say it doesn’t really promote it. Autonomous teachers should be also guided but should be given freedom to try out their own methods should be given strategies also for how to be good teachers how to be creative teachers and so on.”

(Interview 4- Supervision)

“If they are sticking and fixed to those lessons I don’t think it’s helping them at . . . it is not helping at all . . . It’s like a cause and effect. It’s a two way! If experienced teachers follow it that will not help their autonomy . . . We need to limit this to experienced and highly motivated teachers . . . Nowadays all are calling for adaptation but there is no training or instructions on how to adapt in order to avoid dangerous adaptation, it is not official through the curriculum, no clear procedures on how and what to adapt, there needs to be like a workshop on teaching teachers regarding how to adapt.”

(Interview 5- Training)

Based on the above discussion, it appeared that authorities' perceptions on teacher autonomy were in accordance with the findings reached about teacher knowledge. The findings showed as stated earlier that some teachers even experienced teachers, found it challenging to bring together the content and their teaching strategies. This is an alarming situation for a centralised educational context like Oman, which bases its education on nationwide benchmarks. Hence, the key finding about being autonomous relates to being able to modify their teaching practice. This modification is to be based on strategic and systematic approaches in order to correspond the content – intended to be learned by students – and the teaching strategies to be implemented in order to achieve student learning. This supervisor expressed the importance of meeting outcomes by teachers when they want to adapt their lessons:

“ . . . they need to think of the outcomes and compare the methods in teacher's book with the ones from outside from training courses from articles and to bring all of these into practice and start analysing which methods of them are more appropriate, my own techniques which I brought from outside or the ones from teacher's book.”

(Interview 3- Supervision)

The findings highlighted some inconsistency between the views of the authorities from the MoE on teacher autonomy and how it needs to be achieved. Whilst the practitioner departments such as Supervision and Training, thought that curriculum does not necessarily support teacher autonomy because it is hidden in the curriculum documents and teachers are not supported on how to adapt and modify their lessons, the Curriculum department authorities thought that autonomy is encouraged by curriculum. The encouragement for autonomy the Curriculum authorities call for was limited to the level of giving extra teaching tasks during free time and weekends or at the school activity level and through extra-curricular activities as suggested in the Teacher's Book.

“As we are having in the system extra-curricular activities within the school or outside the school we find that even from experience that there are many teachers who are very creative in trying to suggest some activities or perform some activities in weekends, evening, encourage students to do something or their own even in summer time sometimes they might encourage students so . . . and that is very important I think for the students themselves

(Interview 1- Curriculum)

This view of Curriculum authorities on autonomy represents the philosophy of the prescribed curriculum. There was no emphasis on the term 'autonomy' neither in the curriculum framework document nor in the ministry policy documents. The MoE

documents were similar and focussed on setting the theoretical framework for the Basic Education system in general. The only reference to teachers was through the discussion of the learning and teaching strategies.

“Consequently, it is recommended that teachers should not limit themselves to one strategy, method, or technique, but diversify their teaching and use the various learning and teaching strategies.”

(Basic Education, 2001, p. 12)

“Teacher's Guide is a tremendous book marked with a variety of education strategies and modalities to improve the quality of learning and teaching, upgraded continuously”

(MoE, 2016)

The curriculum framework document does not seem to say much about teacher autonomy. Similar to the policy documents, it states all of the components of the Basic Education curriculum and only refers to teachers under the section of Teacher's Book.

“The Teacher's Book aims to provide full support for the teacher in planning their lessons for the semester. The curriculum introduction describes the aims of the curriculum and gives a rationale for the adopted approach to language teaching. The book also suggests ways of managing different types of activities and using the routines of classroom interaction as a context for language learning”.

“The Teacher's Book provides step-by-step notes for each unit, which help teachers create suitable environments for effective and enjoyable language learning.”

(Directorate General of Curriculum Development, p. 33)

Based on the above statements, it appears that the policy and curriculum documents state that the teaching strategies and methods act as suggestions and support for teachers. However, these documents do not specifically mention whether the step-to-step instructions are optional or not and neither, do they mention teacher autonomy directly. Generally, I think that these key documents provide less information on teachers whose practice can either champion or defeat the implementation of the whole reform and the curriculum they teach.

A final comment could be on the chasm in the comprehension of teacher autonomy between the different parties involved in the Omani educational system. Although some teachers were motivated and keen on becoming autonomous with their teaching, some older males together with the authorities from Curriculum thought that autonomy only

comes with time and that new teachers cannot be called autonomous because education is centralised nationwide. Additionally, authorities and the policy documents viewed teacher autonomy in relation to the achievement of certain activities. However, at the same time, both the curriculum authorities and policy documents saw the instructions given to teachers in the Teacher's Book as suggestions only, something that led to a complicated situation. Some other authorities who work closely with teachers have brought up this complicated situation and their view corresponded with the teachers practice analysed previously. This key finding is about the call for modification and adaptation of the teaching methods without any training or guidance to the teachers neither during their pre-service teacher education nor in their in-service training. This situation resulted in a mismatch between teachers' beliefs about what autonomy is and their actual practice in the classroom. The mismatch in the comprehension of autonomy by the teachers resulted in them not being able to use appropriate teaching strategies to teach certain content and adhering to the Teacher's Book instructions.

Having described autonomy, the third component of TPI, in the next section I will move onto the last component, 'teacher commitment', represented by their roles and responsibilities using the prescribed curriculum.

#### 5.1.4 Teacher Commitment

This section considered the level of commitment that participant teachers expressed in relation to their job represented by the way they viewed their roles and the kind of responsibilities expected of them within a context of a prescribed curriculum. Teacher role and responsibility will be analysed based on the findings from the three sources of data collection methods implemented in this research.

##### **Role**

Role refers to the position teachers assume to have or assign to them in their schools based on the prescribed curriculum they teach. Given a prescribed curriculum that provides the details about what to teach, how to teach and how to assess, one would expect teachers to show some dissatisfaction about the role expected of them in such a

context, because of being highly controlled; something that may not allow room for the utilisation of teacher expertise. However, and surprisingly, the findings from the discussions with the participant teachers demonstrated that all teachers were quite positive about their role using this curriculum. The key role that nearly all teachers assigned to themselves was the “facilitator” role. According to the linguistic definition given by Cambridge Dictionary, a facilitator is someone who helps another person or organisation to do things easily and helps them find answers to problems through discussions and suggestions on how to do things. The facilitator role that the participant teachers demonstrated involves the simplification of their teaching and supporting the development of learners’ academic skills and their morality. Whilst the female teachers focussed their role on the facilitation of their teaching, their male colleagues expressed that their role was to facilitate their student learning and morality development. This links the participant teachers’ perceptions of their roles and responsibilities to their beliefs and values. The facilitator roles expressed by the participant teachers are discussed below.

### A Facilitator of Teaching

The female teachers viewed their role as facilitators as represented by being modifiers of the prescribed curriculum. For example, they perceived their role as following the guidelines and choosing the best tasks from the curriculum to give to their learners in order to help them achieve the expected objectives. The female teachers expressed that achievement of the facilitator role was dependent on the availability of chances and time during the school day. This suggests that because the curriculum is dense, accordingly, teachers rely on the availability of opportunities to add to what they do and to facilitate their teaching. The selection of tasks represented the kind of decisions teachers took to facilitate their teaching, such as skipping some unnecessary tasks according to their evaluations of these tasks in order to teach the most important ones. The quotes below reflect this point,

“Sometimes we delay some tasks, we skip for example . . . we have lots of songs we have lots of activities games and also our curriculum is very tough we have 75 lessons in one semester so we don’t get time to finish so we should focus on the most important things to do first.”

(Female 15+)

Me	2. How do you see your role using this type of curriculum? Why?
Hadeel	To choose the best way to teach it
Me	Does it give you the chance to choose the best way to teach it ?
Hadeel	the best way you can
Fatima	By following the guides
Me	How? How to choose the best way to teach it?
Nada	To be selective to choose what is appropriate for our students needs and levels
Me	Does this curriculum allow you? To be selective?
Nada	Somehow whenever we see we have a lesson with few steps
Sameera	We find a chance
Nada	To create for our students
Me	So you see your role as selecting or choosing the best ways to teach your students selecting being selective
Bashayer	Skipping some steps that we feel they will not gain from them according to our time like sometimes games some games not that much very important some steps

Table 5.3: Teacher role (Female 6-14)

Being a facilitator of their teaching appeared to be based on the curriculum being content-heavy and overburdening on the teachers' beliefs and others expectations of them to take certain actions in order to achieve the expected outcomes of the curriculum. This indicates a high level of commitment from the female teachers towards 'teaching the curriculum' not the 'facilitation of the learning-teaching processes' unfortunately. This manifested in the examples provided by the teachers, such as skipping some of the tasks and teaching only the most important ones based on their own evaluation of these tasks. This also raised the issue of teacher concern about curriculum coverage. It is noteworthy that teachers indicated the omission of games from their daily practice, which might mean that either curriculum has plenty of games and less of serious activities or these teachers do not appreciate games as learning strategies. Based on my own knowledge of the curriculum as a member of the department, games represent teaching strategies and support learning.

In addition to viewing their roles as facilitators of their teaching, the L2 teachers also viewed their role as facilitators of their students' learning.

### A Facilitator of Student Learning

Although the female teachers heavily considered the facilitation of teaching as their role, some other females – although immersed into their teaching – regarded their role of being facilitators of their students' learning of the English language.

Wurood	To guide students and to achieve the objectives of the curriculum
Me	What else? How do you see your role?
Nada	Somehow a modifier
Nahla	Sometimes creative
Sameera	Also being responsible of achieving it and for students
Nada	Because they will be assesses and you will be blamed
Sameera	Or thanked
Bashayer	And we don't want to feel guilty or blamed
Fatima	Also from university we got something sometimes we have to feel that everything is done we don't want to leave a subject and there's something missing or something which is not covered we have to cover everything sometimes myself I sacrifice classes for things which are not in the curriculum
Bashayer	So we are taking extra lessons

Table 5.4: Example of facilitator role (Female 6-14)

Based on the above discussion, we can infer that the females perceived their role as being responsible for their learners' achievement of curriculum outcomes. The teachers appear to facilitate their teaching for learner academic success. The teachers also mentioned that they do so, in order to avoid being blamed about not achieving the goals or if they do, they expect praise. They also linked the achievement of goals with their emotions and the feeling of guilt for not achieving or not doing what they are expected to do. This might refer to the self-imposed expectations or the expectations of others of teachers' role. This goes back to the societal expectations, the identity theory and the concept of roles, which means that people's roles in a society are described based on how others see them and how they see themselves. Tickle (2000), concluded that what teachers see as important in their professional lives is influenced by the expectations of

others of them, their past experiences and the conceptions of teacher image, which is formed by others as an accepted image of a teacher. This means that the teachers' views of their role as facilitators of student learning is linked to their personal traits and other societal expectations of them or could be an impact of the prescribed curriculum on their professional identity.

Even though the female teachers viewed their role as facilitators of their teaching and therefore ensuring their learners' academic success, this does not mean that the male teachers neglected their teaching. In this regard, this male teacher commented on the new ideas he brought into his teaching for his learners:

“I am a facilitator as a guide in the class . . . Carry the new ideas for the pupils.”

(Male 15+)

The male teachers' interpretations of their role were attentive towards the facilitation of student learning. They defined their role as being facilitators for learner academic and morality (the moral issue will be discussed in the next point to allow space for the discussion of the academic role of the males). In this regard, the older male teachers viewed their role as being facilitators, inspirational, monitors and guides. The following discussion in Table 5.5 exemplifies this point.

Omar	Our role is monitors and facilitators
Dan	Monitor facilitator guide trainer source of inspiration and an evaluator and sometimes a counsellor
Nasir	I think I agree with them this is our role but some pupils may give you a surprise when they you know for example if you are teaching a certain point so a pupil would ask you does this point come in the last year exam so some pupils are learning the subject only for exam so they always ask us what to do in the exam and they don't like to be taught the whole curriculum
Me	So students may change your role?
Nasir	No they always ask for that but we don't obey them
Me	Ok, Faris? Keeping quiet?
Faris	As Mr Omar said I am a facilitator as a guide in the class Carry the new ideas for the pupils

Table 5.5: Teacher roles (Male 15+)



The Basic Education theoretical framework view of the teacher role concurs with the male teachers' views as being inspirational, a guide, a monitor and a facilitator for their learners. It is fascinating to see these teachers using the exact terms as the policy documents.

“The traditional role of the teacher in imparting knowledge is no longer valid. The teacher is a designer of educational experiences. She is a guide, a coach, and a facilitator. The teacher accurately diagnoses the strengths and weaknesses of the learners and provides a scaffold for them to keep moving ahead in their development.”

(Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 15-16)

This congruence between the views of most of the male teachers and the curriculum policy document is fascinating, because it indicates the teachers' awareness of the role expected of them by the ministry. This awareness might have derived from the commitment of these teachers to familiarise themselves with the Omani educational policy especially that they are all expatriate teachers. It is also interesting and surprising to see this group of teachers' views about their roles resemble the policy documents but not with the authorities' views.

The authorities' perceptions of teacher role using the prescribed curriculum were concentrated on two key areas; these were teachers' years of experience and adherence to the Teacher's Book instructions. Most of the authorities believed that teachers' role using the prescribed curriculum differs according to their years of experience. They think that new teachers' role is very limited to following the instructions given by the curriculum until they get some experience and only experienced teachers can slightly modify their teaching to suit the circumstances of their classrooms. These authorities based their views on their personal experiences when they were teachers using a prescribed curriculum.

“At the beginning of my career I think my role was very limited to planning.....to know about how to give instruction to that task or this task and not really to create or to plan a different lesson from the one which is given to me in the teacher's book .....Practically, why should I search for other ways, I thought at the time that perfect people wrote it. So I stick to it that time, I followed all the steps .....Only in the second time of teaching the same lessons I started to think .... For example the teddy bear jigsaw. I was a facilitator more, a person who is looking for the human beings needs in my class.....I became a decision maker about the needs of my students in the classes I teach.”

(Interview 5: Training)

“Well when I talk about myself I followed it when I thought that it was useful and help me to reach the objectives for the different levels for the students but when I come to a stage when I feel that it isn’t helping to reach then I adapt I tried all new ways with the students I tried to create my own teaching materials my steps so we tried to add something to inject some new methods that can help those students.”

(Interview 4: Supervision)

However, this supervisor thought that curriculum prescription does not encourage teacher creativity or innovation and teacher role becomes a follower and knowledge transmitter.

“Just to follow, they are following the steps there, guided by those steps, I don’t think it encourages really .. innovation and encourages teachers to be creative, they are just following, especially that they believe that content is just a matter of knowledge.”

(Interview 4: Supervision)

I think the views the three authorities have for the current prescribed curriculum implemented by all schools at different levels entail some elements of dissatisfaction. This is evident from their mention of interference, density of curriculum, lack of certain skills such as writing in certain levels and the gap between assessment and curriculum. Most of these issues were brought up by the teachers and were mentioned earlier in this chapter.

The key conclusion from the authorities’ words is about teacher obligation to follow the curriculum as it is when they are new, but with time teachers would feel the need to use their experiences. This view of the authorities was translated in the teachers’ practice and the kind of modifications teachers strive to do to the curriculum.

As being a facilitator of teaching and student learning appeared to be identified as a role by most of the male and female teachers, the development of learner morality seemed to be the concern of male teachers only.

#### A Facilitator of Learner Morality

The male teachers observed their roles to being akin to friends, counsellors, evaluators for their learners’ discipline and academic motivators. The roles mentioned by the male teachers appeared to be ‘social’, ‘emotional’, and aimed towards the development of ‘learner morality’. They indicated that they work on the development of their learners’ attitudes and behaviour as well as their academic learning. From a common knowledge

about boys' schools in Oman and maybe in many parts of the world, boys need constant alerts in relation to their behaviour. This might explain why only male teachers have identified these roles and linked socialisation to their roles.

Socialisation and emotions have been linked with teacher identity in previous research (Golombek and Johnson, 2004; Flores and Day, 2006; Reis, 2015). However, socialisation in previous research has been linked with teachers' prior experiences as school learners and teacher pre-service teacher education. The findings from my research link socialisation to teacher roles. I discovered that teachers' social experiences and emotions urged them to assign certain roles to themselves. These roles do not necessarily link with the curriculum they teach because they seem to be very social and emotional oriented. Goffman (1959) views identity as the roles one takes in a society. The roles that these teachers took depended on the contexts they belonged to and as to how they viewed themselves professionally. For example, this male teacher used modality (Trent, 2015) represented by the word "should" to affirm his view and express necessity of what he says. He links his views to the social expectations of him as a teacher as he mentions his role being an Omani citizen who should contribute to the development of the country.

"It is our role we are a teachers ok and the teacher should be like that ok he should be like friendly with the student he should communicate with the student he should be a person like that because otherwise he is not a teacher if he will do other things.....we have to be like that we are Omani citizens we have to do our best to have the best person of teacher."

(Male 6-14)

To sum up, it seems that the roles teachers assigned to themselves are effected by others expectations of them as teachers and how others see them in a society as well as their own views about their professional identity. This finding coincides with previous research such as Goodson and Cole (1994) and Connelly et al (1999).

Furthermore, the term facilitator was highly recognised as a role expected of teachers by both the policy documents and the teachers themselves. However, authorities linked teachers' role to the prescribed curriculum and to teacher experience. To relate the facilitator role of the teacher to the curriculum types mentioned in chapter three of this thesis, we can see the discrepancy between teacher roles and curriculum type. The prescribed curriculum belongs to the product-based model, yet it calls for learner-centred curriculum, which ideally is part of the process-based model. Moreover, if we accept that

the MoE tries to keep its educational system up to date and adopts the learner-centred approach (which is a process-based model) into its curriculum, then, this does not match with its prescription of curriculum. In the process-based curriculum teacher and learner 'role' and 'autonomy' are given precedence, appreciated and teacher experience becomes critical and crucial.

This section discussed teachers' roles as perceived by the teachers themselves, authorities and policy documents, and as such, it becomes necessary to question the participant views on their responsibilities.

## **Responsibility**

When asked to describe their responsibility or the kind of tasks teachers undertake to achieve the facilitator role they assigned to themselves, most of their responsibilities focussed on their learners with a lip service being paid to their own professional development. However, authorities thought that teacher responsibility lies in (1) facilitating student learning, (2) in the teaching-learning process and (3) in the development of themselves professionally with some reference to work ethics. Thus, we can notice some similarity between the views of both teachers and authorities regarding the responsibilities of teachers using a prescribed curriculum.

The responsibility for learner development was highly discussed by both teachers and authorities. The discussion on this part of teacher responsibility could be divided up into two categories. These are the facilitation of learner academic knowledge and skills as mentioned by both authorities and teachers and the facilitation of learner social skills, behaviour, and attitudes (morality) that was brought up mainly by the male teachers.

## **Development of Learners**

The teachers showed a great level of responsibility towards the development of their learners' academic skills and knowledge in order to achieve the expected aims of the curriculum. The teachers said that they achieved this by checking learners' work, developing their skills, vocabulary, grammar and comprehension levels. Additionally, the

teachers' responsibilities involved helping learners become confident and independent towards their own learning, preparing them to move from one level to another by getting sufficient knowledge from their curriculum and by making their teaching interesting and easy. The extracts below are from the teachers' utterances that exemplify the kind of responsibility they feel towards being L2 teachers.

“To prepare students to be ready to move from one level to another by gaining sufficient knowledge from the curriculum that they learn.”

(Female 6-14)

Fatima	Students should leave this stage with specific qualifications to make sure that I don't leave it for the next step for that poor teacher waiting for
Nada	To struggle
Fatima	Yeah to struggle with them yeah I have to do my job accurately sometimes coming with things I don't leave her with things should have been done already for example grade 10, cycle one

Table 5.6: Teacher responsibilities (Female 6-14)

Authorities also considered the facilitation of student learning as a key responsibility of the L2 teacher. The authorities from curriculum and supervision emphasized teacher responsibility to facilitate student learning and help students achieve better through the employment of a learner-centred approach as mentioned by the supervisor.

“Their main task is what they do actually in class so I wouldn't want to think when I think of what teachers should be doing of course in terms of responsibilities I won't go outside of classrooms. So the main responsibility for them is to support students with teaching of course and also the other thing is to follow the development of the students this is very important this is related to teaching to learning and assessment and students' performance as well”.

(Interview 1: Curriculum)

“Ok change the role instead of making their classes teacher centred to student learner centred which means everything should be done by the learners not the teacher take the dominant role my role as a teacher to guide them to monitor their role as a facilitator plus ... guiding them to do everything .....To make sure I have achieved my goals.”

(Interview 3: Supervision)

Teacher commitment towards their work was examined by previous research as an indicator of teacher identity (Carrinus et al, 2011), as a result of formal teacher education programmes (Darling-Hammond et al, 2002; Schepens et al, 2009) and as the risks of educational policies on commitment and quality of teachers (Van Veen et al, 2005). However, the kind of commitment different gender teachers have for their learners in a curriculum prescription context is unique to the current research.

Whilst the female teachers and authorities emphasized the development and facilitation of learner academic skills and knowledge as the main responsibility of L2 teachers, the male teachers demonstrated more commitment towards learner behaviour and attitudes. For example, this teacher puts it as,

“Yeah for me I personally feel that goal setting I personally feel that my responsibility is to give them more human values and develop their character with integrity, so goal setting, developing their character with human values with integrity and overall whole self-development this is my responsibility being a teacher”

(Male 15+)

Although in reality this seems to be the job of any teacher, surprisingly, the authorities did not explicitly mention building learner morality. Some authorities mentioned the process of facilitating teaching and learning as a responsibility of a teacher above anything else.

“Responsible I mean that commitment to this job is important. To fulfil all the issues related to your job in terms of preparing your students and teaching, writing your lesson plans, marking , observing student progress reporting their progress to be responsible for your students, your teaching and yourself as a teacher professional development and the admin issues as well . Responsible for everything related to your job.”

(Interview 2: Curriculum)

“I think the role of any teacher is to facilitate learning this is the number one the core what do you say the main thing if I am facilitating learner I am doing lots of things being autonomous training them learning to learn I will do everything understanding your learners..... Understanding your learners styles and personal issues.....a person who rewards them.....their levels... what encourages them.....see the process of learning and itself... there are outcomes... assessment procedures .....”

(Interview 5: Training)

“Facilitator I mean doing your best trying hard to provide student with what they need diagnose any problems weakness points try to help them support them scaffold them use different technology techniques strategies teaching methods

extra in order to make it clear for them to reach that path or the required knowledge in English language competency”

(Interview 2: Curriculum)

A close look at the above quotations from Curriculum shows the implicit consideration of the development of learners as a whole, while the quotation from the training specialist referred to this as “personal issues”. The policy document referred to this issue as attending to learner needs in a holistic manner.

“All of this means that the entire curriculum, and its complete implementation, is learner-centred. Teachers attend to the common needs of learners as well as their individual needs, in a holistic manner that encompasses their physical, affective, social, and intellectual development. This is especially true for the first cycle of Basic Education. In the second cycle, learners continue their growth and development and gradually become socialised into the demands of society and organised social life.”

(Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 13)

Generally, the teachers particularly the males, worked on developing their learner personalities and character. They said that this responsibility comes before teaching the curriculum. The reasons they gave for this commitment derived from their personal-self and emotions towards their learners.

Emotions have been put at the heart of teacher’s work as a motive for their daily practice particularly regarding the relationship with their learners (Hargreaves, 1998, 2001). Teacher emotions were found to derive from teachers’ relationship with their learners (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011), and these emotions could inform teachers’ understandings of their practice (Golombek 1998; Benesch, 2013). This highlights the significant role of emotions in the development of TPI and its influence on the teachers’ practice.

The teachers’ emotions and personal-self influenced their professional identity and caused them to act in a fatherly or an older sibling way. It also links to their religious values, which they highlighted as well.

“Also responsible of improving students’ skills all skills and behaviour also.”

(Female 6-14)

“So I was discussing with them with my students. This is not good we are Muslims so the girls should go with her mahram\*\*.”

(Female 15+)

Moreover, it seems that the male teachers cared about their learners' behaviour and attitudes more than the female teachers did. This finding demonstrates the social and emotional aspect of TPI. This means that the harmony between the social and emotional identity of the teachers particularly the males has influenced positively on their practice manifested by their commitment to the development of their learner's character. Most of the male teachers believed that it is their responsibility to ensure their learners' possession of values, good manners and human integrity. For example, regarding this, the following teacher said:

"Yes it's my first responsibility to ensure values and good manners before all then I come to teaching so sometimes in my lessons you can find 2 or 3 minutes we interrupt the lesson and do something else. . . Because I think that it is the role of the teacher for example when a prayer call comes and I am in class I stop teaching until it finishes and then I ask them to repeat the douaa\* because it is my role to teach them how to be good citizens."

(Male 15+)

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This teacher said that he worked towards developing his learners' personalities by giving them values and keeping their enthusiasm level up through encouragement.

"So developing their personality not only in part of teaching apart from teaching giving them as you say building up their values and keeping up their enthusiasm because you should never give up in life that's the thing which I tell them every day maybe you got less marks sometimes when I go to the class they are upset after this physics exam or maths exam so I just give them 5 minutes to relax and this and then I say this is not the end of the world."

(Male 15+)

This teacher added that he set goals for his learners and offered suggestions and advice to them.

"Yeah for me I personally feel that goal setting goal setting I personally feel that my responsibility is to give them more human values and develop their character with integrity, so goal setting, developing their character with human values with integrity and overall whole self-development this is my responsibility being a teacher."

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<sup>2</sup> \* Say a prayer



(Male 15+)

This male teacher commented on his control of students' behaviour and actions, he communicated with them to help them become good citizens.

“To me I agree with Mr Faris because the teacher inside the class may see some things which pupils can do and these things can't be done in front of their parents at all so beside teaching we have to control their actions their so our responsibility is not to teach a curriculum but to control their action to control their behaviour yes to be a good citizen.”

(Male 15+)

As the development of students' learning represented by their academic skills and social behaviour was considered to be the main responsibility of the L2 teachers, teacher professional development appears to be the responsibility of the teacher as well.

### Professional Development

According to some teachers and authorities, teacher professional development is one of the responsibilities of L2 teachers themselves. They linked teacher professional development to various tasks. For example, this Curriculum authority linked it to being a source of knowledge for their learners:

“Source of knowledge you need to be up to date with the latest trends in English language teaching and other related issues like technology, to be creative and the primary source of knowledge.”

(Interview 2: Curriculum)

The training specialist linked teacher professional development to being a model for learners about learning and teaching of the English language.

“Being a model in the classroom in terms of learning and teaching the language.”

(Interview 5: Training)

Moreover, this supervisor and some female teachers linked professional development to updating themselves by attending different academic events. In this regard, they said,

“To upgrade themselves, extend their knowledge improve themselves professionally”

(Interview 3: Supervision)

Wurood	Update myself as a teacher to know more things about teaching in the world for example new strategies , teaching
Nahla	make workshops
Bashayer	Conference

Table 5.7: Teacher professional development (Female 6-14)

In addition to the development of learners and teacher professional development, adherence to work ethics was also considered as a responsibility of L2 teachers.

#### Adherence to Work Ethics

The reference to work ethics was surprising to me, as I did not expect authorities to bring this issue up as to being one of teacher responsibilities, because work ethics is not yet explicitly given much attention by practitioners in Oman with regards education and maybe in other fields too. The two authorities from supervision who belonged to the same work place raised up the issue of adherence to work ethics.

“They should believe in work ethics, what are my duties and my rights and work according to that because some people unfortunately due to their training they started to break the rules. They only teach. Teaching is not everything it’s about guiding learners showing them the right way it’s not spoon-feeding”.

“Believe in themselves they are teachers they should do their work in the right way.”

(Interview 3: Supervision)

“They have to do their job properly as teachers I mean there are guidelines.....They have to take the responsibility of all learners not only specific students. All students should be taught in a fair way regardless of their level regardless of their races wherever they come from they have to teach all the students”.

“Follow the proper assessment in order to be fair ..... Strategies and follow the same documents or criteria”.

(Interview 4: Supervision)

The reference to ethics by supervision authorities was significant especially that both of them belonged to the same department. This might indicate that there was some talk regarding work ethics within this department. In addition, this brings up a quite neglected issue in relation to teacher training. The importance of teacher compliance to work ethics in teacher education and training programmes, such as being fair to learners and teaching and assessing them equally. Although these ethical considerations are crucial, they are still not being emphasised explicitly in teacher education programmes and trainings. Moreover, exposure to work ethics would act as a revelation for teachers about the role of teaching, which is not only about the coverage of curriculum rather it is about developing learners as a whole too. Currently, these concepts are present within teacher education and training programmes but are not presented explicitly under work ethics.

To sum up, teacher commitment was represented by their roles and responsibilities using the prescribed curriculum, related to being facilitators of student academic learning and morality development. The teachers translated the facilitator role into certain tasks or responsibilities and the development of learners was the main responsibility expected of L2 teachers. This expectation was both societal and self-imposed. This finding demonstrates the strong academic relationship the teachers have with their learners which is translated into certain roles and responsibilities. Surprisingly, the findings highlighted a gender difference between the male and female teachers in favour of the male teacher commitment towards the development of learners' behaviour and morality. The findings also emphasised the female teachers' immersion into their daily practice based on their prioritisation of the facilitation of their teaching and the development of learner academic skills. This finding harmonised with the finding about female teacher immersion into their work in point 5.1.1 and 5.1.2.

This section discussed the findings reached in relation to the four components of TPI. The discussion included how teachers viewed themselves in relation to their professional identity and their beliefs about the curriculum they teach. The discussion also considered the findings about teacher professional knowledge, autonomy and commitment. The next section in this chapter presents the factors that influence the development of TPI.

## 5.2 Factors Influencing TPI

Since the formation and development of TPI is fundamentally a social process that is intertwined with academic input, it was inevitable to ask the participant teachers about the reasons that stand behind the images they held for themselves in order to discover the factors that influence L2 non-native TPI. The teachers' responses revealed various reasons that underpinned their self-image. For example, their passion for teaching was linked to their childhood experiences of role model teachers and to their beliefs and personality traits or qualities.

Based on the teachers' responses, it appeared that the reasons behind their professional identity related to some internal and external reasons. This finding is in line with previous research on TPI (Flores and Day, 2006; Beijaard et al, 2000 and 2004; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Izadinia 2012). This section explains these reasons in detail providing examples from teachers' exact words.

### 5.2.1 Internal Factors

The findings revealed two internal factors that underpin teacher-image and therefore their professional identity. These were the teachers' beliefs and values as well as their personality traits.

#### **Beliefs and Values**

The beliefs and values spectrum of the participant L2 teachers concentrated on their role as teachers and the whole concept of becoming an L2 teacher; which meant care about learners and concern about their teaching. These beliefs about care and being concerned were very strong that they became central and therefore informed or guided the teachers' practice, as they have overwhelmed the teachers to the level of portraying their self-image with descriptions related to their beliefs and values. For example, these two teachers said:

"It's an internal thing, we feel that this is our role."  
(Male 6-14)

"..what I have in my head.. my principles."

(Male 15+)

The beliefs, values and attitudes that these teachers held about students doing well in school particularly in the English language classroom, formed some kind of aim for them that they worked hard towards its achievement. Nias (1989) observed a quite similar finding in relation to the core values of teachers that formed as purposes for them and informed their teaching. In addition, this finding relates to the argument about teachers' beliefs guiding their practice (Borg, 2003; 2006). Thus, it appears that the L2 teachers' practice was led by their beliefs and values about how teachers should act. This finding also relates to self-imposed and others expectations of teachers (Connelly et al., 1999; Goodson and Cole, 1994). For example, this male teacher expressed what is expected of being a teacher,

“Actually everyone believe my believes is that by logic you cannot leave someone like that so it's for example leaving someone in the situation so the result would be nothing so you have achieved nothing. The purpose of teaching is to teach those who needs you who needs caring.”

(Male 6-14)

The quote below explains how strong and core teachers' beliefs can become and the way they influence their practice in the classroom. This teacher explains that in front of visitors he follows the prescribed curriculum, however, whenever he is by himself in the classroom, his teaching goes back to reflect the way he was taught in his childhood and not as what the curriculum asks him to do.

“some we follow it especially in front of our visitors because some of them keep looking at the teacher's book and waiting for the teacher if he is following or no but when I am alone I teach as I am taught”

(Male 15+)

This relates to the identity theory by Mead (1934) as their core beliefs and values about learners and teaching or their “Me” was strong and dominant.

Besides their beliefs, the teachers identified their personalities as another reason for being who they are or for the professional identity, they held.

## Personality Traits

Some teachers claimed that their personality traits such as being kind, caring, supportive and responsible were represented in their desire to do their best and work hard to achieve their goals regarding their learner success and teaching development. For example, this male teacher stated,

“And also sometimes relating also to our personality some teachers are taking care more about the things not just students actually about everything they do it.”

(Male 6-14)

These female teachers related what they do for their learners and for their teaching to certain personal qualities or traits such as being helpful and responsible,

“Also first of all feeling responsibility of course we want our students to be better than ok.”

(Female 6-14)

“We like to help to help others yeah we are helpful.”

(Female 15+)

This male teacher justified his professional identity by being a person with leadership skills and qualities such as guidance and training of his learners,

“I feel that if a person gets motivated he himself can take decisions about their what he want to be in the future , so as being a teacher I can guide him whatever possible to English language to structure language through progressing development and I can train him to achieve what he intended to gain in the future.”

(Male 15+)

Based on the above quotations from the teachers, we can sense that their character or personality traits influenced their practice. The teachers felt responsible for their learners and were concerned about their teaching because of their personality traits of being kind, helpful, supportive, and responsible. Schepens et al (2009) discovered that teachers' personal traits and demographics are crucial to the formation of their professional identity. However, the findings from this research emphasized that teacher personality traits are crucial not only during the formation stage of their professional identity, but are necessary for its development. The concept of “born to be a teacher” as stated by Schepens et al

(2009), forms a critical indicator of TPI and was symbolised by teachers' personality traits particularly the ones that relate to teaching and learning.

Besides the internal factors that influenced TPI such as their beliefs and values about who a teacher is and their personality traits, this research discovered that certain external factors could also contribute to the process involved in TPI development.

### 5.2.2 External Factors

The other set of reasons that stood behind the image the English language teachers held for themselves related to the contexts that surrounded them or are still surrounding them. These external factors are discussed below.

#### **Society, Culture and Religion**

The social and cultural reasons represented by teachers' disposition of being the eldest child at home. In the Arabic culture, the eldest children in the family are the ones expected to take more responsibility towards the family than their younger siblings would. About this, one teacher said:

“.....even in our families. We are the first so maybe they depend on us . . . .”

(Female 15+)

Another social reason relates to the sentimental relationship expressed by the teachers towards their learners, which seemed like a family member or a friend. For example, acting as a mother, a father or a big sibling,

“ . . . I am friendly with students like a mum . . . .”

(Interview: Female 15+)

“.....in the beginning of every year talking friendly with my students that you are my brothers . . . .”

(Male 6-14)

This teacher mentioned having members of the family with learning difficulties and therefore, he expressed sentiments towards his learners, which seemed like an older sibling:

“.....in fact I have a brother who is not so good in school and he is in college now ... I feel very bad regarding him in grades 11 and 12 no one helped him no one cares about him at school at that time in fact he faced a lot of difficulties.”

(Male 6-14)

Two of the male teachers with 15+ years of experience expressed professional integrity towards being a teacher by being a Muslim L2 teacher. They stated:

“ . . . honesty towards my job. Of course it is my religion that made me like this.”

(Interview: Male 15+)

“Today I am the teacher who is here to teach pupils . . . it’s our job and no one watches us but Allah . . . so this why”

(Male 15+)

These findings indicate that the teachers’ social and religious identity influenced their professional identity and therefore impacted on their practice at school. This is because identity is a social activity and was affected by the surrounding contexts that teachers encounter during their career lifespan (Erikson, 1968; Beijarrd et al, 2004).

It appears that the social, religious and cultural identities such as their position in the family, integrity, family circumstances and taking social roles towards learners influenced the teachers’ practice. This finding is similar to findings of previous research, which mentioned the impact of teachers’ personal lives and social contexts on their professional identity such as Flores and Day (2006) and Rodgers and Scott (2008).

In addition to the social, religious and cultural reasons, teachers also indicated their prior experiences as another external factor for the description they assigned to themselves.

### **Prior Experiences**

Another reason that underlies the description of the self-image of the L2 teachers relates to their prior experiences when they were learners themselves either in schools or in



higher education institutions. The prior experiences or the apprenticeship of observation as coined by Lortie (1975) had a big impact on the teachers' professional identity and on their teaching practice. Interestingly, some male teachers mentioned the impact of pre-service teacher education programmes on them. For example, they said:

“.....first of all when I was studying at . . . university there was a doctor a professor and ...he was telling us always and reminding us that please . . . when you became a teacher please try your best don't use the stick use any other way . . .”

(Male 6-14)

“. . . when I was a university student in my last year so my teacher trainer urged me to give the best . . . always and something else he told me or he tried to inspired me, to learn from my students also.”

(Male 15+)

It is interesting to recognise the role of pre-service teacher education programmes and tutors in shaping TPI. This provides some evidence of the impact of pre-service teacher education programmes and educators on the formation of TPI. The two male teachers who mentioned their university education were the only people in their groups to say so. There was no support from other participants on this issue, as one would expect in focus groups that participants' views might influence each other. However, this did not happen when these two teachers mentioned their pre-service teacher education experiences.

Although, many teachers did not consider their pre-service teacher education as a reason for shaping their professional identity, most of them went back in time to their childhood and brought up their experiences as schoolchildren and the role of this past in shaping their professional identity.

Unlike the pre-service teacher education, all groups except for females with 6-14 years of experience brought up the role of teachers' prior experiences as schoolchildren in the development of their professional identity. In these groups particularly in the male groups, more than one person mentioned the positive past experiences of their childhood teachers, who provided good role models for them through their encouragement to them and who were the reasons behind the teachers' decisions to become L2 teachers from earlier ages.

“What made me become an honest person is my earlier teacher who taught me..... they were very hard worker as Mr Faris say my old teacher who taught me

their effort to taught me to teach me so this is I learned from it and when I decided to be a teacher of English I decided to be the same copy of my teacher.”

(Male 15+)

“I was inspired by my class teacher who taught me in class one ... yeah she was a British lady and I had in my mind in that level that I wanted to be an English teacher.”

(Male 15+)

This teacher linked his honesty towards his work as a teacher with his appreciation of his childhood teacher and said,

“yeah I first saw my English teacher I was in grade one prep in .....we start learning English in grade 1 prep so I was fond of the way he stands in front of the class ....the way he starts his board from the left all the teachers start from right to left only this teacher from left so I was I was fond of him and I went straight on and asked him was very happy..... I want to become a teacher of English”

(Male 15+)

The negative experiences of childhood teachers were mentioned as being the reason behind the teachers’ care about their learners, integrity and concern for teaching.

“I get this problem when I was young so I can help them in this problems for example in the language itself.”

(Female 15+)

“.....It’s happened to us before, sometimes because of our culture we are shy a bit and we had teachers who encourage us to do better.”

(Male 6-14)

Based on the above quotations, it was evident that the older generation of teachers mentioned their childhood teachers and talked about their attachment to the English language and their desire to become L2 teachers. The other prior experiences given were previous teacher support that they received when they were learners. Bullough (1997) cited in Flores and Day (2006) found that prior experiences and beliefs are central to becoming a teacher. This finding reflects that childhood experiences play a crucial role in shaping TPI (Lortie, 1975; Samuel and Stephens, 2000) together with other factors that related to classroom contexts and school environment.

As well as the social, cultural, religious and prior experiences factors that influenced TPI, learners' needs and school environment also influenced their professional identity.

### **Learner Needs and School Environment**

The teachers linked their care about their learners' levels, motivation, success, future and development to their understanding of their learners' needs and expectations. Thus, learner needs and the school in which teacher work seemed to have played a role in the development of their professional identity. This female teacher expressed the need to develop her learners' knowledge,

"I care about my children to improve their knowledge"

(Interview: Female 15+)

Similarly, this male teacher mentioned his design of supportive tasks,

"Because I feel students need some supportive tasks supportive ideas that's why I need to plan the task."

(Male 6-14)

This teacher explained that understanding learner character represented the learners' needs.

"And the students' personality change they are not like before just those children are more active and more experienced they know everything they know more than us."

(Female 6-14)

Teachers seemed to be responding to their learners' needs and considering themselves responsible for their success and development. This links to teacher responsibility and the expectations teachers set for themselves or the ones that others set for them. For example, this teacher expressed that her learners are always expecting her to provide them with something, regarding the matter she said,

"Always the students are waiting from the teacher a lot even the teacher they are waiting they are expecting for their teacher"

(Female 6-14)

Hargreaves (2000) mentions that the expectations of teacher responsibility towards their learner success are becoming high. This finding about teachers trying to meet their learner needs and the consideration of their learners' needs as a motive for their work that shapes their professional identity is a positive indicator of teacher commitment to being L2 teachers.

In relation to meeting their learner needs, the male teachers mentioned their school environment to be the reason that underlies their care and motivation of their learners, because they noticed that their learners are less motivated and care less about their learning English.

“Because I feel when I come to Oman I feel that the students majority of the students are not motivated properly because they are not, I mean some of them of course are not interested and there are not particular about the goal or what they want to achieve in their future so I thought that why I can't give a motivation when we teach so that they can achieve they can decide a goal they can set a goal they can work for it throughout their education period and then can win that goal.”

(Male 15+)

“ . . . in Oman most parent doesn't take care about students or maybe they take care but students themselves don't care.”

(Male 6-14)

This finding confirms that the school context in which teachers work, contributes to the shaping and development of their professional identity. Previous research such as Flores and Day (2006) observed that school environments and cultures influenced teacher motivation, commitment and attitudes towards teaching.

So far, we have observed that the socio-cultural factors represented by teacher family circumstances, prior childhood experiences, religion and the culture of taking responsibility, have played a role in the development of the non-native L2 TPI in the Omani context. The next point considers curriculum as an external factor that played a role in the development of TPI.

## **Curriculum**

The female teachers identified the prescribed curriculum as a reason for their teacher-image particularly that they expressed more interest in talking about their teaching

throughout the interviews. They talked more about teaching methods and techniques unlike the male teachers who focussed their discussion more on their learners and on themselves.

When the female teachers mentioned curriculum as the reason for their self-image, they actually referred to the Teacher's Book, which is the guide for the course book they teach that contains the aims, objectives, the teaching content and detailed teaching instructions. I discovered that most of the teachers' understanding of the word curriculum was attached to the Teacher's Book and the course books their learners use. Most of them do not seem to see beyond this level. They do not refer to curriculum as a comprehensive term that involves the aims and principles of education in Oman; they refer neither to the philosophy nor to the theoretical perspectives that underpin curriculum. They talk neither about the concepts and content nor about assessment as part of the curriculum. The teachers – particularly females – do not seem to adopt the holistic view of curriculum; rather they perceive curriculum components as separate units.

The teachers' views of curriculum (Teacher's Book), as a reason behind their teacher image was not in favour of curriculum, rather they expressed both positive and negative impressions about it. For example, this teacher mentions curriculum, but actually referred to the Teacher's Book as an inspiration or as a resource that equipped her with some teaching ideas when she ran out of them.

“Yeah sometimes, the curriculum helped me to create new way yeah to create new way in my teaching because sometimes when you see the lesson or the term itself you think you don't know how to do it and how to teach your students how to give them the idea.”

(Female 15+)

“For me it's the curriculum forced me to change especially the old one ... For example for grade 12 the core one not the basic one I believe that its low than the students know I have studied this book since 1999 the same information you know I have taught them how to use the tape recorder they say teacher now you have to teach us how to use CD.”

(Female 6-14)

The second quote is a contrasting view on curriculum to the first one. The second teacher said that curriculum forced her to become the teacher who likes to change and modify her teaching methods, because of it being dated and not developed frequently. She gave a very interesting example of curriculum content on teaching instructions for how to play a

tape recorder. This means that the dated lesson content forced this teacher to modify it and made her think of a substitution that learners nowadays use, such as a compact disc (CD).

Although the example the teacher above provided, comes from the old course book – “Our World Through English” (OWTE) – that is being petered out in schools, other teachers who teach the Basic Education curriculum thought that curriculum forced them to become concerned about their teaching because it lacks certain issues. In this regard, this female teacher explained that as grade 7 curriculum lacks writing and grammatical tasks, she compensated this shortcoming by bringing in these tasks. She said:

“ . . . because as I teach grade 7 they don’t have writing, yeah so I am giving them more writing task and also they don’t have grammar they don’t have good grammar.”

(Female 15+)

The discussion on curriculum with the female focus groups brought up the issue of technology as another external factor that influences TPI.

### **Technology and Availability of Materials**

Some of the female teachers thought that the reason behind their concern for teaching, their desire for the adaptation of curriculum techniques and adoption of new and innovative methods was a consequence of their easy access to teaching materials and electronic devices. Although, this group of teachers identified the availability of materials as a reason for the lesson modifications, one of their colleagues in the same group complained about not getting a CD for listening tasks for the whole semester.

“And one point also we missed a cassette for them so during the whole semester they had no chance to listen to a cassette so for all listening lessons I have to brought something from outside there’s no tape so either I read from the teacher’s book or bring something from outside so the whole semester just adapting.”

(Female 6-14)

The availability of materials mentioned by these teachers referred to both, the ones provided by the ministry and the ones they bring from outside. This means that easy access to the Internet these days helped teachers find what they want in order to meet the needs of their learners. The widespread availability of the cyber world caused teachers to

describe themselves as modifiers of their teaching methods and adopters of new methods and techniques. In this matter, these three female teachers expressed the link between technology and their teaching,

“Even the available materials nowadays facilitate our work not like several years ago . . . The ministry now is aware of providing materials and technology devices.”

(Female 6-14)

“Yes when they saw us using the electronic media they themselves involve themselves and they make something for you they make the Instagram last year they make it Instagram account and they like to talk to others about the projects I was surprised.”

(Female 6-14)

“I am the type of teacher who likes to use different or new techniques in teaching especially electronic techniques. Since 3 or 4 years electronic teaching and using electronic world and certain computer programmes have been introduced to our school and this ask us to vary our ways in teaching specially using the electronic programmes as I said I think this makes the students more interested in learning

(Female 6-14)

This finding indicates the impact of the Internet and technology on TPI. The use of technology to serve teaching and learning is useful as long as teachers are cautious about what they use and know how to use it. This opens the agenda for a discussion on the implications of the cyber world on TPI.

To sum up, based on the findings from this research it appears that the internal and external factors that surrounded the L2 teachers impacted not only on the formation of their professional identity, but rather on its development as well.

The next section explores the benefits and the challenges of the prescribed curriculum for teachers by considering the views of both authorities and teachers about curriculum prescription.

### 5.3 Curriculum Prescription verses TPI

In order to comprehend the kind of impact curriculum prescription had on the L2 teachers, it was inevitable to ask the participants about their personal experiences of what they found useful or challenging with such a curriculum.

#### 5.3.1 Benefits

Although all teachers and authorities agreed on the benefits of curriculum prescription for teachers, the degree and kind of this benefit varied according to different participant experiences. These involved practical benefits particularly for new teachers and administrative benefits.

#### **Practical Benefits**

To begin with, all of the participants seemed to agree on the benefits of this type of curriculum for new teachers, because it is detailed, structured and organised in a way that guides and supports new teachers. In support of this point, these teachers and supervisor stated,

“Of course for all new teachers this curriculum is the best thing to give.”

(Male 15+)

“The benefit is for new graduation teacher she will see from the teacher’s book..... this is a good way she will follow but as we are experienced one we feel that these are very bored means it’s boring . . . Useful for the new teacher because she can get benefit from it because she is still new and she need help.”

(Female 15+)

“.....at that time I had really to follow the curriculum prescribed steps or guidelines because at that time my experience was still limited but when the time passed I mean I got enough experience I think at that time I discovered that those prescribed steps were not enough really so I tried to add my own . . . It added to my knowledge because there were techniques that helped me develop myself as a teacher.”

(Interview 4: Supervision)



According to the MoE, Teacher's Guides or Books are considered as rich resources for teachers,

"Teacher's guides are rich resources for the continuous improvement of learning and teaching strategies".

(Basic Education, 2001, p. 13)

In addition to the curriculum prescription role in helping teachers organise their ideas about teaching, this curriculum authority added that prescription boosted his confidence when he was a teacher,

".....I felt it gave me some confidence on how I perform my daily work because it was very clear on what I should be doing . . . "

(Interview 1: Curriculum)

Based on the above quotations, which represented the participants' reflections on their own personal experiences of curriculum prescription, this type of curriculum was valued and considered important for new teachers. The other notable issue from the above quotations, related to the fact that after gaining some experience teacher felt the need to bring their own teaching experiences into their practice.

In addition to the benefits this kind of curriculum provides the new teachers with, all experienced teachers believed that this curriculum provided them with some other practical benefits. For example, this male and female teacher perceived curriculum prescription as a guide for lesson planning that provides aims and lesson objectives and lesson structure such as when and where to begin and end their lessons.

"Yeah maybe the way they just present in the preparation book I mean . . . for example the teacher's book just gave us the example of putting your lesson into steps step one step 2 step 3 I mean when you are preparing."

(Female 15+)

"It gives us the aims of curriculum because if I know the aims of curriculum I know what to focus on, isn't it?"

(Male 6-14)

In addition, curriculum prescription provided teachers with answers to certain tasks in the course books. Thus, it saved teacher planning and preparation time as it provided the teaching methods and assessment procedures.

“I agree with this point and related to benefit I think assessment also there is a benefit in assessment to know that there is a presentation.”

(Female 15+)

“To arranges the ideas in a specific subject if you want to explain something it arranges for example the teacher’s guide or the teacher’s book it arranges our ideas on how to teach sometimes I am not ready to arrange my ideas it helps me arranging these ideas to deal with them in a specific way.”

(Male 15+)

“The curriculum helps us in like know the objectives see the steps ok have idea what’s in the lesson also just be organised in the lesson but at the same time because some activities ok like mixed between like writing is not that much there also grammar and so on we have just to ok just to bring more things activities like or adapt the task to be in another way ok change the task to be more easy I mean easier for the students”

(Female 6-14)

The older male teachers also added a wider and a valuable benefit for this type of curriculum. They said that the curriculum made them focus on what they teach and work towards the achievement of the ministry’s goals, aims and purposes.

“This type of curriculum will help him be focussed because it is all structured, it is well prepared.”

(Male 15+)

“Yeah also I benefited from the curriculum as a tool because it helps us to achieve our aims.”

(Male 15+)

Authorities also seemed to agree with the teachers on certain practical benefits of this curriculum such as saving time and guiding teachers with lesson planning

“Sometimes it saved my time sometimes because you remember at the beginning of our teaching we teach 5 classes and take extra lessons so it saved my planning time, I don’t have to search for tasks they are these so I can adapt little . . . ”

(Interview 5: Training)

“It guided me at the beginning but after a certain number of years, after gaining experience I felt there is a need to do great changes, I noticed I kept teaching the same things in the same way. I felt I need to do some modification in the step . . . ”

(Interview 3: Supervision)

In addition to the curriculum benefits mentioned above, two other authorities brought up a quite different benefit and linked it to teacher gender.

“ . . . I don't think they are really presenting something that shows they are creative they are doing what's there in the book but only for boys' schools . . . Female teachers try to bring other things not really mentioned in the teacher's book. They follow but they believe that the course book in itself is not enough so they increase I mean they add something which can make students even better and I noticed that there is really big difference between the boys and the girl's schools because they add lots of things to the curriculum they are not really depending only on the curriculum.”

(Interview 4: Supervision)

“Prescribed curriculum is good for male schools! It's to do with the attitudes of students and teachers . . . there are few teachers who are creative They have less motivation, less responsibility.”

(Interview 5: Training)

The description of these authorities from Supervision and Training of the difference between female and male teachers might have elements of reality especially that the female teachers throughout the interview sessions explicitly highlighted the kind of efforts they undertake in order to modify and adapt their teaching. However, the male teachers' discussions concentrated more on their learner social and academic development, something that might not be valued by authorities as compared to the adaptation of lessons. The two quotations about different gender teachers might also indicate that some authorities link teacher creativity with only lesson modifications. This alarming situation links to the kind of teacher appraisal system implemented and whether lesson adaptation is considered important as other elements in the learning-teaching continuum.

Based on the above discussion, curriculum prescription appeared to be beneficial for all teachers in general and for new teachers in particular. Thus, it is mainly valued in aiding teachers with lesson planning and preparation and a source for teaching strategies. Besides these practical benefits for teachers, the prescribed curriculum appeared to be appreciated for some administrative benefits.

## **Administrative Benefits**

Besides the practical benefits teachers gain from curriculum prescription, authorities brought up other administrative and professional development benefits. For example, having a centralised and prescribed curriculum puts teachers at ease with regards to training, transfer from one school to another, discussions of lessons and their teaching with authorities, co-teaching and usefulness for parents as their children gain the same type of knowledge and skills.

“When I was a teacher I found it easy to follow because even though if I moved or transfer from one school to another so I don’t need to check and revise new curriculum no ...”

(Interview 2: Curriculum)

“Since it centralised which means that all teachers do the same thing they almost teachers follow the same strategies because they got the same training because its prescribed here teachers find the chances opportunity to discuss, to comment also to review the curriculum and they can develop the curriculum or suggest development points or areas or points where can decision makers or curriculum department at the ministry have a look at when they would like to develop the curriculum.”

(Interview 2: Curriculum)

“It puts teachers to think more about their students and for supervisors sometimes give good feedback about the same curriculum . . . Can be good for parents, the know what they are learning they can compare between teachers . . . Also for supervisors they can compare lessons between teachers and schools and take ideas from one to another .....If teachers are moving from one grade to another it can help in their professional development . . . Good for sharing i.e. co-planning, co-teaching . . . Prescribed curriculum is good for male schools! It’s to do with the attitudes of students and teachers there are few teachers who are creative they have less motivation, less responsibility.”

(Interview 5: Training)

This means that having a centralised and prescribed curriculum, as the national curriculum for the whole country might be a benefit from an administrative view. For example, it becomes much easier to deliver the same training courses to the teachers across the country because they all teach the same curriculum. However, it is vital to remember that each individual trainer and teacher is different, thus his or her training needs and support would be individualised and variable.

Another rationale for curriculum prescription is linked with some authorities' beliefs that teachers need guidance; otherwise, they would not be able to manage their work according to what is expected of them as teachers. The curriculum authority as expresses this point,

“Prescribed curriculum is a cultural issue, sometimes if you don't provide some teachers in some cultures with clear guidance they won't be able to manage themselves and to teaching so it is centralized and culture and teacher and people expectations”

(Interview 1: Curriculum)

The point on the expectations of the teachers and their ability to meet the expected level of them has been raised in literature for long. Some scholars such as Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) consider that this view undermines teachers and side lines their expertise. Additionally, this brings up the issue of trust over teacher work, something which might mean that in some contexts teachers are not trusted enough to do the work expected of them. Thus, curriculum prescription is viewed as an administrative benefit and is therefore promoted to guide teacher work.

Although curriculum prescription may facilitate the learning-teaching process at an administrative level, it is still important to consider teachers' needs based on their years of experience and professional identity.

To conclude, although the teachers and some authorities referred to only the Teacher's Book not to the whole curriculum, they all agreed on the benefits of this type of curriculum for teachers' particularly for new teachers. Interestingly only male teachers brought up the usefulness of this curriculum for the achievement of educational aims. At the same time, some authorities described the male teachers as less motivated and less creative because they modify their lessons less compared to their female colleagues. The participants in the discussion above expressed one of the key issues related to the usage of this curriculum by new and experienced teachers. Most of them expressed that with experience this type of curriculum becomes a challenge for TPI.

### 5.3.2 Challenges

Teachers' replies to the unsatisfying factors about the curriculum they teach related to its content, its relation to assessment and its effects on them as teachers.

#### **Curriculum Content**

##### Weight and Density

The teachers and some authorities described curriculum content as heavy, long and not matching the time given for its achievement. Heavy content can shift teachers' focus from the development of learner skills and achievement of lesson aims to content coverage.

“ . . . once they see the size of the book and the steps this make them . . . get confused they don't know how to do it.”

(Interview 3: Supervision)

“Yeah I agree with Nada on the heavy content the curriculum is very heavy on the students because we want to focus if it's for example with 3 or 4 units with clear activities ok grammar writing, whatever ok we can focus on the skills on the students themselves we can just take time to focus on the objectives . . . Because here we focus we just want to finish 5 units.”

(Female 6-14)

In addition, because the time given is not enough to cover the curriculum content, teachers omit some tasks and/or take extra lessons.

“Yeah I think there are many lessons, long lessons and less time to do the lessons and extra time for the teacher ... yes and the sequencing of the lessons is not good.”

(Interview: Female 15+)

Finally, teachers expressed that curriculum designers did not properly consider the time needed to teach different skills such as grammar.

### Balance between Content and Learner Needs

Teachers and some authorities explained that there was no balance between the presentation of the four skills in both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 curriculum, particularly literacy development for Cycle 1.

“It only started last year and I was very happy the jolly phonics in grade 1 so am still in grades 3 and 4 not I didn’t receive the students still but am still doing the same way to help them read.”

(Female 6-14)

“I think for Cycle 1 it needs to be reviewed, evaluated revised and also improvement especially grades 1& 2 . . . .”

(Interview 5: Training)

The participant teachers particularly females referred to Cycle Two grades 7 and 8 curriculum that involves plenty of reading tasks, but experiences an obvious lack of writing tasks.

“You get reading for 3 4 lessons one after the other but there is no chance for writing so we have to create for writing.”

(Female 6-14)

The teachers also thought that curriculum does not accommodate individual differences or meet the needs of learners. As a result, teachers struggle between finishing the curriculum content and developing the skills of their weak learners who cannot understand the curriculum content, which is above their level. In this regard, these two male teachers stated:

“The curriculum is above the levels of students ... for example there is high vocabulary and some activities shouldn’t be there like about culture about habits....I think the curriculum is heavy.”

(Interview: Male 15+)

“Also it does not take into consideration individual differences in the classroom we have extremely weak students now I have some students in grade 10 they don’t know the English alphabet they have no idea about the alphabet.”

(Male 15+)

From the above discussion, we can sense a real problem with literacy development in the primary curriculum, something that affects negatively on higher grades. Generally, both teachers and authorities demonstrated some awareness of the challenges that relate to curriculum weight, density and balance between content. However, none of the responses articulated by the participants covered the “curriculum type”, which is in this case the ‘prescription’. The participants’ responses covered the exact and immediate challenges involved in the day-to-day-curriculum practice implemented for different grades. This might provide evidence of the participant teachers being less knowledgeable about the availability of other curriculum types.

In addition to identifying ‘content’ as a challenge of the prescribed curriculum, the participants brought up the mismatch between curriculum content and assessment.

### **Assessment**

The older teachers from both gender and some authorities believed that there is a mismatch and a gap between curriculum content and assessment where exams assess learners’ general knowledge not curriculum content. For example, they explained:

“I think we teach in one valley and the examinations comes from another valley.”

(Male 15+)

“Yeah they don’t match so we teach something and exam is something else.”

(Male 15+)

“The assessment and the prescribed curriculum there is somehow no match for me for my students even complaining like we are teaching the types of writing for each writing there is a certain type but the 2 types of writing that we teach in the first semester are not the ones that are assessed in the exam what’s the point behind this nobody tell us what’s the point.”

(Female 6-14)

This kind of mismatch effects learner achievement and becomes another challenge that faces both teachers and learners. This supervisor complained that some teachers neither consider the assessment book significant, nor consider the outcomes essential.



“ . . . but I guess there is a gap between the curriculum and the assessment and training itself . . . unfortunately most teachers they neglect the outcomes they don't focus and when they want to teach the book again they don't use the assessment book as a reference they feel they are neglected they are not related to each other.”

(Interview 3: Supervision)

Besides the curriculum being heavy, dense, long, and imbalanced between the four skills and not matching the assessment procedures, the participants reported the negative impact of this kind of curriculum on teachers.

### **Effects on Teachers**

Although some of the participant teachers stated that curriculum prescription was advantageous to them, some other male teachers expressed that curriculum makes teachers become mechanical, dependent and lack creativity because they follow it rather than think and create. In this regard, they stated:

“You become mechanical that means you know step one put the picture on the board step two turn around you are completely led through a curriculum.”

(Male 15+)

“Limiting our creativity . . . yes because if the ministry or my supervisors will ask me to follow everything in the curriculum word by word...you know, later on I'll not be able to create new ways for my students but if I feel free that I can whether I can use it or not use it in that way I can manage a new ways or a new method to satisfy with my students.”

(Male 6-14)

“What they said is right and also like we become dependent on the teacher's book and lost our creativity and as . . . said and we becoming more and more lazy not that kind of lazy but we are depending on the book so we need creativity.”

(Male 6-14)

These quotes introduce the other side of the coin; they represent the negative impact linked to curriculum prescription on teachers. The danger of teaching in a mechanical way without any personalisation of the teaching and learning process is a critical situation that needs to be taken into consideration.

To sum up, teachers' views on the challenges they faced with the prescribed curriculum, seemed to be very narrow and immersed into their daily practice once again. Teachers rarely think beyond their practice or out of the box. The kind of responses they provided for the benefits and the challenges with this type of curriculum exemplified their narrow minded and lack of curriculum knowledge. They talked most about the practical details of their work such as the curriculum being helpful in relation to lesson planning and preparation and the curriculum being a challenge as being heavy and long, the imbalance between skills and the mismatch between assessment and curriculum. It was fortunate to find some teachers talk about the challenge for their professional identity such as becoming mechanical and lacking creativity.

## Conclusion

This chapter analysed and interpreted the findings from the three data collection sources in order to explore the impact of curriculum prescription on the development of L2 TPI. The investigation of this impact was based on the proposed four components that non-native L2 TPI may consist of in a non-Western context. These components were, (1) teacher beliefs and values about themselves as teachers (self-image), and about the curriculum they teach, (2) teacher professional knowledge, (3) autonomy and (4) commitment. The findings demonstrated a high degree of teacher immersion into their daily practice as the teachers focussed the discussion of their TPI on their teaching and learners. Not only this immersion represented the strong academic relationship they have with their learners, it also resulted in the creation of a certain level of narrow vision about the learning-teaching process in general.

However, the findings highlighted that even in a curriculum prescription context, the teachers felt motivated, emotional, positive, self-assured and committed towards their job. Specifically, the findings revealed that teachers' emotions together with their personal and social identities signified by the internal and external factors had influenced the development of the participant TPI. This influence was represented in the responsibilities these teachers committed themselves with regards their learners and their teaching. For example, teachers' beliefs about the importance of support for learners and the influence of their childhood role model teachers shaped their professional identity to become teachers who care 'about' their learners' academic and morality development. Additionally, the blend between teacher personality traits and the influence of their

immediate societal, cultural and religious beliefs were translated into actions inside the classroom. The care about learners, in being concerned for their teaching, in their expression of passion about teaching and linking their practice to integrity with their job as teachers represented these actions.

The key finding revealed by this research linked to the gender difference between male and female teachers with the finding contradicting the accepted role of female teachers' psychological nurture of children. Correspondingly, the findings emphasised the vital role of non-native L2 teachers' culture and religion in shaping their professional identity.

The impact of curriculum prescription on the L2 teachers was quite limited and negatively affecting their professional identity. For example, the findings stressed that teacher pedagogical content knowledge, curriculum knowledge and knowledge of educational values was not fully developed regardless their years of experience. This finding highlighted a critical issue about a mismatch between teachers' beliefs and their daily practice in relation to their grasp of both autonomy and of the learning-teaching process.

The next chapter elaborates on these findings and discusses them in relation to their implications for theory and practice.

## Chapter 6

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### Introduction

This chapter aims to synthesise the findings presented in relation to how they address the following research questions

RQ1: In what ways can the context of a prescribed curriculum contribute to the development of teachers' professional identity?

RQ2: Within the context of a prescribed curriculum, how do English language teachers describe themselves in relation to the development of their professional identity?

RQ3: What factors influence the development of professional identity for this group of English Language teachers?

This chapter also synthesise the significance of the findings for future educational policy and practice development in Oman. Furthermore, the discussion links the findings to the theoretical perspectives underpinning this research.

The findings demonstrate clearly that teachers' professional identity (TPI) is not static, but instead an evolving key element within the teachers' perception of 'self'. Moreover, this is continuously remoulded and influenced by the teachers' lived experiences. Such experiences appear not only to be underpinned by gender and moral values as much as being determined by their faith; but are also emotionally driven, as demonstrated through the teachers' narratives. The research therefore opens up the concept of TPI as a more malleable and complex concept that may have previously been considered (Beijaard et al, 2004) and one that is determined by multiple factors including gender, faith, moral accountability and love for the role of teaching learners.

#### 6.1 Emotions and Personality Traits over Professional Identity

The findings confirm the significant role of both teachers' emotions and their personal-self onto the development of their professional identity. The role of the personal-self has been confirmed and proved by previous research, such as Samuel and Stephens (2000); Day

et al (2006) and Flores and Day (2006) who found that teacher personal-self represented by their biographical experiences of learning and teaching from home and school influenced their professional identity. Similarly, this research not only confirms the influence of teachers' perception of 'self' on their professional identity, but it specifically demonstrates the influence of teachers' personality traits, their values and emotions on the development of their professional identity.

## Emotions

The exploration of TPI in chapter five demonstrates clearly how it is both emotionally and socially driven. The influence of teachers' emotions is represented in the attributes that participant teachers attach to their professional identity which in their main focus on learning and teaching. This indicates a high level of attachment to work in those teachers' lives and therefore highlights the interrelated relationship between teachers' personal and professional lives and the influence of each on the other. Teachers express high levels of emotions into their daily practice such as their passion for teaching English, which is sustained through the strong professional relationships built with their learners. These emotionally driven professional relationships enable the teachers to care more about their learners with the same level-of consideration provided as would be afforded to friends or family members. The emotional element caused the action of care teachers provide for their learners' academic levels and social development as well as the concern for the curriculum they teach. The emotional dimension is represented in the teachers' use of terms such as "like" and "love" to describe their passion for being English teachers and how loyal and honest they are to their work. Thus, TPI is observed to be positive, emotional and caring.

Although the curriculum is prescribed and directly guides the teachers' practice, teachers still feel a sense of responsibility towards their learners and their teaching. However, the teachers also believe that in both caring for their learners whilst also teaching a prescribed curriculum creates a dilemma of tension between their teacher professional identities and the context requirements. On the one hand is the influence of the societal expectations of the teachers such as learners who do not care about learning the English language and whilst on the other hand is the curriculum prescription which does not meet the learners' levels and abilities in relation to certain knowledge and skills that learners need to develop. This tension causes teachers to choose a commitment side and hold themselves

responsible for both their learners' progress and the teaching of the curriculum showing the relational and contextual nature of TPI (Beijaard et al, 2004). This finding also demonstrates how emotional, caring and relational the professional identity of the English language teachers since it is being influenced by their emotions towards their learners and their responsibility as teachers together with meeting the societal expectations of them.

Additionally, this finding reinforces previous findings and conclusions about TPI being emotional and relational (Rodgers and Scott 2008; Beauchamp and Thomas 2009). Hargreaves (1998) focussed on the emotional aspect that relates to teaching, which was teacher emotional relationship with learners and found that the emotional relationship with learners makes teachers place their students at the heart of their work and think about them first, which results in caring for the students. As there appears to be a consensus on the role of emotions on TPI, professionals like Zembylas (2003) and Reis (2015) argued for a (re) theorisation of the role of emotions in teachers' professional identities and lives including ESL teachers (Reis, 2015). This research supports this call and confirms the role of emotional influence on the professional identity of the L2 teachers and clearly demonstrates how emotions could impact on the beliefs and the values as well as the practice of teachers.

The emotionally driven professional identity of teachers provides evidence that since teachers have less authority over their work within a curriculum prescription context, they utilise their emotions to bring-in their 'authority' and 'ownership' over 'their practice' as an approach towards its personalisation. This is evidenced by the teachers' main focus on teaching and their relationship with their learners. The findings from previous research, which emphasised the role of emotions on L2 teachers' practice, do not provide us with reasons for this behaviour unfortunately. Is it human nature? Or is it an influence of bureaucracy on L2 teachers which gets them to bring in their personal-self to feel authority and ownership over what they do? These queries invite further exploration.

### Personality Traits

The findings demonstrate that the characteristics of TPI are based on their personality traits such as care, commitment, support and help as well as their academic interest in learners, their beliefs, attitudes and values. Malikow (2005) and Gao and McJunkin (2014) found that certain personality traits can lead to teacher effectiveness, such as teacher

enthusiasm, interest in learners, care and patience. McBer (2000) classified personal traits and teacher attitudes as professional characteristics of teachers. In relation to the personality traits possessed by the L2 teachers, this research corresponds with the traits found by Malikow (2005) and McBer (2000).

The findings disclose certain personality traits and faith values act as factors that underpin the development of teachers' professional identities. The personality traits and faith values are: (1) care and academic interest in learners, (2) help for learners, (3) adaptability and creativity of lessons (4) dedication towards teaching English, (5) integrity and honesty and (6) responsibility. Additionally, the personality traits of the participant teachers are emotive. This is demonstrated by the strong relationships teachers have with their learners inevitably impacting on their practice and on how they describe themselves. In this regard, Hargreaves (2000) and Day (2009) note that the emotional dimension of teachers' work is about being passionate about teaching and caring for and 'about' their students learning progress and their lives. This research also finds that teachers' emotions influence their personality traits and guide their professional identity and therefore impact on their practice.

For example, as the educational context in Oman is about the implementation of a prescribed curriculum, the expectations of others such as authorities created a demand on the teachers who found themselves forced to adapt the curriculum they teach as it lacked certain areas of knowledge, which learners need to acquire as part of learning the English language. This adaptation of lessons compensated for what the curriculum lacked and got teachers to meet the expectations of others from them as L2 teachers saved the teachers' face value. This process of lesson adaptation led to teacher development of the adaptability and responsibility personality traits, which are reinforced by their emotions, personal values and faith.

## 6.2 Limited Professional Knowledge

"To the traveller with no destination, one road is as good as another"

A translation from an Arabic proverb

Clark (1992, p.80)

The findings highlight the limitations and incompleteness of English language teachers' professional knowledge. The types of professional knowledge, which teachers appear to lack, are the pedagogical content knowledge, subject knowledge, curriculum knowledge and educational values knowledge. Although, curriculum prescription can ensure uniformity of education and shape teaching and learning behaviour, it may de-professionalise teachers (Ball and Cohen, 1996) as it may not allow teachers to utilize their professional knowledge, which they gain from a variety of sources and might even lead to deskilling of teachers.

The findings suggest that the prescribed curriculum does not necessarily benefit or add to the teachers' professional knowledge apart from some general knowledge about teaching methods and lesson planning which is represented in their practice. This finding is quite similar to Reeves (2010) who found that the teachers in his study benefited from the prescribed curriculum in issues related to language learning and teaching. However, this research finds that curriculum prescription does not impact measurably neither on teacher's professional knowledge nor on their professional identity.

According to Shulman's (1987), view of teaching that was stated long ago,

“Thus, teaching necessarily begins with a teacher's understanding of what is to be learned and how it is to be taught. It proceeds through a series of activities during which the students are provided specific instructions and opportunities for learning, though the learning itself ultimately remains the responsibility of the students.”

Shulman (1987, p.7)

From Shulman's words, we learn that teacher's understandings of the content to be learned (subject knowledge) must proceed the way in which it is going to be taught (pedagogical knowledge). The understanding of the content to be learned or the subject knowledge seems to be vague or unclear to nearly half of the participant teachers in this research.

This research finds that the female teachers are immersed into their daily practice, something which makes their vision narrow and limited to their daily classroom practice and curriculum teaching, instead of viewing the 'wider picture' of the teaching-learning process. Unfortunately, this immersion solely into their immediate world impacts negatively on their professional knowledge and practice. The immersion into daily practice creates a mismatch between teachers' understandings about 'what learning is about' and their practice in class. Their practice reflects a focus on 'their teaching' without much



consideration of student learning of the intended content that should be learned. This also suggests the influence of teachers' beliefs on their practice based on the decisions they take (Borg, 2003). This influence is represented in the teachers' selection of the teaching methods to adapt the original lessons from the curriculum. These methods represent the teachers' beliefs and bring-in the teacher-self to influence their professional identity and this creates the mismatch between their stated beliefs and actual practice.

The teachers' reflection on actual practice raises this mismatch and shows that the teachers' main focus is on 'the details' of the course book 'texts', without understanding 'what it is to be learned' from those texts. This creates the problem of teachers adapting their lessons by selecting teaching methods that do not appear to meet the content to be learned. This results in the invisibility of the set targets, which are to be learned by students in a nationwide curriculum. This situation indicates some lack of pedagogical content knowledge from the Omani teachers as compared to their expatriate counterparts who (except for one), modified their lessons to make them relevant to the learners' life experiences. To be able to modify in this manner, indicates an underlying understanding of the content to be learned by their learners. This takes us back to Shulman's (1987) words and makes clear that for teachers to decide on the teaching methods, they first need to identify 'what it is that their learners need to know'. Although this identification of content to be learned by students depends on many factors such as learner needs and abilities, this identification can also relate to the teachers' professional knowledge, such as knowledge of their subject and to pedagogical content knowledge in order to take adequate decisions about student learning and avoid any inadequacy.

Although, the decision about the content to be learned reflects teachers' beliefs about language teaching and learning, it can also reflect teachers' professional knowledge. This research finds that in addition to teachers' beliefs guiding their decision making, the level of professional knowledge they have may also influence those decisions. The kind of decisions the Omani teachers take for their lesson adaptations demonstrates this.

The apparent lack of pedagogical content knowledge by the Omani teachers' may require larger scale research to comprehend fully the reasons underpinning it. Further research might consider examining the adequacy of current pre-service teacher education programmes, including the curriculum content and syllabus design of pre-service modules.

The participant teachers' lack of subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge might well be a result of the prescribed curriculum, as teachers are encouraged by their supervisors to adapt the curriculum they teach to meet their learners' needs without necessarily being directed on how to do this adaptation. In this regard the training specialist said:

“Nowadays all are calling for adaptation but there is no training or instructions on how to adapt in order to avoid dangerous adaptation, it is not official through the curriculum, no clear procedures on how and what to adapt, there needs to be like a workshop on teaching teachers regarding how to adapt.”

(Interview 5 - Training)

Shulman (1987) describes curriculum knowledge as teachers' knowledge of different types of curriculum. These findings demonstrate that Omani teachers are currently lacking some understanding of curriculum knowledge. For example, the teachers referred to their pedagogically underpinned Teacher's Book as the curriculum. This shows a very limited understanding of what the curriculum means to them. Moreover, in addressing the challenges they face with the prescribed curriculum, teachers do not see 'the bigger picture' outside of the curriculum and they do not consider prescription as a 'type of curriculum'; rather they focus on the content that they teach and discuss problems. Their answers focus on complaining about the lengthy and dense content of the curriculum, lack of writing tasks for grades 7 and 8, lack of grammar tasks, the mismatch between curriculum and assessment procedures (particularly exams), and the imbalance between teaching the four skills in the curriculum. The teachers' replies do not consider the approach of prescription, which they appear to have difficulty understanding. The teachers (particularly the females) could not see the wider implications of the curriculum in attempting to identify its challenges to them. This suggests that deep immersion in the everyday teaching activities results in a lack of wider and pedagogically underpinned curriculum knowledge. The findings suggest that this situation might result from English teachers in Oman who have never experienced a different type of curriculum, so therefore lack knowledge about the variety of alternative curriculum types available.

Limited Teacher professional knowledge, might be in part as a result of teachers being told what to teach, how to teach and how to assess as part of the prescribed curriculum. The examples highlighted (chapter five, pp. 159-160) present experienced teachers who cannot connect the curriculum content which they teach with selecting the most appropriate teaching strategies, and teachers who had very limited understanding of the

curriculum principles and aims. The teachers understand that they would benefit from adapting their lessons to meet their learners' needs and abilities, but in practice this does not appear to happen. This anomaly creates an additional mismatch between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual practice.

### 6.3 Mismatch between Beliefs and Practice

The findings from this research present a kind of mismatch between teachers' stated beliefs and actual practices. The mismatch lies in (1) the teachers' understanding of the learning-teaching processes and their actual practice; (2) their misunderstanding of autonomy and their actual practice, which contradicts their beliefs.

#### Learning-teaching Process and Practice

As discussed, the finding on teacher self-image not only highlights the female teachers' deep levels of immersion into their daily practice, but also this resulted in not necessarily appreciating 'the bigger picture' beyond their direct classroom and the taught curriculum. This apparent limited vision therefore suggests a developing vacuum in relation to the teachers' understandings of the whole teaching-learning process as they are self-limiting their knowledge to one end of the pedagogic spectrum. The apparent invisibility of the 'bigger picture' may result in an incomplete vision of the learning-teaching process.

A number of practices has recognised the finding about the mismatch between the teachers' understandings of the learning-teaching process and their practice. For example, the female teachers' description of their professional identity was very much based on their concern about teaching. Although the female teachers did mention learning in-between their speech, they nonetheless prioritised their teaching as represented by their modifications and adaptation of the curriculum strategies.

Teachers' roles and responsibilities are focussed on being facilitators of their learners' academic and social behaviour and their teaching. However, facilitation of teaching appears as linked to some misconceptions of learning. For example, some teachers see the omission of some activities such as games as preferred and necessary in order to focus teaching time on other areas such as vocabulary, grammar and teaching of skills.

This demonstrates that teachers primarily focus on teaching the curriculum and not necessarily on ensuring learning. In addition, the excessive focus on lesson modification, which resulted in unsuccessful attempts by some females exemplifies this mismatch and confirms that teachers do not consider learning as equal to teaching.

### Autonomy and Practice

The findings demonstrate that most of the teachers believe that they are being autonomous while teaching the prescribed curriculum apart from some younger female and male teachers who have a mixed view on autonomy and think that the prescribed curriculum inhibits their freedom to teach.

The findings demonstrate that nearly all of the teachers (both male and female) feel that they have an acceptable level of autonomy in their teaching role, as they are able to make decisions on their lessons and modify them. This autonomy is contextualised within their immediate classroom environment. However, unlike their younger peers, the older teachers do not see curriculum prescription as demanding or constraining for their autonomy. Interestingly, most of the teachers' practice does not appear to match their stated beliefs about autonomy because their practice follows the prescribed curriculum instruction as presented in the Teacher's Book. Indeed, the reflection on practice suggests that nearly half of the teachers adhere closely to the Teacher's Book instructions in their daily practice.

Al-Zedjali (2009) found that Omani teachers stated beliefs about autonomy do not match their practice. Similarly, the current finding supports this observation from Oman and is consistent with the conclusion of a study conducted in Turkey, which has a comparable educational system to Oman. The Turkish study by GÜR (2014) suggests that teachers feel autonomous regardless of the level of curriculum prescription. GÜR (2014) also states that the teachers in Turkey think being autonomous is synonymous with modifying and adapting their teaching. In fact, they are found to be highly dependent on the Guidebook/Teacher's Book. GUR's finding concurs with this study, as the participant teachers feel autonomous solely because they can adapt and modify their lessons. However, when reflecting on their practice, the teachers are found to be highly dependent on the prescribed curriculum and in particular with the Teacher's Book instructions. This

suggests that the teachers do not feel confident in abandoning the prescribed curriculum; and instead they appear to be highly dependent on it.

The reasoning behind this contradiction between what teachers say about being autonomous and what they actually do in practice might indicate some lack of understanding about what it means to be an autonomous teacher. This could be attributed to the fact that teachers' have never experienced being autonomous in their career lives as the Turkish teachers in GÜR's (2014) study. This may also be a result of the teachers' lack of knowledge about alternative curriculum designs as well as a misunderstanding of what being autonomous actually means in practice.

However, some of the expatriate male teachers appear to be aware of the meaning of autonomy and think that teachers can only be autonomous with experience and that new teachers should not do so as it might impact negatively on their practice. This might indicate more confidence by the expatriate male teachers in their practice.

“Of course teacher autonomy works when they get certain experience because autonomy doesn't mean that ... do whatever he wants.”

“Of course it should not be from the beginning after some years of experience at least 5 years of experience then they can use their own autonomy their own experience etc. but always right from the beginning rather than motivating the children they demotivate definitely because.”

(Male 15+)

It appears that curriculum prescription has little impact on teacher's perceptions of the learning-teaching process and their autonomy, despite the mismatch between teachers' understandings of the learning-teaching process and the autonomy, which they actually practice in class.

#### 6.4 Gender Difference: Caring Males

One significant finding in relation to the participant teachers' beliefs about their professional identity is that some characteristics are gender dependant. As we saw in the previous chapter, the findings indicate that male teachers express a high level of care about their learners' academic levels and social behaviour, something that results in a discovery of a gender difference between the male and female teachers. The male

teachers are found to be nurturing and caring about their learners more than their female peer counters. The finding contradicts the common belief concerning teacher gender stereotypical relationships with their learners where women are considered as naturally caregivers (Bullough, 2015). The findings do not present female teachers as particularly motherly and nurturing as might have been expected (to have psychological closeness to learners) but rather this study presents the male teachers as more nurturing and caring of their learners' academic and social skills development.

Based on the teachers' description of their professional identity, unlike the female teachers who are very immersed and concerned about their daily teaching; in contrast the male teachers talk more about how much they care for their learners. They show that they care about the development of their learners' academic knowledge and skills such as succeeding in their studies in order to get a good job and enter higher education. They also demonstrate that they care for the development of the social behaviour, attitudes and morality of their learners by advising them, discussing their problems and instructing them on how good behaviour makes them become better citizens. This finding could be considered as unique in relation to the gender difference in attitudes between male and female teachers.

Local direction with regards to gender issues comes from the MoE in Oman, which has decided that children attending Cycle One or primary schools must be taught solely by female teachers as they are seen to be psychologically closer to children of this age and would act more 'motherly' towards the children.

"The feminisation of administrative and teaching personnel in the first cycle of Basic Education (Grades 1-4) is now complete. The rationale here is to make the learners feel secure psychologically at this early age, and to motivate them to learn in an appropriate climate that meets their needs and supports their progress in further development, especially during this critical period of transition from home to school."

(Basic Education, 2001, p17)

This finding of male teachers showing more nurturing for their learners could be attributed to their reaction to their immediate school environment as this teacher explains the reason for his care:

"In Oman most parent doesn't take care about students or maybe they take care but students themselves don't care."

(Male 6-14years)

This other male teacher shows his care about his learner's behaviour and expresses that it is his role as a teacher

“...because the teacher inside the class may see some things which pupils can do and these things can't be done in front of their parents at all so beside teaching we have to control their actions their... so our responsibility is not to teach a curriculum but to control their action to control their behaviour .. yes to be a good citizen.”

(Male 15+)

From these two quotes, we can see that there is more than one reason for the male teacher's care about their learners. Thus, it appears that in addition to the other reasons for the male teachers care such as role model teachers from childhood, their faith and personality traits, the situation in the boys' schools and social context of learners and parents who care less about English language learning have contributed to influence the TP. The male teachers therefore, reacted responsively to this situation by bringing in their caring personality traits, with their emotional and social selves acting in a fatherly, brotherly and nurturing manner.

Regardless of the reason, it is significant to find all males in the three different settings agree on care about their learners or talk more about their learners and prioritise them over any other commitments to their role as teachers. This demonstrates nurture and care for their learners.

In spite of being conducted in an English institute not in a school setting, the study by Dordinejad and Porghoveh (2014) in Iran did not indicate any gender difference between the male and female teachers in relation to teacher effectiveness and success from the perception of learners. Although the male teachers show that they care about their learners' academic and social behaviour development, this does not mean that the female teachers do not care about their learners. The female teachers implicitly show some care for their learners through how they speak to the children; but nonetheless their priority is their teaching, which is indicated by the high level of immersion they have towards their teaching. This immersion does not leave the female teachers the space to engage outside of the curriculum in the surrounding context.

This unexpected behaviour of female teachers' of not showing or perhaps hiding their 'motherly' behaviour and being very focussed on their job of teaching could be attributed

to various reasons which might be out of the scope of this research. For example, it could be that the females feel that they like to be 'ideal' in the work place and they usually do as they are told. In contrast, men may take risks when carrying out tasks and care less about other's judgments of their actions. The comparative study by Gao and McJunkin (2014) on the personality traits differences between the American and Chinese school teachers discovered that gender significantly affected only one personality trait namely teacher expectations. In their study, the female teachers showed greater concern to challenge their learners for higher achievements. This provides evidence that gender expectations could be another reason why the female teachers in the current research are so immersed in the teaching of the curriculum and display less of a relationship with their learners. The gender difference between teachers is a significant research area that may benefit from further consideration.

#### 6.5 Role Model Teachers

The development of the professional identity of teachers, and particularly in male teachers seems to have begun from their childhood when they were schoolchildren themselves, having been influenced by past role models of positive L2 teachers who cared for and motivated them. There was one incident of a negative role model of a teacher for one of the male teachers who decided not to become like his prior Maths teacher when he practices teaching:

“Because I still remember the maths teacher asking me to do the maths then I take some time to think he clashes me with a thing..... he will slap you! insulting you try to hate the subjects so you give up I can't do it that feeling develops in different ways I have seen it in my friends so I thought when I be a teacher I will be a different person that's why I meant when I said I want to cater for the needs of my students maybe when I go to a class it is unusual boys are not willing to learn.”

(Male 15+)

The past positive experiences of role model teachers have led to the construction of certain beliefs, values and dispositions about who a teacher is and how they should perform. This has impacted on the image the participant teachers hold for English language teachers and this image has influenced the formation of their professional identity. These beliefs make up a certain stereotype of the professional identity for each teacher and what is referred to as the “Me” self by Mead (1934).



The findings suggest that the professional identity of teachers or their 'Me' self appears to interact with various cognitive, cultural, religious and social factors including pre-service teacher education programmes thus influencing the development of their professional identity.

This research discovered that the role model of past childhood teachers is a significant factor in the development of the participant teachers' professional identity. The teachers (particularly the older expatriate males) appear to be more heavily influenced by their prior role model teachers and want to replicate their experiences to be like them when they are teachers. Whether or not this finding is a positive attribute, it may be worthy of further exploration outside of this study. However, a question to be raised is about the impact of pre-service teacher education on the teachers. According to the findings from the previous chapter, very few male teachers refer to their pre-service stage as to influencing their professional identity. This may open an agenda for further investigation into the impact of teacher preparation programmes on the development of teachers' professional identity. According to Flores and Day (2006); Izadinia (2012); Cabral (2012) and Xu (2013) the pre-service stage is crucial in the shaping of teacher identity. In addition, it is the stage where teachers' past and previous assumptions and beliefs about being a teacher are confronted with research and facts about teaching and learning. Thus, the pre-service stage is supposed to be the right time for teachers to correct any misconceptions they have developed over years about teaching and learning. However, this stage does not seem to be apparent or influential, because the participant teachers have rarely mentioned it.

## 6.6 Religion and Culture

The teachers' professional identity reveals a faith element, which also contributes to and influences standards of practice. The teachers' religious values are represented in their actions during teaching and in their beliefs about being honest teachers. Indeed, teachers base their honesty on their religion Islam. These Islamic faith values are interpreted into actions that guide teachers' work and transform into commitment, integrity, care and concern for their teaching and learners within an Islamic-socio cultural context.

According to Olson (1988), Hamilton and Richardson (1995) cited in Mansour (2008) and Richards (2015), teachers' beliefs are linked with their cultural experiences and act as a

filter towards any new knowledge the teachers encounter and that teacher conceptualisation of teaching and learning is linked to their culture of how education should work. Mansour (2008) states that religion is considered as part of culture, which influences a person's views, attitudes, beliefs, understandings and construction of knowledge, and therefore a person develops their own "Personal Religious Beliefs" (PRB), which acts as a filter to their work. To investigate the role of experiences in relation to beliefs and practice of Egyptian science teachers, Mansour (2008) found that the teachers' PRB that influences their practice as science teachers. This influence includes teachers' role, their learners' roles, their knowledge of science and the teaching methods they use. The findings from Mansour's (2008) study emphasise the impact of religion and culture on teachers' professional identity and therefore its influence on their teaching practice. Thus, based on the role of teachers' beliefs on their understanding of knowledge, I claim that teachers' religious beliefs - linked to cultural knowledge and practices - require consideration in order to fully understand teachers' practice.

To some extent, the findings concur with Mansour's (2008) study in relation to the influence of teacher's religious beliefs and culture on their professional identity and practice. The religious beliefs of some of the L2 teachers from this study are found to be a factor that influence the way teachers describe their professional identity and practice. Some of the participant teachers associate their religious beliefs with their teaching practice. For example, a female teacher modifies her lesson to debate an issue related to the religion of Islam, instead of debating the environment topic as suggested by the curriculum. Here she says:

"Yeah for example today I was discussing with them Jebel Akhdhar\*. We have some project related to the Ministry of Education that they took some girls to Jebel Akhdhar camping in Jebel Akhdhar.

"So I was discussing with them with my students. This is not good we are Muslims so the girls should go with her mahram\*\*."

(Female 15+)

From the above example, we can appreciate the impact of this teacher's religious beliefs on her teaching. Another example comes from the male teacher who puts the development of his learners' behaviour and morality as a priority and links it to Islam. In this matter, he explains that whenever he is in class and hears the prayer call from the mosque, he stops teaching and then recites some prayers together with his learners:

“Because I think that it is the role of the teacher for example when a prayer call comes and I am in class I stop teaching until it finishes and then I ask them to repeat the douaaaa<sup>\*\*\*</sup> because it is my role to teach them how to be good citizens.”

(Male 15+)

The above two examples from the older teachers show the role of religion on TPI as they link their Islamic beliefs to their teaching. Additionally, the description the two male teachers gave about themselves as discussed in the previous chapter relate to being honest teachers. Teachers say that honesty derives from their religious beliefs as no one except God (Allah) watches them do their work. This confirms the influence of religion on TPI. All of this provides evidence on the role of religion as a factor that influences the development of TPI.

3

The influence of religion on L2 teachers' professional identity seems to lead to the construction of new knowledge about the role of religion or faith in the development of TPI. Although, not specifically studied through this research, this finding of religion and culture appears as unique in the field of EFL and TESOL. Most of the studies on TPI (including the identity of L2 teachers) have been carried out in either European or in Asian countries where perhaps faith is not necessarily a significant factor or a component of TPI. The study conducted by Yayli (2015) in Turkey on L2 teachers' multiple identities found that the most dominant identity was the Muslim identity. This research provides evidence on the influence of faith on L2 TPI. Since religion and culture are considered less by studies related to TPI, I argue that they should be added to the components an L2 teacher's professional identity may consist of. Additionally, I argue for a serious consideration of culture and religion on L2 TPI in such faith-associated contexts to explore the influence of faith on TPI and therefore their practice.

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<sup>3</sup> \* a well-known mountain in Oman

\*\* a member of the family whom a girl can't marry like a brother or a father etc.

\*\*\*say prayers

In addition to religious beliefs, which influence participant teachers' professional identity, the cultural related issues are also found to be significant to this research. Culture in this research is defined according to Peck (1998, p.1):

“Culture is all the accepted and patterned ways of behavior of a given people..... Not only does this concept include a group's way of thinking, feeling, and acting, but also the internalized patterns for doing certain things in certain ways”

For example, if a teacher had the experience of being the oldest child in the family at home, such teachers are used to being given responsibility from an early age. This cultural factor also influences TPI and is reflected in their actions of being responsible for their learners and even describing themselves as mothers and other family members.

This research demonstrates that L2 teachers' religion and culture underpins their professional identity as represented by their beliefs and inevitably impacts upon teachers' practice. Thus, religion and culture need to be considered as key factors, which influence the development of L2 TPI.

#### 6.7 Societal Expectations and Face Value

Although, not significantly proved in this research, societal expectations of teachers and teachers' wanting to meet these expectations of them appear to have played a role in the development of their professional identity. The expectations of others such as authorities, supervisors and parents of the teachers in Oman, relate to the achievement of students and to the teaching of curriculum content. For example, the situation of parents who are less caring about their children's English language learning (especially in boys' schools) means that teachers pay extra attention to their learners' academic needs and development and hold themselves responsible for their learners' success.

The expectations of teachers' work derive from both the society and from the teachers' personal-selves. The teachers believe that this is what teachers do or should do based on their prior experiences of teachers' work. The influence from the societal expectations of the teachers' work and teachers' tensions to meet these indicates that they do their best for their learners and teaching. All of these factors appear to have influenced the development of the L2 TPI.

## 6.8 Theoretical Perspectives of the Findings

The findings were examined from a multidimensional theoretical perspective on TPI (Varghese et al, 2005 and Trent, 2015) and are found to be in concurrence with the social identity theory by Tajfel and Turner (1986) which emphasises the concept of belonging to a group and the discursive and affinity identity of Gee (2000). The findings moreover demonstrate that the faith of English language teachers belonging to an Arabic and Muslim non-native culture of the English language or group impacts on their professional identity and therefore influences their practice. The belonging of the teachers to the Arabic, Muslim and non-native culture of the English language influences the participant teachers' cognition and their personality traits in accordance with social identity theory thus positively influencing TPI.

Additionally, the role of the social context in which teachers live out their day-to-day experiences has also been observed to be significant in this research. The social context is therefore seen to interconnect with and be influential on the teachers' cultural and social behaviour. In relation to the identity theory by Mead (1934) and the role of "Me" self, which is an accumulation of an individual's prior experiences, the findings demonstrate that teachers' prior experiences play a crucial role in making them who they are and in the development of their professional identity. Additionally, the prior experiences of role model teachers – who they were taught by in their childhood – also influence English language teachers' developing professional identity.

Moreover, the findings demonstrate the chronological development of identity as suggested by Erikson (1968) as the older teachers with 15+ years of experience view autonomy quite differently than their younger counterparts. The age difference leads to the claim that teacher's cognition develops with age and that they view things differently as they get older. In addition to teacher cognition development with age, I argue that the reason behind the older teachers viewing autonomy differently also relates to their self-efficacy and confidence in what they do.

The findings agree with those of Stets and Burke (2000) on how individuals view their roles within a group and what status they have. The participant teachers' views of their roles vary and do not necessarily match with the group they belong to. For example, within a single focus group set of interviews, teachers' views on their roles towards the prescribed curriculum are quite different because each represent teacher's cognition, beliefs and lived personal experiences.

Finally, the L2 teacher identity is found to form an interplay between various factors that influence its development. The intrapersonal, the interpersonal and the institutional factors appear to influence the development of identity significantly. This finding corresponds with the concept of professional identity being interrelated and multidimensional as proposed by Trent's integrated model (2015). However, the findings add culture and religion as influencing factors on non-native L2 teachers.

## Conclusion

Teaching is a complex activity, which involves the personal-self of the teacher as well as their professional-self and draws on the societal and contextual experiences and changes (Day et al, 2006). ELT contexts become even more complex and L2 TPI becomes a significant influence on teachers' daily practice. The complexity of the L2 teacher's professional identity derives from teachers being non-native speakers of the English language. Thus, in order to understand the practice of L2 teachers, it becomes inevitable to discover their professional identity.

This research has revealed the notion of TPI as a means to explore the kind of impact that curriculum prescription might have on L2 teachers in Oman. To do so, the concept of TPI was split into four components. These are (1) teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes about themselves as teachers and the curriculum they teach, (2) their professional knowledge, (3) their autonomy and (4) commitment.

This research finds that the participant teachers hold a positive and dedicated image of themselves as L2 teachers. The teachers are found to care 'about' their learners' academic levels, social and moral development. Teachers are concerned about their teaching and seek adaptation because they are encouraged to do so and because they feel the need to do so. However – and most significantly – they do not know how to do this. The teachers are found to lack subject knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and curriculum knowledge, and are not equipped with strategies for curriculum design and development. Although teachers are passionate about their teaching, they do not however consider learning as part of the learning-teaching process. More consideration is given to their learners' development and how best to adapt their teaching to the requirements of the prescribed curriculum instead of ensuring that the learning outcomes were achieved.

The findings confirm previous research with regards the role of teacher emotions, prior experiences, the social and the personal experiences of teachers in the development of their professional identity. Specifically, the findings highlight the significant role of teachers' personality traits, religion, culture and emotions in the development of TPI.

The significant findings reveal that the characteristics of TPI are based on demonstrable classroom teaching personality traits such as caring, being supportive, being interested in their learners and having positive beliefs and attitudes about English language teaching and learning. The findings also highlight a gender difference between male and female teachers in relation to caring and nurturing of their learners. The male teachers' emotional, social nurture and care about their learners is found to be more than their female colleagues are. This finding conflicts with the common and accepted assumption that female teachers would be more caring and nurturing of learners.

Moreover, the additional significant finding relates to the cultural and religious influence on teacher personality traits and values, which appears to impact positively on teachers' practice. This finding is unique to contexts where teachers are non-native speakers of the English language.

The findings indicate and highlight two significant limitations in teachers' understandings. The first limitation relates to the teachers' misunderstandings of effective classroom pedagogy including choosing appropriate classroom learning and teaching techniques and the second limitation highlights the mismatch between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual practice. The teachers are found to believe in the importance of autonomy and adaptation to meet their learner needs and abilities as part of the learning-teaching process, however, their practice reflect their adherence to the prescribed curriculum and do not reflect a clear understanding of learning. Teachers (particularly females) are found to be much immersed in their daily work of teaching and keep themselves busy by adapting and changing the curriculum instead of spending more time on student learning or developing themselves professionally.

This chapter discussed the findings in relation to previous research and related these to the theoretical perspectives, which framed this research. The following chapter (the conclusion) summarises the research study, synthesises the findings discovered, draws implications for policy and practice, and discusses the contributions of this research and the possibility of generalisability. The conclusion also states the limitations of this study

and makes some recommendations for further research based on the findings. Finally, suggestions for the way forward conclude this research and close this thesis.



## Chapter 7

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Introduction

This conclusive chapter encapsulates this research, which examined the English language teachers' lived experiences of teaching within the prescribed curriculum of Oman. The English as Second and Foreign language (L2) teachers' perspectives on their professional identity offer both a unique contribution within the theoretical field of teacher professional identity (TPI) and within the future development of policy and practice for L2 teachers within Oman.

#### 7.1 Professional Knowledge and Positive Attributes

Although the findings reveal that the impact of the prescribed curriculum is less significant to teachers' daily practice, a considerable lack of key professional knowledge has been identified. However, the research also reveals the positive attributes of the teachers, including their dedicated and committed natures. Not only are these attributes inextricably interlinked with teachers' core beliefs and values about the teaching and learning of English, but they are also interwoven with their religious and cultural principles. Indeed, current teaching principles and practice are often those replicated from past role models who have taught them previously when they were children. This mix of professional knowledge and positive attributes confirms the relational nature of TPI; as a developing entity that is influenced by the environment it is party to, and evolving within.

Not only have prior 'role model' teachers impacted on teachers' beliefs and values as English teachers; but so have their cultural and religious beliefs. Their cultural and religious beliefs have influenced their evolving positive and professional attitudes towards being English teachers. Therefore, the role of religion and the influence of the Arabic and Islamic culture is embedded both within the teacher's professional identity and reflected in their practice towards their learners and their teaching.

The Omani teachers' lack of curriculum knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge results from not being cognitively equipped with strategies for curriculum design and development; additionally, there is an unusual mismatch between the teachers stated beliefs and their actual practice due to a lack of necessary knowledge to ensure effective student learning. Although the teachers believe that they have the autonomy to adapt lessons to meet their learners' needs and abilities, their practice reflects a strict adherence to the prescribed curriculum.

In addition to the mismatch mentioned above, the limited knowledge of the learning-teaching processes appears to be due to teachers – particularly female teachers – focussing more closely on daily teaching methods, rather than ensuring that the student learning outcomes are achieved. Unfortunately, this prioritising of daily teaching activities has resulted in a narrow vision of understanding for the complete learning-teaching process.

Increasingly throughout the research process, L2 TPI has been found to be positive, emotional and dedicated towards their learners, their teaching and towards being English teachers. Surprisingly, teachers, (particularly male teachers) appear to be more caring and focus upon their learners' academic levels and social and moral development. Such findings reveal the significance of teacher personality traits such as being caring, helpful, supportive, interested in learners, hold positive beliefs, dedicated, responsible, enthusiastic and passionate about teaching of English on L2 teachers' developing professional identity.

Moreover, teachers' emotions play a key role in their practice as revealed through their passion for teaching. However, despite this apparent passion for teaching, the achievement of learning outcomes is not considered as part of the whole learning-teaching process. Teachers continue to be pre-occupied with their learners' development and the adaptation of their teaching rather than prioritising students reaching their learning outcomes.

## 7.2 Implications of the Study for Policy and Practice

Based on the findings demonstrated by this research, it is noteworthy to state that curriculum prescription does not appear to have a strong impact on teachers' professional

identity or their professional knowledge. The knowledge they possess is an accumulation of general pedagogy and teaching methods gained from different sources including the curriculum. Unfortunately, teachers continue to demonstrate incomplete knowledge about the learning-teaching processes including a lack of pedagogical and curriculum content knowledge. This knowledge is required for the selection of appropriate teaching methods to ensure student learning and actions to be taken in relation to the directions within educational policy and the teachers' assumed responsibilities.

#### Educational Policy in Oman: Recommendations for the ELT Curriculum

The English language curriculum framework and the policy documents could be revised in relation to the relevance of TPI and developing learner focussed pedagogical advances.

The revised version of the English language curriculum framework and policy documents as well as teacher appraisal programmes needs to explicitly specify the role of the teacher and allow them the opportunity to experience autonomy through a supported and guided approach which balances between teacher autonomy and accountability.

This approach involves the inclusion of autonomy in policy and curriculum documents by presenting a variety of teaching methods, which teachers can choose from and/or by providing guidelines about the learning intended to be acquired to assist teachers make sound pedagogical decisions for their learners. Most importantly, the curriculum framework must reach every teacher in Oman as currently these documents are practically non-existent to teachers and as a result, teachers do not appreciate or consider them as important. If teachers are to be encouraged to move away from solely immersing themselves in their daily practice and to appreciate a wider awareness of the educational system, the philosophy and intended learning goals, then teachers must examine the framework and understand it. As more teachers disengage from the wider context of developing educational policy, unfortunately the more immersed teachers become in their day-to-day teaching activities which impacts negatively on the children achieving their learning goals.

## Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Design

If the MoE in Oman is to expect professional teachers, then teacher involvement in the development of English language curriculum including course books need to be considered. Teacher involvement in curriculum design should go far beyond the formal and nominal method adopted by the ministry, which is about involvement of a small number of teachers to sit on authoring and curriculum committees. This approach of teacher involvement in curriculum design is limited as it excludes most of the teachers from professional development opportunities. As the findings demonstrate, Omani teachers' lack pedagogical content knowledge. I therefore propose the adoption of a different strategy to involve teachers in curriculum design.

The strategy I propose is MoE to develop a detailed curriculum framework, which contains the necessary elements needed to guide teachers to “develop” and “create” their own teaching methods. This curriculum framework should be circulated into the schooling system and in higher education institutions in order to train teachers and student-teachers on how to use it in order to be able to develop their own teaching methods. As teachers in Oman lack expertise in this area and as a matter of support, the framework should make it clear to its users what content knowledge is for each grade and to provide examples of certain teaching methods, which possibly match different content, ought to be learned by learners and therefore, how to be assessed.

Additionally, the Teacher's Book for all grades needs to be flexible and have a different layout from the current ones. For example, it might provide a variety of suggestions for teaching methods matching certain content, which teachers can choose from if they wish or just make use of when they adapt their lessons. This option of selection from varieties needs to be stated explicitly in both the curriculum framework and Teacher's Books. In accordance with Masuhara et al (2008):

“We want a teacher's book which succinctly and clearly shows ways of effective and principled teaching that satisfies language learning theories. In our view, what teachers want are not prescriptions but good texts, advice, and suggestions so that they can personalize, localize, and adapt the global course books to suit their learners in their classrooms”.

Masuhara et al (2008, P. 311)

By adopting this strategy, teachers would still have their support from the curriculum/ Teacher's Book particularly newly qualified teachers, yet teachers would have the

flexibility to bring in their professional identity and make use of their professional knowledge to design their own curriculum/syllabus if they so wish. Only by allowing teachers to bring in their professional identity into their practice, will teachers feel relieved and autonomous to craft their own methods that match their learners' needs and abilities, and most importantly, achieve the content ought to be learned by students in a well-structured, systematic and planned mode that corresponds with the wider educational aims and goals. The current practice of discrete attempts by individual teachers to adapt and modify their lessons is incomplete because teachers adapt on a 'one-off' strategy. To adapt their lessons properly, teachers need to view the wider picture of learner achievement and view learning-teaching as a process not as isolated and discrete attempts of adaptations of lessons/ tasks that lead to nowhere.

To enhance the role of schools in the development of teachers practice, schools need to embrace some professional development sessions for teachers on curriculum and syllabus design. In addition, during the school day, time needs to be allocated for teachers to design and plan their lessons cooperatively with each other with the lead and support of the 'qualified' senior teachers.

For teachers to be able to reach the level of being autonomous and plan teaching methods that match the content they teach or in other words, to develop teacher pedagogical content knowledge, more parties need to be involved in this action to manage this change particularly teacher preparation institutions and teacher training programmes.

### Pre-service and In-service Teacher Training

The more teachers are informed about their inner selves and its interconnection with their developing professional identity, then the more knowledgeable they should become about the positive influences on their developing practice. Thus, concepts like teacher-self and TPI need to be present in teacher education programmes and teacher training courses.

As the emotional dimension is usually forgotten or neglected when professional standards are designed because the focus goes on skills and knowledge (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996 in Hargreaves 2000), the positive impact of teachers' emotions need to be utilised in teacher training and development programmes both through the pre-service teacher education and through in-service training courses.

The inclusion of syllabus design and lesson planning modules in teacher education and training programmes should specifically aim to develop teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and curriculum knowledge. This action would help teachers know why they adapt their lessons and how they can do this to ensure student learning. In addition to knowing about why and how to adapt their lessons, teachers would be able to select the teaching methods, which are suitable for the content to be learned by students. Finally, the development of teacher knowledge about educational values such as national aims and principles of education in their context would definitely benefit their practice and would ensure teachers' understanding of curriculum content.

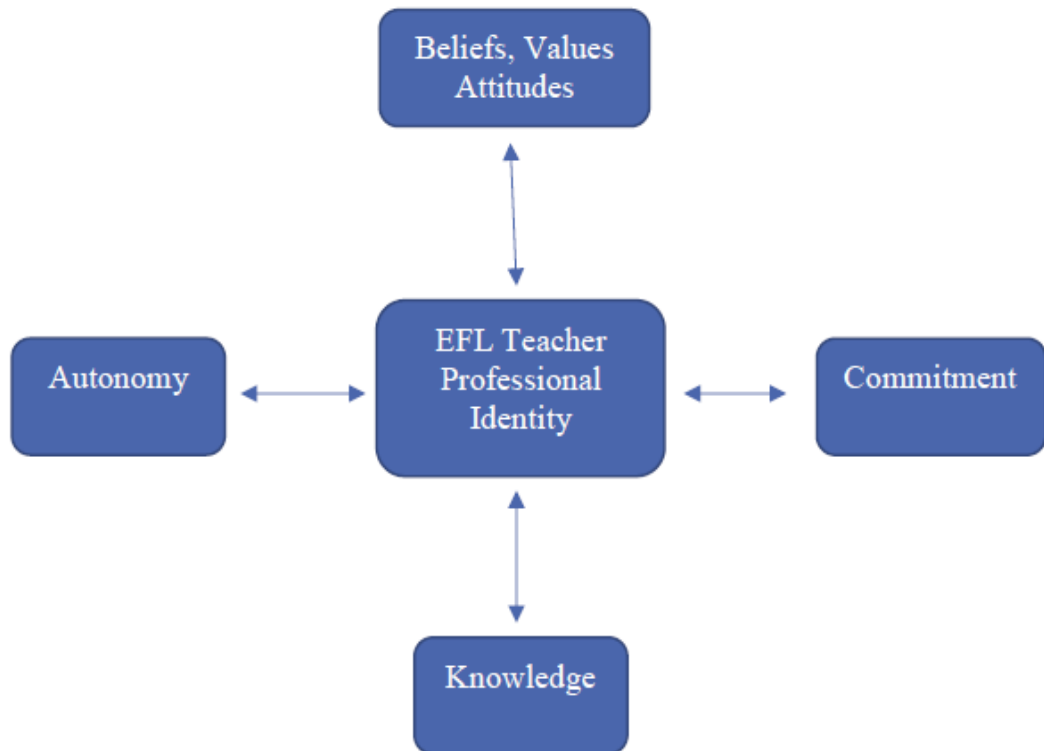
The practicum of teaching in higher education institutions such as universities needs to be longer than just split teaching experiences over one semester. According to Butcher (2000), mentor support needs to be incorporated into higher education institutions in a more formal and systematic way to ensure student-teacher professional development. The teaching practice of student teachers needs to be extended and planned systematically and followed up closely through proper mentoring programmes so that teachers develop appropriate practical professional knowledge.

### 7.3 Contribution of the Research

This research results in some theoretical and substantive contributions to the field of EFL/TESOL in relation to TPI.

Based on the fact that TPI is multifaceted and multidimensional, it is therefore challenging to observe. Indeed, more knowledge is added to the multidimensionality of this notion. This research contributes theoretical insights on the concept of TPI for L2 in EFL/TESOL contexts teachers by building on existing theories and theorising the components of this type of identity. This research presents a theoretical model for the components of TPI, which provides theoretical insights through which to research the concept of TPI. These components are intended to aid researchers in further study of teacher identity. The two models (Figure 7.1 and 7.2) present initially four and latterly six key components, which are found crucial to understandings of L2 TPI in EFL contexts.

The initially proposed model of L2 TPI in Figure 7.1 consists of four components: (1) beliefs, values and attitudes, (2) knowledge, (3) commitment and (4) autonomy.



*Figure 7.1:* A proposed conceptual model for L2 Teacher Professional Identity (TPI) components

The findings reveal that the proposed four components are found to be crucial for understanding L2 TPI. However, two new components have emerged from this research which link directly to non-native L2 teachers in EFL/TESOL contexts. These two elements are (5) religion and culture (6) emotions and personality traits.

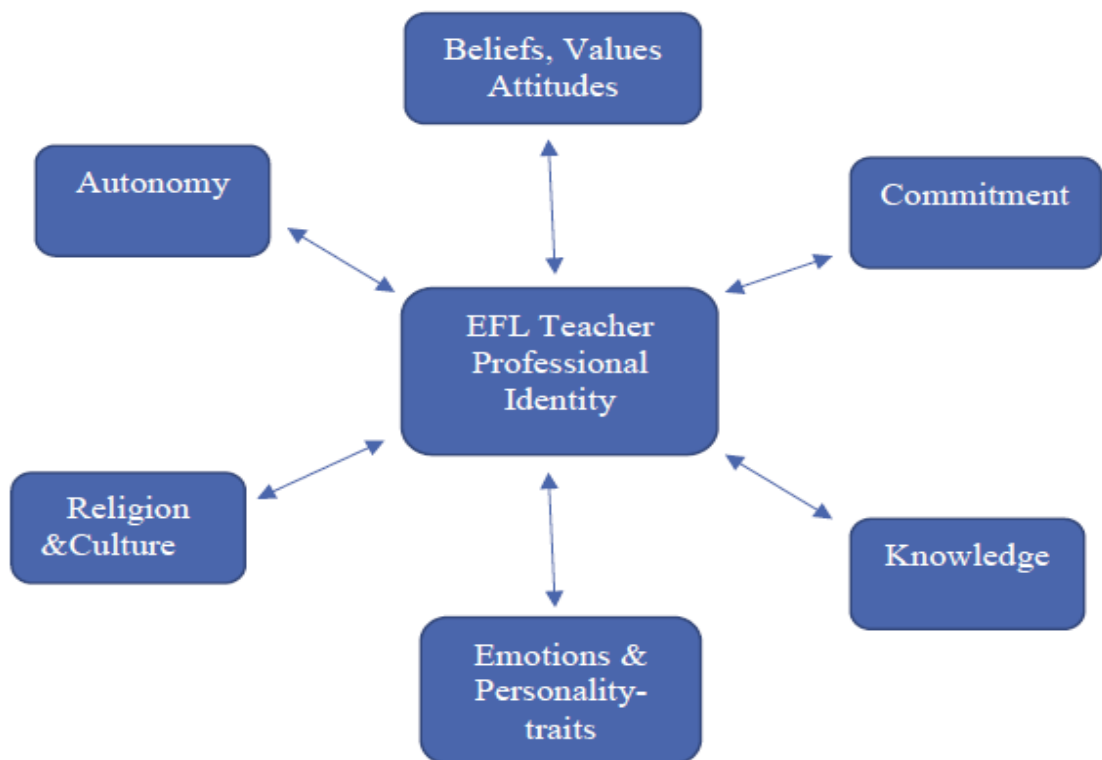


Figure 7.2: Components of L2 Teacher Professional Identity (TPI)

Based on the research findings, I argue that there are six components, which L2 TPI may consist of. The developed model (figure 7.2) shows the six components of L2 TPI as: (1) beliefs, values and attitudes, (2) commitment, (3) autonomy, (4) religion and culture, (5) emotions and personality traits, and (6) Knowledge. These components interact with each other and influence teachers' views of their professional identity.

To note, the proposed components model did not initially include 'emotions and personality traits' and 'religion and culture' as key components within teacher identity – as these were not anticipated as being of significance. However, the findings indicate clearly the interplay of 'emotions and personality traits' and 'religion and culture' as significant components for the development of L2 teacher's professional identity.

The addition of the two components, 'emotions and personality traits' and 'religion and culture' to this model reflects the fact that these two components emerged from the data and were not anticipated as the other components. The influence of teacher emotions together with their personality traits that are moulded with their Islamic and cultural beliefs and values was translated into actions towards their learners and teaching. These actions



were represented by the teachers' care, patience, motivation, enthusiasm and interest in learners' success and teaching of the English language.

The aim of this model (Figure 7.2) is to contribute to the field of ELT/ TESOL by providing observable insights into the components of TPI. The findings indicate that in addition to the necessity of having a certain level of baseline knowledge about teaching English, to being a committed teacher and to experience a degree of autonomy, L2 TPI is developed through the influences of teacher beliefs, attitudes, values, emotions, personality traits, faith and culture. All of these components are found to be present as part of the L2 TPI.

Additionally, individual teachers could use the components model to become aware of their professional identity as L2 teachers. This model may also be utilised in teacher education and teacher training programmes to unravel TPI.

The components model could also contribute to EFL knowledge in the wider Arab context as the components of TPI have arisen from within this culture and religion. Although culture and religion are considered as key components within teacher-self and TPI, they are also influential on teacher identity– correlated. This co-creation between components and influences opens doors for further research in relation to building further understandings of teacher-self and professional identity.

Moreover, the implications suggested in this research could be utilised to further develop pre-service teacher education programmes in higher education institutions and for the development of in-service teacher training courses both in Oman and beyond in similar educational and cultural contexts.

#### 7.4 Generalisability of the Research

This research took place in Muscat, the capital area of Oman where English is taught as a foreign language (TESOL/EFL). The participants were state school L2 teachers whose teaching experience was between six and over fifteen years when this research took place. The participant teachers represented the three stages of education in Oman as they taught in Cycle One, Cycle Two and Post-Basic education schools. The participant teachers share similar situations as other teachers in Oman from different governorates. For example, they get similar pre-service and in-service training programmes, they all

teach the same curriculum for each grade and implement similar assessment procedures. This means that based on this representative sample, the opportunity for generalisability of the findings to other governorates in Oman is quite high. Also, given similar circumstances, the findings could be applicable to other contexts outside of Oman, which share similar sociocultural contexts.

## 7.5 Limitations of the Research

The research effectively investigated the concept of TPI and the impact of curriculum prescription on professional identity in a non-Western country. However, as is commonly the case in research, there are a number of limitations that need to be addressed.

The limitations lie in this research being qualitative and small-scale with a limited number of participants from only one governorate in Oman. This constrains the scope of the findings to this context only. The other more specific limitations of this research are about the research sample and the data collection methods.

The key data collection method implemented in this research was focus group interviews with the participant teachers. One of the key issues linked to any group interviews including focus group interviews is the influence of the participants' views on each other. For example, when I asked the teachers in the first group to tell me about the type of teacher, they see themselves as, their replies may have influenced those of other's and resulted in similarities to the first participant's view.

I endeavoured to avoid the same issue with all the other groups by asking the participants to individually and silently construct an answer to each question before speaking. Another technique I used was for the participants to write down their views about this question before opening the floor for discussion. The results worked well with these alternative techniques with replies that reflected an increase in teacher differences.

However, although some participant views appeared as similar, difference in the rationale for the responses remained. Besides, it is an unknown as to whether listening to other's views may or may not change the original views of each participant.

The other issue that links to the use of focus groups was having dominant participants. This happened in one of the focus groups. I dealt with this issue by using techniques such

as thanking the dominant participant and naming another person to move the discussion forward.

Another limitation of this study was the sample, which did not include new teachers whose experience is between 1-5 years. This group of teachers were unreachable for various reasons as discussed in the methodology chapter. Having this group of new teachers in the sample, might or might have not changed the findings of this research.

## 7.6 Recommendations for Future Research

This research opens the agenda for further research in EFL contexts and particularly in Oman and other Gulf countries or the Arab world.

Since English is largely taught in EFL contexts by non-native speakers of the L2, more research on TPI needs to be completed in these contexts. EFL teachers face various challenges concerning the teaching of the English language, and therefore there is a need for ongoing research within the arena of teacher-self and professional identity. For example, English teachers' language proficiency levels have been identified as one of the challenges that face EFL TPI (Copland et al, 2014). Particularly relevant in this regard is the study by Al-Lamki (2009) who observed that the language level of the English curriculum in Basic Education was challenging for teachers of English due to their proficiency levels. This evidences the need for more research on the concept of TPI and in particular, teacher professional knowledge and language proficiency levels.

One of the limitations of this research is its exclusion of new teachers, thus further research needs to be carried out in Oman on new teachers' professional identity and to explore the impact of curriculum prescription on them.

Based on the research findings, teacher gender needs to be further explored in relation to gendered views on the role of teachers of English. It would be interesting to conduct some research to explore the difference between school boys and girls and why female students outperform their male counterparts.

Moreover, the influence of culture and religion on L2 teachers' professional identity in non-Western countries is another obscure area in the field of TESOL. How teachers' religious

beliefs impact on their teaching of the English language, might build upon the findings discovered in this research and ensure continuity.

Another area that is a prerequisite for investigation is the impact of curriculum prescription on teacher professional knowledge. Although this research explores teacher professional knowledge as one of the components of TPI, it does not specifically target this type of knowledge. As the findings demonstrate that teachers possess limited pedagogical content knowledge regardless of their teaching experience, the area of teacher professional knowledge becomes a critical issue for further investigation.

### The Step Forward

The value of 'digging deeper' into L2 TPI is like diving into the depth of the teacher's inner-self and observing its influence, control and impact upon teacher practice. Teacher's professional identity plays a dual role as an 'influencer' on their practice and as being 'influenced' by cognitive and sociocultural factors. This demonstrates the key role of the sociocultural factors in the development of TPI and, in particular, the importance of the values and beliefs that teachers hold, which shape both their own professional identity and by implication, the futures of the young learners that they teach.

The alignment between curriculum requirements and TPI lead to the development of deep professional knowledge and to greater understandings of the 'bigger picture' of the overall learning-teaching process. Without such alignment, teachers remain disadvantaged and their efforts to professionalise their work remain unjustified and inadequate.

The step forward towards alignment is to trust in teachers' autonomy to use their expertise to influence and improve their lessons. To achieve this outcome requires accountability systems in teacher preparation and training needs to be activated. The continuity with 'the norm' of curriculum prescription and the avoidance of enabling teachers in decision-making should not be postponed. For teachers to make informed professional decisions they need opportunities to collaborate in supportive and professional learning environments.

The step forward is not by the adoption of the 'lip service' in allowing teachers discrete opportunities for lesson adaptation. Instead, the way forward is by allowing teachers to

plan their overall aims for their learners' school year and work on developing pedagogically driven practices, which facilitate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. In doing so, teachers are not only meeting the needs of their learners but also working for a better educational future.

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## APPENDICES

The following table shows the elements of education for the academic years 2011/2012 and 2014/2015:

<i>Academic-year</i> <i>Edu/items</i>	11/12	14/15	Percentage growth(11-14)
schools	1040	1048	0.77
classes	19406	19450	0.23
students	517053	523522	1.25
teachers	51811	56211	8.49
Administrators	9057	11606	28

Appendix 2 Focus group interview guide

Questioning route	Question	Type of question & purpose	Areas investigated	Tool used
Opening	<p>Tell me.....</p> <p>your name</p> <p>how long have you worked as teacher</p> <p>about your school ( type, size.....)</p> <p>classes you teach</p>	<p>Descriptive :</p> <p>General opening information</p> <p>Factual information about individuals</p>		
Introductory  (the professional self/identity)	I am the type of teacher who.....	<p>Contrast:</p> <p>To help them think about extreme issues (themselves as teachers)</p>	<p>Beliefs about how they see themselves as professionals (Who am I?) (What is my role?)</p> <p>responsibility and commitment.</p> <p>Reflection on their roles as teachers</p>	Self-reflection

Transition  (the professional self/identity)	What made you or helped you become who you are now or become the teacher you just described?	Evaluative:  To enable them to make judgements  Contrast:  To help them think about extreme issues  Evaluative:  To enable them to make judgements	Beliefs about how they see themselves as professionals (Who am I?)  What contributes to make that professional self	Self-reflection  Turning point or critical stages
	Think about the curriculum you teach, what role has this curriculum played in making you who you are today?	Evaluative:  To enable them to make judgements	Beliefs about how they see themselves as professionals (Who am I?)  What contributes to make that professional self	Self-reflection  Turning point/ critical stages
	How different are you as a teacher now from when you first started teaching?	Evaluative:  To enable them to make judgements	Beliefs about how they see themselves as professionals (Who am I?)	Think back & Self-reflection



	Probes  What differences?  What has helped you do/ achieve that?		self- image  What contributes to make that professional self/identity	
Key  ( standardised curriculum & professional identity)	Think about a lesson you taught recently (yesterday or the day before), what did the learners in your class learn? How do you know that they did so? How do you teach .....?  Think about a lesson you taught twice or more than once. What has changed each time you taught it? Why? How?	Evaluative:  To enable them to make judgements  Contrast:  To help them think about extreme issues (learning & teaching)	Knowledge about learning and teaching, content and pedagogy that is based on educational theory and research.  Teachers conception of teaching and learning	Setting situations & think back  Reflections on their roles as teachers  /recall using instances  verbalizing theoretical and practical knowledge
	What do you do in order to develop yourself professionally?  How do you see your professional future?	Contrast:  To help them think about extreme issues (professional development)	Job motivation  Responsibilities & commitment.	Self-reflection

<p>On a 1-5 scale, with 1 being strongly agree and 5 strongly disagree, how do you rank the role of the curriculum you teach in providing you with opportunities to develop professionally?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>How?</p>	<p>Evaluative:</p> <p>To enable them to make judgements</p>	<p>Beliefs &amp; values about the impact of and the role of the prescribed curriculum in their professional development</p> <p>Responsibilities &amp; commitment.</p>	<p>Likert-type self-report scales</p> <p>Self-reflection</p> <p>Targeted questions concerning a specific area/ topic</p>
<p>What are the specific benefits you got from the curriculum you teach?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>How?</p>	<p>Circular:</p> <p>to help them think about meta – thinking</p> <p>Evaluative:</p> <p>To enable them to make judgements</p>	<p>Knowledge</p> <p>Beliefs &amp; values</p> <p>Autonomy</p>	<p>Self-reflection</p> <p>Targeted questions concerning a specific area/ topic</p>
<p>What, if anything is particularly frustrating or unsatisfying about using the curriculum you</p>	<p>Circular:</p> <p>to help them think about meta – thinking</p>	<p>Knowledge</p> <p>Beliefs &amp; values</p>	<p>Self-reflection</p>

	<p>teach?</p> <p>How these might be addressed.</p>	<p>Evaluative:</p> <p>To enable them to make judgements</p>	<p>Autonomy</p>	<p>Targeted questions concerning a specific area/ topic</p>
	<p>Have you got any ideas about alternative types of curriculum(s)?</p> <p>What would that look like?</p> <p>What would be different?</p>	<p>Contrast:</p> <p>To help them think about extreme issues (alternative curriculums)</p>	<p>Knowledge</p> <p>Beliefs &amp; values</p> <p>Autonomy (decision making)</p> <p>Responsibilities &amp; commitment</p>	<p>Self-reflection</p>
Ending	<p>If you had a chance to modify the curriculum you teach? How would you change it? What would you change?</p>	<p>Contrast:</p> <p>To help them think about extreme issues</p>	<p>Knowledge</p> <p>Beliefs &amp; values</p> <p>Commitment &amp; responsibility</p>	<p>Setting situations</p>

			Autonomy	
	Is there anything else you would like to say or add that you didn't get the chance to say earlier or anything that I have missed about our topic of discussion today?	Round up		

### Appendix 3 Semi-structured interviews guide

No	Question	Type of question	Purpose of question/action
		Introduction about the research topic and aims.	To put the participants at ease.  To introduce the topic, the type of questions will be asked and to remind them of confidentiality
1	Tell me about your  Job title Qualifications background	Introductory questions	To get them started in a less threatening way.
2	Could you give an overall idea about the current English language curriculum that is being used by teachers nationwide?	Grand tour question	For the participants to give a verbal explanation about something that is very familiar to them.
3	What does a prescribed curriculum mean to you?	direct language question         Probing questions	To get the reply in the participants own words/own way of describing something         To follow up what they said and to get more details about the point being discussed

4	<p>Based on your experience, what have been the benefits of using this type of curriculum for you as a teacher?</p> <p>What are the features/ factors involved in this type of curriculum that support teacher professional development?</p>	<p>Grand tour question</p> <p>Probing questions</p>	<p>For the participants to give a verbal explanation about something that is very familiar to them.</p> <p>To follow up what they said and to get more details about the point being discussed</p>
5	<p>How do you see the teacher's role in using this type of curriculum?</p> <p>What was your role when you were a teacher using this type of curriculum?</p>	<p>Structuring question</p> <p>Probing questions</p>	<p>Moving the discussion to a new topic/ area [ teacher role in using the curriculum]</p> <p>To follow up what they said and to get more details about the point being discussed</p>
6	<p>Do you think the current curriculum help develop teacher autonomy? How?</p> <p>Can explain that please? Can</p>	<p>Structuring direct question</p>	<p>Moving the discussion to a new topic/ area [Teacher autonomy]</p> <p>To get the reply in the</p>

	you give an example, please?	Probing questions	participants own words/own way of describing something  To follow up what they said and to get more details about the point being discussed
7	Have you got any ideas about alternative types of curriculum(s)?  What would that look like?  What would be different?	Follow up questions  Probing questions	To elaborate on the participants initial answers  To follow up what they said and to get more details about the point being discussed
8	What do you think are the three most important roles and responsibilities of teachers?	Structuring question  Probing questions	Moving the discussion to a new topic/ area [Teacher commitment & responsibilities]  To follow up what they said and to get more details about the point being discussed

9	If you were to modify the learning and teaching approach within the Ministry, with regards prescribed curriculum, what would you do?	Hypothetical interaction  Probing questions	To get the reply in the participants own word/ own way of describing something  To follow up what they said and to get more details about the point being discussed
10	Do you have any other views/thoughts about the issues we discussed today?	Closing question	To round up the discussion and allow the opportunity for the participant to add to what they have said during the interview



## Appendix 4 Pilot focus group interview

### **Welcome:**

Good morning/afternoon. I would like to welcome you to this session today and to thank you for agreeing to take part in my research.

### **Introduction:**

I am Fawziya Al Zadjali, a PhD student at the school of Education and Childhood at the University of Leeds Metropolitan in the UK.

### **Purpose of the focus group interview:**

I am researching the impact of the centralized and prescribed curriculum upon the development of teachers' professional identity. You have been asked to contribute to this focus group because you meet the criteria in terms of age, gender and teaching experience. Also, I would like to know your views on today's subject and want you to share your thoughts and understandings of the issues raised with each other.

### **Ground rules:**

- There are no right or wrong answers. All views are important. Please feel free to express your views even if you think they are negative.
- Please try and give the chance to others to express their views.
- Say your name first then give your view. I assure you again that none of your names will be written in the research thesis.
- I am recording this session, so please speak in a clear voice and be loud enough to be recorded. I am recording because I want to record everything you say and not miss any part of it.

- All mobile phones must be off or kept on silent please. If you feel that you need to answer an urgent call that you can't miss please leave the room quietly to get your call and come again to the session.
- Please feel free to help yourself with the refreshments throughout the session.

Let's get started now, first I would like you to introduce yourself by saying your name and telling us briefly about your school, the classes you teach and your teaching experience years.

Focus group interview No \_\_\_\_\_

No	Name	Teaching experience	School (type, size...)	Classes taught	Title/ Other
1					
2					
3					
4					

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No	Questions	Participant 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6
1	Can you finish this statement,  I am the type of teacher who.....						
2	Think about a lesson you taught recently (yesterday or the day before), what did the learners in						

	your class learn? How do you know that they did so?						
3	How do you feel about using a centralised and prescribed curriculum?						

4	How do you see your role using this kind of prescribed and centralised curriculum?						
5	On a 1-5 scale, with 1 being strongly agree and 5 strongly disagree, how do you rank the role of this type of curriculum in providing you with opportunities to develop						

	<p>professionally ?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>How?</p>						
6	<p>What are the strengths of using this type of curriculum for you as a teacher?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>How?</p>						

7	<p>What, if anything is particularly frustrating or unsatisfying about using this type of curriculum?</p> <p>How it might be addressed.</p>						
---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

8	<p>Would you rather have a less detailed/prescribed curriculum than the current one?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>How?</p>						
9	<p>If you had a chance to modify the learning and teaching approach at the Ministry.....</p> <p>What would you do?</p>						



	<p>What would you do to the curriculum?</p> <p>How would you change it?</p> <p>What would you change?</p>						
10	<p>Is there anything else you would like to say or add that you didn't get the chance to say earlier or anything that I have missed</p>						

	about topic discussion today?	our of						
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## Appendix 5 Stage 1 Focus group interview questions

### **Welcome:**

Good morning/afternoon. I would like to welcome you to this session today and to thank you for agreeing to take part in my research.

### **Introduction:**

I am Fawziya Al Zadjali, a PhD student at the school of Education and Childhood at the University of Leeds Metropolitan in the UK.

### **Purpose of the focus group interview:**

I am researching the impact of the centralised and prescribed curriculum upon the development of teachers' professional identity. You have been asked to contribute to this focus group because you meet the criteria in terms of age, gender and teaching experience. Also, I would like to know your views on today's subject and want you to share your thoughts and understandings of the issues raised with each other.

### **Ground rules:**

- There are no right or wrong answers. All views are important. Please feel free to express your views even if you think they are negative.
- Please try and give the chance to others to express their views.
- Say your name first then give your view. I assure you again that none of your names will be written in the research thesis.
- I am recording this session, so please speak in a clear voice and be loud enough to be recorded. I am recording because I want to record everything you say and not miss any part of it.
- All mobile phones must be off or kept on silent please. If you feel that you need to answer an urgent call that you can't miss please leave the room quietly to get your call and come again to the session.
- Please feel free to help yourself with the refreshments throughout the session.

Let's get started now, first I would like you to introduce yourself by saying your name and telling us briefly about your school, the classes you teach and your teaching experience years.

Focus group interview No \_\_\_\_\_

No	Name	Teaching experience	School (type, size...)	Classes taught	Title/ Other
1					
2					
3					

4					

No	Question	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
1	I am the type of teacher who.....				
2	What made you or helped you become who you are now or become the teacher you just described?				
3	Think about the centralised and prescribed curriculum that you teach, what role has this curriculum played in making you who you are today?				

4	How different are you as a teacher now from when you first started teaching?				
5	Think about a lesson you taught recently (yesterday or the day before), what did the learners in your class				

	<p>learn?</p> <p>How do you know that they did so?</p>				
6	<p>What do you do in order to develop yourself professionally?</p>				

7	<p>On a 1-5 scale, with 1 being strongly agree and 5 strongly disagree, how do you rank the role of this type of curriculum in providing you with opportunities to develop professionally?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>How?</p>				
8	<p>What are the specific benefits you got from this type of curriculum?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>How?</p>				



9	<p>What, if anything is particularly frustrating or unsatisfying about using this type of curriculum?</p> <p>How these might be addressed.</p>				
10	<p>Have you got any ideas about alternative types of curriculum(s)?</p> <p>What would that look like?</p> <p>What would be different</p>				

. 11	<p>If you had a chance to modify the learning and teaching approach at the Ministry.....</p> <p>What would you do?</p> <p>What would you do to the curriculum?</p> <p>How would you change it?</p> <p>What would you change?</p>				
. 12	<p>Is there anything else you would like to say or add that you didn't get the chance to say earlier or anything that I have missed about our topic of discussion today?</p>				

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استمارة طلب تسهيل خدمة بحثية

ملحق رقم (٢)

تاريخ الطلب

رقم الطلب

مقدم الطلب: فوزية محمد عبد الله الزيداني  
 الوظيفة: مديرة مكتب دراسات وتطوير المناهج  
 الجامعة: ليزمستروبوليان البريانية  
 جهة العمل: المديرية العامة لتطوير المناهج  
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 الهاتف: 99475044/01454 013052  
 إجراء دراسة حول:

المناجح المعطلة

وذلك بهدف الحصول على:

درجة الماجستير  
 درجة الدكتوراه  
 أخرى، تذكر:

وأود أن أطبق دراستي/بحثي في محافظة/منطقة:

مسقط  
 ظفار  
 الداخلية  
 الشرقية شمال  
 الباطنة جنوب  
 البريمي  
 الشرقية جنوب  
 الظاهرة  
 الوسطى

مديريات ديوان عام الوزارة:

(يرجى تحديد المديرية في الوزارة)  
 المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم بصحراء  
 المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم بصحراء  
 المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم بصحراء

عليه يرجى التكرم بتوفير الخدمة الآتية: (اختر واحدة أو أكثر)

المساعدة في الحصول على بيانات  
 المساعدة في تطبيق أدوات الدراسة  
 خدمة أخرى، تذكر: رسالة للتواصل مع المدارس بشكل شخصي من الجامعة

علما بأنني وصلت في دراستي/بحثي إلى مرحلة:

تحديد العنوان أو المشكلة  
 استخراج النتائج وتفسيرها  
 تطبيق أدوات الدراسة  
 بناء المخطط أو الأدوات البحثية

 جمع البيانات أو المعلومات حول موضوع الدراسة

أرجو التكرم بالإسراع فيما يستعمله من أجل إعداد الرسالة وذلك  
 لأنني أعوم بجمع البيانات في بداية شهر إبريل الحالي 2014  
 ولكم جزيل التحية  
 \* نسخة من استمارة الطلب في سجل الوارد.



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14<sup>th</sup> January 2014

**To whom it may concern,**

I am writing to request your cooperation and support for one of our Doctoral Students, Mrs. Fawziya Hamdan Abdullah Al Zadjali. Mrs. Al Zadjali first enrolled as a PhD student in the School of Education and Childhood at our University in February 2013. Her work receives funding support from the Government of Oman and to date, she has successfully completed the first year of her studies. She has now reached the data collection stage of her research into the impact of the centralized and prescribed curriculum on Omani teachers' professional identity development and therefore I would appreciate your cooperation and support with this next stage of her study.

Mrs. Al Zadjali's research plan, which received ethical approval by the University Research Ethics Committee in January 2014, requires her to conduct focus group interviews with both male and female Omani teachers from all levels (Cycle One, Cycle Two and Post Basic education). These individuals would be English as well as Arabic specialist language teachers and all findings would be reported anonymously within her thesis. Therefore neither schools nor individuals interviewed in the course of this research would be identifiable in her study, either by name or by context. Additionally Mrs. Al Zadjali also wishes to conduct a small number of semi-structured interviews with employees of the Ministry of Education in Oman. She is planning to conduct all of these interviews associated with her doctoral research during April 2014.

Therefore, I, as Mrs. Al Zadjali's Director of Studies and my colleague Dr Caroline Bligh as her research supervision team, would appreciate your support in accessing participants at the Ministry of Education in Oman and request that you also provide Mrs. Al Zadjali with a letter enabling her to enter the schools that she has identified in her research plan so as to interview a small selection of their teachers.

Your cooperation in this matter would be highly appreciated and I thank you on behalf of Mrs. Al Zadjali's supervision team and Leeds Metropolitan University, in anticipation of your cooperation with this request. If you have any queries relating to this research or the data gathering protocols associated with this request, please do not hesitate to contact me at [n.sutcliffe@leedsmet.ac.uk](mailto:n.sutcliffe@leedsmet.ac.uk)

Yours faithfully,

**Dr Nick MG Sutcliffe**

Director of Studies & Principal Lecturer – The School of Education and Childhood

## Appendix 8 Stage 2 focus group interview questions

### **Focus group interviews guide**

#### **Welcome:**

Good morning/afternoon. I would like to welcome you to this session today and to thank you for agreeing to take part in my research.

#### **Introduction:**

I am Fawziya Al Zadjali, a PhD student at the school of Education and Childhood at the University of Leeds Metropolitan in the UK.

#### **Purpose of the focus group interview:**

I am researching the impact of the centralized and prescribed curriculum upon the development of teachers' professional identity. You have been asked to contribute to this focus group because you meet the criteria in terms of age, gender and teaching experience. Also, I would like to know your views on today's subject and want you to share your thoughts and understandings of the issues raised with each other.

#### **Ground rules:**

- There are no right or wrong answers. All views are important. Please feel free to express your views even if you think they are negative.
- Please try and give the chance to others to express their views.
- Say your name first then give your view. I assure you again that none of your names will be written in the research thesis.
- I am recording this session, so please speak in a clear voice and be loud enough to be recorded. I am recording because I want to record everything you say and not miss any part of it.

- All mobile phones must be off or kept on silent please. If you feel that you need to answer an urgent call that you can't miss please leave the room quietly to get your call and come again to the session.
- Please feel free to help yourself with the refreshments throughout the session.

Let's get started now, first I would like you to introduce yourself by saying your name and telling us briefly about your school, the classes you teach and your teaching experience years.

Focus group interview No \_\_\_\_\_

No	Name	Teaching experience	School (type, size...) Other	Classes taught
1				
2				
3				

4				
5				
6				



7				

Participants	Q.1. I am the type of teacher who.....



Participants	Q.2. What made you or helped you become who you are now or become the teacher you just described?



Participants	Q.3. Think about the centralised and prescribed curriculum that you teach, what role has this curriculum played in making you who you are today?



Participants	Q. 4. What are the specific benefits you got from this type of curriculum? Why? How?





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Participants	Q. 5. What, if anything is particularly frustrating or unsatisfying about using this type of curriculum? How these might be addressed.



Participants	Q. 6. Think about a lesson you taught recently (yesterday or the day before), what did the learners in your class learn? How do you know that they did so?



Participants	Q. 7. Have you adapted it? Why? What did you do differently?
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Participants	Q. 8. Do you think the current curriculum help develop teacher autonomy? How?



Participants	Q. 9. How do you see your role using this type of curriculum? Why?



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Participants	Q. 10. What are your responsibilities as a teacher? Why?





Participants	Is there anything else you would like to say or add that you didn't get the chance to say earlier or anything that I have missed about our topic of discussion today?



## Appendix 9 Ethical approval

FOR PROJECTS INVOLVING RISK CATEGORY 2 AND 3: DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE/S			
<b>APPLICANT (STUDENT/STAFF MEMBER/RESEARCHER)</b>			
<i>I confirm that I will undertake this project as detailed in stage one and stage two of the application. I understand that I must abide by the terms of this approval and that I may not make any substantial amendments to the project without further approval. I understand that research with human participants or their data must not commence without ethical approval.</i>			
I have read an appropriate professional or learned society code of ethical practice:		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Where applicable, give the name of the professional or learned society:		BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research	
<i>Signed</i>	Fawziya	<i>Date</i>	26/09/2013

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR/DIRECTOR OF STUDIES RECOMMENDATION FOR STUDENT PROJECTS					
<i>I confirm that I have read stage one and stage two of the application. The project is viable and the student has appropriate skills to undertake the project. Where applicable, the Participant Information Sheet and recruitment procedures for obtaining informed consent are appropriate and the ethical issues arising from the project have been addressed in the application. I understand that research with human participants must not commence without ethical approval. I recommend this project for approval.</i>					
<i>Name</i>	Dr N M Sutcliffe	<i>Signed</i>		<i>Date</i>	26/09/2013

### Local Research Ethics Co-ordinators

Please complete EITHER A (giving ethical approval for the project) OR B (recommending the project to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee for approval)

<b>A LOCAL RESEARCH ETHICS CO-ORDINATOR APPROVAL</b>					
<i>For projects approved by the Local Research Ethics Co-ordinator</i>					
<i>I confirm ethical approval for this project</i>					
<i>LREC Name</i>	Dr DP White	<i>Signed</i>	DP White	<i>Date</i>	15/10/13

Appendix 10 Participant consent form

*Participant Consent form*

Centralized Prescribed Curriculum and Teacher Professional Identity Development

Please read and tick the following statements .

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and understand what is expected of me.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I understand that my participation is completely voluntary.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I give my consent to be audio and /or video-taped during the interview and recognise that the recordings will be erased later.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I understand that if I change my mind later, I can withdraw from the research at any stage I wish without having to provide any reasons for my action and my data will not be used.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I understand that my name will not be mentioned in this study.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I confirm that I have been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study, and my questions answered to my full satisfaction.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I understand that the findings from this study may be published.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I agree to take part in this study.</li> </ul>	

Participants name	
Signature	Date
Signature of researcher	
This research project is supervised by Dr Nick Sutcliffe and Dr Caroline Bligh. Leeds Metropolitan University. UK	
Researcher's contact details :	
<b>Fawziya Hamdan Al Zadjali</b> <a href="mailto:f.alzadjali7772@student.leedsmet.ac.uk">f.alzadjali7772@student.leedsmet.ac.uk</a>	
<b>Independent University contact</b> <b>Dr. David White</b> Senior Lecturer 01138127313 <a href="mailto:d.p.white@leedsmet.ac.uk">d.p.white@leedsmet.ac.uk</a>	

## Appendix 11 Participant information sheet

**Participant Information Sheet**  
**Leeds Metropolitan University, UK**  
**Centralized Prescribed Curriculum and Teacher Professional Identity Development**

You are invited to take part in this small scale research project. Before you agree to take part in this research, you are advised highly to read the information provided below carefully. Please feel free to discuss the information with others and ask for any clarification if needed.

**Why is this research being carried out?**

This study forms part of a PhD project. It aims to explore the impact of the centralized and prescribed curriculum on Omani teachers' professional identity development.

**Why have you been selected to take part?**

You have been selected to take part in this research because you meet the criteria set for this study. These criteria are related to age, teaching experience and gender.

**Is it compulsory to take part?**

Your participation is voluntary and you are not obliged to take part. If you agree to take part and later change your mind, you can withdraw from the research at any stage you wish without having to provide any reasons for your action and your data will not be used.

**What will happen if you agree to take part?**

You will be invited to take part in a video and/ or audio taped focus group interview consisting of 4 mixed gender participants with similar age and years of experience to you. I will ask for your opinions about the curriculum you teach, your experience as a teacher and about your feelings and views. I will also ask you about the implications the curriculum has on your professional development. I will facilitate the discussion.

**How long will it take?**

Between 30 minutes to an hour.

**What will happen to the information you provide?**

The information you provide will be kept safe with me in a locked cabinet at the University until the end of my study. The data will be kept with me for at least 10 years and will be completely destroyed after that. I will get rid of the data by erasing all of the recordings. The interviews will be transcribed and analysed using codes or themes. Your names will be kept anonymous. The findings will be written in the PhD thesis and may also be published at a later stage in academic journals, books or websites. The findings may also be shared with other educationalists in seminars and conferences.

**Will your privacy be secured?**

Your name will not be used in the study thesis. I will use codes and different names to associate with your responses.

**Will you benefit from taking part?**

Participation will give you the chance to contribute and share your thoughts, ideas and understandings with other practitioners in reflective ways.

**What to do now**

If you agree to take part in this research, please sign the attached consent form.

Should you require further information about this study and your role, please contact me:

Fawziya Hamdan Al Zadjali

[f.alzadjali7772@student.leedsmet.ac.uk](mailto:f.alzadjali7772@student.leedsmet.ac.uk)

## Appendix 12 Sequential steps in the analysis process

1	<b>Data preparation</b>	<p>Familiarisation with the data/ reading notes, listening to recordings...etc./ Decisions about transcription type Preparation of transcripts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transcript lines were numbered using word process</li> <li>• Printed each transcript in a different colour</li> <li>• Used a matrix on A3 sheets for each interview question</li> </ul>
2	<b>Coding</b>	<p>Read the first transcript regarding Q 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manually wrote the line number that answers the question</li> <li>• Manually wrote a code / a comment/ a phrase that described it</li> <li>• Electronically copied and pasted exact speech that answered each question and typed my comments.</li> <li>• Kept a review and a discard pile</li> </ul> <p>Did the same for each and every question.</p>
3	<b>Data organisation</b>	<p>Read through the comments/ answers to each question and looked for patterns, similarities/ differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grouped together the comments/ answers that were similar/ alike or repeated.</li> <li>• Wrote a summary to describe what each group of teachers said to answer each question.</li> </ul> <p>Compared and contrasted between and across the focus groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrote similarities and differences between groups for each answer they gave for all questions.</li> </ul>
4	<b>Interpretation</b>	<p>What the findings say?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read through the codes and the descriptive summaries I wrote for each group.</li> <li>• Looked for categories/ cut-cross issues/ repeated comments/ innovative comments</li> <li>• Themes were formed based on the above point</li> </ul> <p>Separation between me and my data for some time</p> <p>Wrote the analysis findings based on the themes discovered using exact speech/quotes from the participants and my summaries.</p>

Appendix 13 Summary of teaching tasks

Male 6-14	Task content	Evidence of learning	Type of modification	comments
	Reading vocab from story & story setting	Students did the focus reading	Each group to write their questions and teacher collects these later	Similar to teacher book instructions
	Grammar use of linking words	Students write their own examples or sentences	Elicited examples from students and wrote these on the board  Advice to finish it at home	Similar to teacher book instructions
	Grammar - present perfect continuous	Students gave their own examples or sentences	Grammar translation method	Similar to teacher book instructions
	Reading –read and answer questions (reading for specific information)	Students answer the questions given	prepared some questions not the ones included in the curriculum	Content and teaching strategy mismatch  by letting students understand all of the details in the text instead of depending on themselves to read for specific information.
Female 6-14	Task content	Evidence of learning	Type of modification	comments
	Reading instructions and matching them with pictures.  Listening?	One lesson dedicated for reading the instruction	Made it authentic in class (pan cakes)	Related task to learner real lives  The lesson took 2 lessons instead of one-
	Vocabulary about sports Sorting sports words into two categories	Vocabulary learned	searched for videos and pictures to demonstrate each sport and associated each sport with a picture	Content and teaching strategy mismatch
	Grammar How to make sentences using past simple  They have to complete examples and then the rule	Students could write sentences in past tense	Searched YouTube for how best to teach past tense Students to write sentences about pictures	Similar to teachers book instructions
	Vocabulary Civilizations Skimming text and answering questions	Students read the text and got information about civilisations	Asked learners to read the text at home Distributed the text between learners each to read a section. Asked learners to bring pictures for the new words new and write their meanings	Content and teaching strategy mismatch
	Listening and answering questions	Students answered the questions	brought a video of a conversation between 2 people	Content and teaching strategy mismatch
Female 15+	Task content	Evidence of learning	Type of modification	Comments
	Listening and Speaking Argument words about the topic of	Learners used the argument words	Changed the topic to girls camping in Jebeal Akhdhar ( a mountain in Oman)	Related task to learner real lives



	environment			
	Reading and matching about "Salalah" a place in Oman	Learners wrote a paragraph	Changed it to speaking then writing	Content and teaching strategy mismatch
	Reading a paragraph about famous people in order to plan for writing	Learners discussed the person in their groups and teacher elicited vocabulary. Then they wrote a paragraph about their person.	Gave learners some pictures about famous people and asked them to choose one of them.	Content and teaching strategy mismatch from reading and the plan for writing to speaking and writing
Male 15+	Task content	Evidence of learning	Type of modification	Comments
	Vocabulary Abbreviations on mobile phones	Learners gave more abbreviations	Adapted without consulting the teachers book . Adapted by giving 2 or 3 abbreviations and asked learners to come up with more	Related task to learner real lives
	Grammar simple present tense	Learners gave the words successfully and understood	asked learners to share their own experiences on football and how they are going to do it. Then followed teachers book	Related task to learner real lives
	Grammar second conditional	Students understood in less time	Gave examples to learners and elicited more from them	Similar to teacher book instructions
	Writing emails	Students sent real emails to the teacher	asked learners to send him an email	Related task to learner real lives
	Grammar first conditional	Learners gave examples of first conditional	started the lesson with a song he prepared on the first conditional and then asked them to give examples	Related task to learner needs and interest

Gender	Similar to teacher book instructions	Content and teaching strategy mismatch	Related task to learners real lives
Male 6-14 years	3	1	
Female 6-14 years	1	3	1
Male 15+ years	1		4
Female 15+ years		2	1