

**Exploring the Role of Muslim Faith-based Schools of Birmingham in Meeting
the Religious, Cultural and Educational Needs of Muslim Children and the
Expectations of Parents**

An Empirical Case Study

By

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Abstract

This research explored the role of Muslim faith-based schools in the culturally and religiously diverse city of Birmingham in meeting the religious, cultural and educational needs of Muslim children and the expectations of their parents. The economy- focus post-Second World War mass migration to Europe has acted as the key catalyst for the modern Muslim presence in the UK and wider Europe. While Muslim communities came from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds, Islam has defined their collective identities. With the joining of their families, the first generation of British Muslims have begun to realise the challenges of maintaining Islamic values and identities among their offspring who were growing up within an overall secular and multicultural society. This has marked the establishment of Mosques, community centres and most crucially faith-based Islamic school in the UK.

The relevance and desirability of faith-based schooling in general and Muslim schooling in particular has come under a close security in the UK. This study focused on the case of Muslim schooling within the context of multi-faith and multicultural city of Birmingham. The study explored parental motives behind the choice of Islamic schools, their distinctive educational ethos and how they address the challenge of helping Muslim children integrate into the wider multicultural British society.

The study adopted an empirical research methodology through utilising a mixed-methods research design to investigate its key questions. The main data collection tools were survey, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The study sample included 133

parents, 36 students who graduated from schools and 33 teachers and governors running Muslim schools. The quantitative data was analysed using the SPSS software and the interview and focus group discussion were analysed by adopting qualitative data analysis procedures.

The overall research findings suggested that parents held positive views of the Muslim schools but at the same time had high expectations about their general academic achievement as well as the Islamic Education provision. Most of the parents shared the view that Muslim schools needed to adopt a more integrated approach to the curriculum striking the balance between Islamic and secular subjects. Parents overwhelmingly thought that the Muslim schools did contribute to the social and cultural of integration of Muslim children into the wider multicultural and multi-faith British society. However, one of the significant findings of the survey analysis was the fact that parents appeared to be ambiguous about the overall achievement of schools in adequately meeting the academic and Islamic religious, moral and spiritual needs of their children.

The conclusion chapter summarised the key findings of the study and discussed the implications of the findings for improving the quality of Islamicfaith-based schooling within the context of secular and multicultural British society.

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Mohammad Arif AlMakkawi

Dedication

To my mother and father (my first teachers) who have been working extraordinary to educate me throughout my life, yet they themselves were not learned. May Allah elevate their ranks in Paradise and accept all their efforts as a form of *SadaqahJariyah* (For ever rewarding). Ameen.

Without their support and love my life experiences and accomplishments would not have become apparent.

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of this thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education Institute in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed Date: 28 August 2017

Terminology

‘adl – is another word for divine justice in *Islam*.

‘ilm – is the Islamic term for knowledge.

Adab – Arabic term that prescribed *Islamic* etiquette.

Akhirah– Is an *Islamic* term referring to the afterlife.

Akhlaq –The practice of virtue, morality and manners in *Islamic* theology.

(AS) Alayhi s-salām– Peace be upon him (prophet *Muhammad*).

Allah – The Arabic name for God.

Aqeedah – Refers to an *Islamic* term that means creed. Any religious belief system, or creed, can be considered an example of *aqeedah*.

Ayah – verse of the holy *Qur’an*

Dunya – Is an *Islamic* term that refers to the world (Earth) in general.

Fatwa – A ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority.

Fitrah – A word that has no equivalent English translation but is often translated as 'primordial pure human nature', 'instinct' or common sense.

Hadith – a collection of traditions containing sayings of the Prophet *Muhammad(SAW)* which, with accounts of his *Sunnah*, constitute the major source of guidance for *Muslims* apart from the *Qur’an*.

Hajj– the greater *Muslim* pilgrimage to *Makkah* which all *Muslims* are expected to make at least once in their lifetime if they can afford to do so, which takes place in the last month of the *Islamic* calendar. It is a Pillar of *Islam*.

Halal – literally means permissible but is commonly translated as lawful.

Haram – refers to things that are forbidden according to the *Islamic* law.

Hijab – An *Islamically* prescribed way of dress.

Hijab – is the *Muslim* head scarf worn by many *Muslim* women as a symbol of modesty and privacy.

Hikmah – is an Arabic term meaning wisdom.

Ibaadah – is the *Islamic* term for the worship, obedience, submission, and devotion to *Allah* (God) along with the ultimate love for Him.

Iblees– In *Islam*, *Iblees* is a *jinni* who refused to bow for Adam.

Imam – a religious minister in *Islam*

Jibreel – the Arabic name for the Angel Gabriel

Khalifatullah – God’s vicegerent/stewardship

Khutbah – A formal speech or sermon which occurs regularly in *Islam*. It often refers to the sermon given during the Friday congregation prayer.

Madrassa(s)– within the context of British *Islam* largely refers to informal community-based *Islamic* religious schools.

Makkah– is a city in Saudi Arabia. The birth place of the Prophet *Muhammad (SAW)*. The holy city of *Makkah* is visited by millions of *Muslims* each year for the ritual pilgrimage.

Masjid – A Mosque, an *Islamic* place of worship.

Medinah – is a city in Saudi Arabia. It is the second most holy city of *Islam* (after *Makkah*), with it being the burial place of *Muhammad SAW*.

Muslims – they believe there is no God but *Allah* and that *Muhammad (SAW)* is his final messenger.

Qur'an – *Islamic* sacred book, believed by *Muslims* to be the word of God dictated to the Prophet *Muhammad (SAW)* by the Angel Gabriel

Sadaqah – is the Arabic word for charity.

SadaqahJariyah – Is an *Islamic* term that means Continuous Alms/Charity. A continuous charity is an action that someone does that remains active even after the person is dead.

Salah – Is Arabic word for Prayer. There are five obligatory prayers throughout the day that *Muslims* are expected to fulfil. It is one of the Pillars of *Islam*.

(*SAW*) *Sallahu Alaihi Wassalam*- Peace and blessing be upon Him(*Prophet Muhammad*)

Sawm – fasting in the month of *Ramadan*, from dawn to dusk. It is one of the pillars of *Islam*.

Shari'a – A body of moral and religious teachings .

Shia –one of the two main branches of *Islam*, followed by about a tenth of *Muslims*. *Shias* rejects the first three *Sunni* caliphs and regards *Ali*, the fourth caliph, as *Muhammad's* first true successor.

Sunni –one of the two main branches of *Islam*, and differing from *Shia* in its understanding of the *Sunnah* and in its acceptance of the first three caliphs.

Tafsir– is the Arabic word for exegesis (interpretation) of the *Qur'an*.

Taqwa – Is an *Islamic* term for piety, love and fear of God. It has been described as one of the "ideal ethical values" of *Islam*.

Tarbiyyah – The education and upbringing of *Muslims*.

Tawhid– in Arabic means attributing Oneness to *Allah* and describing Him as being One and Unique, who has no partner or peer in His Essence and Attributes.

Ulama – often refers to a religious elite or scholars at the top of the religious hierarchy.

Ummah–The whole community of *Muslims* bound together by ties of religion.

Zakah– Payment made annually under *Islamic* law on certain kinds of property and used for charitable and religious purposes. It is one of the Five Pillars of *Islam*.

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CHAPTER ONE (Introduction)

1.1 Introduction

The study aims to explore the role of Muslim faith-based schools of Birmingham in meeting the religious, cultural and educational needs of Muslim children. The research explores the types of Islamic schooling (schools guided by an Islamic Educational ethos) that exist within the context of Muslim communities in Birmingham and critically engages with the degree to which they are able to fulfill their Islamic ethos and the wider educational goal within the reality of a largely secular and culturally and religiously diverse British society. The focus of the study is to examine parental expectations as well as the wider society's demand. Muslims schools need to act as the representatives of social cohesion and integration within the wider multicultural Society. As such it must be noted that there are sensitivities and controversies surrounding faith-based schooling in general and Muslim faith schooling in particular. A widely discussed report by Runnymede Trust (2008), *Right to Divide; Faith Schools and Community Cohesion*, argued that the faith schools were unable to educate young people to live comfortably with cultural and religious diversity in modern British society. A more recent edited study (Arweck, 2017) that reports on a three-year empirical research project exploring the role of Religious Education and faith schools informing pupils' attitudes towards religious diversity, does not support this negative view of faith-based schooling. Furthermore, as it will be discussed separately, even faith community's engagement with the mainstream schooling can be very controversial. For example, the infamous Trojan Horse affair, which alleged some Muslim parents 'and activists' attempted to take over some of the mainstream schools and had an intention of applying a narrow Islamic ethos at the schools in Birmingham, illustrate the concerns of the wider society about Muslims' involvement with the mainstream schooling of their children.

One of the main objectives of the current study is to find out how Muslim faith-based schools respond to the expectations by the parents in offering an educational provision that provides young Muslims with a proper understanding of their faith as well as a competent general education that prepares them to live comfortably within a largely secular and multicultural society. Despite the controversial nature of the topic, Muslim faith-based schooling that takes place within the context of secular and multicultural societies often has been discussed without providing supporting evidence. Lack of empirical evidence turns the issue into a passionate defense of being either for or against Muslim schooling. The current study by adopting an empirical research design aims to develop more nuanced and reflective approach to the topic. As such the study by offering an evidence-based analysis of the issue aims to make an original contribution to the related research and policy discussions. Moreover, it must be noted that the field of Islamic Education, which is the primary scholarly discipline that the present research is based upon, is overwhelmingly populated with historical and descriptive studies (Sahin, 2014). As would be discussed comprehensively, the empirical nature of the study is intended to make a significant contribution to the gradually emerging new interdisciplinary research agenda in Islamic Education.

Muslims in the UK, albeit come from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, share a common core religious belief and observe certain religious practices prescribed by Islam. There are two major denominations in Islam; the majority of Muslims belong to the *Sunni* interpretations of Islam and the second biggest sect in Islam is the *Shia* Islam. As aforementioned, there are also cultural differences between Muslims depending on the background of the community they belong to. However, faith (Islam) offers a collective overarching identity for the Muslim communities coming from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The Qur'an, the sacred book of Islam, emphasizes the substantial significance of core faith values of Islam that bring

humanity together. This is illustrated through the prophet Adam (AS) who, according to Islam, was the first human being that God created; who is the father of mankind, therefore, indicating that there is no superiority or preference of people from different cultures as they all are ultimately derived from Adam (AS).

The sayings of the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) known as *Hadith*, reflecting his living tradition (*Sunnah*), clearly emphasises the significance of core faith values binding diverse Muslims coming from a multitude of cultures and ethnicities forming the *ummah*, the world-wide Muslim society. In one of his well-known public sermons in Arafat, the prophet (peace be upon him) said: “O people! “Your Lord is one, and you all share the same father. There is no preference; neither for the Arabs over the non-Arabs, nor the non-Arabs over the Arabs. Neither there is preference for the white people over the black, nor the black people over the white. Preference is only through righteousness.”(Bukhari, 2004, Sahih, Hadith No. 455). Islam therefore, through the *Qur’an* and *Sunnah*, illustrates that all mankind is equal in the sight of God regardless of cultural and racial differences.

This introductory chapter aims to present the central research problematic and highlights the significance of the study by discussing its contribution to the field of Islamic Education and wider related educational and social policy discussions. It also outlines the context in which this research has been undertaken; discussing generally the educational needs of the Muslim children in Britain (UK) with particular reference to the city of Birmingham highlighting, briefly, the reasons and motives behind establishing Muslim faith-based schools. This chapter, in order to clarify the research context further, also identifies parental reasons and motives for finding an alternative educational system which can teach their children’s Islamic faith as well as the national curriculum. In addition, this chapter highlights, briefly, the personal and professional

background of the researcher. The chapter ends with describing the organization and contents of the chapters in the study.

Britain today is a very different country than what it was known to be in the last century. This social transformation has been partly triggered by the arrival and settlement of immigrants including Muslim communities in large numbers after the Second World War. The post-Second World War's economic and social conditions have led to the introduction of multicultural policies in education and in areas of social concern. In addition to this, historically faith has always played a pivotal role in the overall educational system in Britain.

One of the recent educational developments in Britain is the establishment of Muslim faith-based schools to serve the needs of the growing number of Muslim children within regions like Birmingham which is one of the multicultural cities in the country. The establishment and the gradual increase of Muslim faith-based schools therefore indicate that some Muslim parents and community members remain dissatisfied with the existing state schooling system. It is important to point out that to meet the concerns of new communities living in Britain, the British government brought about many changes through different educational policies such as 'every child matters' (Department of Education, 2003) and other multicultural policies to accommodate the needs of religious communities. The communities' democratic right to education has been upheld through allowing the faith and values-based education provision. For example, many Muslim parents are grateful for the state schools to provide separate physical education sessions for Muslim girls as well as allowing them to wear *Hijab* (Islamic head scarf) and what Muslim parents deem as modest clothing. However, some parents feel that not enough has been done to accommodate the religious and spiritual educational needs of Muslim children. Some Muslims believe that schools need to contribute into the Islamic

Education (*tarbiyah*) of Muslim pupils allowing them to learn about the fundamentals of Islam and its religious and moral values such as *Ibadah* (worship), *akhlaq* (manners) and *aqeedah* (belief). Many of these parents feel this can only be done in an Islamic educational environment hence the reasons for establishing separate Muslim faith-based schools. It is believed that some Muslim parents prefer Muslim faith-based schooling primarily because they aim to develop their children's faith and identity (McCreerya, Jonesa and Holmesa, 2007). It is believed that Muslim children can easily be influenced by the wider secular culture; hence the needs for such faith-based educational institutions have been emphasized by some Muslim parents and community leaders in order to inculcate and preserve the Islamic identity of Muslim children. However, it must be noted that although, the demand for Muslim faith-based schools has grown over the last three decades, yet only 5% of the Muslim children in the United Kingdom attend Muslim schools with the remaining 95% of Muslim children attending mainstream state-funded schools (Association of Muslim Schools UK, 2015; Department for Education, 2015).

The process of establishing Islamic schools to educate Muslim children shows the dedication and the importance that the Muslim community associates with providing Islamic Education for the younger generations to come. Over the years, the number of these schools has grown and the standard of these schools has also improved. The journey of Muslim faith-based schools began from hiring out halls to cater for their children's religious needs and developed further over the years by renting or purchasing small houses to be used as supplementary evening schools and further developed at a later stage to establish full-time Muslim faith-based schools (further details will be discussed in the literature review chapter).

It must be noted, as mentioned above, that there has also been wide criticism concerning the desirability and whether there is a need for faith-based schooling in a multi-faith and secular British society (Cooling and Green 2009). Moreover, with the increasing highly sensitive political context and the rise of religiously motivated international terrorism, many people remain skeptical whether Muslim faith-based schools, in particular, can deliver what they aim to achieve due to their limited resources and humble provisions in general. Some may even go beyond to suggest that Muslim schools play a major role in isolating Muslim children from the wider society (Khan, 2009; Timmerman, 2009). Some fear that Muslim schools may present a rigid interpretation of Islam which may contribute to the radicalization of Muslim children or the coming Muslim generations. This study seeks to explore the Islamic educational vision and the overall educational aims of these schools and explore to what extent these schools are able to achieve their stated educational ethos.

As depicted in the chapter on Islamic Education, since the First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Makkah (Saudi Arabia) from 31 March to 8 April 1977 (Meijer, 2009; Hussain, 1977) there has been endeavors to clarify the educational vision of Islam. Most of the Muslim faith-based schools in the UK operate within such broader spectrum Islamic educational ethos. This study aims to find out about how they define this specific educational ethos and the extent to which they achieve this objective. Hence, the study does not in any way aim to take a stand for or against the existence of Muslim faith-based schools; neither does it aim to highlight or promote this type of schooling. In addition, the study does not highlight the shortcomings of the state schools nor undermine its contribution to the British society. The research, through the use of an empirical educational research framework, aims to conduct a systematic study to

identify the role played by the present Muslim faith-based schools of Birmingham in meeting the religious, cultural and academic needs of Muslim children.

1.2 The research questions and aims of the study

This study, by taking into account the findings and recommendations of previous research in the field of education in general and Islamic Education in particular, aims to critically explore the educational ethos and standards of Muslim faith-based schools and whether they meet the expectations of parents regarding the religious, educational and social needs of their children. It must be noted that Muslim faith-based schools are seen by the parents as providing a safer educational environment for their children and the curriculum incorporates faith-based principles. However, parents and wider Muslim community are also concerned with Muslim schools' ability to raise the academic achievement of their children. More significantly, the degree to which Muslim schools prepare young children to live in a cosmopolitan, multi-faith and secular British society (i.e. whether they act as a force for integration or segregation). Finally, the study considers the empirical findings of the research for improving the overall Islamic Education offered within the context of Muslim faith-based schooling in contemporary British society. As will be discussed shortly, it must be stressed the key concerns of the study are grounded within the researcher's personal and professional context. As a Muslim educator, the researcher has a considerable experience of teaching in Muslim faith-based schools and is also a part of the community.

The study aims to explore the following main questions:

1. What are the main types of Muslim faith-based schools operating in the city of Birmingham?

2. What are the general motives and expectations of Muslim parents in order to send their children to Muslim faith-based schools?
3. To what extent do these schools achieve their general educational aims and specific Islamic Educational goals in meeting the religious/spiritual and educational/social needs of Muslim children?
4. To what extent do these schools prepare children to live within the wider multicultural society?

Based on the above research questions, several research objectives can be discerned:

- 1) To identify the different types of Muslim faith-based schools operating within Birmingham.
- 2) To explore general motives and expectations of Muslim parents in sending their children to Muslim faith-based schools.
- 3) To explore the extent to which these schools achieve their general educational aims and specific Islamic educational goals in meeting the educational and religious/spiritual needs of Muslim children.
- 4) To examine the extent to which these schools prepare children to live within the wider multicultural society.

The study adopts a qualitative case study framework with a mixed-methods research design to explore the main research questions. This includes construction of a large quantitative survey and several semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions with the individuals associated through Muslim faith-based schools and members of the Muslim community who had

direct experience with Muslim faith-based schools including parents, Muslim school graduates and teachers.

In the light of the study findings, the research aims to make the recommendations to improve the overall Islamic educational provision within these schools as well as make suggestions to the related educational policy makers concerned with the community education and integration of Muslim young people into the wider British society.

The education provided by Muslim faith-based schools explored empirically from a number of angles which has contributed to the richness of the data collected. The researcher sought the views of the Muslim community in order to determine whether Muslim faith-based schools are providing a competent level of education to Muslim children; preparing them for the wider multicultural society and at the same time not isolating them from society.

It must be noted that Islamic Education can be seen as having a variety of different meanings. One aspect of Islamic Education identified through the research is the educational and pedagogic provision made by the schools to teach the essentials of Islam such as the *Qur'an*, matters of worship including purification, *Salah* (prayer), *Zakah* (obligatory charity), *Sawm* (fasting during month of Ramadan) and *Hajj*(pilgrimage to Makkah) as well as the daily etiquettes which are all derived from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of the prophet (peace be upon him) . In addition to the Islamic literacy aim, the term 'Islamic Education can have even a broader meaning than this by embracing knowledge in general in a framework where the institution complies with Islamic teachings and values where students learn secular education as well as Islamic education but in an Islamic environment. The researcher, examined diverse

types of Islamic schools including residential, non-residential, single-sex or co-educational exploring the views and perceptions of the key stakeholders (parents, teachers, managers and graduates of the schools) directly involved with Islamic faith-based education.

1.3 Significance of the study

While examining the available literature in the field of Muslim faith-based schools, the researcher has discovered that the available literature either passionately promotes the existence of Muslim faith-based schools or makes a case against separate Muslim faith-based schools. It must be noted that no empirical study of this size (within Birmingham) has been conducted in this precise field to explore empirically the role or the performance of present Muslim faith-based schools in meeting the educational, religious and spiritual needs of Muslim pupils under their care.

Although, the Muslim faith-based schools have been in existence for over three decades, no empirical systematic study has been conducted to establish if present Muslim faith-based schools are able to demonstrate whether they achieve their goals of establishment. This research can be considered as a response to the call of some previous researchers in the field of education of Muslims in Britain, such as Sahin (2005, 2014), Fatima (2003), Amer (1997) and Hwer (1991) who also identified this gap and suggested the necessity of the research in this field. It is hoped that this study will convey an understanding of the concept of education that is provided within Muslim faith-based schools of Birmingham, not only in the perspective of Islamic Education but also in the field of education in Britain in general.

Since the arrival of Muslims in Britain, Islamic Education is thought to be a new phenomenon to some educationalists and to others who view Islam as a threat to the wider society, as some Muslims do not fully accept the state school educational system even though the majority of

Muslim children are studying in state schools. Some argue that Muslims are unable to mix fully into the British society; they have established separate Muslim faith-based schools to accommodate the children's religious, cultural and academic needs.

On the one hand, considerable numbers of the British Muslim community prefer having their own independent Muslim faith-based schools. They are of the opinion that having separate independent schools will improve Muslim children's academic standards, provide them with a safer and protected environment, support them mentally, spiritually, morally and culturally. This group is of the opinion that Muslim children will achieve better academically as well as religiously with children of their own religious beliefs, where they can be educated in an Islamic environment and with the Islamic ethos. It is argued that schools can play an important role in community cohesion when determined by educating children of their own religious traditions in an environment that accommodates their religious and cultural needs, also by developing within them the sense of respecting people of different faith traditions and values including people of no faith. This group argues that the current British educational system has failed, to some extent, to cater for their religious and cultural needs and feel more secure when educating their children in an environment of their own kind.

On the other hand, a sizeable number of the wider British society, including some Muslims, turn down the idea of faith-based schools in general and Muslim faith-based schools in particular (Hewer, 1991). The latter group is of the opinion that Britain is a multi-cultural society; children should study together under the state system as this will enhance integration and produce a cohesive society. They argue that pupils graduating from independent faith-based schools will not be able to integrate with the wider society; instead, they will condemn

the lifestyle of the wider society and some may even become fundamentalists in their belief and extremists in their actions (Ameli and Merali, 2004).

This study brings about an evidence-based viewpoint into the field of Muslim faith-based schools and contributes to the current debate about whether Islamic schools have an adverse effect on social cohesion and academic achievement of Muslim children who attend Muslim faith-based schools. The study analyses the current challenges of Muslim faith-based schools by exploring how these challenges are affecting the educational achievement of Muslim faith-based schools.

It is hoped this study will act as a rich source to the educational sector and offers ways forward to improve the current provision of Islamic Education within secular and multicultural British society particularly by highlighting the current challenges for policy makers and educationalists. It is hoped that by highlighting and providing a diverse viewpoint about Islamic Education, this study will promote social and community cohesion as it will allow wider society to reflect the educational needs of Muslims.

Recent political developments and the rise of religious extremism in Europe and the world have resulted in feelings and suspicion about the Islamic educational system and its quality in addressing radicalization among Muslim young people (Sahin, 2016). As mentioned earlier, one of these challenges includes Trojan Horse incident (2014) which although was directly linked to state schools, has nonetheless tarnished the reputation of Muslim faith-based schools in Birmingham resulting in wider society viewing Muslim schools as a breeding ground for fanatics (Mail Online, 2014). Operation Trojan horse is said to be a takeover plot of fanatical, extremist associated individuals who attempted to Islamize certain state schools. It has been reported that a group of organized Muslim governors from the established secular state schools were

involved in overtaking and Islamizing these schools, such as Park View academy and Oldknow academy in Birmingham. It is worth noting these schools were graded as 'outstanding' by Ofsted in their latest inspections. Further details of Trojan horse Operation would be discussed in the Literature Review chapter.

The relevance and role of faith-based schooling in a largely secular and multicultural British society have attracted attention of parents, educational and social policy makers as well as the public at large. Within the current highly politically-charged reality of Muslim community of Britain, the educational provisions of Muslim children in state schools as well as in Muslim faith-based schools have raised important concerns. There is a great need to understand what is going on in these independent Muslim faith-based schools. For both Muslim parents who chose to send their children to these schools, and the wider society, they all need to know about the educational provision and the extent to which they meet their set targets. As such parents, local community and social or educational policy makers should have research-based and reliable information about these schools to monitor and to improve their educational capacity. This study, by adopting an empirical research framework makes an original contribution to the field of education in general and Muslim faith-based schools in particular. More importantly, the study will contribute to the theory and practice of Islamic Education by critically exploring the educational practices and contributions that are taking place in Muslim schools. As such parents, teachers, pupils and educationalists will benefit from the current research.

1.4 Personal and professional background of the study

The researcher is a Muslim educator and a member of the Muslim community of Birmingham.

He is of the Asian Pakistani heritage and speaks fluent Arabic, Urdu, Mirpuri, Seraki and English.

He is very familiar with the culture and traditions of the East and West since he was born in Pakistan, brought up in Saudi Arabia, married to a British-born woman of Kashmiri origin and has been living in Birmingham for nearly three decades.

The researcher previously taught in one of the leading Muslim faith-based schools of Birmingham for more than a decade. For the duration of his teaching career (1993 – 2008), he enjoyed being a full-time teacher of Arabic language and Islamic Education. Currently, he is a religious Minister (Imam); a governor in two state schools, also a head teacher of a Birmingham-based Muslim supplementary school (Madrassa) which caters for more than 300 students. Working within a Muslim faith-based school of Birmingham for more than a decade empowered him with experience and knowledge about the reasons and motives behind establishing Muslim faith-based schools, the needs of the Muslim children; the demands of their parents as well as the needs of the Muslim community in general. During his teaching career, he was also able to communicate with pupils, parents, teachers, community members, Imams (religious ministers), community leaders, delegations from state schools, educational inspectors, visitors from Britain, Middle east, Asia, Africa as well as from the European countries. The researcher lives and spends most of his precious time in the areas that are heavily populated by Muslims which also gained him an in-depth understanding of why some Muslims felt that there is a need for separate Muslim faith-based schools. This unique experience granted him vast experience and knowledge about the needs of Muslims as well as the views of the hosting society in the undertaken research field.

In addition to this, it is worth noting that the researcher is an independent person; he is not sponsored or supported by any organization or individual, as this grants him freedom from the possible influence of taking for granted value position and bias (Robson, 2002). It is also worth

pointing out that while an insider, the researcher also perceives himself within the research process as a reflective practitioner. The researcher has kept a strong degree of reflexivity while completing the study. This has enabled him to ensure impartiality and clarity regarding the views and positions expressed by the study participants and his own views about the issues explored. Over many years, as a reflective practitioner, he began to realize the changing needs of Muslim children and the fact that Muslim education institutions have been finding it difficult to catch up with social and cultural changes of the community they serve. The findings of the study by Sahin (2005), originally carried out among sixth form Muslim students in Birmingham, that indicated the formation of 'foreclosed religious identities' among Muslim youth has also been influential for the researcher to embark on the current study. Following the recommendation of Sahin's study, he is also convinced that Muslim schools need to encourage research into their practice in order to identify the problems they face and suggest evidence-based constructive ways forward to improve the standard of the Islamic Education within British Muslim communities.

Based on the above-described personal and professional rationale, the study focuses on Birmingham as its research context. Birmingham, after London, has one of the highest percentages of Muslims (Lewis, 1994). While Muslim faith-based schools of Birmingham could be considered as a sample of other similar types of schools within Britain, as these schools emerged and developed in almost the same period, circumstances, and atmosphere as other faith-based schools; the Muslim community of Birmingham could also act as a sample representative of the diverse backgrounds of Muslims within Britain; they share common vision, similar life opportunities, similar backgrounds and circumstances (Hewer, 1991; Grimmit, 2010). However, the Muslim community is not a homogeneous entity but is multi-

ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-national with different social classes and ages who possess different levels of wealth and education. The researcher is aware of this diversity and as such will not claim that the results of the study cannot be generalized. However, it must be stated that a similar set of issues affects other faith-based Muslim educational settings in the UK. Therefore, the study will only make cautious qualitative generalizations.

On a practical note, the researcher is a member of the Muslim community of Birmingham; this has reduced a considerable amount of travel, time and costs while conducting the study. Finally, the researcher is a known person to many Muslim faith-based schools, parents and community leaders of the city; and based on this personal advantage, he was able to gain access to Muslim faith-based schools as this is, in general, a difficult task to be achieved as mentioned by many researchers in the field (Robson, 2002).

1.5 Organization of the study

The first chapter established the wider context of the study discussing the professional and personal background of the researcher, stating the research questions, aims and the objectives of the study. The second chapter focuses on the historical background of Muslims' arrival to Britain with particular reference to post-World War Two migration and their settlement in Britain.

The third chapter discusses the available literature which reviews and contains details of previous research in the field, and offers a critical analysis of their findings and recommendations, demonstrating the gaps found in previous studies and how this study contributes in filling the identified gaps. The fourth chapter explores the concept of Islamic Education, the aims and objectives of education in Islam and critically explores new theoretical

perspectives on Islamic Education. This chapter also engages with the challenges facing Islamic educational practices within the context of British Muslims and the wider European Muslim Diaspora.

The fifth chapter provides, in depth, the reasons for choosing the methodology of the study and its mixed-methods based research design i.e. sampling, data collection and analysis procedures and research ethics. The following three chapters present the empirical findings of the study; chapter six will present the results of the major quantitative survey exploring the diversity of Islamic schooling within the context of Birmingham with special reference to the overall parental perception of Islamic schooling. Chapter seven and eight present analysis of the qualitative data sets exploring the teachers, managers of Muslim schools together with the graduates of these schools about the relevance and value of Islamic schooling within the context of multicultural British society. Chapter nine discusses the key findings of the study.

The overall, outcomes, conclusions and recommendations of the study are presented in chapter ten. The final part of the thesis will present references and appendices.

CHAPTER TWO (Historical Background)

2.1 Introduction

The Muslim community that has settled in Britain is one of the major ethnic and religious communities which have contributed to the diversity of the British population. A large number of this community is of the Indian subcontinent origin, unlike other European countries such as France where Muslims are largely of Arab and African heritage and background. Muslims in Britain are mainly categorized by their shared religion (Islam) rather than a shared country of origin or language which is in contrast to many other ethnic minority communities such as the Afro-Caribbean's, who are mainly depicted by their ethnic and cultural characteristics rather than their religious affiliation. It must be noted that modern interdisciplinary 'Ethnic Studies' has emerged at the latter part of the 20th century as a reaction against the Euro centrism of traditional disciplines such as Anthropology focusing on different levels of difference signifying human condition i.e., race, ethnicity, nation also sexuality and gender. Race, as a social construct, is the classification of humans into groups based on physical traits, ancestry, genetics, or social relations, or the relations between those groups. Unfortunately, race, as a modern concept embedded within the secular narrative of western modernity and widely used in categorizing humans, has its origins in the western colonialism (Segal, 1991; Allen, 1994). As C. Hirschman, (2004) observes, in the early 20th century, many anthropologists have gradually accepted that biologically distinct races were isomorphic with distinct linguistic, cultural, and social groups, while popularly applying this thought to the field of eugenics, in conjunction with a practice that is now called scientific racism. After the Nazi eugenics program, along with the rise of anti-colonial movements, racial essentialism lost widespread popularity. A significant number of modern anthropologists and biologists in the West came to view race as an invalid genetic or biological designation. However, the during the post 2nd World War mass migration to Europe, most migrants including ethnically diverse Muslims, have been mainly perceived

with the category of 'race' rather than with recognition of their distinctive common religious heritage.

As Muslims migrated from different parts of the world at different times to Britain and to other European countries, the Muslim community residing in Britain today is, therefore, an ethnically diverse community of different ethnic origins, backgrounds, cultures and languages whose main commonality is their shared religious beliefs and Islamic heritage.

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the historical background of Muslim settlement in Britain. The researcher will highlight as to how Muslims and Islam have grown over the past decades with particular reference to Britain, using Government census data to indicate the growing trend and discussing what factors contributed to the growth of Islam in Britain. The researcher will also examine in detail the wider reasons behind the emergence and the expansion of Muslim faith-based schools highlighting the community's concerns about their children's educational, religious and cultural needs.

2.2 Overview of Islam in Britain

Britain, today, is a secular democratic state whose religious heritage lies, largely, in Christianity. Historically, Britain was and still is committed to the Church of England's teachings and beliefs and did not, formally, separate religion from the state like the United States of America and France. Britain is currently known by its rich diversity and different religious and cultural traditions, languages and values. Although some of Britain's rulings, laws and customs may be based on Christianity, but at the same time Britain is also known to be largely a secular country, yet accommodating the needs of other religions and beliefs. The rich diversity of religious and non-religious traditions and cultures within Britain has its own benefits to the British society as a whole. On the other hand, due to this rich diversity, the provisions of state schooling is an

issue which remains complicated due to the religious and cultural needs of the different ethnic groups and communities that make Britain of today.

Grimmitt states that “a secular democracy hosting a range of different religious and non-religious faith communities cannot be ideologically neutral” (Grimmitt, 2010,p.15). Grimmitt is therefore implying that a democracy cannot be secular, not connected with religious and spiritual needs when the community has a range of different religious and non-religious faith communities; hence it is likely that the government will lean towards a specific side.

Muslims within Britain form the second largest religious group after Christians, with 4.8% of the population identifying themselves as Muslims according to the 2011 census (Office for National Statistics, 2012). Hence government, as well as policy makers, encourage, particularly, by Religious Education and Citizenship curriculum to promote community cohesion, promote better interfaith understanding as well as to promote a positive understanding of Islam and to combat Islamophobia which has risen substantially in recent years (Simons and Wester Lund, 2015). As a result of riots in Bradford (2001) and other northern cities, educationalists as well as politicians are more eager and are working to promote safer Britain and stronger community cohesion (Burnett, 2008).

In the wake of terrorist attacks such as the 9/11 and 7/7 bombings and more recently the assassination of Lee Rigby on 22nd May 2013, Charlie Hebdo’s attack in Paris on 7 January 2015 and continuous threat from Al-Qaeda, the Taliban and the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS); there has been an increase in Islamophobia and hostility towards Islam and Muslims. Therefore, it is more important than ever before to ensure community cohesion as terrorists have a confounded idea of what Islam, really, stands for.

After the incidents of 11 September 2001, the British Prime Minister at the time, Tony Blair, sorted to clarify that the events that took place had nothing to do with Islam or Muslims, he stressed that Muslims should not be targeted in any way as a result of the attacks, this in turn showed an understanding that, contrary to stereotypical and popular belief about Muslims as a monolithic, 'fundamentalist' or 'terrorist' group, is one of the most striking aspects associated with Muslims living in modern Britain today is the diversity that they bring as an ethnic minority representative (Ansari, 2003).

Britain of the twenty-first century is very different than the twentieth century. Britain today is made up of a diverse range of cultures, languages, traditions and faiths. In the past, British society followed more or less one religion, and the society was mainly of the same traditions and values. Christianity was the main religion within Britain, and therefore the culture of the society was almost everybody's culture. The challenges of the twentieth century were of different nature than today's', particularly when it came to the field of education and cultural backgrounds. Today, we can witness people of almost all faiths, cultures and background which make up today's diverse British society. Hence, social and community cohesion within Britain is a paramount issue for policymakers. As religion could play a positive and crucial role in community cohesion, therefore there is a need to understand all religious teachings including Islam and Muslims.

Although Muslims feel, at times, that they have been targeted for political reasons, sometimes by the media and suffer from increasing Islamophobia, it is important to realise that Muslims appreciate the treatment and hospitality they receive from the majority of British society and from the British government as a whole. They are proud to be part and parcel of Britain. Muslims feel that although they are originally from different parts of the world, they strongly

feel a sense of belonging to Britain; therefore, they feel that they are British Muslims. It is thought that the schools could be considered as a starting point of community cohesion.

Sahin's observation (2010, p.124) clarifies this point very well:

“If we, both Muslims and the wider policy makers, cannot offer an authoritative educational vision for young generations of British Muslims, we should not be surprised that their agency will be forged by the extremism of radical Islam and isolationism expressed as rejection of an exclusivist wider secular society”

Policy makers and educationalists need to comprehend and appreciate the importance of faith and religious traditions to different communities. They need to understand and appreciate the fact that religious beliefs and teachings combat prejudice and call for the respect of other peoples' beliefs, traditions, as well as promote community cohesions. Since religion and religious beliefs existed throughout history, hence schools and teachers can play an outstanding role in strengthening the vision and role of schools in helping children and young people to learn to live (together) peacefully with their differences.

The number of Muslim faith-based schools in the UK has been steadily increasing particularly in the last two decades. It is argued that these new faith-based schools are emerging to meet the parental and the Muslim community's expectations, choice and demands (Association of Muslim Schools, 2015). Today there are over one hundred and fifty private Muslim faith-based schools in Britain offering Muslim children education of the state curriculum adopted and followed in the Islamic environment.

“It is believed that faith based schools have a particular 'ethos' that is distinct and that encourages moral development as well as academic success” (Grimmitt, 2010).

Since faith was the basis of education in the West, considering the fact that faith-based schooling has been part and parcel of the British educational system for many centuries, it is natural to expect that British Muslim community, like Christian and Jewish communities, will make use of this inclusive educational principle and establish their own faith-based schools. As such, most of these schools are independent Muslim faith-based schools but only eleven of them are government funded schools (Department of Education, 2010).

However, recently emerging educational challenges such as Operation Trojan Horse (2014), although have been directly linked to state schools but has nevertheless tarnished the reputation of Muslim faith-based schools in Birmingham by the wider society as Muslim schools are now being stigmatised as a breeding ground for fanatics (Mail Online, 2014).

There has been, particularly since 1977, a growing reality on an intergenerational level to bring about educational changes, within the current Muslim educational system to meet the demands and challenges. There is growing concern about the gap between generations and for the loss of religious values and traditions. In this modern British society, it is thought by the first and second generation of Muslim immigrants that the current generation is losing their culture and religious identity (Ali, 2008). Although the older generations are proud of the educational and social advancements of Muslim children; they express concern for youngsters being attracted towards extremism, violence, drugs and crimes (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009).

It is further argued that the political events taking place in Muslim countries across the globe for example in Iraq or Syria, is not directly linked with the lives of Muslims in Britain. Muslims have to deal first with the issues linked directly with Britain such as education of Muslim

children which should be their main priority, “transferring the heritage of Islam to the next generations”(Saqib, 2015).

2.3 History of Islamic education in Britain

Muslims presence in Britain can be traced back to at least two centuries; for example, many Muslim students were studying in Britain as far back as the 19th century (Ansari, 2003). One of the first Muslim communities of a significant size can be traced back to the middle of the 19th century where the first fairly permanent Muslim communities settled in Manchester, Cardiff, Liverpool, South Shields and East London. These Muslim migrated to Britain as itinerant merchants and entertainers, sailors who on voyagers decided to take up permanent residence, servants, princes and the aforementioned students as well as those from professional classes (Ansari, 2003).

The immigration of hundreds and thousands of Muslims to Britain and to other European countries has resulted in one of the most significant reshaping of the cultural and religious identity of Europe since the protestant reformation of the 16th century, where religious, political, intellectual and cultural disturbance splintered Catholic Europe (History, 2015). The Muslim community has become an easily visible minority in Britain by incorporating religious principles, through the building of Mosques, establishing Islamic schools, wearing of *Hijabs* and opening *Halal* food stores. Muslims, like other immigrants tended to migrate for reasons such as political unrest in their homeland, natural disasters or to pursue further education or better work opportunities. Muslim immigration is often understood through the ‘Push and Pull’ theory which considers the structural drivers of migration. These theorists argue people migrate, “away from poverty, flood, or political unrest – towards parts of the world where there is demand for labour” (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). Other theorists such as Castles and Kosack (1973)

identify the 'world system theory' which examines the migration of people based on the worldwide economic labourmarket of supply and demand. This theory describes migrations as a mechanism for gaining cheap labour for capital (Kofman et al, 2005).

One of the main factors that contributed to the increase in Muslim migration as well as other ethnic groups to Britain is the World War Two (WW2). After the WW2 ended it became apparent that the reconstruction of the British economy required a large influx of immigrant labour. In 1949 the royal commission on population reported that immigrants would be welcomed without reserve, "Following the Second World War thousands of workers were recruited as a result of the war in Europe... beginning with the 1950s, the migration of black labour from the ex-colonies to Britain began on a significant scale" (Tierney, 1982).

However, in the second half of the twentieth century, the situation has changed. The last mass migration of Muslims to European countries was mainly facilitated by the labour shortage in Europe after the Second World War. On the whole European countries turned out to their previous colonies to recruit labour force (Vertovec, 1997).

As such Britain turned out to the Indian Subcontinent region (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) to attract workers who would participate in rebuilding its economy(Lewis, 1994). The majority of Muslims migrating to Britain post-1945 was therefore from Indian subcontinent due to the economic boom and the development of manufacturing in Britain post-Second World War that required both skilled and unskilled labour (Gilliat-Ray, 2010).

Beside this, there are other reasons behind Muslim presence in Britain such as the political and economic unrest in many parts of the Islamic world; the Punjab partition from India in 1947, the civil conflict of Cyprus in the 1950s, the expulsion of the Asian community from East African

countries like Uganda in the 1970s, the war in Iraq and Iran in the 1980s, the Gulf war in Iraq (August 1990), the ongoing Somalia civil war, the Afghanistan war (2001 – to present) as well as the recent unrest in the middle east such as in Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Iraq. All these factors have contributed to the mass migration of hundreds of thousands of Muslims from different parts of the Islamic world to European countries (Hayes, Humphries and Cohen, 2004).

The migration from the sub-continent to Britain was mainly for two reasons: firstly, as a result of the Punjab partition from India in 1947 and its consequences; secondly, because of the opportunity for the members of commonwealth countries to become a replacement labour force in Britain, but recently for better life opportunities (Tierney, 1982). In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, Muslims like any other emigrating community, worked and played their role mainly in filling the gap in the field of labour.

As time passed, immediate family members, relatives, friends and others joined one another seeking mainly, better employment, life standards and security. During this period the concerns of Muslims were related directly to their immediate life (Vertovec, 1997). Over the years, they started to plan for their permanent settlement in Britain, particularly after the 1971 Immigration Act which came into force on 1st January 1973 replacing the 1962 Act, allowing immigrants to become permanent residents and citizens of Britain, also permitting them to bring, to Britain, their dependents (The National Archives, 2015). As families including children of the immigrants joined the breadwinners; parents began to think of their children's education. Muslim parents, like others, sent their children to the state schools hoping that they could achieve the best education available in the country (Ally, 1981). As time passed, it was realised that some Muslim children were targeted in many schools as victims of institutional

racism. Racism and racist teachers, for example, was an issue for all migrant communities including Muslims, "Some teachers in British schools are, of course, racists... and there are many more again who would actually see themselves as anti-racist" (Tierney, 1982).

"It cannot be surely denied that there are certain groups of people in British society who face prejudice and discrimination, and who suffer disproportionately in relation to others, simply because they happen to be different in some way from the majority" (Grimmitt, 2010).

Since the concept of education in Islam is to develop and educate students physically, mentally and spiritually and does not recognize or differentiate between them or prioritises' one over another, knowledge in Islam, therefore, cannot be set apart from faith or piety (Taqwa). Education in Islam aims to change attitude of pupils in life to acquire knowledge not merely to satisfy an intellectual mindset or for worldly benefit alone, but to develop as rational, righteous being and bring about the spiritual, moral and physical welfare to their families, their people, and their society and to the whole world. As a result, the aim of education in Islam is to produce not only good but also righteous mankind, who is obedient to his Creator and advances in research fields to serve humanity and be good citizens.

According to Badawi (1997), there was always close and personal relationship between the teacher and the student which ensured that moral and spiritual guidance was given alongside the teaching of various skills.

Thus, Muslims expected that state schools will develop their children within their morals, ethical and religious values, or at least acknowledge the importance of these areas to Muslims and be sensitive enough when going against these values or concerns. Instead, it was realized by some Muslim parents and religious activists that the aim of state schools in the West is only to produce good citizen and intellectually advanced beings in science and technology, which is

not enough in accordance to the philosophy of Islamic education(Reid, 1997, Parker-Jenkins and Hartas, 2005). Muslims began to realize that state schools (being largely liberal/secular in their approach) did not provide their children with the necessary moral values, cultural and traditional teachings. It was feared that these children would gradually lose their distinctive religious outlook and religious identity, especially as the parents themselves had little knowledge about the teachings of Islam. The dissatisfaction of the state school's environment, along with the development of feelings between some Muslims that Muslim children can achieve better results academically, also bearing in mind the low development of discipline and respect standards along with the absence of adherence to religious and cultural beliefs, these and other similar feelings and viewpoints added dissatisfaction to the feelings of some Muslim parents. Since the central institution in Islam is the mosque, as a result, gradually, many small houses were converted to places of worship and supplementary Islamic education centers to meet Muslim children's religious and cultural needs (Nielsen, 1992).

Studies suggest that (Thatcher, 1987; Grimmitt, 2010) in the inner cities- where youngsters must have a decent education if they are to have a better future- that opportunity to succeed is all too often snatched from them by hard-left education authorities and extremist teachers. Children who need to be able to count and multiply are learning anti-racist mathematics whatever that may be, children who need to be able to express themselves in clear English are being taught political slogans, and children who need to be taught to respect traditional moral values are being taught that they have an inalienable right to be gay.

As a result of this and with the support of the Muslim community, some active and concerned community members have started establishing Islamic centers and mosques in their locality particularly in areas which were populated with Muslims as a place where they themselves

(Muslim immigrants) could meet, perform the daily prayers and their children could also learn about their religion after schooling hours and during weekends (Imam, 1986). In the early 1980s, some parents, as well as mosque committee members, came to realise that although mosques and Islamic centres played an essential role in preserving and developing the religious identity of Muslim children, there were serious shortcomings in the way these centres were running (Amer, 1997; Khan, 1996).

The Association of Muslim Schools UK (AMS UK) was established in 1992; it is officially recognized by the Department for Education (DfE) as representing the interest of Muslim faith-based Schools as well as providing support for these registered schools in the UK, currently numbering 156 members. The institutions strive to ensure their members work with the children and their families who came from faith and non-faith backgrounds through their education and charitable activities (Association of Muslim Schools, 2015).

The Association of Muslim Schools' has recently been implied to be connected to the Trojan Horse enquiry. The association released a statement indicating that the alleged "Trojan Horse" affair has no effect on its work as the alleged issues that have arisen concern non-AMS UK schools. They insist that they support their members in developing their understanding on ways to play a full and active role in a diverse and multi-cultural British society. They argue, "Muslim schools demonstrate exemplary practice with respect to fostering community cohesion, nurturing active citizenship among pupils and raising and fulfilling their aspirations. This stems from the leadership role of AMS UK and the manner in which we expect our members to manifest their Islamic ethos in a pluralist society" (Association of Muslim Schools UK, 2015).

The first Muslim faith-based school opened in Bury, Lancashire in 1979, Dar al-Uloom Al-Arabiya Al-Islamia, since then there has been a steady increase in the demand as well as the growth of Muslim Schools. The first Muslim faith-based school to receive state funding was Islamia Primary School, London in 1997. Yet as of 2013, only 5 per cent of the Muslim children in Britain attend Muslim schools with the remaining 95 per cent of Muslim children attending mainstream state-funded schools (Association of Muslim Schools, 2015).

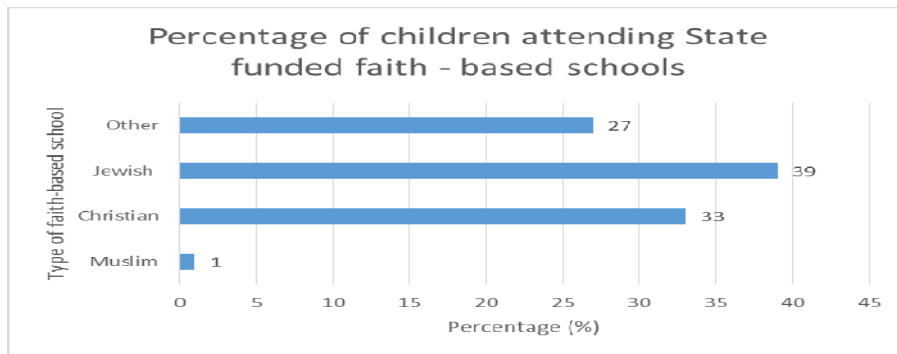


Figure 2. 1 Percentage of children attending state-funded faith-based schools

The above graph indicates the number of children attending Muslim faith-based schools that are funded by the state which is significantly lower than the other faith schools that are government funded. Muslim state funded schools account for only 1%. The highest proportion of children attending a faith-based school that is state funded is the Jewish faith-based school with 39 per cent of children attending schools that follow the Jewish ideology. This may be due to the Jewish population accounting for only 0.5% of the total population, according to the 2011 government census while Muslims account for 4.8% of the total population. 33% of children attended Christian faith-based schools that are government funded. The below figure

0.2 also points out those Muslim faith-based schools that are state funded schools have significantly fewer school places available for new pupils. While Muslim schools only have 5,910 places, Church of England schools have 989,365 state-funded places. The data displayed in the figure 0.2 illustrates the substantial difference in the number of state-funded places for schools that follow a distinctive religious ethos. Reasons for this may be due to people who identify as Christians account for 59.3% of the total population according to the 2011 government census.

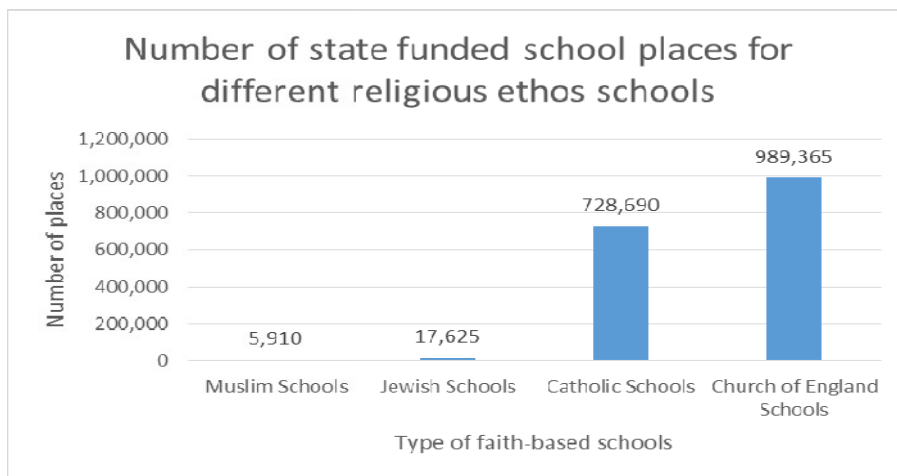
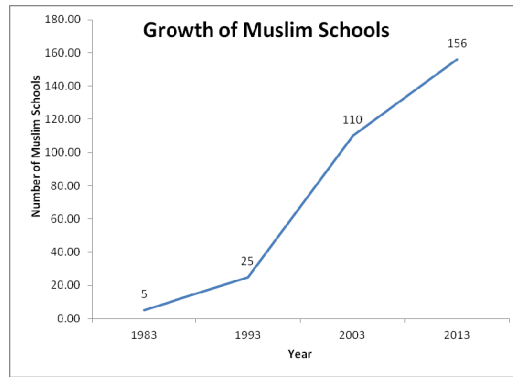


Figure 2. 2 Number of State-funded school places for different ethos schools

The above graph (figure 2.2) indicates that both Muslim schools and Jewish schools are at the lower ends of the spectrum; however, Jewish schools have over 75% more places than Muslim schools. This substantial difference may be due to Jewish schools being established before Muslim schools. One of the country's most famous Jewish schools is the state-funded JFS in London which opened in 1732, this was nearly 25 decades prior to the first Muslim school which was established in 1979 (Association of Muslim Schools, 2015).



The figure 2.3 further illustrates the exponential growth of Muslim faith-based schools since the date of establishment of Dar al-Uloom Al-Arabiya Al-Islamia in 1979; it shows there has been a steady demand and growth of Muslim faith-based schools (Association of Muslim Schools, 2015).

2.4 Government census (2001 and 2011)

The 2011 census indicated that England and Wales became more ethnically diverse with more people identifying themselves with minority ethnic groups. Despite the white ethnic group was shown as decreasing in size, 86% of the population still identified themselves as white making it the majority ethnic group still present in England and Wales. The census indicated more than nine out of ten Christians in England and Wales were White, accounting for 30.8 million people with 86% of this group identifying themselves as White British. Over 1.6 million people identified themselves with the 'Other White' category. Muslims, like Buddhists, were more ethnically diverse, 68% identified themselves with the Asian Background, and the proportion of Muslims who identified themselves as Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British only accounted for 10% which was similar to those reporting as other ethnic groups (11%). The 2011 census indicated that 93% of the total population that identified themselves as 'no religion' were from a white background while the majority of Hindus and Sikhs classified themselves with the Asian

ethnic background, with statistics standing at 96% and 87% respectively (Office for National Statistics, 2012).

The 2011 Government census showed that the number of people who identified themselves as a Christian in England and Wales has declined by 12% since 2001 with figures falling from 71.7% to 59.3% during the past decade (Office for National Statistics, 2011).

According to a recent study by the Pew Research Center (Kern, 2014), Pew Research Centre's Religion & Public Life Project originally carried out in 2011, the Muslim population of Britain reached 3.3 million by the end of 2013, which represented 5.2% of the overall population of 63 million. During the same decade, the Muslim population in England and Wales increased by 80%, with figures increasing from 1.5 million in 2001 to 2.7 million in 2011, which in turn makes Islam the second-largest religion in Britain. Although immigration is one of the biggest factors contributing to the rise of Islam in Britain, it has been reported that hundreds of Britons are converting to Islam every month which is also contributing to the gradual increase of the presence of Islam in Britain.

From amongst the common reasons for people to have reverted to Islam is due to marriage to a Muslim while others have embraced the religion due to their own extensive research in different religions and religious values. The number of British converts to Islam is over 100,000 with an average of nearly 5000 British people converting to Islam every year. Nearly two-thirds of converts being women, 70% of Muslim converts in Britain are white and average age of conversion being 27 years old (The Guardian, 2013; Faith Matters, 2014). The exact number of Muslim reverts, however, is impossible to estimate.

Fiyaz Mughal, director of Faith Matters said, "Conversion to Islam has been stigmatized by the media and wrongly associated with extremist ideologies and discriminatory cultural practices"(Faith Matters, 2014).British reverts to Islam plays an essential role in the Muslim community as they have valuable knowledge of the British way of life as well as an established Islamic viewpoint. Muslim reverts are able to articulate and use their knowledge to argue the establishment of Muslim faith-based schools. The influence of well-educated Muslim converts has made the Islamic education of their children their highest priority (McDermott and Ahsan, 1986).

According to the 2011 census, one in five people who identified themselves as Christian was aged 65 and over, with people less likely to report as being Christians across all age groups in 2011 compared to 2001. Muslims, on the other hand, had the youngest age profile, with 48% aged under 25. This represents 1.3 million of the Muslim population, which is an increase of 505,000 people since 2001. This may be due to the majority of Muslims having more children than the average of the population. Like Muslims, people who identified themselves with no religion also have a younger age profile with 39% being under 25 (Office for National Statistics, 2015).

Census Analysis 2001 - 2011				
	2001		2011	
Religion				
All People	52,041,916		56,075,900	
Christian	37,338,486	71.7%	33,253,009	59.3%
Buddhist	144,453	0.3%	224,304	0.4%
Hindu	552,421	1.1%	841,139	1.5%
Jewish	259,927	0.5%	280,380	0.5%
Muslim	1,546,626	3.0%	2,691,643	4.8%
Sikh	329,358	0.6%	448,607	0.8%
Other	150,720	0.3%	224,304	0.4%
No Religion	7,709,267	14.8%	4,037,465	7.2%
Religion not stated	4,010,658	7.7%	1,407,505	25.1%

Figure 2. 4 The Census Analysis 2001 and 2011

The above table illustrates a comparison between the religion people associated themselves with between the period 2001 to 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2012, Office for National Statistics, 2002).

2.5 State schools and the educational challenges of Muslim children

The British educational system and the standard of education in Britain, in the past and present, has been internationally recognized, admired, and praised by different communities, including Muslims (Nielson, 1981; Ally, 1981).

Muslim immigrants, therefore, did not hesitate in terms of sending their children to state schools. In fact, many Muslim parents have given, and still, do give, priority to state schooling over Islamic supplementary centers. Muslims, in general, did not find imperfection within British curriculum or schooling system. They, in fact, hoped that the standard of education in their countries of origin become as good as it was in Britain. However, Muslims gradually began to be more conscious of their children's religious beliefs and thoughts. Muslims began to feel that their children's ethical issues and religious values were not addressed in the state schools; Muslims felt that state schools' environments did not help or promote their religious values,

and this very system became a “challenge” for them. It was also noticed that mosques and home teachings were not enhanced by the state schools.

Fatima (2003, p.65) is of the opinion that, “parents feel their children are caught in a situation of ‘cultural clash’, this is because the ethos of the state schools is regarded as a clash/inconsistent with their way of life.”

Since the purpose of education in Islam is not to cram pupils with facts on religious beliefs, but to up bring character-based person, this has led to the role of “the teacher acted not simply as the guide to better knowledge but also as the example to better conduct” (Badawi, 1979; al-Attas, 1979).

Muslim faith-based schools emerged within Britain to fulfil this task, they emerged, alongside the modern educational system to inspire the aims and objectives of Islamic education; they emerged to provide a safer environment to Muslim children, integrate education and faith, and to produce citizens with high academic achievement (Fatima, 2003). Similarly, Parker-Jenkins (2005) observes that for parents, faith-based schools are seen attractive because of the cultural appropriateness of the educational settings and the religious ethos of the institutions.

It is evident that the British Muslim community, in general, is a religious community, and there are many issues which concern the community with regards to their children’s education. Sometimes the issues are of ethical or moral, such as the teachings about homosexuality, dress and *Halal* meals (Grimmitt, 2010), other issues are due to the methodology that is used in teaching certain subjects which could be seen as religiously rather sensitive issues such as the lessons of sex education or mixed swimming (Sarwar, 1996). Therefore, Muslim parents believe

that Islamic Schools generally instruct religious teachings and knowledge that the state schools are unable to provide (Reid, 1997; Clyne, 2000).

Similarly, It is believed that educational discrimination against Muslim children has heightened in the recent years especially after the media coverage and the rise of Islamophobia, this, in turn, has resulted in some children feeling marginalized in state schools due to prejudice and stereotyping (The Muslim Council of Britain Report, 2007).

Due to contemporary politically charged reality, Muslims in Britain began to realise that the challenges facing their young children are quite immense and that the community must critically consider the Muslim education provision offered in an Islamic educational institution. As Sahin's work, originally carried out among Muslim students in the sixth form colleges in Birmingham (2005, p.39) has shown, Muslim educators should take seriously their educational practice in a way that "Islamic Education should not be reduced to a one-way transmission process but contribute to their overall personality development". He further suggests that there is an urgent need to rethink the Muslim educational philosophy in the hope of developing learner-centered approaches to Muslim education. This will require to critically engage with the curriculum as well as the teaching methods followed within Muslims schools. In addition, the views of pupils who attend these schools and their parents should also be taken into account.

2.6 Political, social and religious challenges

Muslims in the last three decades (1980 – 2010) went through number of unpredictable challenges including the 'Rushdie affair' also known as the 'The satanic verses controversy' which refers to the intense and at times violent reaction of some Muslims towards Salman Rushdie's published work, "The Satanic Verses", which was first published in Britain in 1988. A

major controversy ensued due to the book as some Muslims accused Rushdie of Blasphemy and mocking Islam. This inspired demonstrations in London resulting in a *fatwa* (Islamic Ruling) calling for Rushdie's death by the Supreme Leader of Iran, on 14 February 1989 (Falkenhayner, 2014). The UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA) was established in response to the Rushdie Affair; the organization collected signatures for a petition to send off to the publisher and requested an extension of the blasphemy law. The UKACIA handled the Rushdie Affair with more grace than those who burnt the copies of the book in the street, threatening bookstores that sold out the book to even going as far to bomb two bookstores in New York (Bowen, 2014; Pipes, 1990).

From amongst the challenges to the Muslims is also the perceived actions of Al-Qaeda, this group is thought to be established between 1988 to 1989, the Al-Qaeda group can be seen as a challenge to the Muslim community as it challenges the integrity and peacefulness of Islam. Most notably in 2001, 19 militants said to be associated with al-Qaeda staged the September 11 attacks against the United States. Al-Qaeda was also linked, whether directly or indirectly, to more attacks in the six years following September 11 than it had been in the six years prior, including attacks in Jordan, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Turkey, Britain, Algeria, and elsewhere (Bowen, 2014).

Incidents directly linked to Britain include the 7 July 2005 London bombings (7/7 Bombings) whereby a series of coordinated suicide bomb attacks which took place in London to target the civilians using the public transport system. It is thought four British Islamist men detonated four bombs onboard London underground trains across the city and on a double-decker bus in Tavistock square. All these incidents contributed to the rise in Islamophobia and hate crimes

against British Muslims as well as Muslim across the globe. The 7/7 bombing was one of Britain's worst terrorist attack acts since the Lockerbie bombing in 1988 (Allen, 2014).

Since 2014 Muslims had to live with consequences of the rise of ISIS; an extremist terrorist organisation controlling territory in Iraq and Syria, the group also has territorial control and affiliates in many other parts of the world. This group has participated in many murderous activities around the world in the name of Islam that mainstream Muslims object against as it goes against the teaching of Islam (Sekulow, 2014, Al-Sudais, 2015).

All these incidents contributed to the rise in Islamophobia and hate crimes against British Muslims as well as Muslim across the globe. For example, on 17 June 2014 in Essex, a Saudi Arabian female student of the University of Essex was stabbed 16 times, 2 of which were fatal resulting in her death, it is believed the student was targeted for her Islamic dress (The Huffington Post UK, 2015; BBC News, 2015; Duggan, 2014).

Omar Ali, the president of Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) said that "This isn't the first attack on a Muslim student and certainly is not the last on a member of the Muslim community in the UK. We will naturally wait for all evidence to become clear and articulate. However, if the attack turns out to be Islamophobic in nature because of her Muslim appearance, then it will correlate with the disturbing exponential increase in hate crimes against Muslims in the UK." (The Huffington Post UK, 2015; The Times, 2015).

More recently in January 2015, France was left shocked after a massacre of 17 people in the French Capital, Paris. 12 people were killed at the office of the satirical magazine, Charlie Hebdo, by two French-born brothers who claimed to be avenging the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Magazine Charlie Hebdo is known for its controversial cartoons

ridiculing and mocking various religious groups and leaders including Islam and its prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The situation amplified when another attacker shot a policewoman as well as opened fire on a Jewish supermarket killing 4 shoppers including one Muslim (Henley and Graham-Harrison, 2015).

Since these and other similar incidents, Islam has come under attack with some high profile individuals including media mogul Rupert Murdoch demanding that all Muslims should be held responsible for the Paris attacks, “Maybe most Moslems are peaceful, but until they recognize and destroy their growing jihadist cancer they must be held responsible” (The Guardian, 2015).

At least 128 Islamophobic incidents have been reported since the murder of the 17-people killed during the Paris massacre including the murder of a Moroccan man who was brutally stabbed by his neighbor in his home 17 times in front of his wife. According to the French council report, the 128 anti-Muslim Islamophobic incidents were made up of 33 acts against mosques, and 95 threats reported to authorities. Since the incident, the family of Ahmed Merabet, the French Muslim police officer who was murdered outside the Charlie Hebdo office, have spoken out about the incident, “I address this to all the racists, the Islamophobes and the anti-Semites: you mustn’t mix up extremism with Muslims, the madmen have no colour or religion. Islam is a religion of peace, of love ... my brother was a Muslim and he was killed by two terrorists, by false Muslims” (Henley and Graham-Harrison, 2015). Muslims from all over the world have condemned the attack as it goes against the teachings of Islam and the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

“So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So, pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter” The Qur’an[03:159].

This incident has affected Muslims across the world with people questioning once again how peaceful Islam is. Commentators who do not have enough knowledge about the Islamic faith insist on highlighting the 'dark side' or pessimism of Islam by taking the religious text out of context or interpreting incidents as they understand it.

The media, can be seen as another challenge to the Muslim community, it can be argued that the Muslim community has been marginalized by the media because not many westerners learnt about Islam from its original sources, rather they learnt about Islam from sources such as negative media or from other sources which portray Islam as a threat to western lifestyle and values. Dervla Murphy said, "If you know nothing about people, you can believe anything"(Modood, 1992). Muslims are often perceived as being different; the media often play a role in reinforcing this sense of difference, due to the presentation of Muslims in all aspects of media including film, fiction and newspaper that present stereotypical and distorted views of Muslims and Islam in general (Ameli et al, 2007).

All these factors have contributed to Islam being portrayed in a negative light, with society questioning how peaceful the religion of Islam is when it is always portrayed by the media and elsewhere as causing mischief and trouble across the globe. Mainstream Muslims in Britain, therefore, are often left feeling marginalized from society as a result of these challenges making it difficult for some Muslims to integrate fully into a society which views them as a 'threat'.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter, in order to locate the study within its wider research context, discussed in detail emergence of Islam as a collective identity marker for culturally and ethnically diverse Muslim immigrants settling in the UK after the World War Two. The chapter presented the historical

background of Muslims in the UK and discussed the aspects involved in the steady emergence and growth of British Muslim communities. The chapter explored the factors such as enabling young Muslims to develop proper Islamic sense of belonging that have led to the establishment of Muslim faith-based schools. The evolution of Britain as a multicultural and multi-faith country has been briefly highlighted to provide an insight into the diversity of the population. Through using the official census data, the overall characteristics of the Muslim population, its trends of growth and social and educational challenges facing the community have been discussed in detail. The chapter also discussed recent challenges facing Muslims in the West and the implications of these challenges resulting in the rise in Islamophobia and in shaping the future of Islamic Education in Britain.

CHAPTER THREE (Literature Review)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to classify and engage critically with the main body of literature related to the study. Faith-based schooling in general and the Islamic schooling in particular within the context of a multicultural educational system in the UK, have attracted the attention of researchers in the fields of Social Sciences and Educational Studies. Particularly, the most recent controversy over Muslim parents' and activists' involvement in the schooling in Birmingham state-funded schools, the infamous Trojan Horse affair, which refers to the alleged organized attempt by a number of associated individuals to introduce an Islamist or *Salafist* (Wahabi School of thought) ethos into several schools in Birmingham, has highlighted the renewed interest in exploring the relevance and desirability of faith-based education in contemporary secular societies. This type of literature increasingly includes security-related studies focusing on religious extremism and radicalisation as well as research on social and community cohesion.

The undertaken research aimed to explore the degree to which Islamic schools meet the expectations of parents and children in terms of offering an effective Islamic educational provision. This chapter highlights how the current Western educational system is viewed by the Muslim faith community residing within the UK. The researcher analysed and illustrated the findings of the previous research undertaken in this particular field, identifying the gap in the previous studies and how this research would offer an original way of addressing the issue.

The researcher explored the reasons behind the recent rise of Islamic schooling, its historical background and the contemporary challenges facing Muslim ethos schools within the context of secular and multicultural British society. These issues will be contextualised within the wider debate on faith-based schooling. Islamic schooling, like the rest of faith-based educational

provision in the UK, for example, Christian or Jewish schooling, show diversity. Some of these schools are independent while others receive different levels of state funding. However, while most of these schools teach the national curriculum, they make a special provision for teaching the particular religious teachings of their community. The school institution, be it Islamic or otherwise, is one of the earliest mainstream social institutions where children come into sustained contact, schools in general respect and accommodate diversity and strongly promote these values to its students. Schools promote educational attainment which in turn results in enhancing employability. Schools provide an opportunity to develop friendships between children of varied ethnic and faith groups; it is an essential mechanism which enables students to develop an understanding of different minority groups in the wider society. Islamic schooling, in addition to the general educational development goals, aims to develop the Muslim child according to Islamic principles and engage in creating a connection between the Divine and Muslim children and young people. Some Muslims feel that this spiritual link has not been emphasised enough in mainstream schools that do not hold religious principles. Therefore, they feel that having Muslim ethos schools will enable the continuity of Islamic identity and cultural values of the community in the lives of its young generations.

This chapter analysed in detail the literature on Muslim faith-based schools, parental satisfaction, community cohesion and challenges facing the Muslim community including the recent Trojan Horse enquiry and its implications on the education of Muslim children and the Muslim community as a whole. It is widely agreed that education is a crucial element in bringing about social integration of all students especially in such a diverse and multicultural and multi-faith society like Birmingham. In the light of the findings, the researcher explored whether Muslim children are isolated from the wider society and the precaution measures

taken by Muslim faith-based schools to overcome segregations of Muslim students from the wider society, ensuring Muslim students are effectively integrated into the wider society and play a positive and constructive role in the society as a whole.

This chapter explores the implications of the recent incidents regarding Islamic extremism and whether these incidences have affected the education of Muslim children. This chapter also analyses the repercussions of the rise of Islamophobia on Muslim children and what Muslim schools are doing to safeguard its students and clear misconceptions about Islam as a religion. The researcher, in turn, debates the common view that Muslim faith-based schools are a breeding ground for Islamic extremism and identify what these schools are doing to clear these misconceptions. The researcher explores the reasons for parents choosing fee-paying Muslim faith-based schools over state-funded schools which are government funded and explores whether parents are satisfied by the educational standards provided by Muslim faith-based school and whether these schools are achieving their goals of establishment.

3.2 Setting the scene

Literature in the field of faith-based schools, in the UK, highlights the idea of formal schooling which ultimately begins with Church of England schools, “The Church of England has been the established Church of the country since the 16th century and has held a long-time commitment to education”(Parker-Jenkins, Hartas and Irving, 2005).

A wide range of literature can be found on Christian faith-based schools; illustrating their number, their educational ideology and the important role they have played and still are playing over the centuries in preserving and teaching Christianity to the present time (Hewer, 1991).

Historical literature in the field of education, as well as the faith-based schools, highlights the historical contribution of the Church in educating the society. According to Richardson (2010), churches were the education providers before the state provisions (Grimmitt, 2010).

The growth of partnership between the state and Church (in the field of education) gradually led to commitment of schools to diversity, inclusion and equality (Ehler and Morrall, 1954). While debates, policies development and discussions continue in the educational field, it is hoped that schools of all types promote community understandings and focus on learning from similarities and differences of one another which create rich diversity in our society.

Literature also highlights the emergence of other faith schools within the UK such as Jewish schools. The migration of the Jewish community from Eastern European countries is retrospective to the period between the 1880s to the First World War. It is reported that one of the main priority concerns of the Jewish community at that time was the education of their children. Their children's religious identity and heritage was of great concern to the Jewish community as their children were exposed to the dominant society culture which contributes over time to take their own religious aspects (Jewish aspects) less seriously than they should do, "There was great concern that these children would be at risk of losing their Jewish heritage and identity, through compulsory study of Christianity and the New Testament" (Miller, 2001; Parker-Jenkins, 2005).

To combat these threats, the Jewish community established supplementary schools and centres operating at evenings and during weekends in an attempt to preserve their children's religious and cultural identity. As these classes and centres alone could not sustain and perpetuate the pupils' religious heritage, the Jewish community began to establish independent full-time faith-based schools.

Like the Jewish community, many Muslim parents residing in the UK share the same feelings and concerns about their children's religious identity. Muslims are of the opinion that by establishing Muslim schools, children are able to develop and maintain their Islamic identity by maintaining certain Islamic practices within school hours as well as achieve and prosper educationally.

In today's Western liberal societies, the progression of man and his advancement are easily noticeable in the material world often at the expense of ignoring humanity's spiritual development. As Flint and Peim (2011) suggest in the field of education the concept of improvement is often assumed to be indicating positivity with qualification. They further stress the need to 'deconstruct the ethic of improvement' before exploring diverse dimensions of the education. Clearly, within the West, religion no longer dominates the society, thus liberal view is that democracy will provide a solution to man's needs including his spiritual, moral values and cultural needs. This view is rejected by the religious communities who believe in divine revelation and accepted the God-given religious guidance of life.

Husain and Ashraf's book, *Crisis in Muslim education* (1979), support the idea of full-time Muslim faith-based schooling for they integrate and strengthen religious and spiritual values of education with skills and techniques by implanting Islamic concept in all branches of knowledge and changing the methodology of teaching to enhance and to produce religious-based society (integration of traditional and modern system of education). They are of the opinion that faith-based schools bring about the required reform in education by preserving and promoting sustenance to the human spirit; faith-based schools develop in pupils' religious identity which is not achievable in the state schools (Hussain and Ashraf, 1979).

There is a fear amongst Muslims that the current modern and liberal educational system lacks prospering teaching of spirituality and religious values. The secular education, it is further argued, instead of strengthening teachings of God, could promote doubts in pupil's minds about their religious beliefs.

Consequently, many Muslims, like other faith communities living in Britain give a preference to faith-based schools primarily because of their teaching environment and teaching methodology reflect community's faith values. These schools argue that they are based on a faith ethos but provide a balanced curriculum, accommodate moral and spiritual principles, foster in pupils' their religious identity. They also emphasize that they promote respect and tolerance towards other faiths or people with no faith. In addition to this, these schools facilitate and encourage daily worship and perform prayers in congregation in accordance with their set timings. In Islam, the concept of worship (Ibadaah) is not restricted to prayers (Salah) and fasting (Sawm) etc., instead it is a comprehensive term which includes thoughts, feelings, and work, etc. Some Muslim parents, therefore, prefer Islamic schooling as it also enhances home teachings; ensuring their children do not live in confusion when it comes to matters of faith.

According to Badawi's (1979, p78) Muslim teachers and schools, "...are measured by both the matter presented and the spiritual lessons, not only to the cerebral part of the personality of the pupil but to the whole and integrated human personality in him". Hence Muslim faith-based schools emerged within Britain and other parts of Europe to enhance the traditional teachings to Muslim pupils, to increase devotion to human inner part of life (spiritual side), to preserve their faith and elevate their academic achievement standards.

It is hoped that Muslim faith-based schools will integrate modern knowledge and religious virtues, and produce generations who will accept religious authority, and at the same time

acquire knowledge of the modern sciences in an Islamic perspective. In today's fast moving world, cohesion between religious teachings and modern education system is an immediate need of the world educational system, if both (modern education and religious teachings) remained separated from one another, mankind's understanding and his contribution to the human life will remain imperfect, and the tension between traditionalists and modern scientists will continue to affect the world society. Today's modern education system has been changed from its original goal. The current goal of education in the Western world appears to be focusing on technology and the success in this material world. It is argued that this philosophy of education has resulted in the mental and spiritual unrest of humanity, moral crises, produced materialist and selfish man. According to Husain and Ashraf (1979; p.45), "unless an attempt is being made now to Islamise the humanities, social, and natural sciences by producing basic concepts humanities, social, and natural sciences by producing basic concepts and by changing the methodology of approaching them or teaching them, it will not be possible to create a viable group intellectually capable of resisting the onslaught of secularist teaching"

The Education Act of 1944 provided free secondary education for all pupils. Local Education Authorities were required to submit proposals to the new Department of Education for reorganising secondary schooling system in their areas. Mainly aiming to establish grammar, secondary modern and technical whereby children would be allocated into sets on the basis of an examination at the age of 11 with the main objective to provide equal opportunities to children of all backgrounds. Education Reform Act of 1988 allowed both primary and secondary schools to opt out of local authority control and be funded by the central government. As a result of the reform, roughly one-fourth of all state schools chose to reconstitute. However,

under further legislation in 1998 'grant-maintained schools' were abolished and replaced by 'foundation schools' which were viewed as having more self-sufficiency over their affairs.

The education system has evolved significantly in recent years and today there is a variety of schools available from private schools, to church schools, state-funded schools and more recently faith schools which Islamic faith-based schools fall under.

Although faith has been the foundation as well as the part and parcel of the British education system, throughout history, with the schooling system adopting the methods and views of the church teachings, therefore it could be argued that faith education has always been a part of the British educational system. However, recently and especially within the last three decades, there has been the rise of Islamic and other minority religious faith-based schoolings systems within the UK.

In the UK, the first independent Muslim school was established in 1979 (Dooley, 1991; Parker-Jenkins, 2005). Within a period of thirty-five years, the number of Muslim faith-based schools has increased to over 125 schools in the UK (Association of Muslim Schools, 2015).

Muslim faith-based schools may differ slightly between each institution with regards to the ethos of school with some may be focusing more on Islamic Education while others are more diverse in its teaching, including both Islamic and national curriculum. The term Islamic Education can mean a number of things; on the one hand, it can focus solely on Islamic studies. This in turn refers to religious education in which a person focuses solely on religious knowledge including in-depth study of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* (teachings of prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), where all knowledge is drawn from including matters of worship like *Zakah* (obligatory charity), *Sawm* (fasting in the month of Ramadan) and *Hajj*

(Islamic Pilgrimage to Makkah) if one can afford it. The person may, in turn, learn about other matters including purification, Islamic etiquettes, Islamic dress code and general relations in terms of family, business, law and inheritance. However, on the other hand, Islamic Education can have even broader meaning, implanting knowledge in a general more traditional framework, where the syllabus and environment all comply with Islamic values and teachings, while at the same time students are taught the national curriculum including Science, Mathematics and English. The curriculum will still devote its time to Islamic Education and may not include any texts that contradict with Islamic beliefs and teachings (al-Zâydî, 2015; King, 2005).

3.3 British Muslim community and challenges of the 21st century

This research was conducted at the time when the world witnesses conflict in many forms across different parts of the globe. Political and social commentators even suggest the presence of a ‘clash of civilizations: ‘Islam and West’. We know that the twentieth century ended up with wars, riots and conflicts involving or against Muslims in different areas across the globe, including the war of Serbia against Bosnia, Russia against Chechnya, the continuing conflict in Kashmir and the prolonged conflict between Israel and Palestine. The beginning of the twenty-first century, regrettably, has not changed that situation; the world continues through the same bitter experience on a larger scale, for example the attack on the USA twin towers on September 11, 2001; the Burnley and Bradford riots in the UK in July, 2001; the war against the Taliban government in Afghanistan, October 2001; the war against Saddam Hussain’s regime in Iraq, March 2003; the Madrid bombings in Spain, March 2004; the London, UK tube bombings of July 2005; the printing of the Danish newspaper cartoons of prophet Muhammad(peace be upon him) which caused anger across the Muslim world, September 2005; the consequences of Hamas’ victory in the Palestinian elections in February 2006; the hot

dialogues with Syria and Iran, June 2006; the war of Israel and Lebanon, July 2006, the execution of the Iraqi President Saddam Hussain, December 2006, Murder of Lee Rigby, 2013; Charlie Hebdo; Paris attacks, 2015 and the continuous threat from ISIS etc. All of these events have participated in changing the world order, in one way or another; and humanity in general - irrespective of colour, age, gender or creed –everyone has been affected in some way or another. As a result, hatred on the basis of religion and traditions has increased amongst different communities. Consequently, the teaching of mosques and Islamic *madrassas*, today, are seen by many as the force behind the Muslim extremists' views and terrorists in different parts of the world (Malik, 2008; McDougall and Auerbach, 2015).

All of these events have directly affected the image of the Muslim community in the UK, with the majority of wider secular society claiming, once again, that Islam is not a peaceful religion. As a result of these incidents in recent years, there has been a rise of Islamophobia within the UK. With some people not only having discriminatory attitudes towards the Muslim community but also physically assault and portray abusive behaviour towards the Muslim community, these include Muslim women being targeted for wearing the *Hijab*(head scarf) and mosques being vandalised. More shockingly there has been an increase in Muslim-hate crimes reported online. All these incidents have led to heightened atmosphere for British Muslims who fear reprisal attacks against them for the incidents that have occurred around the world and in the UK (Awan, 2013; Ansari, 2004; Richardson, 2004).

This study is conducted in this unsettled period of time, where Muslim faith-based schools are seen by many Muslim parents as a refuge for their children from the western society norms and values, whereas the majority of the wider society, on the other hand, sees Muslim faith-based schools as a breeding ground for extremism.

3.4 Literature on Muslim faith-based schools

For the purpose of gathering knowledge and collecting information on the topic, the researcher searched very closely through catalogues of many Islamic bookshops in the UK, i.e. IOCI publications; catalogues of the main publishers and printers who often published work in the field of Islam or Muslim faith-based schools in the UK, e.g. Muslim Educational Trust and Iqra Trust, both, based in London. The researcher also searched through the bibliography of the existing studies in this field, e.g. Parker-Jenkins (2005). The researcher also carried out searches at the University of Birmingham library, and went through many unpublished related theses. The researcher analyzed many Muslim education and religious education journals of the last decades, in which he found many useful articles based on Islamic theory and the Islamic concept of education. He also benefited from many articles which held the view for and against separate Muslim faith-based schools. Over the last three years, the researcher went through many Muslim newspapers such as 'The Muslim News' and 'Q-News' which repeatedly presented articles, views and reports about the educational needs of Muslim children in state schools. The researcher also went through many UK newspapers, particularly 'The Independent', 'The Times', 'The Guardian' and 'Birmingham Metro' which also from time to time discussed the case for and against faith-based schools, including Muslim schools. Internet sites also provided a large collection on different subjects including literature on Muslim faith-based schools, therefore, a large amount of data was accumulated through Islamic and non-Islamic websites on different areas, e.g. the argument for and against Muslim faith-based schools, the idea of establishing more full-time Muslim faith-based schools and the view of the UK Chief Inspector of Education, David Bell(2005) which angered the Muslim community as he claimed that the growth of Islamic faith schools posed a challenge to the coherence of British society (Smithers, 2005).

As time passed, it became evident that literature in this field was rather limited; this is because the undertaken research field has not yet been properly documented. There are few recent rather casual attempts to classify the doctorate-level theses undertaken in British higher education system on Education and Muslim societies in general (Al Ghanem 2016) but not directly on Islamic Education. However, Imam Jalil Sajid (an educationalist and a prominent member of the Muslim community of Brighton) and Mohammad A Saqib (Birmingham based educationalist), as well as Al-Hijrah library in Birmingham, had some collection on the undertaken research topic. The collection contained many small pamphlets on Muslim faith-based schools, Muslim schools brochures dating back to the 1980s, articles, newspaper collections etc. Many of this material was either the work of an active member of the Muslim community living in the UK or a circular to the most prominent members of the Muslim community living in Britain at that time (See appendix 1). This enhanced the researcher's work and supported him in accumulating knowledge. It also enabled him to reach written materials which were not documented or made available in general libraries or bookshops.

It appears that the literature in the field of Muslim faith-based schools is presented rather differently from many other topics; the literature on this topic is poorly documented. A large amount of this type of literature is written by volunteer Muslim institutes, community leaders or Muslim writers. It is also realised that most of the work is published by charitable organisations and sometimes undated. In addition to this, it was realised that most of the literature, in this field, is dated to or after the 1980s and many of the writers are either from Birmingham, e.g. Hewan or regular visitors of Birmingham, e.g. Cheema, who provided an outstanding opportunity enabling the researcher to meet these writers that often directed him to the latest works and undertaken initiatives in the field.

Finding literature on Muslim faith-based schools is a task that requires patience and continuous efforts. This is because there are not many studies conducted in this field nor are there many academic or published papers on the topic; this could be because, in the past, there were no immediate needs to search in the field of Muslim faith-based schools, as they did not exist until 1979, (Parker-Jenkins, 2005). The few kinds of research that are found in the field relate indirectly to the undertaken research topic. From amongst the most prominent works is the work of Amer (1997). She conducted a descriptive and explanatory study on Islamic supplementary schools of England, entitled 'Islamic supplementary education in Britain: a critique' which examined and explored the Islamic supplementary schools in different parts of England.

In light of Amer's (1997) research and other similar studies' findings, e.g. Khan-Cheema (1985) the Muslim community residing in Britain became, as time passed, more vigilant about the shortcomings of Islamic supplementary schools. Amer, who suggested that unless Islamic supplementary schools were improved by the trained teachers and well-designed syllabuses along with the necessary teaching resources and aids; the contribution of these schools will continue to be limited in maintaining children's cultural heritage. She argues that the absence of adequate Islamic curriculum, in addition to a long-term clear-cut strategy of achievement along with the inadequate provision of proper classrooms are the main issues behind the underachievement of Islamic supplementary school in the UK.

From amongst the unique studies in this field is the work of Hewer (1991). Hewer's contribution in the field of separate Muslim faith-based schools is of great interest to both, the hosting society as well as to the Muslims residing in Britain. In his M.Phil dissertation, he explains in detail the educational and religious needs of Muslim children in community schools

with particular reference to the main aims and objectives of Islamic education. Although Hewer does not support the idea of separate Muslim faith-based schools, he sympathises as a philanthropist with the religious and cultural needs of Muslim children and parents. He is of the opinion that the Department of Education (DoE), and many community school teachers, lack the understanding of education in Islam as well as the religious and cultural needs of Muslim children in community schools. He suggests that non-Muslim teachers should be trained to comprehend an overall understanding of Muslim children's religious and cultural needs. He also suggests that the Muslim community should work with British universities and other teaching institutes to produce teachers and governors who can assist Muslim children in community schools with their religious and cultural needs.

Fatima (2003) conducted a research in Birmingham on a single sex Muslim faith-based school; she discussed 'whether Muslim faith-based schools isolate or integrate pupils in a multicultural society'. She expresses it seems to be difficult for the present UK educational system 'education for all' to meet the needs of different communities living today in a pluralistic society. For this reason, different religious groups or communities, e.g. Muslims and Sikhs began to establish their own faith-based schools to preserve their religious heritage. In the name of integration, Fatima suggests that non-Muslim teachers and pupils should be accommodated within Muslim faith-based schools to create the atmosphere of coherence and harmony in society. She is of the opinion that demanding separate schools by different groups is an issue of equality rather than isolation or integration, and argues that since there are different faith-based schools in the country, i.e. Christian and Jewish schools which are established to promote and preserve religious heritage, it becomes an issue of equality for the new faith communities in the UK; different communities will continue to feel that their

children's educational right is not accommodated within the same government. Muslim and other minority faith groups should be accommodated and supported by the same legislation as the existing faith schools so that they can produce good citizens who will appreciate the state's contribution to their education and religious development. Fatima also highlights the main reasons behind the establishment of the new type of faith-based schools, e.g. to close the gap between home practices and schools; she is of the opinion that, "this is an issue that needs to be researched in more details to discover whether Muslim faith-based schools are meeting their own aims" to fill this gap. This research is hoped to contribute original knowledge in filling this gap.

As mentioned previously, printed material that deals with the issue of educational needs of Muslim children or Muslim faith-based schools, most of that exists is in the form of reports, pamphlets, newsletters, school brochures etc. Organisations such as the council of Mosques; U.K. & Eire published the Muslims and Swann (1986) report, which was a response to the report of Committee of Inquiry into the education of children from ethnic minority groups. The report highlighted the importance of religion in a Muslim pupil's life and the role of community schools in developing this personality; the issues raised in Religious Education lessons and syllabus in community schools and the debate over separate schools for Muslim children; the concerns of the Muslim community to racism, etc. Iqra Trust (1991) based in London is another organization that contributed significantly in making the educational authorities aware of Muslims' religious and cultural needs, from amongst their work is the publishing of participating in school governing bodies.

This report aims to guide school governors (Muslims and non-Muslims) of the Muslims parental and pupil's needs in the curriculum, sex education, religious education, collective worship, etc.

Muslim educational trust (London) could be considered the third organization in this field which actively participated in building awareness amongst Muslims of their children's rights in mainstream schools, and also participated actively in drawing the attention of the Department of Education and Science (DFES); Local Education Authorities (LEA); schools and other educational bodies to the educational needs of Muslim parents and pupils (Sarwar, 1991). It is interesting to note that most of the printed pamphlets or booklets are the production of the Muslim Educational Trust.

London Islamic School represented by Iftikhar Ahmed could be considered as the fourth organisation in this field, which played an important role in order to highlight the eligibility of the Muslim community residing in the UK to have their own separate schools. He is of the opinion that 84% of the Muslims in the UK agree that they should have a choice of schooling for their children.

Cheema's report in 1985 could be considered amongst the very early formal reports in the field of Muslim children's educational needs in the UK which reveals the approach of some proactive members of the Muslim community, living in Britain today, who demanded separate Muslim schools for their children in 1982. The Muslim Parents Association (MPA) approached the Bradford Local Educational Authority in the year 1982/1983 and submitted an application to the Bradford LEA to establish five voluntary aided Muslim schools in two existing first schools, two middle schools and a single sex girls school which was rejected on the grounds that (MPA) was unable to prove that it represented the entire Muslim community of Bradford; secondly, MPA did not possess the financial resources; thirdly, many Muslim parents were opposed to the scheme, and finally, the organization did not have enough resources (Khan-Cheema, 1985). It could be stated that we cannot trace evidence before 1979 in which Muslims

demanded separate schools in the UK for their children. The year 1979 could be, therefore, considered as a turning point in the history of Muslim education in which a new type of faith-based school in the UK was either demanded or established.

It is also noticed that Muslim faith-based schools emerged slowly, over the last three decades, between 1980s-2016; it seems as though these schools learnt and developed from the experience of the previous Islamic schools. We trace no evidence or records showing that the emergence of Muslim faith-based schools as planned or studied by a body or an authority; in the transcripts of interviews and the available documents we learn that some concerned individuals in different parts of the country followed the footsteps of one another and established mainly small sized full-time schools in the country. According to Hewer (1991), the total number of Muslim faith-based schools was seventy-one schools. In the year 2000, the number increased to 91 (Hewer, 2001). A report published by the Islamic Human Rights Commission titled 'what schools do British Muslims want for their children' (2005) states that the number of Muslim faith-based schools in the UK exceeds one hundred and one schools; amongst them four grant-maintained schools, yet the report of the Association of Muslim Schools in the UK- June 2006 shows the number of Muslim faith-based schools exceeded 120 full-time schools.

It became evident that the number of these schools increased rapidly expedited and the number of parents who chose this type of school for their children has also increased. This reflects that there is a sizeable number of Muslims residing in the UK who prefer separate Muslim faith-based schools for their children. However, there are some areas of concern amongst the Muslim community about the religious and cultural provisions implemented in these schools. This study aimed to explore and illustrate these concerns.

From amongst the outstanding works in the field of Muslim faith-based schools is the work of Islamic Human rights: 2005, titled 'what schools do British Muslims want for their children'. This report could be considered as a summary or epitomise of many previous works of Muslims, highlighting the needs of Muslim children in community schools. It discusses the case for and against Muslim schools, the Muslims' struggle for voluntarily-Aided Muslim schools, the reasons behind the current underperformance of Muslim children in the UK, etc.

A book by Parker-Jenkins (2005), entitled 'in good faith: schools, religion and public funding' could be also considered as one of the published works in this field. Parker-Jenkins names Muslim faith-based schools and other new faith schools as 'new type of faith-based schools in the UK'. The author highlights the historical perspective of faith-based schools in general, with reference to the emergence of Jewish faith-based schools. Parker-Jenkins is of the opinion that educational problems of different faith communities are the immediate concerns of the new faith communities residing today in the UK, e.g. Muslims and Sikhs. The writer of the book is of the opinion that these reservations match the concerns of communities migrated and settled in the UK before them, e.g. the Jewish community. It is thought that the newly migrated communities are following the footsteps of communities settled in the UK before them, particularly in the field of education.

Parker-Jenkins' focuses on funded faith-based schools of different communities in the UK by providing accounts on their historical perspectives, the emergence of new type of faith-based schools in Europe with particular reference to the UK, e.g. Muslim, Sikh and Greek; the struggle of these schools for state funding and the role they are expected to play for their communities.

Other studies such as the work of Knight (1988) and Daniele (1984) discuss the expectations and priorities of Muslim parents residing in the Small Heath area of Birmingham, regarding

their children's education. Gallagher (1991) raises the issues and the problems Muslim children face in the state schools, particularly when studying subjects such as music. It becomes evident that the small amount of literature found on Muslim faith-based schools does not directly relate to the undertaken research topic. Literature in this field, as stated before, often discusses issues such as the idea of separate Muslim schools, as discussed by Halsted and Sarwar, the rights of Muslims in community schools, as discussed by Cheema and Hewitt, or the case against Muslim or separate schools as discussed by Rushdie.

Sahin (2002; 2005) in his work with Muslim sixth form college students in Birmingham advocated the need to conduct empirical educational research in finding out the needs of Muslim children and critically engaging with the theory and practice of Islamic education in Muslim schools. His research revealed that exploring the faith development of Muslim young people must be given priority as most of them are increasingly becoming alienated from the mosque and family. Sahin argued that "the theory and practice of Islamic Education must be grounded in the life-world of Muslim children in the hope of developing learner-centered approaches in Muslim education" (2005: p.166). One of his key recommendations suggests that Islamic education must not be seen as part of traditional Islamic Studies only engaged with historical and theological studies. He stresses that theological basis of Islamic education must be integrated with clear and articulate educational thinking thus the subject needs close contact with the Educational Studies and more significantly engagement with Religious Education as studied at the faculties of Education in the British higher education institutions. The findings of Sahin's work will be revisited when discussing the nature of Islamic Education.

3.5 Exploring diverse views of faith-based schools

Around one in three state-funded schools in England have a religious character. This is reflected in the substantial historic contribution of the churches in providing education. Faith schools constitute about one-third of all established schools in England, with over 99% of these schools reflecting Christianity while the rest follow the teachings of Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, or Hinduism. Faith-based schooling is a wide area and Muslim-faith based schools are slightly different. Faith schools can be different kinds of schools in terms of the way it is run but are often associated with a particular religion. Most faith-based schools are run just like any other state schools whereby they follow the national curriculum except for religious studies, as they are able to teach solely about their own religious principles and ethos. Muslim-faith based schools tend to practically teach students about Islam by implementing Islamic teaching into the curriculum for example by observing the 5 daily prayers and ritual fasting in the month of Ramadan. Although many other faith-based schools observe ritual prayers and religious ceremonies, in contrast, the majority of Muslim faith-based schools tend to be practically base the curriculum around Islam as a way of life, more than just a religion.

The existence of faith schools is a controversial issue that has been under much debate in recent years, particularly after many claim faith-based schools in general isolate and indoctrinate students into their particular religious beliefs, after the recent scandal regarding faith-based schools such as the Trojan Horse inquiry and a state-funded school in the United Kingdom being forced to bring about dramatic changes after Ofsted inspectors deemed the school "inadequate", claiming the students displayed "discriminatory views" toward people of other faiths (Christian Post, 2015).

Studies or literature in the field of Muslim children's educational needs in the mainstream schools often highlight the concerns of the Muslim community in regards to issues such as diet, dress, assemblies, Religious Education lessons, sex education lessons, mixed gender classes, etc. It is also noticed that literature in this field often discusses areas such as the 'upbringing of a Muslim child in Great Britain', 'being British and feeling Muslim', 'Religious Identity in a plural society', the Education Act of 1988, 'reasons behind the preference of Muslim faith-based schools over state schools', 'the struggle of Muslims for voluntary aided Muslim schools', 'the reasons behind the underperformance of Muslim children in the UK'. Many studies discuss these issues from different angles, explaining and highlighting the needs of Muslims in the British educational system. Studies on Muslim faith-based schools can be divided into four types; firstly, pro-separatist school's literature; secondly, literature against separate schools; thirdly, moderate views; fourthly, promotional debates.

3.5.1 Literature promoting faith-based schools

During Tony Blair's ten years in office as prime minister, there was clear support for the expansion of faith-based schools which was partly linked to his personal Christian faith (Grimmit, 2010). The Church of England's announcement (2005), which is backed by the elected labour government, that it would be spending five hundred million pounds to expand its network in a bid to revitalize the Church schools angered a sizeable section of the British society; the idea of establishing one hundred new faith-based schools from which two schools will be Muslim faith-based schools divided the opinions of the society.

It argues political motives behind the government's support for faith-based schools. However, it may also be owing to all religion supports their own religious ethos, moral values and

promote academic achievement in order to seek employability but at the same time learn their religious character as well.

As a result of the Labour government's supportive attitude, a debate over the issue has taken place; many were supportive of the idea, yet sizeable number opposed this idea. The Muslim community was also divided into two opinions; the first opinion was supported by Bradford's first Asian Lord Mayor who is of the opinion that Muslims should remain within the state school's educational system but calls to be fully accommodated within the current system. This group desired the Islamic religious ethos to be maintained within the state system, also to ensure a greater coherence between what is being taught at home, in the mosque and in school (Parker-Jenkins, 1995). However, the other group was supported by Muslim Educational Trust and the Association of Muslim Schools which were of the opinion that faith-based schools provide an opportunity to teach in an environment that does not contradict home teachings or the mosque (Coles, 2008). According to Hewitt (1996) Muslims try to stimulate the spirit of Islamic Education through faith-based schools, which covers the different aspects of the modern syllabus from an Islamic viewpoint, also makes an attempt to give Muslim pupils a firm grounding in their faith through the study of the Qur'an, Hadith, Islamic history and Arabic language. This view was also supported by Badawi, 1979 and al-Attas, 1979:

“Muslim educators unanimously agree that the purpose of education is not to cram the pupil's minds with facts but to prepare them for life of purity and sincerity. This total commitment to character-building based on the ideals of Islamic ethics is the highest goal of Islamic education”.

Literature supporting this view in Britain (formal and informal) is often printed in small pamphlets, progress reports, newspaper articles and magazines such as the Muslim News, Muslim Weekly, Trends and Q-News, along with Muslim faith-based school brochures, all of

which highlight the important role played by Muslim faith-based schools in society, particularly for Muslim children for whom they provide an environment that accommodates their religious beliefs and values. This type of literature promotes the establishment of separate Muslim faith-based schools. Khan-Cheema (1996) states the four main reasons which lead the Muslim community to establish separate Muslim faith-based schools; firstly, because the state schools have failed to provide spiritual and moral education within schooling hours; secondly, the absence of community languages, e.g. Arabic and Urdu from the school curriculum; thirdly, lack of concern about single sex provision by the state; fourthly, for the absence of a balanced 'cultural' content in the curriculum.

Sarwar (1994) further elaborates the view of Muslims in education, he is of the opinion that Islam views education as a process through which a child's total personality is developed in preparation for both worlds; the seen (the world we live in) and the unseen (the life hereafter). He is of the opinion that Islamic theory of education influences almost every part of the curriculum, something not possible in state schools. This does not mean that some subjects are avoided if they contradict Islam or entail un-Islamic practice. Muslim school's curricula are modified to meet the requirements of Islam.

Siddiqui (1991) is of the opinion that funding Islamic Studies departments in the UK is essential for the government, also holding training religious and educational programs for teachers and educationalists to promote the understanding of Islam from an Islamic perspective. Buaben (1999) further elaborates on this and highlights the importance of Muslim teachers to teach Islam. He demands Islam to be firstly studied properly and then be practised. He further suggests that teachers must not be biased or prejudiced in their approach and should respect Islam and shun Islamophobia.

These studies, on the whole, argue that Muslim faith-based schools produce balanced Muslims who can be British as well as Muslim. It is a commonly held public view that Islamic faith schools are more likely to be separatist and teach anti-western or radical sentiments. This view is refuted by theologians and educationalists such as Jorgen Nielsen, argues' that the four Muslim men who brought terror in the name of Islam to London July 7, 2005, were not the products of separate Muslim schools, *The Independent* (July 21, 2005, p.3). Yusuf Islam, previously known as Cat Stevens, in his article 'the problem is not too much Islam but too little' argues that people who carry out attacks or bomb themselves do not have much knowledge about Islam; in fact, they know little about Islam, *The Independent*, (July 31, 2005, p.29).

3.5.2 Against separate faith-based schools

There are many individuals who are principally against faith-based schools in general, it is argued that publicly funded schools should not exercise unjustifiable influence over children to adopt religious beliefs when they are not mature and developed enough to make up their own minds about such a personal subject. It is argued faith-based schools reinforce social divisions by increasing community and ethnic divisions by having selection criteria to the students who attend the school. It is argued that a large number of Church of England schools exacerbate the discrimination against minority religions, such as Islam and Sikhism. It is debated to provide good moral education in schools can and should be done in all schools and has nothing to do with the school's religious affiliation (Angelfire, 2015).

"During Tony Blair's ten years in the office as prime minister, there was a growing concern with social and community cohesion and the roles that schooling might have in encouraging or discouraging such cohesion..."(Grimmit, 2010).

In this type of literature which is often promoted by secular humanists; we often find views against the existence of faith-based schools in general and Muslim faith-based schools in particular. This group perceives faith-based schools particularly, Muslim faith-based schools as a challenge to the coherence of the British society. It is perceived that faith community is not prepared to accept other belief system or lifestyle(Davis, 2008).This view is also backed by the chief inspector of Ofsted David Bell, also by the teacher's union, the guardian (Jan 19, 2005; Islamic Human rights report, 2005, p.12-13). This group is of the opinion that faith-based schools including Muslims teach 'opinions' as 'facts'; the group suggests that faith-based schools divide community on the basis of religion; faith-based schools encourage prejudice, discrimination and segregation. It is argued that without social mixing, communities become suspicious, fearful and hostile of one another (Parker-Jenkins, 2005, p194; Times, Oct 1, 2005).

It is suggested that faith-based schools including Muslims should broaden their admission criteria to people of other or no faith as this would help in community cohesion (Berkeley, 2008). This group is of the opinion that faith schools achieve higher result than non-faith schools not because of their ethos or attitude towards education; it is because faith schools are selective, bias in their intake by taking less proportion of disadvantaged pupils also because of the small number of students in their classes. This group is of the opinion that the expansion of faith-based schools, particularly of Muslim schools, will lead to increasing cultural divisions and social fragmentations. The group expresses further down that Muslim faith-based schools will produce fanatics and extremists who could be a threat to society, (The Independent, July 28, 2005, p5).

Going through some informal literature particularly newspapers, the researcher found headings such as: 'Inside Britain's *Madrasahs*: The Islamic schools accused of harboring

extremism' The Independent, (July 28, 2005, p.1). 'Islamic schools are blamed for bloody uprising in Thailand', The Independent, (May 15, 2004, p.32). 'Pakistani *madrassas* are accused of training suicide bombers, but do Britain's Muslim academies also pose a threat?' The Independent (July 28, 2005, p.5). Newspaper headings such as these contribute in presenting a particular view or image about Muslim faith-based schools and go some way far towards shifting mass public opinion.

3.5.3 Moderate view

This type of literature deals with the phenomena rather cautiously and in a moderate way, such as the work of Hewer (2001) suggesting that the Muslim community should work with the local educational authority and trained Muslim teachers and governors who can enforce and accommodate the needs of all Muslim children in community schools. Hewer is of the opinion that this is a better way forward for the Muslims residing in Britain as well as for the hosting society, as this method accommodates the need of Muslim parents and children also deals with the suspicious attitude of the society that has been developed over the decades. He believes that the Muslim community residing in Britain can achieve better with the co-operation of community schools who have already taken into consideration many issues, e.g. dress and diet and will continue taking into consideration the needs of Muslims on the basis of their religious needs, convictions, and adherence. Hewer though suggests that building separate schools will only help Muslims who live within the locality of these schools yet working with state schools will lead to the betterment of all Muslim pupils and throughout the country.

3.5.4 Faith-based schools in the media

This type of literature is often promoted by various types of media particularly television and radio programs, e.g. 'Beyond belief' Radio 4 programme, at 4:00pm, 2006, 20 March. The program was broadcasted to present a discussion between Muslim, Christian and Jewish representative highlighting whether Faith-based schools should be promoted in plural society. Another group discussion was broadcasted on Radio 4, at 11:00am 2006, 26 June, to establish if Muslim faith-based schools of the UK participate in integration or isolation, with special reference to the situation developed in Northern Ireland.

It is argued that faith-based schools are unable to meet the challenge of community cohesion or bring out people of different backgrounds together beyond their own religious belief. The challenge they face is disagreement to promote what is thought to be (by the wider society) fair, common or just values. These schools, therefore, are liable to promote or contribute prejudice and discrimination.

The above are the four main areas of discussion in literature that are often found dealing with faith-based schools. It is noticed that many members of the Muslim community would not like to risk the religious identity of their children by sending them to state schools. These families stress that they are not against state schools; they are of the opinion that many of the values that are implemented or promoted in state schools do not enhance or promote home and religious teachings. This group is of the opinion that a large number of pupils who attend state schools dramatically change their lifestyle and behaviour which deals with the Thalamus part of the brain by accepting many of the values that are considered against their culture and religious teachings; as a result, many pupils lose their religious and cultural identity. Halstead (1986) underlines the role of the schools as an extension of the family life and faith community.

Children need the support of the community if they are to grow and develop as Muslims if they are faced with conflicting values in schools they will end up in confusion.

3.6 Multicultural educational policies

Khurram Murad in the 1970s presented three possible options for Muslims living in Britain. The first one being to assimilate completely into western society, losing Islamic heritage. Secondly to being in a 'cocoon' and isolate outright from the wider community. Or thirdly to preserve Islamic identity and at the same time present Islam to the society by engaging and being part and parcel of the wider community. Conspicuously the first two options were not the solutions and would ultimately result in the destruction of the Muslim community. Therefore, it is essential Muslims integrate into wider society. Multiculturalism is not a new concept for Muslims. Islam has dealt with multiculturalism from the very beginning. Islam's rapid growth in its early year saw it comprehending a large group of diverse cultures in its community (Salman, 1999; Anwar, 1982).

This in turn resulted in an increasingly ethnically and racially diverse state, as a result there was a substantial amount of race-related policies that have been developed and introduced that broadly reflect the principles of multiculturalism, although there is no official national pledge to the notion. The concept of multiculturalism has faced significant criticism in recent years on the grounds that it has failed to sufficiently promote social integration (Britain Library, 2014).

The Multicultural policy was adopted by the local authority between the 1970s and 1980s onwards. The new labour government, in 1997 committed to the multiculturalists approach at

the national level instead of the local approach however after the backlash of 2001 led by centre-left commentators such as David Goodhart who referred to multiculturalism as “laissez-faire multiculturalism” claiming since the 1960s, the public is faced with the reality and have become increasingly hostile to mass immigration, the government as a result introduced the community cohesion policy instead (The Independent, 2013).

In 2011, then the Prime Minister, David Cameron claimed, “state multiculturalism has failed” in a speech at the security conference in Munich, he further stated his belief that Britain needs a stronger national identity to prevent people turning to extremism. "Frankly, we need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and much more active, muscular liberalism, let us properly judge these organisations: Do they believe in universal human rights - including for women and people of other faiths? Do they believe in equality of all before the law? [...]," the current prime minister, David Cameron said (BBC News, 2011).

The Prime Ministers speech, understandably, gained mixed reviews from the public; it angered and disappointed some Muslim groups, while others, such as Gavin Shaker (Labour MP for Luton) argued the timing of the speech was not wise as it coincided with a major English Defence League rally in London, (BBC News, 2011).

Ed Miliband, leader of the Labour party, on the other hand, calls for a connected nation rather than what he refers to as a ‘segregated nation’. In December 2012 Miliband highlighted his 3-point plan, which emphasises the importance of every Briton, speaking English, “We can only converse if we can speak the same language. So, if we are going to build one nation, we need to start with everyone in the UK knowing how to speak the English Language. We should expect that of the people that come over. We will work together as a nation far more effectively when we can always talk together." However, he disregards the view of assimilation whereby people

who have migrated to the UK can only do so on the condition they abandon their culture and heritage. He believes people can become patriotically British without abandoning their cultural roots (Watt, 2012).

According to Lawson the Islamic school movement has developed as a response by the Muslim community to the perceived and real dangers of cultural assimilation, which he argues will result in confusion and loss of identity, leading to underachievement in school and a more general sense of alienation from both political and cultural norms and values (Lawson, 2005).

According to a lecturer at the University of Birmingham, Ranjeep Sahni argues that asylum and immigration were more or less the same things in the 1990s. Sahni believes that the aspect of racism has not changed over the last two decades; he argues the targets for racism have moved away from migrants; from the New Commonwealth countries, towards the migrants from Eastern European countries. Sahni is of the opinion that the complex interplay between cohesion and unity are not inherently racist but he believes when wider society talks about cohesion and integration they are not talking about specific parts of the population, for example, the Old Commonwealth Countries such as Australia and New Zealand but they are in fact talking about aspects of the New Commonwealth countries which are decolonised countries, predominantly non-white and developing, what used to be communist countries such as the Indian sub-continent. He suggests integration is about those people who do not seem to fit in the 'popular imagination of our way of life'. With regards to the people who want to follow the *Sha'ria* law, which is against the norms and values of the country, Sahni argues that people have lived with certain aspects of *sha'ria* laws and proceedings in this country for a substantial amount of time and have been perfectly happy in terms of banking, family law and so forth, he believes following the *sha'ria* law has only become an issue due to external factors

occurring in other parts of the world for example terrorism (Radio 4, 2014). It is argued that Multiculturalism has failed for reasons such as; it has contributed to the rise in honour killings, inappropriate responses to domestic violence, female genital mutilation and rule by *Sha'ria* law which have resulted in a parallel system. It is argued that the increase in unregistered marriages that is not recognised by British law has led to a loss of rights of both the women and children and so forth.

Some believe that multiculturalism has resulted in religious diversity and intercultural education enabling religious groups, including Muslims to establish their own religious schooling that has enabled children to gain a religious education while at the same time gaining secular knowledge. It is argued legal policies emphasising tolerance and equality among people of all religion, age, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and social class has enabled not only religious groups but varied activist and social movements to take advantage of the policies imposed. For example, the UK Feminist campaign founded in 2010 aims to gain equality between male and females. It is therefore believed that just like these activists movements, faith-based schools have the legal right to exist consequently in the coming chapters the researcher discussed in detail the theory of Islamisation and how the Islamic education has steadily grown in recent years, the researcher examined relevant literature with regards to the theory of education and in the light of his findings the researcher critically discussed whether these theories have played a positive role in the Islamic education of the Muslim youth.

3.7 Trojan Horse Incident and growing suspicions

In the following section, the researcher discusses issues and concerns raised about the integration of Muslim communities in the United Kingdom. The researcher will discuss in detail

the recent Trojan Horse Operation and its implications on the Muslim community as a whole. For many good years, the government's Department of Education has created policies that have invited communities to actively take part in the educational system by the creation of faith-based academies and free school. It has enabled the Christian and Jewish and other religious communities including Muslims to take advantage of the policies and create faith-based educational systems which enable children to gain religious knowledge alongside secular education. However, as Williams observes (2015) this tragic incident highlights several complex sensitivities that exist in the public perception of faith-based schooling and particularly Muslim communities' involvement with the public education. The British public is becoming increasingly concerned about Islam and the influx of Muslim immigration, as well as the risk of establishment of a parallel Muslim society; these have been rated one of the top ranked concerns of the British public (Kern, 2014). These concerns of the British public have heightened in recent years due to existing issues that have gained high media coverage including 7/7 attacks, Murder of Lee Rigby, Trojan Horse Operation, and ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).

Trojan Horse Operation refers to the alleged organized attempt by a number of connected individuals to introduce Islamist ethos into several government funded schools in Birmingham, United Kingdom. The investigation first began in March 2014 after a letter of uncertain and tentative authenticity was discovered that allegedly outlined how to gain control of schools and speculations of furthering the scheme to take over schools in other cities in the United Kingdom. Birmingham City Council claimed that they received allegations claiming similar plots to those illustrated in the leaked letter. Ofsted and the Education Funding Authority of 21 schools in the Birmingham region said it had also found evidence of an organised operation to

target certain schools by Islamists resulting in head teachers being marginalised and at times forced out of their jobs.

A spokesman for the Department of Education said, "the allegations made in relation to some schools in Birmingham are very serious and we are exploring all evidence put to us in conjunction with Ofsted and Birmingham City Council."

Some of the schools at the centre of the enquiry include Golden Hillock School, Nansen Primary School, Park View Academy which are all run by the Park View Educational Trust. Other state-funded schools highlighted by Ofsted include Saltley School and Oldknow Academy and Alston Primary which was previously in special measures. Each school involved was previously graded by Ofsted as 'good' and 'outstanding' but after the new inspection was degraded to "inadequate" and placed into special measures as Ofsted inspectors concluded there were no adequate or enough measures in place to safeguard pupils from extremism.

David Huges, vice-chairman of Parkview trust believes, "Ofsted inspectors came to our schools looking for extremism, for segregation, for proof that our children were having religion forced upon them as part of a Muslim plot." The Ofsted reports found no evidence of this. Huges further argues that Parkview trust does not promote intolerance or extremism of any kind; he believes Ofsted's actions have put these communities at substantial risk of marginalisation (Stevens, 2014).

The report was compiled by retired senior police officer Peter Clarke, who was also the former head of Metropolitan Police's counter-terrorism unit. In his concluding statement of the Trojan Horse Operation report, Clarke wrote, "I neither specifically looked for, nor found, evidence of terrorism, radicalisation or violent extremism in the schools of concern in Birmingham.

However, by reference to the definition of extremism in the Prevent strand of the Government's counter-terrorist strategy contest (2011), and the spectrum of extremism described by the Prime Minister in his Munich speech in February 2011, I found clear evidence that there are a number of people, associated with each other and in positions of influence in schools and governing bodies, who espouse, sympathise with or fail to challenge extremist views" (Clarke, 2014).

Therefore, according to Clarke, there was no evidence found of terrorism, radicalisation or violent extremism found in the schools involved in the alleged school takeover plot by Islamist and Muslim Jihadist. However, he mentioned a partial Islamisation of schools and that a number of people involved in the Trojan Horse scandal are in his opinion sympathetic or fail to challenge extremist views.

In the Trojan Horse report, Clarke concluded that there was no doubt occurred in these educational institutions was driven by a desire to instill a particular style of religious ethos into these state secular schools, he believes there was a common ideological stance among certain connected individuals in this enquiry who had influence within the schools involved in the enquiry hence why they were able to Islamize these state-funded schools. Clarke believes there is evidence that pupils of the schools involved in the enquiry are being encouraged to adopt to an absolute attitude to particular hard-line conventional Islamic viewpoints which he believes will make them vulnerable to radicalization in future, "I have heard evidence to the effect that there are real fears that their current experiences will make it harder for them to question or challenge radical influences" (Clarke, 2014).

Michael Gove the Former Secretary of the State for Education was removed from office on 11th July 2014. It is claimed in the draft Trojan Horse Operation report, which was leaked to the

Guardian, that Gove was enthusiastic to attack what he called, “the blob”, referring to the teaching establishments evolved in the enquiry. It is argued that Gove “crafted and lauded structures that paved the way for the virtual capture of a clutch of schools by extremists. Not terrorists: the review finds no evidence of terrorist proselytising or links to terrorist activity” (Muir, 2014).

Post-Trojan horse, Birmingham City Council has introduced varied ‘action plans’ including 40 home Office-funded anti-extremism workshops. Schools involved in the scandal have been hand-picked by the West Midlands Police’s counter-terrorism unit to take part in the workshops which include, ‘Tapestry’, ‘Protect yourself’, ‘Raise awareness to prevent’ as well as ‘training and safeguarding from radicalization’. Birmingham City Council has also hired two safeguarding employees who work with the schools to prevent extremism and protect the students from radicalization (McKinney, 2014).

There have been further allegations that over a dozen private and state schools in the east London borough of Tower Hamlets have fallen under the influence of Islamic fundamentalists. With more than a dozen schools currently are under investigation by Ofsted and the Department for Education (DfE), the DfE are concerned that the situation in Tower Hamlets may be worse than the original Trojan horse inquiry in Birmingham earlier this year.

Like Birmingham, Tower Hamlets Muslim population is the largest single religious group in the borough with an estimated 34.5% of the population identifying themselves as practising Islam, compared with 4.8% across England and Wales according to the 2011 census (Ali et al, 2015).

According to a senior Whitehall source, “Tower Hamlets is expected to be the next Birmingham, but even worse, because the problems surrounding Muslim fundamentalists

imposing their views on education seem to be more embedded,"(National Secular Society, 2014).

Tower hamlet council has denied the allegations, claiming there is no evidence of Islamic takeover plot or extreme Islamic fundamentalism present in these schools, "Tower Hamlets council has some of the best urban schools in the world due in part to be an unrivalled partnership between head teachers, parents, governors, local politicians and the local education authority over a 20-year period. For instance, 17 out of 18 secondary schools are rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding" (National Secular Society, 2014).

MazahirulUloom School, one of the schools involved in the Tower Hamlet 'Trojan Horse 2', was subject to unannounced Ofsted inspections in October 2014, in a statement the school argued that Ofsted is making sweeping generalisations from a series of vague questions and responses from selected students, some of which have just begun their schooling at the established Islamic school. The trustees of MazahirulUloom argued Ofsted's actions are utterly unprofessional and they feel, "it is preposterous to suggest their views somehow reflect the school's curriculum." The Trustees stressed that the school promote social cohesion and harmony with the wider society (MazahirulUloom, 2014).

Ofsted claimed that the school's curriculum was too narrow, focusing solely on Islamic themes and not having enough contact with other faiths and cultures, Ofsted believes the students are not fully prepared for life in this diverse British society and MazahirulUloom students have no knowledge about different sexual orientations with some students claiming, "Women stay at home and clean and look after the children. They cook and pray and wait for us to come back in from school and help with homework" (Emergency inspection school report, 2014).

MazahirulUloom Trustees deny all these allegations as they feel it is unfair to make sweeping assumptions about the ethos of the school based on selected student's opinions.

On the 19th of April 2014, there was a public meeting in Birmingham with the chair of Parkview and the chair of Oldknow. The researcher participated in this public meeting gaining firsthand experience from those who were directly involved with Trojan horse inquiry. It became clear to the researcher that the governors who participated in the meeting were of the opinion that no illegal activities were taking place in their respective schools. They further asserted that the government has changed its vision and has a new agenda resulting in the direct target of certain schools, they felt that the government was not concerned about these schools when they were underachieving and gaining around 13% and were in special measures, these governors share the opinion when Muslims are prospering and achieving outstanding results which are usually achieved by league schools such as King Edwards, and are graded outstanding by Ofsted before the Trojan Horse allegation, only then does the Government start raising concerns about the safety of pupils and their future prospects. The governors expressed the opinion that these outstanding results were not achieved overnight; it was only achieved because of the hard work of the students as well as the school's governors and leaders who worked hand in hand sacrificing their comfort so that future generations can prosper educationally wise.

The participants who took part in the public meeting argued the media has double standards as no news article has ever highlighted the high standard achieved by these schools prior to the investigation. With regards to the unscheduled inspections undertaken by Ofsted, one of the governors voiced his opinion that these inspectors did not come to the school with an objective, unbiased frame of mind in deciding how the school was being run instead, he

believes the outcome of the inspection was predetermined and the inspection was only a tool to complete the procedures.

On the 21st June 2014, the researcher participated in another public meeting in Birmingham. The researcher interviewed the chair of governors of an Islamic school in Birmingham which was achieving over 74% and was among the top best-achieving schools in Birmingham. The governor expressed his belief that Ofsted is not an independent body instead it is a government tool to fail or adopt the new political visions and mission. He was of the opinion that if the top achieving schools within Birmingham are placed in special measures and graded as inadequate yet there are schools that are achieving less than 40% and are graded as outstanding schools. This particular governor is interested in what measures is used by Ofsted to decide whether a school is graded outstanding or not, as they are clearly using different mathematical measures to suit different agendas.

Taking into account the recent portrayal of Muslim schools by the media it is argued there is now an urgent need to critically explore whether Islamic Education and the overall educational provision in these schools are viewed as adequate enough in accommodating and responding to the needs of Muslim children and expectations of their parents, the researcher discussed this topic in more depth in the research findings chapter.

In more recent news, after it was alleged on a national scale with high media coverage that the year (2014/2015) several extremists tried to take over Birmingham schools indoctrinating its students with advanced radical interpretations of Islam, it is now claimed over a series of official investigations that these claims are groundless. Members of parliament have criticised for a “worrying lack of coordination” between five overlapping official investigations into the Trojan horse inquiry. The MPs had found "a worrying and wasteful lack of coordination

between the various inquiries carried out by the DfE, Birmingham City Council, the Education Funding Agency, Ofsted and others"; Mr Stuart added that those overlapping inquiries had "contributed to the sense of crisis and confusion". With Mary Bousted, the general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), saying that the Trojan Horse affair led to "a national panic", claiming that Ofsted may lack the extensive expertise in matters of extremism that are necessary for it to investigate the topic effectively and thoroughly. The MPs report has criticised the Department of Education for "lack of inquisitiveness" and claiming the department was "slow to take an active interest" in the Trojan horse allegations. The report has also criticised Ofsted, with Mr. Stuart stating "Questions have been raised about the appropriateness of Ofsted's framework and the reliability and robustness of its judgments" concluding Ofsted would have to "act to restore confidence in the inspectorate"(BBC News, 2015).

The inquiry has also tarnished the reputation of some Muslim schools regardless if they were in the centre of the inquiry or not, as a result of the inquiry Muslim faith-based schools are seen by wider society as a breeding ground for extremism behaviour and viewpoints. According to a recent survey, 90% of Birmingham's Muslims feel it has caused serious harm to community cohesion which has resulted in many children feeling "targeted and stigmatised." At present, Muslim communities in Birmingham feel vilified and fear that they are being unfairly labelled as extremists indicating that the inquiry has had an adverse effect in a society that calls for a united and integrated nation (Bassey, 2014). It must be noted that a growing number of educational researchers are also concerned with the rise of an aggressive secular agenda, politically motivated intrusive Ofsted inspections and growing anti-Muslim rhetoric within the mainstream schools in the UK. For example, Arthur (2015) while analysing the Trojan Horse

Affair in Birmingham, points out that the space created by the secular liberal education to accommodate religious diversity has come under attack by the increasing state interventions in the mainstream schools.

3.8 PSHE Association

It is argued by the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education Association that teaching children about sex is a moral, ethical and emotional minefield. The government has recently announced that it wants pupils as young as 11 to be taught about sexual consent and had commissioned the PSHE Association to come up with lesson plans. The PSHE has just published these plans and has included topics such as pornography, sexual images, sexual consent, rape myths and victim-blaming. The new lessons could be taught in schools after the Easter holiday, 2015, although parents will have the right to withdraw their children from the classes and pornography would not be shown to pupils. Some argue that children should be able to deal with a highly sexualised society, where pornography is easily available through the internet and so forth. On the other hand, critics have been criticising the proposals; arguing that the subject is being introduced too early, at an age when children are often emotionally vulnerable, these topics may, in turn, contribute to the early sexualisation of children and shortening the innocence of children. Schools are now more than ever expected to teach so-called "life lessons" alongside academic subjects (BBC, 2015).

The previous educational secretary Nikki Morgan believed that "there are now unimaginable pressure on those growing up in the internet age", she is urging schools and departments new guidelines on sex education stating that sex education "is an important element" of the PSHE programme which could be implemented in schools as early as after Easter 2015 (The Guardian, 2015).

Some of the lessons suggested by the PSHE association include asking pupils to imagine what an alien, from a planet where there is no sex, would learn about human sexual relationships from watching pornography. While others will include a discussion on whether pornography realistically depicts consent (BBC, 2015).

Claire Fox, from the institute of ideas, believes “teachers are no more equipped than parents” to teach about sex education. She acknowledges, “parents have always found it difficult to talk about certain subjects with their kids [...] some parents don't believe that divorce is good, they would say that is morally bad [...] some parents don't believe in same-sex relationships they don't want their children... and I know that's hopelessly written off as homophobic but that's what some people with religion believe so the difficulties is if we move into relationship we start to breed on the kind of areas that it's really the parents who give guidance...”, she feels that it is “creepy” for adult teachers to dictate what good emotional relations are and she believes if it was done in another social setting, we would be worried (BBC, 2015).

One argument against Sex Education for 11-year-olds is that it is believed that children at different age rates and the parent would be the best judge of whether children are ready for and mature enough for, “the talk”. Giles Fraser, a priest and journalist stresses his concern about the improper teaching of sex education, “I'm still bothered by the bad sort of sex lesson I remember talking to my children about this and it was staged managed with care and concern and real concentration and you thought about it long and hard and you got it right at exactly the right time for them, it was highly specific, you know what you could say and what you couldn't say and that target type of conversation is not possible in a class where people come from all different backgrounds, you don't know some people they may have really traumatic

sexual experiences already, some people have no idea what is going on, there is no lesson plan that can broad with that, that describes" (BBC, 2015).

According to the Muslim Liaison Committee, Sex Education is one of the guidelines on meeting the religious and cultural needs of Muslim pupils. The guidelines states, "Sex education should be taught in schools as part of the biological sciences or as a programme of personal, social and moral education, or a cross-curricular issue", however they state teaching should be done with great care and sensitivity so that the religious or social beliefs of neither pupils nor parents are offended (Revised Guidelines on Meeting the Religious and Cultural Needs of Muslim Pupils, 1999).

It has been reported that A'ishah, the wife of the prophet Muhammad said, "Blessed are the women of Ansar (the citizens of Madinah). Shyness did not stand in their way seeking (sensitive) knowledge about their religion" (Sayfuddin and Muhametov, 2004, P.37).

It is believed by some Muslims that it is natural that such kind of education exists in the Muslim community since it originally aims at teaching Muslims the morals and rulings of the *Shari'a*, since children are sexualised at a much earlier age and rate in this modern British society, it is now more important than ever to education children the true sex education as shown by Islam and the rulings of Allah regarding the sensitive topic (Olga and Muhametov, 2013).

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed relevant literature that explored different aspects of Muslim schooling, social and educational challenges facing British Muslim communities and, highlighted the four different types of literature that deal with the research topic undertaken. The chapter explored social and historical background informing the presence of Muslim community in the UK and reasons behind the establishment of distinctive Muslim faith-based schools since the mid-

1980s. It is argued that increasing awareness of Muslim community to preserve the Islamic identity of Muslim young people and secure their educational achievement and social and cultural well-being has been primary motive behind the establishment of Muslim faith-based schooling. This chapter also discussed the recent media portrayal of Islamic schools and how it has affected the society's perception of Muslim schools and its ethos, analyzing the findings of the Trojan Horse inquiry to establish whether Muslim schools are promoting extremist viewpoints. After the Trojan horse inquiry, new policies have been introduced in the state as well as Islamic schools such as the new policy of teaching 'fundamental British values' in all schools (Hope, 2014).

This chapter concluded that there is now an urgent need to critically explore whether Islamic Education provision in these schools is adequate in responding to the needs of Muslim children and expectations of their parents. The present study by adopting an empirical research framework aimed to address these important questions. Next chapter will further contextualize the topic by discussing some of the recent theoretical developments in Islamic Education.

CHAPTER FOUR (Exploring New Theoretical Perspectives on Contemporary Islamic Education)

4.1 Introduction

Education is one of the most important fields and through it, the future of an individual, community and society is set out and outlined. Education is very important for societies; therefore, education throughout history can be seen as the vehicle for success and prosperity of individuals and societies.

The Islamic philosophy of education, which dates back to over 1400 years, gives equal importance to its religious science as well as to the modern sciences, aiming to integrate both types of knowledge into a unified curriculum. The Western World's current advancement is merely dependent on the advancement of science and technology and is the current challenge for the different religions and religious communities including Muslims.

Muslims believe that life has two parts or worlds, the seen world (this life) and the unseen world (life in the Hereafter) and education should prepare individuals and societies for the both worlds. In order to understand the philosophy of Islamic Education, we need to relate this philosophy to its foundation; Islam. This chapter will therefore discuss the theory of Islamic Education which is based on its main two sources:

- a. The Holy Qur'an which is believed in by Muslims to be God's eternal words revealed to his final messenger that lays the foundations for this life and the hereafter.
- b. The Sunnah; the life example of the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that has been reported in several books including *Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim* which contains a documented collection of the prophet's sayings, action and behaviour which were witnessed and reported by several close companions.

The Islamic philosophy of education teaches mankind the methods, curriculum and resources which together will develop humans into a well-rounded individual who is both, righteous as

well as a good citizen. Therefore, the Islamic philosophy of education is different than that of many other educational philosophies particularly western educational philosophies which mainly aim to bring about the ideal citizen that follow the norms and values of the wider society. The Islamic philosophy tends to concentrate on the spiritual side of life as well as on the character of the individual. Islamic philosophy does not focus solely on the Hereafter (Akhirah) and forget about this life; instead Islam encourages advancement in both, religion as well as in worldly advancement and gains but without causing harm to the nature.

“But seek, through which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters.(The Qur’an, 28:77).

To Muslims, Islam is not merely a religion which has to be followed in Mosques; it is a complete code of life with all their actions based upon the teachings of the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*. Specifically, it teaches the distinctive *tarbiyyah* (upbringing), *akhlaq* (manners) and *hikmah* (wisdom) needed in leading a successful life both for the *Deen* (religious norms or values) and *dunya* (worldly life). Obtaining ‘ilm’ or rather knowledge, as we will find out further along in this chapter, is an essential part of Muslims’ life regardless of gender or social standing, knowledge is obligatory.

Islamic Education therefore cannot be fully understood unless one considers its starting point, *the Qur’an*. *The Qur’an* lays down the foundation for the educational aims and methods as it contains principles which will assist and guide Muslims in selecting the curriculum criteria. This chapter analyses education, specifically, from an Islamic perspective. It will discuss the nature of human knowledge, which will in turn be explored in relation to revealed knowledge. The chapter describes in detail the concept of *adab* which was introduced by Al-Attas, a

contemporary Islamic scholar, which he believes is central to Islamic education and the educational process. The chapter further discusses Sahin's 'cloud and grass' theory education in Islam that is focused on the concept of *Tarbiyah*.

The researcher hopes that by putting together the various components of the theory of Islamic Education, it will shed some light on the nature of Islamic Education as well as provide educators with a general framework.

4.2 Definition and meaning of Islamic education

Islamic education can be defined as the process through which human beings are trained up and prepared in an intensive way to participate in their Creator's command in the *Dunya* (worldly life) in order to be rewarded in the *Akhirah* (perpetual life after death) enabling the individual to face life-situations with responsibility and accountability (Sarwar, 1991). The Islamic view of life is holistic as it rejects the separation between this life and the life hereafter, "in Islam, mundane, empirical, metaphysical and spiritual matters are interconnected and inseparable", (Sarwar, 1996, p.9) therefore Islam prepares human beings for both this life on earth as well as the life after death (Akhirah).

Pre-Islam, Arabia was largely an illiterate society; we also learn that prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was also illiterate. Islam began its divine message by the word 'read' and encouraged education. Muslims began to read and write the Qur'an in mosques and learnt history of previous nations and other sciences as revealed by God to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) . The basis of education in Islam is the teaching and learning about Qur'anic studies and its sciences. Mosques acted as schools besides being places of worship. The mosque continued to be the heart for providing education in almost all fields; therefore,

there was no immediate need to establish separate buildings for schools and this is how mosques played the role of being boarding and day scholar schools. As time passed, the number of Muslims increased, the need for separate schools and library buildings began and as a result schools and libraries were built either within or nearby Mosques (Somel, 2003), to educate Muslims about their faith and other sciences which included subjects such as philosophy, language, history, mathematics and science. Unlike today, the foundation and the purpose of education was to equip man to become dutiful to God and to create strong ties between man and his creator by teaching him faith and other subjects to enhance man's educational level so that he would serve humanity and the world without abusing its resources or to be detrimental to the world or nature as God created its resources for all human beings and for all times.

4.3 Aims of Islamic education

Education is a process of upbringing that prepares individuals to live within the specific value system and cultural reality of a given society. The process of upbringing human beings is different than other creatures such as animal or plants since human beings according to (Qur'an, 17:70), is different and preferred in nature.

Humanity according to the Islamic point of view, has been created by God (Qur'an 11:61), and human beings need to be developed mentally, physically and spiritually. Geographical location, cultural traditions, political phenomenon's and economical challenges all have to be considered by policy makers and those involved in order to develop the curriculum and school activities accordingly, in order to cater for the physical, mental and spiritual needs of an individual and a society. God created heaven and earth with its resources to serve humanity (Qur'an 45:13) and

God ordered man to live a balanced life without ignoring the worldly gains in life and without causing mischief on earth (Qur'an, 28:77).

The 1977 first world conference on Islamic Education which took place in Makkah, Saudi Arabia criticised the current classification of knowledge; Muslims believed that human being is made up of both physical and spiritual. It was emphasised that separation of knowledge to religious and non-religious institutions was not the correct solution; Muslim educationalists believed that Muslim countries should redefine the aims and purposes of education and the conference was described as a beginning of a new direction. However, it would be unrealistic to expect that a single gathering of Muslim world scholars and educationalists would discover the solution to all educational problems. Nevertheless, the outcome of this conference was seen as a positive move in the direction of education in Islam, as Muslims would be at risk of losing their heritage and their religious identity if no change occurs (Hussain, 1977). Muslim scholars and educationalists are of the opinion that the Makkah conference and other conferences on Islamic education are considered to be the current time endeavours to revive Islamic education and to Islamise knowledge and schools.

It was agreed, by scholars, that the definition for the aims of Islamic Education is, "the creation of good and righteous man who worships' God in the true sense of the term, builds up the structure of his earthly life according to the *Shar'ia* and employs it to sub serve [sic] his faith"(Siddique, 2015).

"Say, 'Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds.' (Qur'an 06:162).The Islamic Education system is based on its values system which is embodied in the *Qur'an* and *hadiths*. It aims to stimulate the moral consciousness of the student by bringing about an organic relationship of education with the Islamic ethical system

(Alavi, 1988). Muslims believed that the relationship between man and the world was created by God to live in, also to find out about its secrets in order to build on these experiences and advance in the worldly knowledge (The Qur'an, 30:10-11). Muslims believe the Qur'an encourages advancement, technology and science, they believe it is necessary to evaluate and develop scientific findings.

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day are the signs for those of understanding” (The Qur'an, 3:190).

Ashraf (1979) separates the concept of 'education' from that of 'instruction', stating that education assists in developing the complete growth of the individual's personality whereas instruction merely trains the individual. Ashraf is of the opinion that the truly educated person is the one who knows how to perform their duties towards themselves, family, neighbours and humanity as well as acquired enough knowledge which will enable them to earn an honest living. Shomali (2005) is of the opinion that if students do not possess the qualities of rationality and truthfulness then Islamic education seems to have failed as it has not achieved what is required. In terms of rationality, he explains that it is important for an individual to be rational as in the Qur'an God either praises those who are rational and follow reason or blames the individual who do not think and are driven by emotions. Shomali argues truthfulness is a great desire and searches for the truth in our heart and mind. These two practises when instilled in the hearts of the students bring about many other good qualities that will be beneficial for them in this life as well as the hereafter (ICE, 2015).

The aim of Islamic Education is therefore to initiate downright change in a person including their, “beliefs, actions, potential, faculties, thoughts, expression, aspiration, energies and everything relating to that person” (Sarwar, 1996, p.10). Islamic Education seeks to motivate society as a whole to promote every good and that will be a benefit for them while at the same

time discouraging evil (Sarwar, 1996). The base of Islamic education is built upon the relationship between the Creator and the created beings and the aim of this relationship is to serve humanity in accordance to God's rules as He is the Guide for life on earth and aims to develop and advance man in both fields of life. The relationship between man and his Creator is that man should worship him as per His instructions. The relationship between man and the world is that God created the world to serve humanity without abusing its resources. The relationship between man and the other man is that of justice, serving and respecting one another. The relationship between man and life after death is that of responsibility and accountability (Ali, 2008).

4.4 Theory of 'Islamisation of knowledge'

In the following topic, the researcher discusses the theory of Islamisation, specifically focusing on theorist which evolved and developed after the first world conference on Islamic Education in 1977. At the Invitation of King Abdul-Aziz University, 313 Muslims educationist and world scholars were invited to discuss the main problems in the Muslim world (Meijer, 2009). Amongst those who attended the conference were S.M Naquib Al-Attas, Syed Ali Ashraf, Abdullah Mohammed Zaid and G.N Saqeb, these scholars in some sense could be seen as the backbones of the undertaken discussion.

Historically the education system in the Muslim world catered traditionally to the majority of students was a form of schooling whereby after *Qur'an* School, the students went to University. In modern times, however the type of schooling is following the western example whereby alongside Islamic education students are acquiring knowledge that has no relation to Islam and

the traditional Islamic teachings. Therefore, the goal of the 1977 world conference was to articulate an Islamic concept of education ensuring that acquired knowledge is not incompatible with revealed knowledge of the Qur'an meaning that there are no grounds for separate schooling systems which aim to separate Islamic Education from secular education (Meijer, 2009).

Therefore, it is argued Muslims want to Islamise the curriculum of schools including the environment as well as the methods and approach used to teach certain subjects, it is argued so that Muslim children will be able to recognise the link between the Creator and the created beings. This link is argued can only occur when one gains knowledge about his beliefs as God emphasis gaining knowledge in the *Qur'an*, the first revelation to mankind, through Prophet Muhammad(peace be upon him) , emphasised knowledge and then belief.

“Read. Read in the name of thy Lord Who created; [He] created the human being from blood clot. Read in the name of thy Lord who taught by the pen: [He] taught the human being what he did not know”(The Qur'an 96:1-5).

‘Iqra’ has two meanings in the Arabic language. On the one hand, it can mean to literally read but on the other hand, it can mean to recite from memory (Qadhi, 2014). Knowledge may be intellectual, spoken or written (Mubarakpuri, 2003).The fact that these very first *Qur'anic* verses were revealed so forcefully by asking man the acquisition of knowledge, shows that knowledge is regarded as one of the greatest bounties of God to mankind showing how closely Islam and knowledge recognise each other.

In Islam, the term for knowledge has a much broader implied meaning for its interpretation than its synonyms in the Oxford dictionary, ‘Knowledge’ lacks in expressing all the aspects of ‘ilm’ which is the Arabic term used in the Islamic theory of knowledge. The term ‘ilm’ which

Franz Rosenthal has justifiably pointed out, has a much wider connotation than its synonyms in the English and other Western languages. The Arabic term 'ilm' is an all-embracing word covering theory, action and education. Rosenthal highlighted the importance of this term in Muslim civilisation and Islam, saying that it gives them a distinctive shape (Al-Islam, 2015).

According to the *Qur'an*, the first teaching class for Adam started soon after his creation and Adam was taught 'all the Names'.

"And He taught Adam the names - all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, 'Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful'" 9The Qur'an, 02:31).

Therefore, this shows that God is the first Teacher and the absolute Guide of humanity implying that 'ilm, attainment of which is obligatory upon all Muslims (Al-Islam, 2015). The crisis of the dualistic nature of education in the Islamic world was discussed at the 1977 first world conference on Islamic education; the division of Islamic education and modern secular education was taken into account for consideration (Meijer, 2009).

The 1977 Islamic education conference aimed and resulted in reshaping and reviving Islamic education system on a worldwide scale. The implications of the conference resulted in setting the platform for the Islamisation of knowledge, increase in European migration as well as the integration of knowledge to make it more applicable to those living in the western world. Since the conference, Islamic education has become more of a scholarly accepted idea with many countries such as Germany and Austria recognising and sponsoring Islamic education and the training of teachers.

According to al-Attas (1978, 1980), Islamisation of knowledge means "the deliverance of knowledge from its interpretations based on secular ideology and from meanings and

expressions of the secular". Al-Attas suggests that in order to Islamise contemporary knowledge, the isolation process must first occur whereby knowledge should be freed from different cultures including Western culture, (Ahsan, Shahed and Ahmad, 2013).

Al-Attas introduced the term 'adab' which he believes is the central point to Islamic education and the educational process. Al-Attas defines 'adab' as, "the discipline of body, mind and soul; the discipline that assures the cognizance and acknowledgement of one's proper place in relation to one's physical, intellectual and spiritual capabilities and potentials; the recognition and acknowledgement of the reality that knowledge and being are ordered hierarchically according to their various levels (maraatib) and degrees (darajaat)", al-Attas further argues 'adab's actualisation in society as a whole is reflected in Justice 'adl', which he further argues is a reflection of wisdom (*hikmah*), which he defines as God-given knowledge which enables one to realise everything has a right or place in society (al-Attas, 1997).

According to Ahsan, Shahed and Ahmad, "Islamisation of Knowledge is a comprehensive phenomenon that re-establishes the knowledge on its original basis according to the revealed knowledge." They believe Islamisation is a term that appears synonymously with the term Islamic Revivalism which is often defined as a reformed movement which is motivated by the conscious change in Muslim thought, attitude and behaviour which is committed to reviving Islamic Civilisation (Ahsan, Shahed and Ahmad, 2013).

Education is a major construct of Islam, and has always held a major value within the Islamic contexts since the formative period of Islam. Educational philosophy has been investigated by early Muslim thinkers, the likes of Ibn Sahnun (d. 870), al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) and has remained an on-going investigation by contemporary Muslim scholars. In order to define 'Islamic Education' scholars have taken different stances on what Islam's concept of

education is, and have argued on the epistemology of the subject. It must be noted that 'Islamic Education' hereby refers to the general concept of education in Islam and is not referring to an antithesis of 'Western Education' as many scholars have perceived it to be. This review intends to look at the works of two contemporary scholars, Naquib al-Attas and Dawud Tauhidi, both who have taken a bottom-up approach on defining the educational concept in Islam. The former is a notable scholar within the Islamic Education field and is famous for the Islamisation of Knowledge project which is a relatively new phenomenon in the Islamic world.

In 'The Concept of Education in Islam', Naqib al-Attas extensively discusses the meaning of education, initially presupposing it to be: a process of instilling something into human beings (al-Attas, 1980: 1). He then analyses this definition and after acknowledging the limitations of this definition, he aims to redefine education so it is in accordance with what he describes as the Islamic concept of education. After a thorough investigation of the relative terms for education in Islam, al-Attas offers his distinct views on some underlying concepts such as meaning, knowledge and education.

Firstly, Al-Attas defines knowledge epistemologically as: the arrival in the soul of the meaning of a thing (al-Attas, 1980, p 7). Further on, he explains that this interpretation is the meaning that is right according to Islamic standards. He then adds to this definition and gives a clear picture of what entails knowledge: recognition of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence (al-Attas, 1980: 7). However, this definition is still incomplete with regards to being the content of education, as mere recognition does not suffice to be the purpose of knowledge, rather only one component of it. The other missing component is

acknowledgement - affirmation of that which is recognised, which provides the concomitant action dimension to knowledge. Finally, including the educational process, he defines the whole thing as:

"recognition and acknowledgement, progressively instilled into man, of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgement of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence."(al-Attas, 1980, p. 11).

Al-Attas then defines another concept 'adab', which he claims is not only the central aspect of education and the educational process in Islam, but it is also self-sufficient to precisely denote the term for education in Islam. "The term 'adab' is an Arabic term which is commonly used to refer to morals and ethics, although it has had different meanings in other contexts. Here it is defined as the discipline of the body, mind and soul. It is a broader concept of what has been previously defined as he says that 'adab' identifies itself as knowledge of the purpose of seeking knowledge [which has already been mentioned" (al-Attas, 1980. P.12). It is evident that only the disciplinary and moral meanings of this word are taken into account for the purpose of relating it to education as al-Attas further on elucidates the purpose of education in Islam; which is to produce a good man, and not as in the Western case; a good citizen. He explains how it inculcates good values into man and helps facilitate him in making the morally correct decisions using his faculty of intellect, thereby producing a society full of good men.

Al-Attas further corroborates his view of 'adab' being the perfect candidate for the Islamic concept of education with two *hadiths* (sayings attributed to the prophet Muhammad (SAW), in which the word 'adab' and its derivatives are used in educational contexts.

Whilst al-Attas' concepts seem to be ideal for instilling good character into an individual, it does not seem that this concept of 'Ta'dib' takes into consideration the addressing of the rational

faculty of man, despite the fact that he did describe how man needs to see reason. This view of al-Attas has not gone uncontested and has seen criticisms from Muslim educators and academics alike. Amongst some of the critics are Abdullah Sahin (2013) in *New Directions in Islamic Education: Pedagogy and Identity Formation* and Khosrow Noaparast (2012) in 'Al-Attas revisited on the Islamic Understanding of Education'.

One major weakness of Al-Attas' work is that the terms 'adab' and 'ta'dib' do not seem to be as inclusive as he suggests, that they include both recognition and acknowledgement (which relate to the Islamic concepts of 'ilm' and 'amal'). Whilst this may be the case in learning moral values, and developing spirituality, it does not seem to stand for all education, and does not encourage reflective or critical thinking of a child. For this reason, such a concept may be adequate for teaching some theological aspects of Islam, although not such for teaching other areas, such as scientific knowledge.

Noaparast (2012) discusses in detail the limitation of the concept of 'adab' as not naturally including knowledge as al-Attas presupposes is an element of 'adab'. He further backs up his criticism, citing sources from the *Qur'an* and *Shi'ite* narrations. An interesting finding, he makes is that the word 'adab' has not been used in the *Qur'an*, although the *Qur'an* has a largely educational theme. Secondly, the *hadith* quoted by al-Attas, wherein it says: "Addabanīrabbī ..." (My Lord educated me, and so made my education most excellent)", becomes problematic to his ideas when looked at from a linguistic point of view. This is because of the common pattern found in the *Qur'an* when one of God's names is used, one is chosen to fit the purpose of the situation. For instance, in the context of forgiveness, his name 'Ghafūr' (forgiving) will be invoked. In this case 'rabb' should mean the Educator, however, al-Attas in another notable work of his, *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*; has explicitly denied the concept of

'rububiyah' to be an educational concept, as he supposes this to be limited to personal development. Furthermore, some *Shi'ite* narrations are presented; wherein the word 'adab' may be used as a distinct meaning to an educational one, as in one instance.

'The right of a child on his/her father is to ... give good discipline [adab] to him/her and to teach him/her [yu'allimahu] the Qur'an' (Noaparast, 2012: 159).

In this case, it is evident that two concepts, 'adab and 'ta'lim', are being used distinctly and the narration shows the disparity between the two; the former being used in the sense of instilling moral discipline and the latter in the sense of teaching the *Qur'an*.

Dawud Tauhidi, in his outlook on the subject, takes a slightly different approach when it comes to defining the meaning of education in Islam. Firstly, he identifies problems within the current scope of Islamic Education; the main issue being with the continuing divergence of the concept of a dual system of education, the Islamic and the Secular. This perception of a dual system has led to a rigid dichotomy between the two, often resulting in: Muslims with dual identities; strongly inclined to one of the two and equally opposed to the other; or confused personalities. It has left Muslims to feel spiritually disoriented and socially marginalised, not knowing their role in the modern society. He then presents four reasons as to why education, both the current Islamic and Western, have not come up to the mark, it does not focus on personality or religious character development, rather on teaching facts and figures; the content of what is taught is often seem to have not met the religious intended outcome in order to achieve the set goal in the lives of the students, their needs and aspirations; whilst the approach should be symmetrical; the curriculum designed for this purpose considerably is arguable (Tauhidi, 2003, p.3).

Tauhidi then argues that the vision of education must be renewed, so it becomes;

“One that is capable of producing young people with a level of understanding, commitment and social responsibility that will empower them to serve their society and humanity effectively”(Tauhidi, 2003, p.4).

He further explains that:

“Tawhīd is a cosmological principle about the whole of creation. It implies that creation and the laws that govern it are integral parts of a unified system, from the smallest atoms to the largest astronomical bodies, and that the One God (Allah) created and unified these elements within a single, integrated system of creation, known as the uni-verse”(Tauhidi, 2003, p. 6).

Whilst this Tawhīdic principle seems to be a great way of integrating the whole concept of education, it seems entirely theoretical and may be challenging to put this into practice. To remove the borders from all subject areas and to unify them in this concept may be an impossible task to achieve. The arguments for the concept of tawhīd he discusses, are not based on empirical or textual evidence from Islamic sources, rather it is largely theoretical. Furthermore, his theory does not seem to have any scholarly backing. The other concept of tarbiyyah which he initially pointed out seems not to be the focal point in his theory; rather it is an end product.

The ‘cloud-grass theory of education’ in Islam was developed by Abdullah Sahin; the theory expresses the opinion that nature itself has the capability to educate. The cloud-grass aspect of the theory is used as a metaphor, “that clouds, by bringing down water necessary for the growth of vegetation, possess an educational function: hence they are called ‘rabab’ (Sahin, 2014, p. 182).

Sahin argues, “Both Tarbiyyah and education strongly indicate the process of facilitation and leading thoughts out rather than of pushing information in”, meaning that education should allow people to question and explore aspects of their religion rather than force information on them that they blindly accept. “narrated on the authority of Ibn Mas’ud suggests that the prophet Muhammad(peace be upon him) had clear and articulate educational self-awareness, the prophet describes the Qur’an using the metaphor of a ‘divine banquet’, by doing so it indicated it was presented to all of humanity to as an educational and moral guidance for humanity. This in turn indicates that education should be a form of facilitating human development rather than a form of moral coercion (Sahin, 2014).

The Qur’an was therefore, revealed in small passages, following a wider teaching rational of teaching through discourse so that the recipient, the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) , could recite, reflect upon, comprehend and be able to apply its teaching into day -to- day life and teach it to others. Therefore, this makes the Cloud-grass theory of education distinctively different from other theories in this field as it focuses on knowledge as a nurturing process that needs to be reflected and comprehended rather than a form of cohesion that is blindly followed without understanding.

4.5 The importance of obtaining knowledge in Islam

From the Islamic point of view, the Qur’an is the exact words of God sent down in a series of revelations to the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through the Angel (*Jibreel* Gabriel). Muslims believe that the Qur’an contains all the ingredients needed for humanity in order to live a happy and fulfilling life, in this life as well as the life hereafter. The Qur’an explains nothing has been omitted, “We have not neglected in the Register a thing” Qur’an(06:38). This therefore indicates that the Qur’an has explanations for all aspects of life, big or small –no matter whatever the problem is, the Qur’an has got the solution.

The word 'Qur'an' is derived from the Arabic word "Qara" which means to read. The Qur'anic verse above indicates that the Qur'an explains everything. The *Qur'an* contains all kinds of beneficial knowledge for man including reports of past events, information for events yet to come, what is '*haram*'(unlawful) and '*halal*'(lawful), as well as what people need to know about their worldly life in terms of their religion, livelihood in this world and their destiny in the hereafter (Mubarakpuri, 2003).

Obtaining knowledge is further emphasised in the *Qur'an*, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know" Qur'an (39:09). The prophet Muhammad(peace be upon him) said: "Seeking of knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim" (IbnMajah,1997, Hadith No.224I). Therefore indicating not a soul is exempt from obtaining knowledge; knowledge should be sought regardless of gender, ethnicity and social background. Knowledge in Islam is often divided into two broader categories but integrated with each other: the knowledge concerning religions and the knowledge concerning human and other sciences. The formally aforementioned the importance of gaining knowledge applies to both, religious as well as secular knowledge (Asadulla, 2009). In Islam, science and religion exist side by side, there are many references in the *Qur'an* to aspects of the natural phenomena asking mankind to observe, deduce and employ nature in the service of mankind (Alavi, 1988). Man is encouraged to advance in science, "He causes to grow for you thereby the crops, olives, palm trees, grapevines, and from all the fruits. Indeed, in that is a sign for people who ponder over. And He has subjected for you the night and day and the sun and the moon, and the stars are subjected by His command. Indeed, in that are the signs for people who reason" (The Qur'an, 16:12-13).

In the above verses God mentions the mighty signs and immense blessings to be found in God's creation. The first verse shows the blessing of water, how this one kind of water can sprout

plants with distinctive differences in taste, colour, scents and shapes proving clear evidence of proof of the one and only God. The second verse talks about the blessing of night and day; the sun and the moon, which revolves and travels within the axis of an orbit which God has designed for it and the stars that are both fixed and moving through the sky. All ordained by God without deviating in any way from its predetermined path (Mubarakpuri, 2003).

The Qur'anic verse mentions the aspect of night and day, the idea of gravity and orbiting of planets was further discussed in the following verse, "It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day. They all float, each in orbit" Qur'an (36:40). This mere discovery was mentioned in the Qur'an more than 1400 years ago but was only discovered by the scientist, Johannes Kepler, in the 17th century.

This therefore indicates that the Qur'an provides Muslims with certain educational principles and guidelines to base their lives around while at the same time encourages them to seek secular education, so mankind will be successful in this life as well as the perpetual life hereafter.

Islamic scholarship led the world in nearly every known academic subject for centuries. There was a wide range of schools throughout the Islamic world and the great Islamic universities preceding western universities (Kinany, 1951). The history of Muslims comes with plentiful examples of scientific and cultural inventiveness. Muslims inherited knowledge of nations that existed before them, developing it and placing it in the context of an accurate and transparent moral framework. Muslim scholarship made a vital contribution to the enhancement and progression of human civilization and made great advances in the field of medicine, mathematics, physics, astronomy, geography, architecture, literature, and history while the majority of Europe was still in the dark ages. Many significant new procedures were

transmitted to medieval Europe from Muslim regions, examples of such include, the use of algebra, the advancement of mathematics through Arabic numerals and the principle of zero vital. Muslims were the first to develop sophisticated apparatuses such as astrolabe, quadrants and navigational maps (Morgan, 2007).

However, Islamic Education has stagnated during the last century; it is argued the reasons for this stagnation is due to the failing of the Muslim world by the direct and indirect involvements of the Western powers and the colony of Islamic world by the West. Some Islamic schools and *Madrasahs* are thought to be way far behind to deliver their own aims and objectives for a variety of reasons such as shortage of financial support and recourses considering Islamic schools endeavours to keep pace with the standards and the constant advancement of western technology and knowledge resulting in many being under the impression that this ample is more successful than that of the Islamic schools. According to al-Faruqi, Islamic Education is generally a private affair devoid of access to public funds; he argues that secularisation ideas are imposed in the name of modernism and progress (Al-Faruqi, 1982).

The component of the curriculum along with its resources, teaching methods, teachers' beliefs as well as their religious and moral character and the teaching environment are the basis of education in Islam, as these set the educational aims, objectives and the standards of achievements for society. The theory of the Islamic Education is to develop man in four fields, physical, spiritual, self-confidence and mental development. A child is developed in all these four areas and they start their initial educational journey seeking knowledge from parents and their surroundings, it is again, Islam that encourages marriage in general and peculiar. Islam gives an equal importance to all four developmental fields and it is open ending process of learning. Islamic education starts from home, expected to be developed in schools and

supported by the surrounded community and society in different fields. Therefore, Muslims believe that teachers are very important component of their society and they deserve special and unbeatable respect by the society.

Teachers in Islam are seen as the first brick in the development of a child's Islamic identity. The prophet Muhammad(peace be upon him) elevated the status of teachers as they set the foundation of Islam and instil the seed of love for Islam into the hearts of their students. Teachers act as role models for their students and by passing on their knowledge which act as *asadaqahjariyah* (continuous reward) (Qarashi, 2015).

Although obtaining knowledge in Islam is obligatory upon every Muslim and is emphasised in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* but we also make out through these sources that the gaining of knowledge is not enough; yet, one also has to act upon the knowledge that the individual gains and receives. The Qur'an often discusses those who are knowledgeable but gain nothing out of their knowledge because they do not act upon their acquired knowledge due to pride and arrogance.

“The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey that carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people” (The Qur'an 62:5).

This can be seen as a lesson for all who are heedless to following the knowledge they have acquired. Allah resembles the heedless to a donkey that carries volumes of books; it will not understand its meaning or abide by it as it is only using its strength to carry it. This is therefore an example of those who entrusted with knowledge and do not use the knowledge gained.

Therefore, they are worse than the donkey because the donkey cannot understand while they do but choose to ignore it (Al-Mubarakpuri, 2003).

It is a duty of those who obtain knowledge to share it with others as there is no benefit for those who obtain knowledge and then to conceal the knowledge they have gained from others. Therefore, from an Islamic point of view we learn that obtaining knowledge is compulsory but one has to obtain knowledge, implement it first within themselves and then advise others in order to be successful both in this life and the life hereafter.

4.6 Challenges of British educational system

Islam like many other religions, aims to facilitate formation of a strong bond between the humanity and the Creator through bringing about faithful individuals who acknowledge the fundamental religious tenants such as oneness of God, life after death, and obey God's commands show ethical responsibility towards the environment.

“Then did you think that we created you uselessly and that to us you would not be returned? So exalted is Allah, the sovereign, the truth; there is no deity except Him, Lord of the Noble Throne” (The Qur'an, 23:115-116).

Some Muslim parents commonly felt their faith was marginalised which in turn has a serious effect on the education of Muslim children and their Islamic identity, as a result supplementary Islamic schools and the full-time Muslim faith-based schools attempted to stem the tides of secularism through their varying levels of Islamic education, however they were often limited by lack of funding and inadequate resources. This resulted in the UK Islamic educational *Waqf* and other similar organisations being established to help raise funds for Islamic faith schooling education and to help give children the education their parents sought (Hewitt, 1998).

The Muslim Education Coordinating Council UK (MECC) founded in the late 1970s acted as the voice of Muslim parents in Britain at the time by voicing what parents sought in the British

educational system. Nazar Mustafa, the council chairman, pointed out that there were over 2 million Muslims living in Britain and many were concerned about the progress of their children in British schools. Muslim children were not only underachieving considerably in educational attainment but also faced the risk of assimilation as Muslim parents found difficulties trying to bring their children up in a largely non-Islamic environment. The MECC was determined in preserving the Islamic identity, therefore, worked with the local educational authorities (LEA) and schools in order to increase Muslims children's attainment levels as well as offer comprehensive guidelines to all education authorities (Council Injects Muslim Viewpoint Into British Education, 1988).

Educational legislation such as the 1980 and 1986 Education Acts as well as the 1988 Education Reform Act have strengthened the rights of parents with regards to the choice of schools available; parents also had the option actively to play a role in the school as school governors (Sarwar, 1991).

As time progressed parents began to question whether *madrassas*, particularly weekday evening classes, demanded too much from their children in terms of workload (Maqsood, 2005). Weekend classes, rather than weekday evening classes appeared to be on the increase as parents began to realise the need for children to focus more on their school work (Rasool, 2009). Parents began to question the quality and content of the education received in state schools, therefore Muslim parents have increasingly moved towards supporting the growth of full-time Muslim faith-based schools (Malik, 1995).

4.7 Tarbiya as 'nurture, care and a reflective educational process'

Human beings by nature are endowed with reflective competence that is central to their development. A key feature in the psychological composition of man is his 'temporality' where

he is aware of his life experience as the open-ended act of 'becoming' his natural desire is the power i.e. driving force behind this becoming' (Sahin, 2014 p. 170). Sahin describes this as being based on human qualities of rationality, responsiveness and dialogue between man and his potential self (2015).

Hence, consciously or subconsciously, human beings are on a continuous lifelong endeavour of self-reform (nurture) through exercising what Sahin (2015) calls a state of 'critical openness'. The medieval Ash'arites' philosophy concurs with this paradigm in their assertion that faith (a psycho-spiritual process) is a phenomenon that is capable of both increasing and decreasing. This idea is supported by Fowler's of faith development theory (Fowler, 1981).

In early Islam, this was a widely understood approach and classically, learners sought out (selected) their teachers which placed a degree of authority in the hands of the learner. This left the role of the teacher as facilitator and that of the student an active agent in their development. The learner's state of personal development, as a self-perpetuating force, has placed him in control and he understands himself as responsible for his own further development.

An objection that contemporary secular thinkers have with confessional Islamic Education is that it is considered controversial and indoctrination. Some traditionalist Muslim scholars on the other hand also hold the view that there is no room in Islamic Education for criticality and exploration. They argue that since the essence of Islam is effective submission to the will of God, and the acceptance of one's fate, how criticality can exist concurrently by affording free choice to an autonomous individual when eventually 'all roads lead to Rome'? This gives rise to the inherent aporia of autonomy and authority in confessional Islamic nurture.

Contradictory to the perceived dichotomy of autonomy and submission in secular thinking, human beings, by use of their intelligence, 'aql', and acknowledging its limitations; that the recognition of God cannot properly be done through the use of intellect, exercise their autonomy in choosing to submit to Him. In fact, without the learner's autonomous choice the act of submission becomes meaningless. In this way, the two concepts of autonomy and authority are actually mutually defining. Al-Attas extensively explained the attributes of 'aql' and free will as inseparable human attributes (Al-Attas, 1991).

It is also a useful exercise to consider the ideas of 'Freedom of Thought' and 'Freedom of Speech'. In principle, an individual cannot be held responsible for considering controversial viewpoints as long as they maintain the social order. This would be the freedom of thought which is more or less a universally accepted idea. His views only become problematic if their viewpoints result into action that is problematic, which is precisely the problem with the idea of an un-tethered freedom of speech. The exercise of freedom of thought in Islamic education is underpinned by the certainty that an absolute truth exists and with sufficient deliberation, it can be accomplished to a greater degree. Suppression of freedoms for learners can only have adverse effects (Dewey, 1997 p62).

Addressing the needs of Muslim children and youth in contemporary British society is a vast topic. In regards to the faith and identity development of the Muslim youth, one must have the potential and the skill to confront it effectively. Surely, it requires an adequate understanding of life in the west as well as concrete knowledge about the psychology of children and youth development. Furthermore, a deep insight into Islam is a tool to achieve this task. However, many challenges that are faced when dealing with faith and identity development emerge from culture clashes and the educator's lack of awareness or knowledge about Islamic civilisation,

contemporary issues, and psychological aspects of faith and identity development. One must bear in mind when educators are mentioned; it not only encompasses the teachers but also parents, Imams, and leaders. The reason being, they contribute to the upbringing up of the child.

Certainly, as Sahin (2014, 2016) implies the most important aspect one must engage in is the concept of 'critical openness'. Thus, he believed that in order to promote critical openness, education should facilitate a dialogue among these different cultures without asking them to change. Rather, to be open and to evaluate why there are differences and to find the common aspects. In fact the main sources of Islam, (*Quran, Sunnah* (The prophetic legacy) and *Ijmaá* (Agreement between scholars) all encourage critical thinking and openness (Sahin 2010). Evidently, 'critical openness' is what helped the past generation of Muslims' success. Hence, the Muslim civilisation experienced educational stagnation.

If the objective of Islamic nurture is to bring about a religious and moral character in the individual through faithfulness then it follows that criticality in nurture must be a confessional pursuit for the purpose of a mature faith development. Islamic nurture, then, is ultimately brought about by autonomous thinking that maintains a critical faithfulness that is also capable of weathering the precarious trials of modernity.

As is often, unfortunately, the case, historically, social and political movements tend to be reactionary. Caution must be taken not to follow a defensive pattern that stays behind to prepare new generations for a continually changing future. The aims of Islamic education must remain clearly defined to encompass religiosity and adherence to religious obligation amongst everything else. Clearly, expertise is required in multiple disciplines to achieve correct balance to ensure that the overarching aims of Islam are not diluted

Teacher training is an urgent imperative for both secular and Islamic disciplines. Rahman quotes that 'that the *ulema* (scholars) are not just professionals like the holders of the degrees in engineering or other professions, for upon their shoulders lays the task of the moral leadership of society. This certainly gives a new dimension to the meaning to the prophetic report where scholars are named as the heirs of the prophets, which means that those with knowledge (not just factual knowledge) are expected to carry out the duty of the prophets. This can only mean the duty in educating (nurturing) mankind.

The scale and urgency of the call for reforms in Islamic Education is summed up by Rahman: 'Unless necessary and far-reaching adjustments are made in the present system of education, it is not even conceivable that creative minds will arise that will work out and suss out the desired systematic interpretation of Islam' (Rahman, 2011, p86).

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of Islamic Education with particular reference to its original resources; the Qur'an and Sunnah, discussing how Muslims defined Islamic Education and the purpose of education in Islam with particular reference to the 1977 first world conference of the Islamic Education which took place in Makkah examining the aims and objectives that were discussed at the conference. The importance of obtaining knowledge in Islam was discussed in general and the 'theory of Islamisation' was introduced where contemporary scholars such as Al-Attas introduced the term 'adab' and explained the role it plays in the education of Muslims in particular.

The chapter also discussed some new theoretical developments within the field which are critical of the 'Islamisation project'. Sahin's critique of 'adab'-focused perception of education

by al-Attas and his *tarbiya*-focused theory of critical and reflective Islamic Education has also been discussed (Sahin, 2014, 2015). The fact that Sahin developed his theory of Islamic Education within the UK context makes his model of the Islamic Education pertinent and prominent to this study. Sahin's model to the Islamic Education has been applied in investigating the challenges facing the teaching of Islam within the context of prisons (Mahmood, 2014), and Muslim higher education institutions (Sudazai, 2015). Sahin's empirical based research framework offers a practical model for assessing the quality and impact of Islamic Education on the formation of religious identities of the Muslim children. Therefore, this model has important implications for improving the Islamic Education provision offered by Muslim schools in the UK.

The chapter has also highlighted how seeking both secular and Islamic Education was a compulsory duty upon Muslims using passages from the Qur'an and incidences from the *Sunnah*. Finally, this chapter is particularly useful as it allows the reader to have a clear understanding and background view of the Islamic education enabling them to understand the deeper significance of education in Islam. It is hoped, by the researcher, that this chapter allows the reader to get wider understanding within the context of the Islamic Education, which provides detailed conception and framework for the next chapter that discusses the methodology used in the case study.

CHAPTER FIVE (Research Methodology)

Qualitative Case Study with a Mix of Methods Research

Design

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology of the study. The research explores Muslim faith-based schools in the Birmingham region. The study explores how Muslim faith-based schools of Birmingham respond to the religious, cultural and educational needs of Muslim children and the expectations of parents and wider society. The study, further aims to find out the types of Muslim faith-based schools currently operating within Birmingham context; the parents' motives in order to send their children to Muslim schools and finally exploring the extent to which Muslim faith-based schools achieve their overall educational ethos and specific Islamic education vision. More significantly this research project aims to critically explore the extent to which the specific Islamic Education provision of these schools reflect the reality of the wider multicultural society and contribute to the overall personal development of Muslim children.

The study has adopted a broad qualitative case study approach utilising a mixed-methods design to collect the required data, hence the research design combines both qualitative and quantitative instruments of data collection and analysis procedures. This chapter discusses the overall methodological framework of the study and the details of the research design used in this research with special focus on the construction of data, analysis procedures as well as reasons for adopting this perspective.

5.2 Methodological considerations and research design of the study

Within the Social Sciences research framework, the nature and type of the undertaken research topic plays a crucial role in constructing an appropriate research design to study a particular set of research questions (Blaik, 2000; Yin, 1994). As the undertaken research is educational in nature, it is important to provide a brief description of the basic social science research paradigms that are generally recognised in two broader overarching frameworks as qualitative and quantitative. In addition, the current study has been taken into consideration, as the researcher followed educational research strategies and research perspectives that have been developed within social sciences framework.

Before discussing the research design of the study, it is important to note that the research is, essentially, about production of new entailed knowledge that is reliable and accurate. As both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms are necessary to make assumptions about the nature of issues explored (usually referred to as ontological assumptions) and what can be known or whether the knowledge produced can be trusted (usually recognised as epistemological concerns). In more detail, Ontology is the philosophical study for the nature of being, becoming, reality or existence as well as the basic categories of being and their relations, meaning what exists or the reality of being explored by the researcher. Epistemology is concerned with the way in which we can come to know about the world around us. As such, methodology refers to the wider framework and the means of acquiring knowledge or the design and techniques used by the researcher to explore the reality under exploration (Anderson, 1998; Healy and Perry, 2000).

This research focuses on Birmingham as a case study and explores the role of full-time Muslim faith-based schools within the Birmingham Muslim community; it is for this reason only full-time Muslim faith-based schools participated in this study. Considering the social and

educational nature of this study, it is more appropriate that it adopts a general qualitative research design that uses diverse strategies of data collection and analysis. Observations, interviews, focused group discussions are mainly qualitative data methods that have been used to gather necessary data for the undertaken research (Patton, 2001). The detailed information about each of these mainly ethnographic research instruments will be provided below. Within a qualitative research framework, the researcher is not taken to be a totally detached observer but someone who is engaged with a social inquiry and interacts with participants in a social context. The social nature of the research is, mostly, emphasised by the *constructivist* paradigm in social sciences, which emerged in the twentieth century as a result of wider developments in anthropology, sociology and psychology. Constructivism focuses on understanding the actions and meanings of individuals; compared to positivist paradigm that is founded on an alternative Ontological premises, which depends upon what individuals or groups perceive to exist (DeMarrais et al, 2004; Coll and Taylor, 2001).

The constructivist epistemology is based on the view that subjective knowledge is created by individuals or groups and its methodology often entails the exploration of these individual worlds. In other words, knowledge does not exist but it is created and constructed by people. Therefore, researchers have to explore the research situation in terms of the participants themselves, by looking at their ideas and their views of reality (Guba, 1990; Cicourel, 1964). The research participants are then seen to be helping out to construct reality, to build new knowledge. Constructivist researchers tend to use interviews, and in-depth or extended observations, which allow multiple social perspectives to be built (Robson, 2002), and the philosophical position of constructivism which emphasises on words rather than numbers.

5.3 The research design and the aims of the study

The researcher prior to embarking on the research, identified the appropriate data collection instruments, a central component of research design, and looked at the specific study aims.

The central aim of this study, as mentioned earlier on, was to explore, empirically, the role played by present Muslim faith-based schools, in meeting the religious, cultural and academic needs of Muslim children. The researcher sought the following opinions from the participants:

1. What are the main types of Muslim faith-based schools operating in the city of Birmingham?
2. What are the general motives and expectations of Muslim parents in sending their children to Muslim faith-based schools?
3. To what extent do these schools achieve their general educational aims and specific Islamic Educational goals in meeting the religious/spiritual and educational/social needs of Muslim children?
4. To what extent do these schools prepare children to live within the wider multicultural society?

In line with these specific set of questions, the researcher constructed a general questionnaire, which was given out in general public programmes of Muslim schools, parents evenings and annual presentation day which was addressed to parents, students, governors and teachers in order to identify participants general overview of Muslim faith-based schools (See Appendix 2.2, 2.3, 2.4). Based on these survey findings, a selected group of Muslim schools was chosen to be closely studied. Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with those running the schools i.e. head teachers, governors and teaching staff. The participants were asked questions about the general areas of teaching and learning including their views on the provision of Islamic education in the Muslim faith-based schools as well as whether the curriculum is

balanced. In addition, interviews with teachers, parents and students were conducted. Similarly, parents' views have been explored through focused group discussions and semi-structured interviews. With participants' permission, all interviews were recorded, and at a later stage, all recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed (See Appendix 2.9, 2.10).

Qualitative research framework appeared to be most appropriate study design to explore the main research questions of the research. Having said that, the study also made the use of questionnaires, which is usually associated with the quantitative research methods. For example, participant's views concerning Muslim schools can be practically mapped out by a general questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was manually entered into Microsoft excel to be analysed as well as analysed pragmatic usage through the SPSS data analysis software in order to produce comprehensive data that is easy to understand and interpret. A selected group of participants were then interviewed using either semi-structured interviews or group discussions depending on which method the researcher sees it better fit, this enabled the researcher to further follow up the key themes and issues (See appendix 2.6).

5.4 Research design of the study

The researcher decided to use mixed-methods design to maximise the research findings and enhance the validity of the findings. The design of the research was decided in accordance with the nature of the research questions as well as the purpose and the aim of the study. For the purpose of evaluating the findings, multiple methods of strategy have been used, e.g. semi-structured interviews, group discussions and self-completion questionnaires. Using more than

one method of data collection enhanced the validity of the findings. Allen (1993), indicates the three major advantages of using multiple method of data collection; firstly, it adds confidence in the research findings; secondly, it increases value of the findings; and finally it provides a clearer picture since qualitative research findings also support the quantitative research findings and *vice versa*. Cohen (1985) also supports the use of more than one data collection instrument as it enhances the credibility of the findings. In this study, the qualitative data collected by interviews and group discussions supported by the quantitative data collected by the questionnaire. To enhance validity of the findings, the researcher selected samples of different 'units' such as, key people, parents, governors, teachers, and students. To avoid bias and remove doubts, and to provide a sound basis of participant selection; the researcher chose what is usually referred as 'purpose sampling method' (Gorad, 2001; Denscome, 2002, p.24).

Overall, the research design of the study followed the below interrelated stages:

Problem; general issues regarding Muslim faith-based schools



Concentration on certain prominent aspect of this issue



Concentrated on identified gaps in the present research, which were the main reasons why the issue has not been dealt with



Further refinement of focus based on analysing existing data generated important questions regarding the issue, that needed to be answered based on findings from previous research



Decided scope of research, e.g. number of schools from which to collect data. Deciding upon methods of research, which proved to be effective in terms of answering the research questions



Data collection instruments, e.g. interview, group discussion and questionnaire.

Figure 5. 1 An overview of the process of the study

Triangulation method:

Analysing the data and drawing conclusions – leading to answering the specific questions as well as contributing new knowledge to the issue.

In terms of the qualitative data analysis, the following procedures suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) which has been followed:

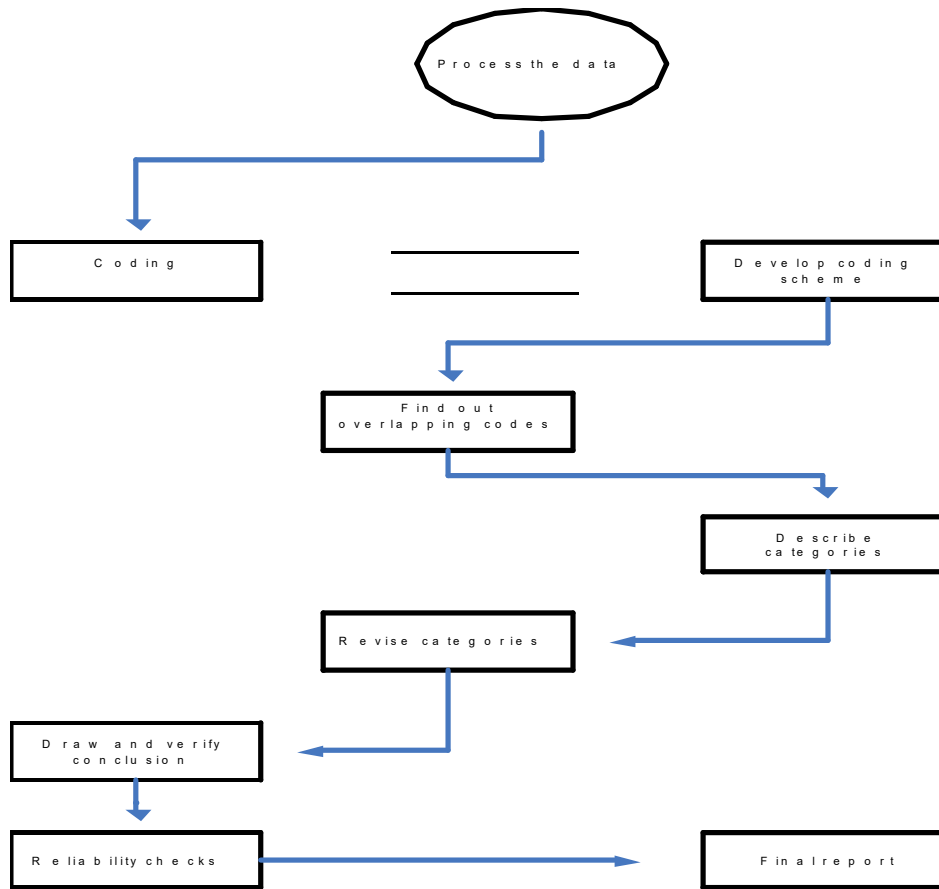


Figure 5. 2 An overview of the process of qualitative data analysis adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994)

This basic research framework has been supplemented with additional data collection instruments such as structured and unstructured observation and a research diary that has been kept by the researcher while conducting the field work.

5.5 Sampling procedure

Before the researcher commenced the undertaken research, he identified all the schools within the Birmingham region that followed the Islamic educational ethos (see appendix 1.05). The researcher informally approached the Muslim faith-based schools and introduced them to his research question and provided them a brief overview of his research. As such the study followed 'convenience sampling' method. It is worth noting that the researcher is an independent individual and he is not sponsored or supported by any organisation or person. This is an important area as this granted him freedom from the influence of all values (Robson, 2002). The researcher is a member of the Muslim community of Birmingham; this reduced considerable amount of travel, time and cost. Furthermore, the researcher is a known person to many Muslim faith-based schools, parents and community leaders of the city; and based on this personal advantage, he was able to gain access to many Muslim faith-based schools which is, in general, a difficult task to achieve as mentioned by many educationalists such as Robson (2002). However, it is worth remembering that this was not always the case, in certain schools, this was not possible, his personality and association within the Muslim community still did not help him in gaining access.

The sample of Muslim schools that participated in this research included different types of Muslim faith-based schools that follow different sects and types of schools that exist within Birmingham in particular and the UK in general. The researcher, premeditatedly, worked hard to include these different types of schools and different schools of thought that exist in the UK as they represent other full-time Muslim faith-based schools, which included Muslim boarding schools, segregated schools, *Sunni* schools, grant maintained schools, *Somali* and *Arab* schools and *Deobandi* school of thought all participated in the study.

After the initial contact was made with the full-time Muslims schools, those schools which expressed willingness to participate in the study; were further contacted and the researcher explained in-depth the purpose of the study. On receiving the school's approval the fieldwork began in the form of pilot study and lasted for the period of four weeks, with potentially, participating schools to examine the applicability of the suggested research design. After the research design was tested and finalised, participants were chosen randomly within the schools to reduce the chances of biases occurring. The researcher asked the schools, which expressed interest in the study, to pass a consent form to students, teachers, governors and parents who had a connection with the Muslim faith-based school (see appendix 2.01). The consent form contained a pre-paid envelop so that willing participants could return it to the researcher free of charge. Participants were then randomly drawn from the response list and contacted by the researcher to arrange the semi-structured interview or group discussion. Semi-structured interviews and group discussion commenced, (see Appendix 2.3,4,5).

Prior to the commencing of the semi-structured interviews and group discussions, the researcher considered the use of some general meeting locations where most parents, teachers and school governors could meet. The Alum Rock area was finalised to be the meeting point for participants who lived towards the east side of Birmingham, whereas Sparkhill was considered as the meeting point for participants who lived in the surrounding area of western Birmingham. Small Heath was considered to be as the meeting point for participants who lived towards south-west side of Birmingham whereas the Aston area was considered as a meeting point for those living in north-west area of Birmingham. Although there were many other locations, participants chose to meet at these centres for a variety of reasons, e.g. proximity of

the site to many participants, and yet, convenience of the route for buses. The locations were easy to reach and as community centres provided a safer meeting space for the participations.

5.6 Data collection and analysis procedures

This section discusses in detail the general information about the main data collection instruments used in the research; the researcher used the mixed method design during data collection. Therefore, the researcher used the following instruments to collect data; semi-structured interviews, group discussion and questionnaires. These instruments contributed to the richness of the data collected and enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the views expressed by the participants regarding the role of Muslim faith-based schools in multicultural Britain.

5.6.1 Quantitative data collection: questionnaire

Bell (1993) suggests that questionnaires are a good way of collecting certain types of information quickly and relatively cheaper as long as subjects are sufficiently disciplined to abandon questions that are superfluous to the main task. The researcher decided to use this instrument along with interviews and group discussions to enhance the validity of the findings; particularly findings reached using group discussions.

Questionnaire was used as the first research instrument. This instrument was chosen as it suited the nature of the study, and gathered a large size of data in a shorter time and with less expenditure, both when collecting data and also when processing it.

The researcher began by constructing the questionnaire ensuring that it was comprehensive and easy to understand as well as applicable to everyone such as; parents, students and teachers. A pilot study was then performed, the purpose of the small scale introductory study was to check the feasibility, completion time and the overall comprehensiveness of the

questionnaire in an attempt to predict an appropriate sample size and to identify ways of improvement on the study design prior to the full-scale questionnaire being sent to the wider cross-section of the Muslim community in Birmingham. Upon completion and revaluation of the questionnaires, a sample of each questionnaire was sent to Muslims schools and community centres within the Birmingham region containing a prepaid envelope to return the research questionnaire upon completion, the goal of this was to ensure a large number of participants took part in the research in order to gain a wide variety of views. Telephone calls were made along with email reminders were sent to encourage completion of questionnaires.

The researcher also attended different Muslim schools and community programmes to handout the questionnaires to be completed. In total 202 questionnaires were collected; 133 parents, 36 students and 33 teachers and governors. The findings were analysed using the SPSS software in order to gain a statistical understanding of participant views on Muslims schools. This instrument was useful as it produced outcomes that enabled the researcher to gain a clear-cut view of each participant's point of view about the role of Muslim faith-based schools in meeting the religious, cultural and educational needs of Muslim children.

Robson (2002) is of the opinion that a large amount of data can be collected by a questionnaire that produces straightforward descriptive information. A questionnaire has been constructed in the light of the study's purpose and aims, mainly to elicit views of study participants such as parents, governors and teachers (Burroughs, 1971; Renheim, 1992). The coding of the scale and points were adjusted to be consistent with both positive and negative phrased questions. Cohen (2000, p.254) argued that "most of us would not wish to be called extremists", in order to avoid the two extreme poles at each end of a continuum.

5.6.2 Qualitative data collection

The researcher conducted in total 22 Semi-Structured Interviews, 5 of which were with students who have graduated or are currently studying in Muslim faith-based schools, 5 parents of children studying in a Muslim faith-based school and 12 teachers or governors who work in a Muslim faith-based school. The research also conducted 5 group discussions with students who had been graduated or are currently studying in Muslim faith-based schools. The semi-structured interviews and group discussions required a long term and in-depth involvement with Muslim faith-based schools as well as the Birmingham Muslim community in particular to ensure an in-depth and rich amount of data collected for this reason, the researcher conducted interviews over a period of 4 months. All interviews were recorded after the permission of each participant was sought, each interview was then transcribed and colour coded according to key areas of the research and themes. Semi-structured interviews and group discussions were conducted with different participants; from different ethnicities and genders.

A sample of participants was obtained through handing out consent forms to members of the Muslim community who have connections with Muslim faith-based schools within the Birmingham region; participants who completed the questionnaire were also given the option to participate further in the study. If the person expressed willingness they were instructed to complete the consent form and return it to the researcher in the pre-paid envelop, the researcher then contacted them with further details and accordingly arranged an interview (See Appendix 2.1).

5.6.3 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews of all forms have been widely used as a research instrument to bring about direct responses to support the results obtained by other data collecting instruments (Powney and

Watta, 1987). Interviews are a useful means of collecting qualitative data as they allow the researcher to collect descriptive and detailed data which corroborates and enhances the quantitative collected data.

It is essential to acknowledge that interviews are categorised in terms of the degree of their formality ranging from unstructured to semi-structured to structured interviews. Unstructured interviews are, usually, guided by interviewees' responses rather than the questions and probing of the researcher. In semi-structured interviews; the interviewer recognises the purpose of interviews but does not have any specific questions to ask. In formal interviews, the interviewer normally pre-specifies questions needed to be asked and determines the structure of the interviews (Nunan, 1992, p.149).

Due to the nature of this study, the researcher specifically chose to use semi-structured interviews, whereas, semi-structured interviews are a form of qualitative data whereby there is a standard, fixed set of questions for each person interviewed. However, this method is particularly useful as semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask additional questions to participants when the researcher sought fit to do so, which allowed the researcher to gain further insight.

Like any other data collecting instrument, interviews also had disadvantages e.g. the presence of a tape-recorder could change the situation to some degree (Gall, 1996, p.313). To minimise this concern, the purpose of recording was explained to participants before the interview commenced. To avoid misinterpretation, notes were made during the interviews and the conclusion was driven from each interview and presented to the participant before leaving to ensure that the researcher's interpretation did not differ to what he or she had intended. The use of semi-structured interviews creates a positive rapport between the interviewer and

interviewee meaning it allows them to feel as if they are in sync or on the same wavelength as they are able to relate well with each other. This is an effective and efficient way to collect data that is not easily observed. Semi-structured interviews have high validity allowing people to talk in depth about certain topics with little direction from the interviewer. As the interviewer in semi-structured interviews can ask and probe interviewee to expand on certain areas and this allows the interviewer to accumulate information that had, either not occurred to the interviewer or of which the interviewer had no prior knowledge. Semi-structured interviews resolves the problem of pre-judgment within the interview, as the interviewer cannot determine what will or will not be discussed as only few pre-set questions are used allowing the interviewee to expand on their responses.

The limitations of this instrument are not unique to this instrument only; each instrument has its own limitations and advantages. In the researcher's view, even though the limitations of this method cannot be ignored, but it could be in many cases minimised and enhanced by using other data collecting instruments (Powney and Watta, 1987). One of the main limitations of semi-structured interviews is that it depends on the skills of the interviewer and their ability to think of questions during the interviewer and the articulacy of the interviewee. Unconscious signals may be given by the interviewer which can guide the respondents to give a particular answer which may be expected by the interviewer. Semi-structured interviews are time consuming and expensive for the amount of data collected. The data collected is not very reliable as it is difficult to exactly repeat a focus interview as respondents may be asked non-standardised questions. As the small size for such methods tends to be small, this also affects the reliability of the findings as the findings cannot be generalised to represent a society as a whole. Another limitation of semi-structured interviews is the depth of the qualitative

information may be difficult to analyse. The validity of the research may also be affected as the researcher has no real way of knowing if the respondent is not informing the full truth.

5.6.4 Focus group discussions

The researcher decided to use this instrument along with the other data collection instruments to enhance the validity of the findings via triangulation complimenting the data gathered through semi-structured interviews. Parents, governors, teachers and students were invited to take part in the group discussion. The researcher chose this instrument because it enabled him to collect a large amount of information in less time, effort and cost. In addition, this instrument provided more opportunities to interact directly with the participants and allowed him to follow up with questions and observer responses. Thirdly, as the participants of this research were of different gender groups and levels of education, this method facilitated and enabled them all to participate. On the other hand, the limitations of this instrument are also of concern, e.g. the findings could not be generalised, due to small number of the participants. Secondly, the open-ended nature of responses made summarisation and interpretation of results difficult. To conclude:

“Limitations are not unique to group discussions; all research instruments in the social science have significant limitations”(Bickman, 1998, p.510).

Yin (1993), Glaser and Strauss (1967) are amongst others who also support the notion that ‘generalisability’ seems to increase with the number of cases covered. Therefore, ‘generalisations’ can be made using what Gilbert Ryle termed ‘*thick description*’, and the subjective inferences that can be analytically extracted from the observation of what has actually transpired or ‘thin description’(Geertz, 1973).

The specific type of case study utilized to conduct the empirical exploration in a single case design with embedded units of analysis (Yin, 1993). This design allows many layers to be

examined as data can be gathered *within* the subunits separately, *between* the different subunits, or *across* all of the units (cross-case analysis) (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

For this purpose, the case study subunits are comprised of five individual interviews and focus-group discussions. The focus group interviews formulate an obvious approach in phenomenological research (Collis and Hussey, 2009). They are being used in this instance to generate a copious amount of information and data from Muslim graduate students in an open environment. Thus, the researcher was able to act as an observer and witness the open discussion taking place between the study participants. This facet of the interviewing process greatly enhanced the analysis and triangulation of data.

Robson (2002, p.284) identifies the focus group interview technique to be 'efficient', as the range of data is "increased by collecting from several people at the same time"; the group environment and dynamics aid the focus on the most pertinent issue and "it is easy to assess the extent which there is a constant and shared view." Therefore, the "participants are empowered and able to make comments in their own words", whilst those who are reluctant to be interviewed on their own can be encouraged to contribute. Furthermore, this methodological technique is also "relatively inexpensive...flexible and can be set up quickly' and also the 'participants tend to enjoy the experience".

5.6.5 Data analysis procedures

The study has employed both qualitative and quantitative data analysis procedures to engage with the datasets generated to decide analysis the data through the content analysis route. Yin (2003 p.109) maintains that data analysis consists of "examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the

initial propositions of study." In general, "data analysis means a search for patterns in data" (Neuman, 1997, p.426). "The ultimate goal of the case study is to uncover patterns, determine meanings, construct conclusions and build theory" (Patton & Appelbaum, 2003, p.67). Therefore, this analysis consisted of searching for underlying themes and patterns in the data collected. The common themes identified were under the several categories that all implied further sub categories such as 'British values,' 'Islamic values and ethos,' within the context of schooling. Furthermore, the Islamic ethos and values of the school were then compared and contrasted, against the official government OFSTED inspection handbook for schools, in regards to the concept of 'British values.'

It must be noted that focus group discussions require the honesty, uprightness and integrity of the researcher and the participants. Therefore, conclusions drawn from the FG interviews could be tainted by an inconsiderate and unethical procedure. In addition, the Hawthorne or observer effect may tarnish the validity of the opinions provided by participants through interviews either individually or in a focus group environment. Therefore, the researcher showed care to safeguard against reactivity by controlling the interviewing and FG sessions. The researcher has kept reflectivity throughout the study,

Yin (2003) recommends that in order to adopt the existing theories and literature in formulating research objectives, the theoretical propositions utilized can aid the organization and conduct of the data analysis phase. Therefore, the central components of the research such as themes and issues can be identified through the literature and contrasted with the empirical findings. Similarly, Saunders et al (2009) observes that this will link the research to the existing body of knowledge in the subject area; this is opposed to be the inductive

approach (also recognized as the 'grounded theory') that seeks to gather data and then explore and identify themes and issues.

The deductive approach utilised is based upon the two-stage 'data analysis' procedure as developed by Saunders et al (2009, p.149) and suggested by the above mentioned work of Miles and Huberman (1994). Thus, the diverse data sets were categorised and summarised into themes and subthemes that reflect the views and patterns of meaning voiced by the study participants.

5.7 Ethical considerations

Prior to embarking on this research, the researcher had to carefully consider any ethical issue that may arise during the undertaken research and particularly consider how he will overcome these issues. Social Science studies are about individuals, communities and societies therefore during the research framework, issues that involve people are bound to be found – thus before even beginning; the researcher had to consider any ethical matters connected with the undertaken research. The researcher, had to ensure the interests and rights of anyone affected by the research was safeguarded and that the researcher keeps within the framework of the legislation on human rights and data protection, maintaining research of good quality and research, gaining informed consent of each participants involved and thinking through the consequences of thesis produced.

During the construction of the questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions, the researcher ensured that all questions did not contain any degrading, discriminating or unacceptable language that could be interpreted as offensive for any members of the sample

group as well as ensuring that the questionnaire was designed to collect information directly related to the research question and that no private or personal questions were requested from the respondents (Kimmel, 2007).

For this reason, prior to beginning the research; the researcher had to gain permission of access and participation of some Muslim faith-based schools in Birmingham to be permitted to have access to the research sites including resources, including talking to and interviewing pupils, teachers and staff, witnessing assemblies, and attending classes. The participating schools and study participants (parents, teachers, head teachers, governors and students) were assured prior to the interviews, complete confidentiality of their participation and the information or data generated by the researcher would only be used by their permission and for the purpose of the study only. For the sake of confidentiality, school names, the total population of each school or the participants' identity would not be exposed. The study ensured anonymity to the participants. Denscome (2002, p.72-73) explains why many participants seek not to expose their identity: "Organisational leaders will probably be anxious not to expose themselves to criticism and want to ensure that the interests of those for whom they have responsibility are not adversely affected by the research. They will want to feel safe about the research".

Informal visits were made to schools and the researcher guaranteed discretion, which contributed to gaining the participants trust and allowed them to open up, express and expand on their views about Muslim faith-based schools.

Bryman and Bell (2007) identified ten principles of ethical considerations which they compiled as a result of examining the ethical guidelines of nine professional social sciences research associations;

1. Research participants should not be subjected to harm in any way, shape or form including physically as well as mentally.
2. Respect for the dignity of research participants should be prioritised.
3. Full consent should be obtained from the participants prior to the study and researchers should be fully aware of what participating in the study means.
4. The protection of the privacy of research participants has to be assured.
5. Adequate level of confidentiality of the research data should be ensured.
6. Anonymity of individuals and organisations participating in the research has to be assured.
7. Any deception or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research must be avoided.
8. Affiliations in any forms, sources of funding, as well as any possible conflicts of interests have to be declared.
9. Any type of communication in relation to the research should be done with honesty and transparency.
10. Any type of misleading information, as well as representation of primary data findings in a biased way, must be avoided.

The researcher, therefore, used the guidelines of Bryman and Bells (2007), and others to set the foundation of ethical considerations the researcher considered in order to ensure that all

participants were safeguarded and were not harmed in any manner throughout the process of involvement in constructing the research.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodology used in this research, highlighting the implications and issues in the research design. It is suggested that given the social and educational nature of the main research questions a broad qualitative research perspective is the best to explore the study aims (Walfford, 2001). The chapter discussed the methodological considerations and research design of the study by analysing in detail the varied chosen research methods that contributed to the richness of the study. It was established that the researcher is an independent individual, which granted him freedom from all influence contributing to the unbiased nature of the study. The chapter provided details of the research design discussing the main data collection instruments used, the data analysis procedures, the study sample and details of the field work. The construction of data, the process of data collection; procedures and analysis were also discussed highlighting how the researcher sought out to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The chapter finally highlighted ethical considerations that are essential to be considered when conducting a research as it is essential for collaborative work since it ensures trust is maintained, the ethical considerations are particularly important as this case study is social in nature, it affects individuals, communities and societies, therefore, it is essential that ethics are upheld to ensure the interests of all parties and the rights of anyone affected by the research was safeguarded. The next three chapters present the empirical findings of the study through analysing the qualitative and quantitative data sets of the study.

CHAPTER SIX: (Data Analysis: I)

Muslim Parents and Islamic Schooling:

Results of the Survey

6.1 Introduction

This study aimed to explore the role of Muslim faith-based schooling within the context of modern British society in meeting the religious, cultural and educational needs of Muslim students. The research explores Muslim faith-based schools in the Birmingham region to look into the main research question i.e. how do Muslim faith-based schools of Birmingham respond to the religious, cultural and educational needs of Muslim children and the expectations of parents. The study further aimed to find out the types of Muslim faith-based schools currently operating within the Birmingham context; parents' motives in sending their children to Muslim schools and finally exploring the extent to which Muslim faith-based schools achieve their overall educational ethos and specific Islamic education vision. More significantly, the research project aimed to critically explore the extent to which the specific Islamic education provisions of these schools reflect the reality of the wider multicultural society and contribute to the overall personal development of Muslim children.

The research adopted an empirical case study framework and a mixed-methods design to explore its central questions that are focused on examining the role and function of Muslim schools within the context of Muslim communities settled in the city of Birmingham. Birmingham is the second largest city in the UK and historically became the destination for a diverse range of Muslims migrants who originated from different parts of the Muslim world, while there is a clear diversity amongst the Muslim population in Birmingham, just like the rest of the UK, due to a variety of historical reasons, the majority of UK Muslims are originated from the Indian sub-continent. Largely because of the early British multi-cultural social policy most of the early migrants, initially had the legal status of being guest workers, were eventually granted citizenship rights. One of the main consequences of this policy meant that families and children of migrants could join them in the UK. The families got reunited, and after two decades of

experience within the state school system; the educational challenges of Muslims living in a largely secular, multicultural and multi-faith British society arose. As a result, Muslims initially have set up Islamic centres and converted small houses into Mosque buildings which included provisions of teaching Islam to their children (*madrassa*) to respond to the religious needs of their children.

However, as discussed in the previous chapters, parents often felt that their children were not getting proper Islamic Education by attending the mainstream schools. Parents appeared to be concerned about the secular character of mainstream education. Because faith-based education has been a well-established feature of multicultural British educational system, Muslims, especially after 1980, also began to establish schools with explicit Islamic ethos. The community, after a long and complicated application process, has demanded that the existing state support to the Christian and Jewish schools should also be extended to Muslim schools. As a result, gradually the state-supported Muslim faith-based schooling, both at the primary and secondary schooling level began to emerge.

The Islamic schooling, mainly due to the dramatic political challenges since 9/11, has been a subject of intense debate and discussion. At the international level, 'madrassa' education is often linked to training for terrorism (Malik, 2008). Within the UK context, the main concern has been that the Muslim faith-based schools cause segregation of the Muslim communities within the wider secular and Multicultural educational British society. The sociological concepts of social integration and isolation are very contentious and the role of education particularly Muslim schooling has been widely debated (Miah, 2015). It is only after the infamous event of the Trojan Horse enquiry, specific issues related to the Islamic ethos of the schools have begun to be problematised too. However, it appears that the role of Islamic education provision

within Muslim faith-based schooling, in particular, has not been properly examined or explored in depth.

This study sets out to explore diverse forms of Islamic schooling within the context of Birmingham Muslim communities with specific reference to exploring the extent to which the parental expectations have been met by these schools. In other words, the study aims to explore how these schools interpret Islamic education and shape their schooling experience with Islamic educational values. The inquiry ultimately aims to contribute to the development of a more competent Islamic education provision that is capable of responding to the parental expectations as well as meeting the educational and religious needs of the British Muslim children. Since the study used a mixed methods research design, it has generated both qualitative and quantitative types of data. The methodology chapter discussed in detail the process of data collection and analysis. According to this mixed-methods design, the data analysis starts by presenting the quantitative data that explores the overall picture of Muslim schooling within the selected case city, parental expectations and the views of the teachers and school managers concerning the value and quality of Islamic schooling offered to their children.

The researcher began by constructing the questionnaire ensuring that it was comprehensive and easy to understand as well as applicable to each participant; parents, students and teachers. A pilot study was then performed, the purpose of the small scale introductory study was to evaluate the feasibility, completion time and overall comprehensiveness of the questionnaire in an attempt to predict an appropriate sample size and to identify any ways the researcher could improve on the study design prior to the full-scale questionnaire being sent to the wider cross-section of the Muslim community in Birmingham. Upon completion and evaluation of the questionnaires, a sample of each questionnaire was sent to a maximum

number of Muslims schools and community centres within the Birmingham region containing a prepaid envelope to return the research questionnaire upon completion. The goal of the research was to ensure a large number of participants took part in the process in order to gain a wide variety of views. Telephone calls were made along with email reminders sent to encourage completion of questionnaires. The researcher also attended different Muslim schools and community programmes to handout the questionnaires to be completed while people waited for the programme to begin. In total 202 questionnaires were collected; 133 parents, 36 students and 33 teachers and governors. The findings, as will be presented below, were analysed using the SPSS software in order to gain a statistical understanding of participant views on Muslims schools. This instrument was beneficial as it produced quintessence results that enabled the researcher to gain an overall understating of the participants' views about the role of Muslim faith-based schools in meeting the religious, cultural and educational needs of Muslim children.

The study also used semi-structured interviews and group discussions in order to explore in-depth, the key research questions through discerning the participants' views, perception and perspectives on some elevated contentious and sensitive issues related to the main study problematic area. This basic research framework has been supplemented with additional data collection instruments such as structured and unstructured observation and a research diary that has been kept by the researcher while conducting the field work as well as covering the duration of the study. The diary book recorded some important issues concerning many aspects of the research.

The quantitative data was analysed by using the SPSS statistically package programme. This chapter will present first, the descriptive statistics about the study participants' key

characteristics (parents) followed by the inferential data analysis which enables to look closely at the patterns of parents' responses to the questionnaire items. The analysis will be presented through tables, graphs and figures. The following topic concerned will present the qualitative data analysis.

6.2. Main characteristics of the study sample: descriptive analysis

The study sample consisted of 135 Muslim parents who were based in Birmingham and were selected to take part in this study through convenience method of sampling. As the bar chart below demonstrates, there were almost equal numbers of both genders but the percentage of female participants was slightly higher (50.1%).

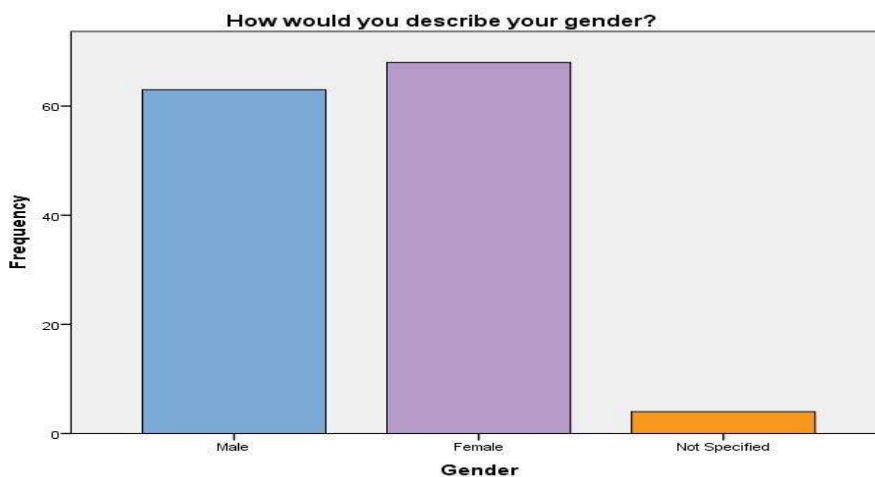


Figure 6.2 1 Gender frequency in the study sample

There were varied age groups within the study sample. However, the majority of participants fell into two main categories: 30-40 and 41-60. The rest of the age categories and their percentages are presented in the pie chart below.

Pie chart 6.2.2: Age distribution within the study sample.

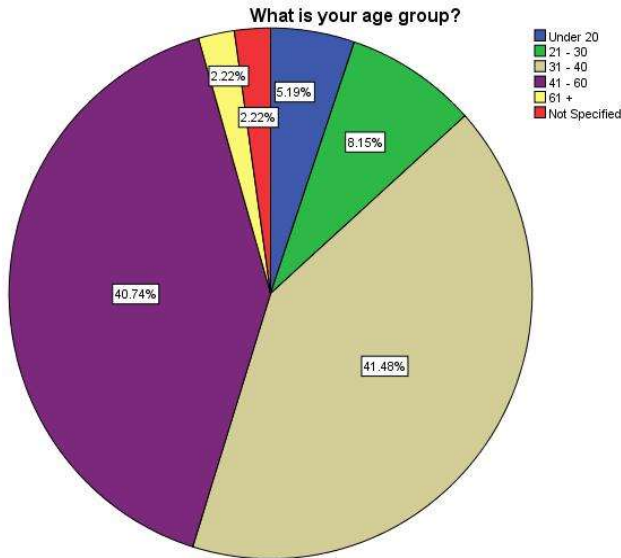


Figure 6.2.2 Age distribution within the study sample

6.3. Exploring parental views concerning Muslim schools

6.3.1 Participants' country of origin

As discussed in detail in the previous chapters, the majority of Muslims in Britain have Indian sub-continent cultural and ethnic heritage. The Muslim population in Birmingham displays the same overall features. As shown in the below, pie chart 6.2 3, more than half of the study participants (60%) come from Asian backgrounds specifically coming from Mirpuri, Kashmiri and Pakistani backgrounds. While the percentage of Muslims originated in India was just above 3%, the second largest percentage was those who came from Somalia (almost 16%). This statistics clearly shows the impact of recent migration trends that are triggered by the continuing conflict in different parts of the Muslim world. The rather higher 8% of the participants appeared to have not specified their ethnic origins. This rather high percentage

could be a reflection of the part of new Muslim migration to Britain that triggered by the war in Somalia, Iraq (2003-2011), mainly ethnic background Kurds who settled in the UK and in the West Midlands.

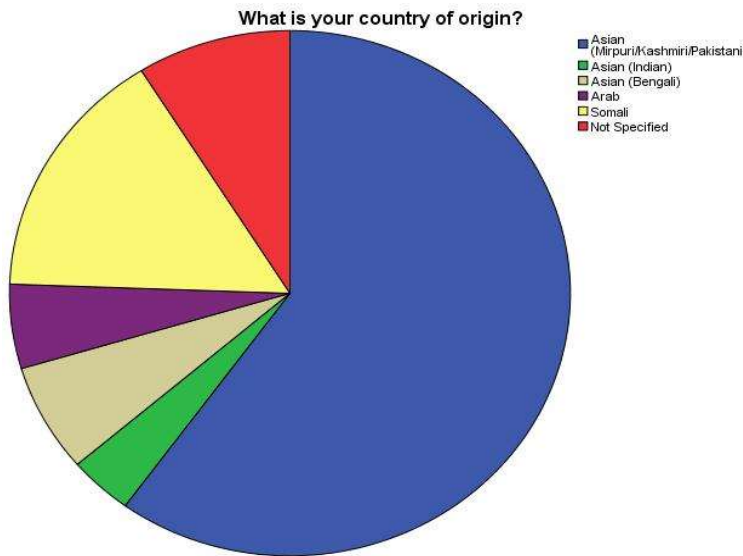


Figure 6.2 3 Participants' country of origin

6.3.2 Reasons and motives behind Muslim schools' establishment

Data analysis suggests that almost 90% of the parents preferred sending their children to Muslim schools. According to the figure 6.2 5 parents (p.155) suggested diverse reasons behind their choice of sending their children to Islamic schools.

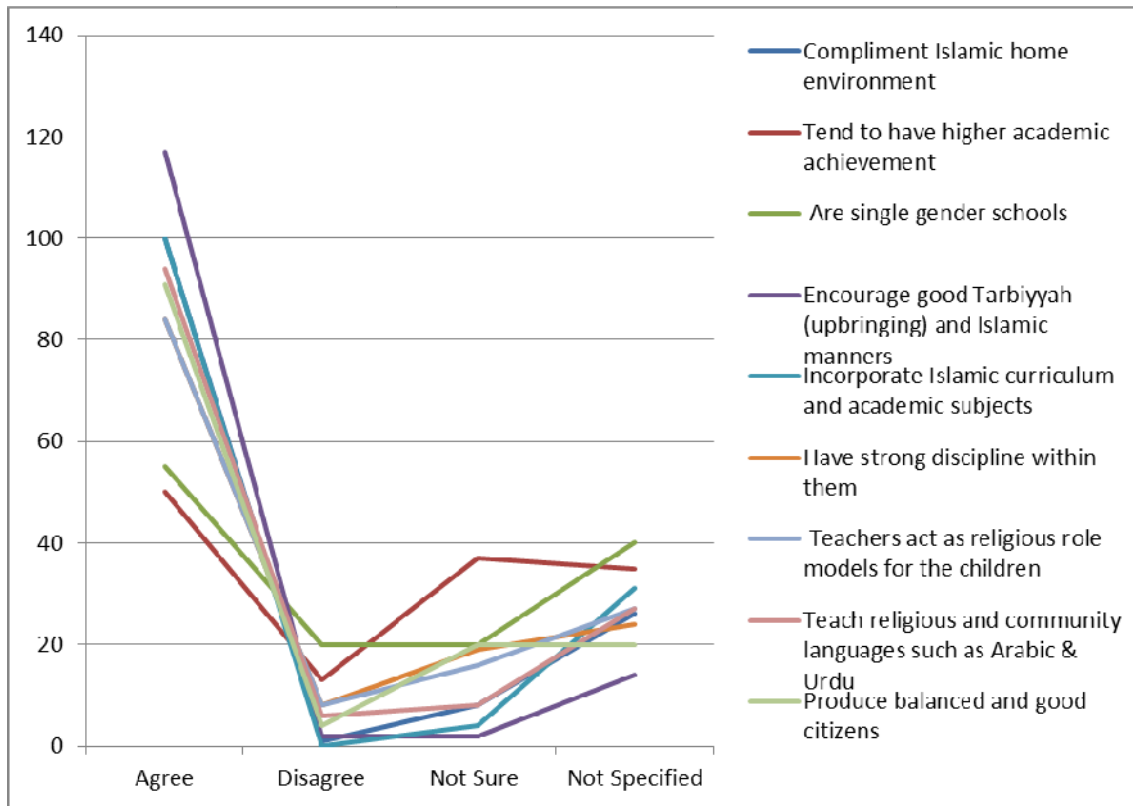


Figure 6.2.4 Reasons behind the parental choice of sending their children to Muslim schools

In many ways, the data displayed in the above figure shows both reasons behind parents' choice of Muslim schools and the key parental expectations from the Muslim schools. In other words, parents have a high degree of trust that Muslim schools will deliver their specific educational and religious expectations. This seems to be acting as a strong motive of Muslim parents to send their children to Muslim schools.

According to the findings displayed in the above figure, parents expect that Muslim schools will have a strong Islamic Education provision that will enable their children to have a competent Islamic literacy, Islamic faith development and the school will follow an integrated curriculum where both Islamic and mainstream subjects combined to offer an academically high achieving school. Similarly, the parents have specific expectations from the Muslim teachers who, they think, would act as religious role models for their children. In addition, parents expect the

schools to be teaching Arabic and Urdu or other community languages as these languages symbolise the religious and cultural heritage of the community. Finally, parents hope that the Muslim schools will actively help their children to become balanced and good citizens. It must be stressed that the percentage of those who expressed these expectations in particular, compared to other expectations, is slightly lower.

Despite all of these high expectations, parents showed awareness that a high number of Muslim parents do not send their children to the faith-based Islamic schools. Just about half of the study participants suggested the parents simply cannot afford to pay high tuition fees and similarly, lack of availability of Muslim schools in the locality and particularly a lack of modern facilities in these schools are suggested to be wider reasons as to why some parents do not send their children to Muslim schools. Most interestingly, a significant percentage of participants (around 40%) thought some parents have the fear that Muslim schools will not help their children to integrate into the wider society. This is a significant finding that has been explored further during the interviews with parents.

Despite the above reservations that some Muslim parents had about the Muslim schools, the majority of parents reported that they sent their children to these schools. However, when parents were asked whether it was the right decision to send their children to the full-time Muslim schools, only 75% of them thought that it was the right decision. On the other hand, the combined percentage of those who were unsure whether it was the right decision to send their children to Muslim faith-based schools were almost 13%. This percentage is, although not very high, yet, is still significant as it highlights that a considerable number of parents felt disappointed with their decision of sending their children to Muslim faith-based schools.

Similarly, the data analysis suggests that Muslim faith-based schools/Muslim schools appear not to be popular with participants' wider family members. While around 64% of the study sample suggested that their wider family members do not send their children to Muslim schools, around 35% of the parents said that their wider family members sent their children to Muslim schools.

6.3.3 Parental views towards mainstream schooling

The figure 6.2 5 (p.174) which demonstrates parents' views on the benefits and value of mainstream education for their children is interestingly varied. Around 40% disagrees with the possibility that their children could have achieved better education by attending the mainstream schooling. However, more significantly the combined percentage of those who are not sure and the ones who did not think that their children would have got a better education by attending the mainstream schooling is almost half of the total sample.

Bar chart: Parents' views about the value of mainstream schooling

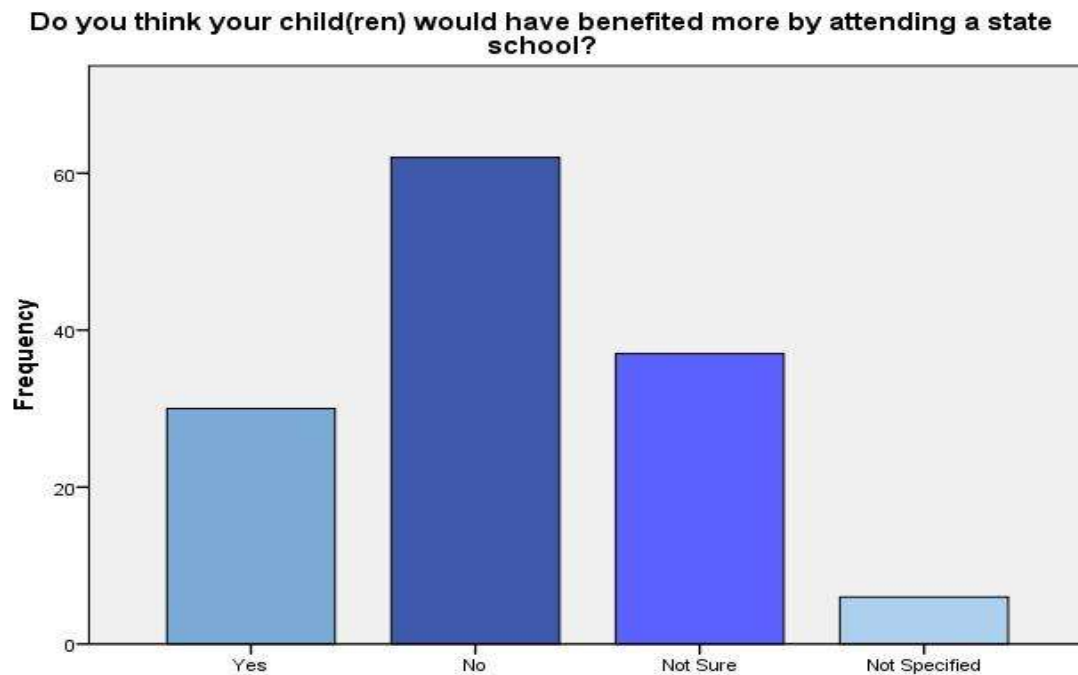


Figure 6.2 5 Parents views about the value of mainstream schooling

Despite the fact that the majority of the study participants 72% would appear to recommend Muslim schooling to other Muslim parents, this is clearly one of the most surprising findings of the data analysis. This result suggests that potentially almost half of the study participants had a reservation in sending their children to Muslim schools. Furthermore, according to the data displayed in the bar chart in 6.2 6 (p.156) almost half participants appear to have sent some of their children to the mainstream schools. The children either are attending the mainstream schools or have attended these schools in the past. This important point was followed up during the interviews with the parents that would be presented in the chapter on qualitative data analysis.

Bar chart : Experience of parents in sending their children to the mainstream schools.

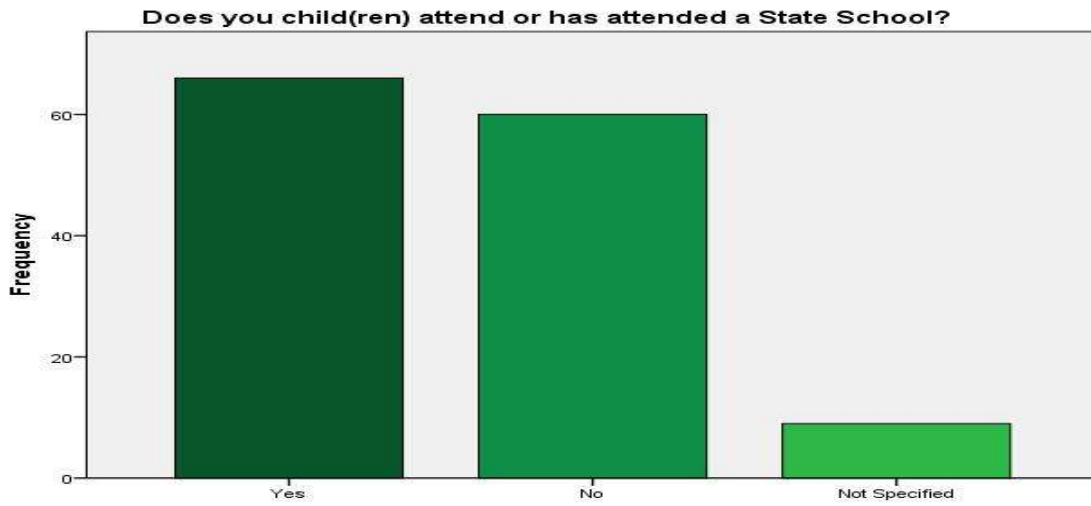


Figure 6.2 6 Experience of parents in sending their children to the mainstream

However, it looks like parents did feel that due to secular nature of mainstream schooling, it is difficult to achieve teaching and learning of Islamic values properly. The bar chart 6.2 7 (p.176) offers a summary of the overall views of the Muslim parents regarding the main reason behind the establishment of Muslim faith-based schools.

70% of the participants felt that the mainstream schools did not present Islamic values and Islamic ethics to the students. Clearly, modern schooling is not meant to promote any particular religious view or values but prepare the students to live in a multicultural and largely secular society. While Muslim parents appreciate this fact i.e. they expect that mainstream schools should keep a broadly balanced study of different cultural and religious values, it seems they feel that the secular character of education also has challenges. Therefore, it appears some of them chose to send their children to a form of schooling that is guided by a clear Islamic educational mission and ethos.

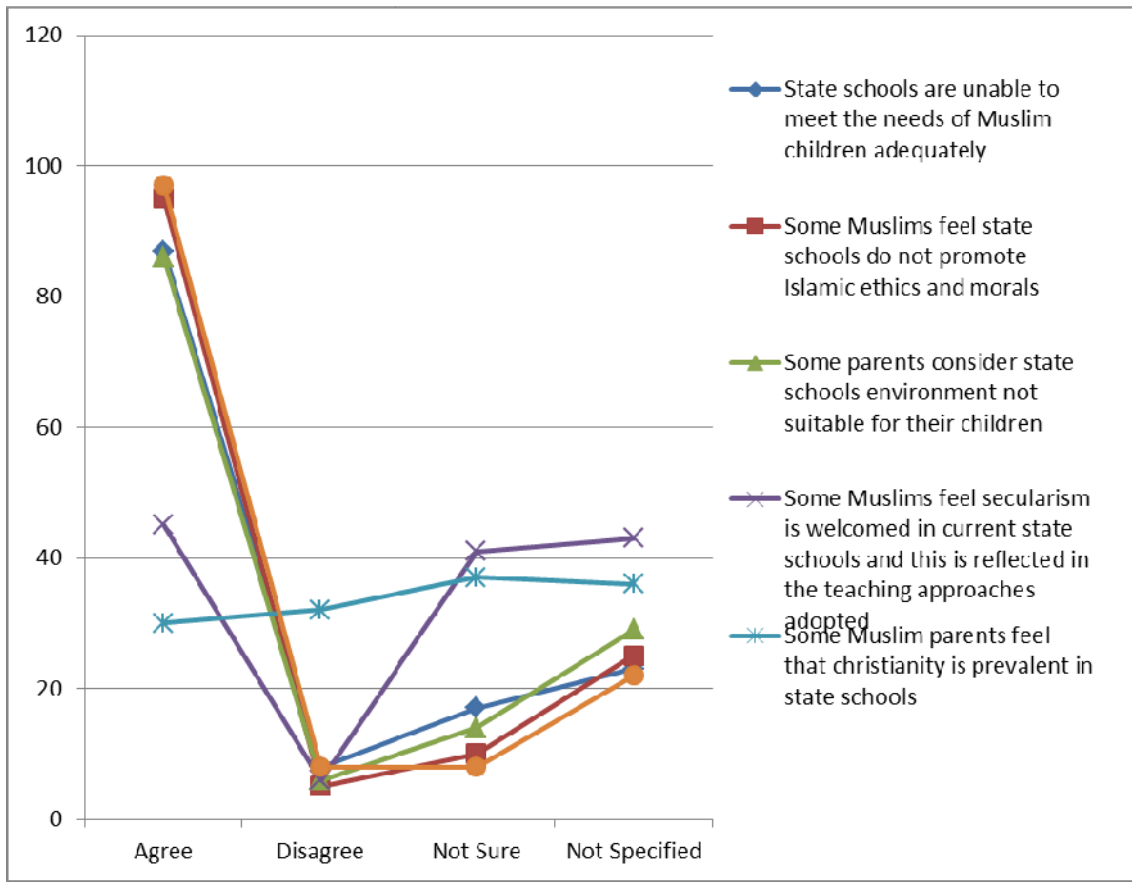


Figure 6.2 7 Parents' views on mainstream schools and faith-based Islamic schooling

6.3.4 Parental view on single sex and mixed-gender schooling

The figure below (page 158) demonstrates the data analysis further revealed that majority of parents preferred mixed-gender schooling for their children and only a small percentage preferred their children to be attending the residential boarding schools.

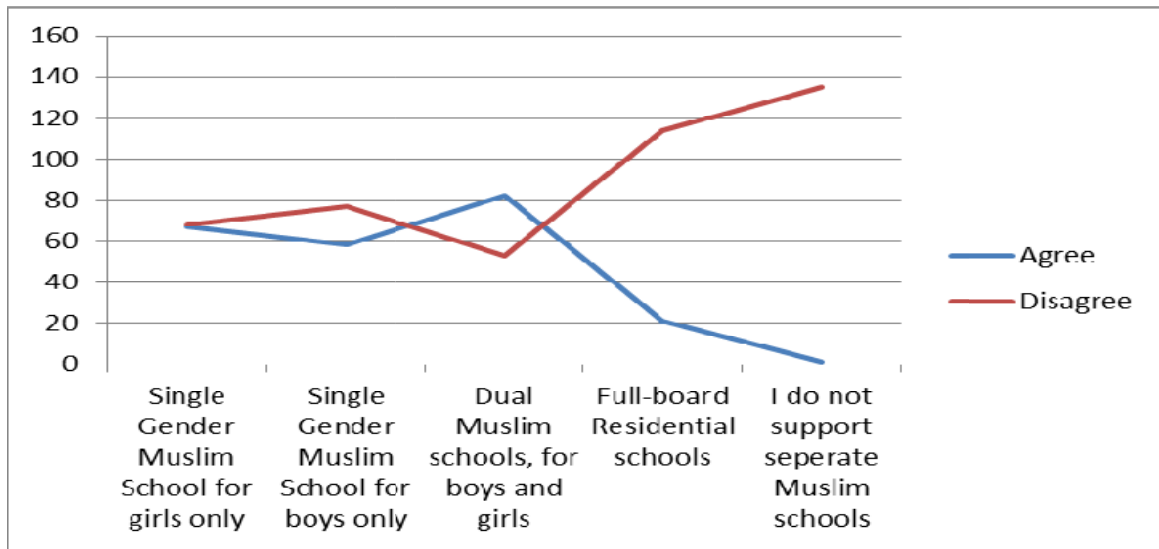


Figure 6.2.8 Parental view on single sex and mixed gender schooling

It is quite interesting to observe that almost half of the study participants 63% endorsed the segregated but mixed gender Muslims faith-based schools while the rest of the study sample preferred the separate schooling provision for boys and girls. This is unexpected findings as it is often assumed that majority of Muslims would support gender separation. Clearly, the empirical findings of this study challenge this widely taken for granted assumption.

6.3.5 Muslim schools and integration or isolation of Muslim children in multicultural

British society

In contrast to the varied views of the participants regarding the value of mainstream schooling, the data analysis revealed a strong parental support for Muslim faith-based schools to enable their children to be integrated into the wider society. As the data displayed in the following bar chart shows (Bar charts 6.2.9), the majority of Muslim parents felt that they had the confidence that their children would be able to integrate into the wider British society as this is one of the key educational aims of the Muslim faith-based schools. Parents' perception of social integration, their positive attitudes towards living with people of other faiths and no faith,

together with their concerns over the challenges of living in a multicultural society will be further explored while presenting the qualitative data analysis in the next chapter.

6.3.6 Parents' view on integration to the wider society

Bar chart Parents' view on integration to the wider society

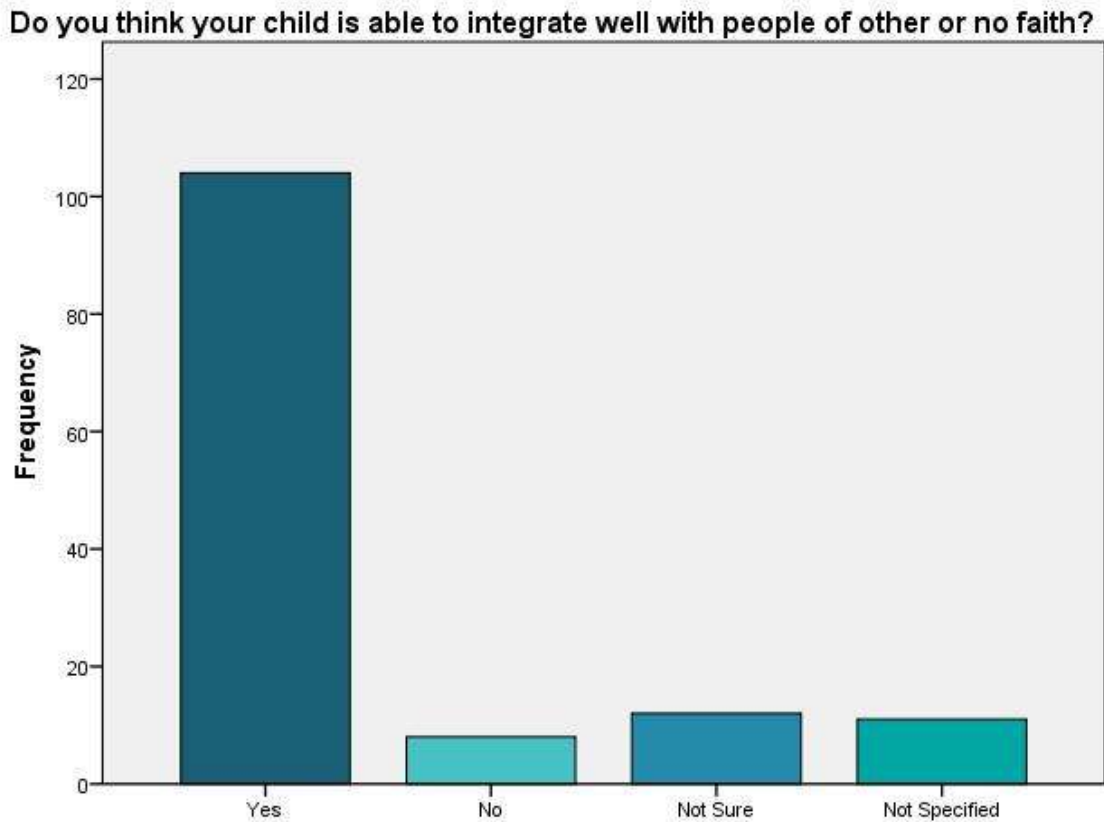


Figure 6.2.9 Parents' view on integration to the wider society

6.3.7 Expectation of parents from Muslim schools

The parents who participated in the study were asked whether their children should only be taught about Islam and Islam-related subjects or a combination of both Islamic and secular subjects should constitute the curriculum of the Muslim faith-based schools. The aim behind this question was to find out parents' views on the importance of secular aspects of the curriculum within the context of Islamic schooling.

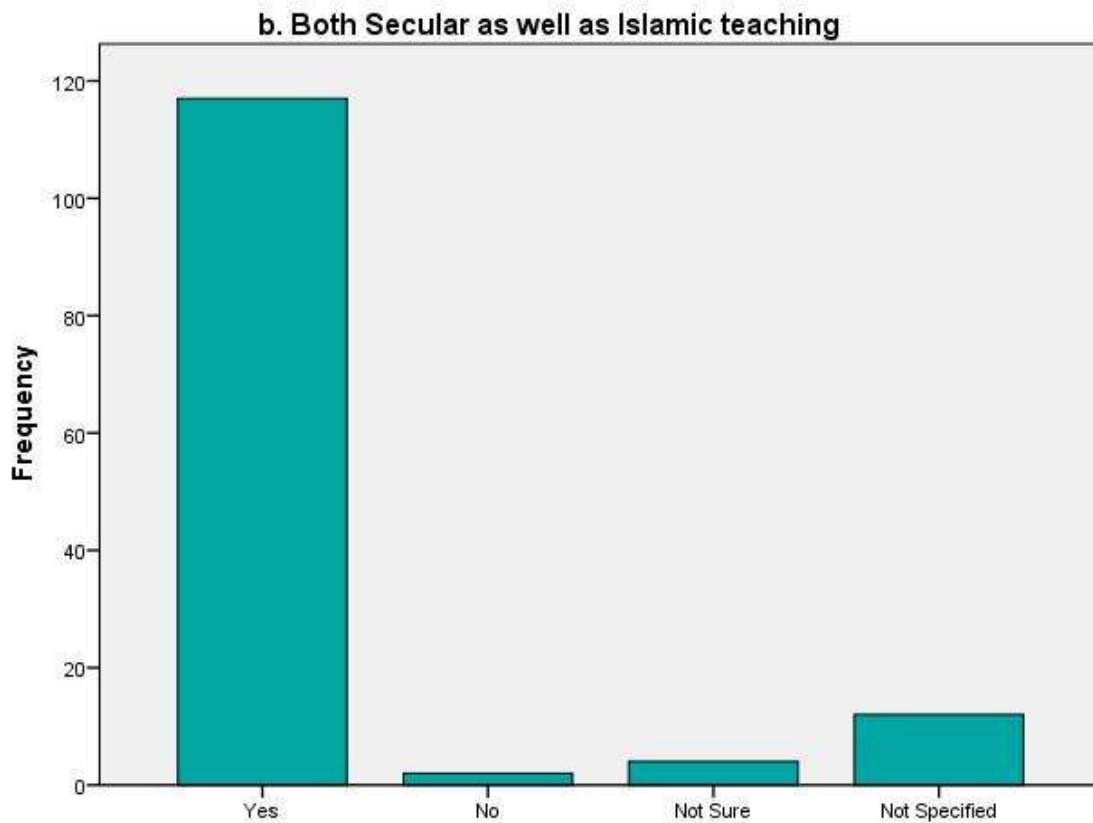


Figure 6.2 10 Parents' expectations regarding the curriculum content of the curriculum

The data analysis displayed in the bar chart above (6.3 10), as well as the figure below (6.3 11 page 180 , revealed that majority of parents (86%) wanted their children to be taught both Islamic and secular subjects. Only about 30% of parents felt that their children should be learning about Islam and Muslims. This interesting finding is significant as it shows that the

majority of parents did not want to opt for a purely religious education but thought that their children will be better with a more comprehensive and balanced curriculum that contains modern known as secular subjects.

6.3.8. What do Muslim parents expect their children to be learning at school?

Traditionally, one of the main reasons for Muslim parents to send their children to Muslim faith-based schools has been about their concern over a lack of proper Islamic Education and fear of secular values shaping the identity of their children. It is interesting to note that the current study did not find the teaching of Christianity to be a serious problem for Muslim parents as more than half of the participants felt that Christianity is not a prevalent feature of modern schooling in Britain. However, it must be stressed that the survey did not ask the parents about their views of Religious Education or teaching of Islam in general within the wider school curriculum. This significant finding will be further explored in the discussion of the findings section of the next chapter.

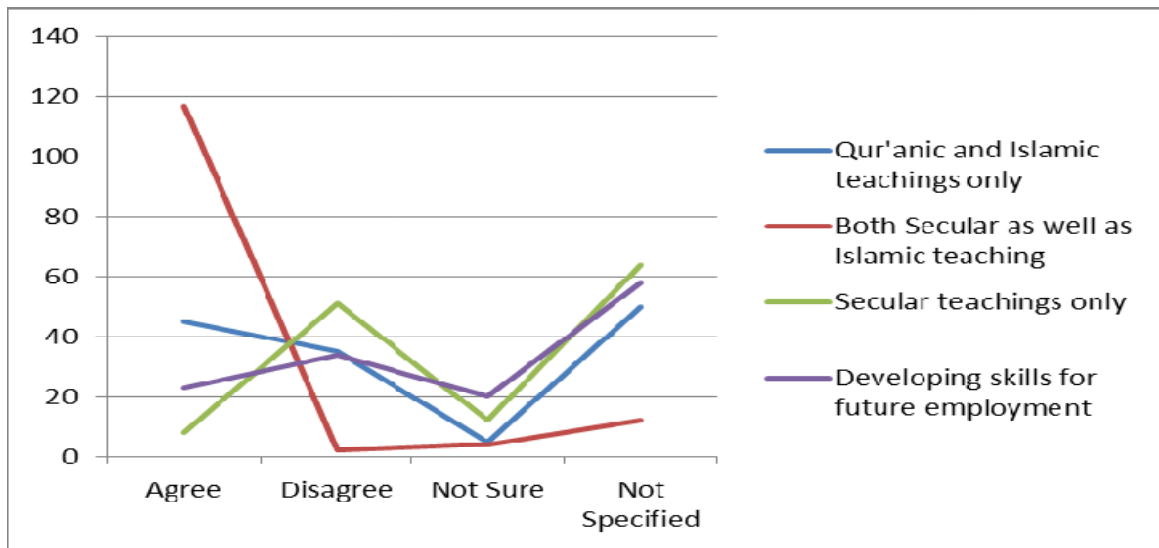


Figure 6.2 11 *What do Muslim parents expect their children to be learning at school?*

As such the data displayed in the figure 6.3.11 reveals that majority of the parents had high expectations for the actual school curriculum which they thought should prepare children to

lead prosperous lives in this world (i.e. preparing them for a future career) and the Hereafter (distinct religious expectation) including a peaceful co-existence with other communities in the society (a distinct social and community cohesion related expectation). This finding suggests that the curriculum should integrate the secular and religious subjects so that Muslim children could get a holistic education, capable of responding to the social, personal, religious and spiritual needs of Muslim children growing within the challenging context of a multicultural and secular society.

The survey specifically asked parents to express their views regarding the quality of Islamic Education provision offered by the Muslim schools. The majority of parents expected that the curriculum in these schools should be comprehensive in integrating Islamic and secular subjects but most crucially, they argued, that it should prepare children to live confidently in a largely secular multi-cultural society. The participants thought that the schools should incorporate Islamic principles in the curriculum by including the study of Muslim festivals, Islamic teachings, the life of the prophets including the life of the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and actively encouraging children to observe the fundamental Islamic religious practices such as prayer and the wider Muslim social and educational teachings and values. Similarly, the parents felt that the schools need to recruit Muslim teachers so that the children could have good Muslim role models in the schools. This, they suggested, would also help 'Islamise' the curriculum and the wider educational culture in the schools.

The last point seemed interesting as the meaning of the 'Islamisation' of the curriculum will later be explored in depth while presenting the qualitative data analysis. The question of Islamising the curriculum and the teaching methods is a complex issue that requires a deeper level of analysis and discussion. It should be stressed that in addition to the parental views, the

schools' interpretation and implementation of the Islamic education provision was further explored through actual visits to schools during which teachers, head teachers, managers and students views on the issues have all been explored. As such, having diverse data sets related to the topic has enabled a critical comparison of views on Islamic education from the perspectives of several key stakeholders. The discussion of the findings chapter will further analyse this crucial aspect of the data analysis.

6.3.9 Parents and the academic achievements of the schools

In addition to the parental expectations regarding the Islamic education provision of the schools, the study participants were also asked whether they were satisfied with the general academic achievements and standards of these schools. The data analysis displayed in the figure below 6.3.i shows surprisingly rather varied parental responses on this question. It is significant to note that just above 40% expressed satisfaction with the academic performance of these schools. About 60% of participants thought that Muslim schools need to do more hard work to produce a better academic performance. The cumulative percentage of those who 'disagreed and unsure' about whether the schools displayed good academic standards was 63% which clearly indicates how a majority of parents actually seemed to be concerned about the overall academic achievement of Muslim schools. It is also important to note that only 25% of participants felt that academic achievement of Muslim Schools was better than the mainstream schools which in turn meant that majority of the parents thought that Muslim schools, compared to mainstream schools, were academically less performing. This is a very significant finding that potentially indicates that parents' expectation of the academic standards and achievement in these schools were not met.

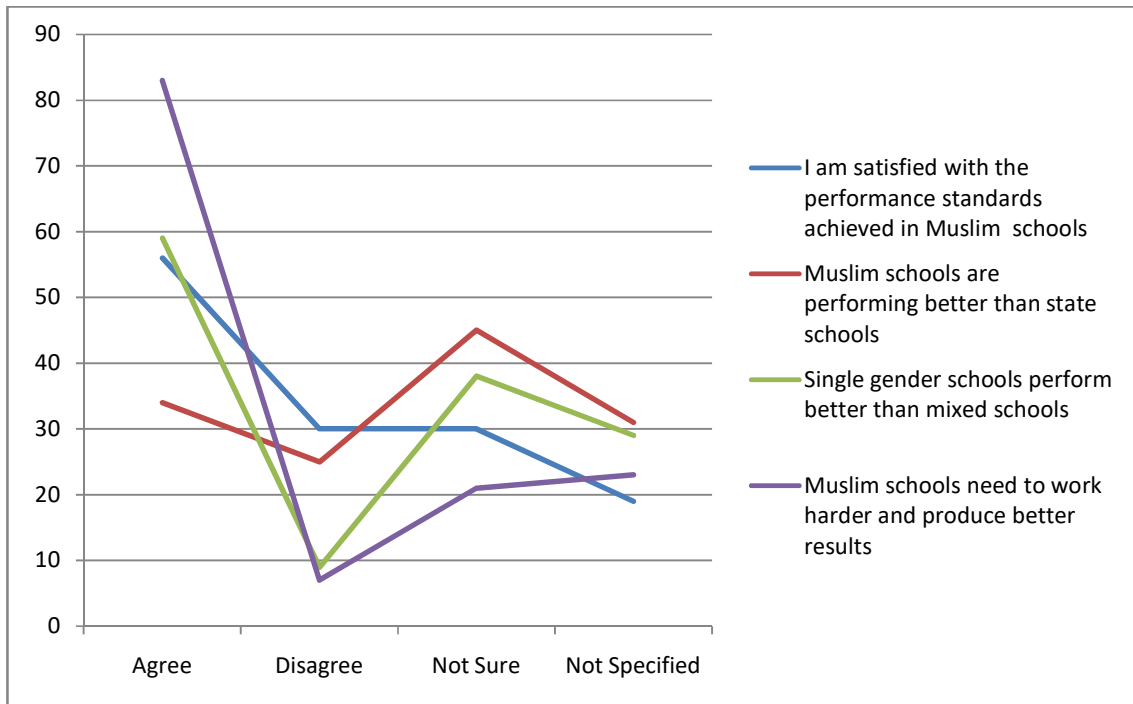


Figure 6.2 12 Parental views about the academic standards of Muslims Schools

On the other hand, according to the data displayed in the above figure 6.2 12, a majority of the parents (around 60%) thought that better parental involvement, strong religious or community vision and presence of good role models in the Muslim schools had positively influenced schools’ academic performance. However, as mentioned above, this does not indicate an overall complete satisfaction with schools academic achievement. A majority of parents (over 80%) thought that the schools need to do more to have better academic results.

As noted above, another significant area of parental expectations was the shared view that Muslim faith-based schools should effectively prepare their children to be able to integrate themselves into the wide British society. The question of whether Muslim faith-based schools cause integration or isolation of Muslim communities in the wider British multicultural and secular society has always been controversial and attracted a wider public debate. As reported

above, a majority of participants expressed the view that Muslim faith-based schools will and should enable Muslim children to integrate themselves into the wider British societies.

According to the data displayed in the bar chart below (figure 6.2 13) more than 65% of the participants thought that Muslim faith-based schools should achieve this key social and cultural expectation by actively encouraging pupils to visit mainstream schools and by arranging educational trips to museums, cultural centres and by joining sports events with other mainstream schools. This further includes Muslim faith-based schools actively organising visits and trips to culturally and religiously significant places in their city. Such cultural and religious encounters are suggested to be offering opportunities for Muslim students to meet children of different cultural and religious backgrounds, thus enabling them to develop intercultural and interreligious competence and skills to be in a constant dialogue with wider society. In addition, the data analysis revealed that parents were overwhelmingly in favour of Muslim schools to recruit non-Muslim teachers so that the children are not schooled in a mono-cultural educational setting. However, despite this flagrant endorsement of intercultural and interreligious educational expectation, parents did seem to be feeling the need that Muslim faith-based schools actually need to recruit teachers of other faiths as part of their wider ethos and commitment to the values of multicultural and multi-faith education. However, as will be discussed in the qualitative data analysis section of the forthcoming chapter, parents had rather mixed attitudes towards the subject of RE where children are introduced to more than one religion through adopting a non-confessional teaching approach. It appeared that majority of parents thought that the teaching of religion and religious subjects should be taught by Muslim teachers. They were also appeared to be in favour of adopting a broad Islamic theological framework while teaching other religions.

The survey has also asked parents whether they expected that the Muslim faith-based schools would actively help prevent both inter and intra-faith divisions such as sectarianism. As the data displayed in the below figure (Figure 6.3.j) suggests, a majority of parents (almost 70%) felt that Muslim faith-based schools neither promote religious prejudice against non-Muslims nor promote intra religious sectarianism.

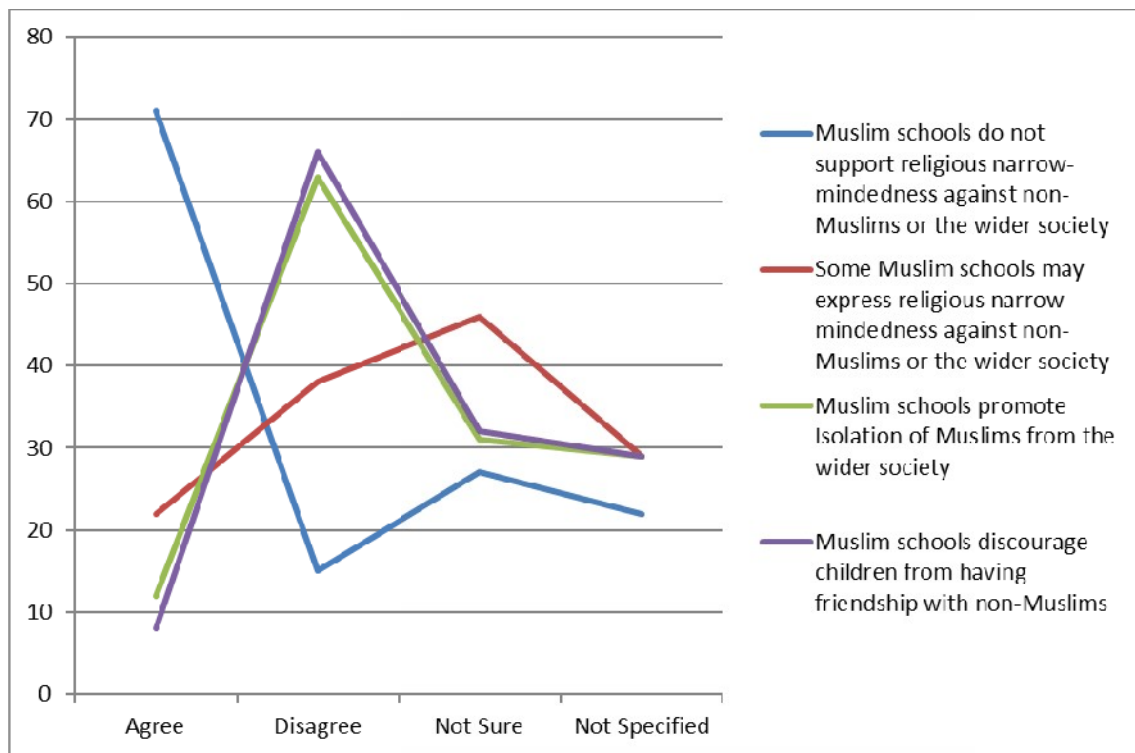


Figure 6.2 13 *Parental views about whether or not Muslim schools promote intra-religious sectarianism and prejudice against non-Muslims*

In other words, the data displayed in the above figure shows that the percentage of those who thought that some Muslim faith-based schools might show prejudice towards non-Muslims was quite low (Just around 16 %). Similarly, the study participants overwhelmingly disagreed with

the statement suggestion that Muslim faith-based schools promote isolation or discourage children from having non-Muslim friends.

In terms of intercommunity tensions and divisions, the majority of parents (more than half of the study participants) thought that Muslim faith-based schools did not promote 'religious narrow-mindedness'. Only about 16% of them thought that some Muslim faith-based schools might promote negative attitudes towards some of the sects observed among contemporary Muslims. Similarly, only 18% of the total population felt that some Muslims might promote religious sectarianism. Overall, parents felt that faith-based Islamic schooling does not cause segregation of Muslim children from the wider society.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the main survey conducted to explore the views and perceptions of Muslim parents who sent their children to diverse forms of Islamic schooling in the city of Birmingham. The descriptive statistical analysis revealed that there were equal numbers of male and female participants who came from similar socio-economic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Through the application of inferential data analysis procedures, the main bulk of the data was explored. The overall quantitative data analysis carried by following a thematic presentation style that focused on exploring reasons behind parents' choice of choosing different types of Islamic schooling for their children and their views concerning the value of Islamic schooling and the wider mainstream schooling.

The analysis clearly suggested that, overall, parents held positive views of the Muslim faith-based schools but at the same time had high expectations about both the general academic achievement as well as the Islamic provision in these schools. In this regard, a majority of

parents shared the view that Muslim schools needed to adopt a more integrated approach to the curriculum striking a balance between Islamic and secular subjects. Parents overwhelmingly thought the Muslim faith-based schools did contribute to the social and cultural of integration of Muslim children into the wider multicultural and multi-faith society. Such Muslim schools, they argued, help maintain the social and community cohesion by promoting cultural integration through actively nurturing the positive appreciation and understanding of the religious and cultural diversity in their society. However, one of the significant findings of the survey analysis was the fact that some Muslim parents appeared to be ambiguous about the overall achievement of schools in meeting academic and Islamic religious, moral and spiritual needs of their children. These interesting findings, as well as several other important themes that emerged from the survey analysis, were discussed in-depth by the study participants through semi-structured interviews that also included a selected group of teachers, head teachers and the graduates of Muslim schools. The next chapter presents the key analysis of this significant qualitative data set.

CHAPTER SEVEN (Data Analysis: II)

**Exploring the Views of Parents, Teachers and Students
about Islamic Schooling:
*Results of the Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus
Group Discussions***

7.1 Introduction

The use of survey and questionnaire techniques exploring such complex set of issues that have been explored in this study shows limitations in that the participants cannot put forward their views more comprehensively. Therefore, the researcher conducted further semi-structured interviews as well as focus-group discussions with the study participants so that they could express their views in depth engaging with different aspects of the topic. The main parental expectations from the Muslim faith-based schools and the parental assessment regarding the adequacy of Islamic curriculum and the overall Islamic Education provision of Muslim faith-based schools constitute the main aspects of the interview content. Exploring parental motives for sending their children to Muslim faith-based schools as well as their expectations from the school and views on how the schools achieve their set general educational goals (school achievement) and specific vision of Islamic Education are all significant part of the key research problem of the study.

This chapter presents an analysis of the qualitative data that was gathered through semi-structured interviews with the study participants. The researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews with a selected group of parents and students attending Muslim faith-based schools. In addition, two focus group discussions were conducted with the graduates of Muslim schools to further elicit the feelings and views of students regarding their study experience in Muslim faith-based schools.

The chapter begins by presenting the results of the data analysis and the key findings revealed by the analysis of interviews conducted with the parents. The last section of this chapter will briefly summarise and epitomise the feelings, views and perception of teachers, head teachers and managers who run the Muslim faith-based schools about the key aspects of the parental

expectations from Muslim faith-based schools and how the Muslim schools attempt to address these expectations.

7.2 Re-iterating the basic qualitative data analysis framework of research design

The overall data collection and analysis procedures of the study were discussed in depth in the methodology chapter. However, in order to achieve coherence in the presentation of the data analysis chapters, there will be a brief mentioning of the overall procedures utilised in analysing the qualitative data. Scholars like Yin (1993), Glaser and Strauss (1967) are amongst others who support the notion that the main aim of the qualitative data analysis is not to generalise the findings. However, they argue that 'qualitative generalisations' reflecting the number of similar cases explored are possible. This further corresponds to the notions of '*thick description*', and the subjective inferences that can be analytically extracted from the observations or '*thin description*' originally suggested by Geertz, (1973).

The specific type of case study utilized to conduct the empirical exploration is a single case design that contains similar units-cases (participants and diverse schools within the research context- of analysis (Yin, 1993).

For this purpose, the case study sub-units are comprised of semi-structured interviews and five focus group discussions. The focus group interviews formulate an obvious approach in phenomenological research (Collis and Hussey, 2009) which were utilised to generate a rich amount of data from graduates of Muslim faith-based schools. Thus, the researcher was able to act as an observer and witness the open discussion taking place between the participants of

the study too. This aspect of the interviewing process greatly enhanced the data collection and analysis procedures.

Robson (2002, p.284) identifies the focus group interview technique to be '*efficient*', as the range of data is '*increased by collecting from several people at the same time*'; the group environment and dynamics aid the focus on the most pertinent issue and '*it is easy to assess the extent to which there is a constant and shared view.*' Therefore, the '*participants are empowered and able to make comments in their own words*', whilst those who are reluctant to be interviewed on their own can be encouraged to contribute. Furthermore, this methodological technique is also flexible and can be set up quickly and often the participants tend to enjoy the experience.

Although the focus group criteria fulfil the essential foundations required for an exploratory study, it does have a number of disadvantages that must be considered.

It is an approach that is extremely reliant upon the honesty and integrity of the researcher and the participants. Therefore, conclusions drawn from the focus group interviews could be tainted by an inconsiderate and unethical procedure. In addition, the 'observer effect' may tarnish the validity of the opinions provided by participants through interviews either individually or in a focus group environment. Therefore, the researcher aimed at safeguarding the process of open discussion by actively guiding the content and flow of the discussion.

The deductive approach utilised is based upon the two-stage 'data analysis' procedure as developed by Saunders et al (2009) and Miles & Huberman (1997) but has been modified for the purposes of this study. Thus, in the original conception, the recommended first stage is summarising the data and the second stage entails categorisation. However, the study has

reworked the process so that the first stage is categorisation and the second stage is summarising. The first stage entails the categorisation (grouping) of meanings; this, as explained in the methodology chapter, involves developing categories and associating specific bits of data to them as relationships.

7.3 Parental motives for choosing Muslim faith-based schools

The main qualitative data analysis procedures that were followed to analyse the data were discussed in the Methodology chapter. According to these procedures, the analysis of qualitative data revealed several important themes, sub-themes and patterns of ideas reflecting the views of the parents about the Islamic schooling and their assessment and expectations from these schools. Five parents, selected among those who have already completed the survey discussed in the previous chapter, also completed the semi-structured interviews to explore their views about the Muslim faith-based schooling in detail. The parents participated in the interviews voluntarily and as described in the previous chapter, came from similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The parents, through the medium of the interviews, discussed in detail their main motives and reasons for sending their children to Muslim faith-based schools.

As will be presented shortly, the analysis of five cases revealed that the study participants had quite similar views concerning a range of issues related to the Muslim faith-based schooling and their expectations of these schools in meeting the cultural, religious and educational needs of their children. This chapter will present a summary analysis of their views through several overarching themes and subthemes. Despite this observable commonality, participants' views showed a considerable diversity and difference on certain issues related to Muslim faith-based

schools. Due to confidentiality reasons and in order to ensure anonymity, participants were given pseudo names. Participants were also assured the right to withdrawal. However, there were no incidents of withdrawal.

All of the parents interviewed initially talked about the types of Muslim schools in their local areas and reasons behind their choices of Muslim schools for the education of their children. The analysis revealed that parents mostly chose to send their children to the Muslim faith-based schools because they were conveniently available within their locality and offered the choice of single-sex classrooms (gender segregation) which they thought was also among the key motives for choosing Muslim faith-based schools for the education of their children. However, all five participants clearly mentioned the religious motives behind their choice of sending their children to Muslim faith-based schools. They all expected that their children will learn about their faith and most importantly develop Islamic identities by attending Muslim faith-based schools. In other words, the school is a place to facilitate Islamic nurture and enable community's cultural values and practices to be communicated to Muslim children.

The data analysis revealed that parents were on the whole ambivalent about sending their children to the mainstream schools mainly because of the secular character of the educational system in Britain. Most of them expressed concerns over the aims of secular education that they thought went against the ethos of Islamic Education. In addition, parents clearly expressed that the mainstream education offered adequate provision on generic subjects thus enabling children to gain a competent general education. However, the secular character of mainstream education, they pointed out, did not enable their children to gain adequate Islamic literacy and the kind of religious and moral values that they expected to see nurtured among their children.

Fifty-five year old Ahmed comes from Pakistani-Mirpuri ethnic heritage and is the father of 4 children, 2 of which attended an Islamic school. His other two children attended mainstream schools. Ahmed also had relatives and friends whose children attended Muslim schools.

Ahmed was aware of different types of Muslim faith-based schooling and said that when his first children were at the school age, there were no full-time Muslim residential boarding schools in the community where he lived and therefore he sent his children to the normal daytime independent Muslims faith-based schools.

Ahmed indicated that he felt single- sex Muslim schools were more effective and desirable than mixed gender schools but he quickly pointed out that for practical reasons i.e. dropping and collecting kids from the school, he would not mind the mixed gender schools.

Ahmed, like, rest of the interview participants, strongly supported Muslim schools but reflecting the view of the study participants said that due to increasing fees he could not send his other two children to Muslim schools.

While discussing why he preferred Muslim faith-based schools over State schools and the reasons behind the establishment of Muslim schools, Ahmed strongly suggested that due to religious concerns he chose to send his children to the Muslim faith-based school. He stressed that most Muslim parents felt that Muslim faith-based schools would provide better religious and spiritual environment (*Tarbiyah*) for their children to be brought up and educated. Ahmed said that:

“...The environment of these (Islamic) schools, as well as the opportunity of Muslim children leaning their faith and being encouraged to practise religious duties and wider moral values, were all the fundamental predominant reasons as to why these schools exist and why Muslim parents choose to send their children to them...”.

Ahmed, like, the other study participants, felt that mainstream schools were not able to offer such Islamic environment and educational ethos and therefore Muslim parents like him opted for the Muslim schools. Furthermore, Ahmed, like, several other parents, suggested that he decided to send his children to Islamic schools over the state schools because he felt that Muslim schools had more “discipline and religious nurture ethos” that the mainstream schools cannot provide. In addition, he said that teaching of religious subjects (Islamic Studies) religiously and culturally is important to Muslims. He further added, languages such as Arabic and Urdu were also significant motives behind his choice of sending his children to Muslim faith-based school. Although he agreed that Muslim schools were strict in terms of discipline, he believed that discipline is needed to ensure good *Akhlaq* (manners and values) and *Tarbiyyah* (good moral upbringing).

Similarly, Irfan who is fifty-five and both of his children and grandchildren attended the Muslim schools, expressed that because of the secular character of mainstream education, he preferred the Muslim faith-based schools:

“[... As Muslims, the main purpose, according to our religion in this world, is to prepare ourselves and our children for the Akhira (Hereafter). Therefore, religious and spiritual education is very important and as a result, we have Muslim schools. The wider society, despite the existence of Christian and Jewish people, is largely secular and this means the mainstream education does not care much about the religious or moral education of the children...”

Irfan’s perception of secular education seems rather unfavourable and implies a direct conflict between secular and Islamic approaches to education. According to the data analysis, most of the parents shared this dichotomy implying the incompatibility between the goals of western secular education and Islamic Education. It appears that the parents’ understanding of secular education was based on the general reaction observable in the Muslim world against the West reflecting the painful memories of Western colonial legacy. Modern Western education,

therefore, was associated with the enforced modernisation and Westernisation that, in their view, destroyed the indigenous Islamic education culture and its institutions.

It was interesting to see that some of the parents, due to the fact that they were living within the Western secular society had familiarity with the mainstream schools, did acknowledge that moral, spiritual development of children were also addressed by the mainstream schools. In fact, they appear to be aware that children in the mainstream schools had to study Religious Education which included the teaching of Islam too. However, most of the parents felt that Religious Education in mainstream schools was too generic and by law cannot offer religious nurture to a certain type of religious life and morality.

For example, Halim, a 45-year-old father of two, who sent his children to the local Muslim school, said that:

“...The state schools focus more on religion as a whole rather than going to specific religious practices in detail or nurturing morality of one religion and therefore I think that Muslim children do not get the chance of learning about their religion and spiritually in detail...”

Similarly, a young parent Aisha, who had one child attending a local Muslim faith-based school, pointed out that:

“Yes, mainstream schools do offer religious education and even moral and spiritual development which is part of school ethos. However, my child needs to be taught Islam in an environment that he will have the chance to practise it, such as praying and showing Islamic values (*tarbiya*) in his life....Muslim schools can offer this opportunity of religious nurture which cannot be achieved in the mainstream schools.”

Furthermore, some of the parents felt that most of the RE in the mainstream schools by introducing more than one religion often seemed to be confusing Muslim children and suggested children should be taught more than one religion(Multi-faith RE) at the secondary

school level onwards. For example, Khadija a second generation Muslim parent of Pakistani heritage who also had one child attending a Muslim school said that:

“...Please do not get me wrong. I am not against the teaching of religions. I myself attended mainstream schools and studied RE.. And I’d like my child to learn more than one religion. But I think that once my child has good knowledge and understanding of her religion (Islam) and developed good (Muslim) faith and then with this confidence, she can learn other religions...”

It appears that most of the parents did not object directly to the teaching of religions in the mainstream schools but simply felt that this was not enough as their children needed to be enabled to embody the values of their religion which they thought can satisfactorily be achieved only if they attended the Muslim schooling.

The analysis of the interviews revealed that three parents who appeared to be quite actively involved with the Muslim faith-based schools where their children attended, and were quick to point out that Muslim secondary schools did offer RE, when asked to provide further information about what their children learned and studied during the RE, it was clear that the study of other religions was based on a broader Islamic theological framework. In other words, RE in these schools appeared to be following an Islamic confessional approach as religions like Judaism and Christianity were studied from the theological perspectives of Islam. Aisha, who actively volunteered in her child’s school, summarised how RE classes were organised and taught:

“...It is not true that Muslim schools don’t teach other religions. They do teach Christianity and Judaism..and as you know we Muslims believe that God, since the creation of Adam, sent many prophets... So our religion tells us to study other religions.....”

However, when Aisha was asked about whether the Muslim children were taught about these religious traditions through studying their sacred texts and meeting with the members of these faith communities to explain their faith traditions, her response did not seem to be embracing the teaching of religious plurality at all:

“...well. For us our faith is everything... we are obliged to follow what our religion says and therefore we look at all of these faiths from the perspective of Islam...”

Clearly for Aisha, as a Muslim parent, studying Islam and what Islam says about other religions is the main concern. Therefore, it can be said that most of the parents seem to be happy with the Islamic Religious Education offered by the Muslim faith-based schools.

It must be stated that despite clear reservations about the secular education, most of the participants insisted that their children should be taught both secular and religious subjects. This strongly indicated that Muslim parents wanted their children to achieve good academic standards as well as exhibit high levels of moral and religious standards and character development.

7.4 Muslim schools and the concerns over integration and isolation

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed that most of the parents felt that Muslim schools (their curriculum and overall educational activities) did not push their children to isolate themselves from the wider society. However, they have acknowledged that having non-Muslim friends could cause concerns and that some Muslim children may not feel as part

of the wider society and agreed to some extent that their children were disadvantaged in developing a sense of belonging to the wider society.

When discussing whether the gradual increase of Muslim faith-based schools promote isolation of Muslim children from the wider society. The participants disagreed and stated that 'They (children) have neighbours who are white people'. This indicates that although during their school life they predominately come into contact with Muslims they are surrounded by people from different ethnicities and faiths. For example, Ahmed disagrees with the view that Muslim schools promote isolation of different groups based on religion or ethnicity.

"It doesn't have to be like that". He went on to mention although his daughter studied at an Islamic school, she has no problems with integration into the wider society and she even furthered her education by attending college and university which was largely diverse, he was adamant his daughter is not lacking in her ability to communicate effectively with other members of society.

Ahmed agrees that children are taught within Muslim faith-based schools how to promote cohesion and to live together within the wider society. He believes Muslims schools do not discourage children to become friends with non-Muslims but rather, "...be friends with good people". He claims Islamic schools are open-minded about other religions and sects within Islam and disagrees with the view that Islamic schools are narrow-minded when it comes to the other sects within Islam, stating, "They still Muslim". According to Ahmed, Muslim faith-based schools do not only focus on the Islamic curriculum but there is a balance between Islamic and national curriculum.

Parents overwhelmingly felt that there was a clear prejudice against Muslim faith-based schools in the UK as part of the wider Islamophobic attitude towards Islam and Muslims.

Khatija's reflection below appears to be shared by the rest of the parents interviewed:

"..You know one has to think as to why it took so long for Muslim schools to be acknowledged to become eligible for local government funding.. I know this because my local school was the first secondary Muslim school that got the funding. And I was there it took a decade to convince the officials.... and now after 9/11 and 7/7 and the whole suspicion in the media that Muslims are terrorist.... attitude these (Muslim) schools are once more under the radar and control....".

Despite this fear that the media and politicians appear to be scaremongering against Muslims and Muslim faith-based schools, it was interesting to note that some of the participants were aware of the possible negative impact of sectarianism within the Muslim community and its wider implications for the Islamic Education provision in the Muslim schools. For example, Ahmed observed that:

"...I think that Muslim schools should avoid operating on sectarian lines such as Barelwi, Deobandi or Shia and Sunni. They must be proper schools and should not promote the agenda of these different sects and schools of thought.. . I'm a British Shia or Sunni Muslim but I believe the school must promote a sense of being British Muslim...."

Ahmed's caution is interesting as it indicates that Muslim schools could easily become part of the intra-community tensions by promoting certain interpretations of Islam and this has a clearly negative impact on students' sense of identity and belonging within the context British society. As such, it is possible to envisage that some of the Muslim schools run the danger of promoting sectarian agendas and might clearly identify with some of the Islamic revivalist movements. This important point will be explored in more depth at the second discussion of findings.

Furthermore, the participant believes that Muslim schools prepare children to be dutiful to God's rules by practising Islam, he agreed with the researcher that Muslim schools incorporate Islamic teachings into the curriculum by incorporating the principles of the prophetic traditions and study of the prophet's life (*Seerah*). He believes Islam is also incorporated into the curriculum through incorporating Islamic festivals such as Eid.

One of the parent participants indicated he was satisfied with the academic achievement of Muslim faith-based schools in general:

"Muslim schools have better results and from what I know they have good results"

This participant claimed that Muslim schools achieve better results in his opinion as the parents, teachers and pupils work harder than state schools, he claims this is due to people sometimes taking advantage of state schools being free therefore they don't appreciate it that much as they should. The participant stated that Muslim faith-based schools do still need to work hard to get good results. It appeared he also attributed the school academic achievement to the small class sizes.

When he was asked how in his view Muslim faith-based schools prepare children to live within the wider society, he replied:

"They used to go to different schools... they played football with other schools",

This, in his view, therefore allowed his children to integrate with various members of society. The participants mentioned that Muslim schools gradually prepare children to live in the wider society as they employ non-Muslim teachers to teach within the Islamic school.

Overall, the data analysis showed that almost all of the participants suggested that Islamic schooling promotes an active integration of Muslim children within wider society. They voiced the need that Islamic Education should be encouraging young Muslims to feel that they are part of the wider society and they should be proud of being British and Muslim at the same time. However, they also highlighted the concern that some Muslim schools tend to give the impression that they were trying to keep Muslim children away from the wider society. Therefore, they felt that schools should do more to engage Muslim pupils with the wider society and enable non-Muslim student's admissions to Muslim faith-based schools.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the data analysis concerning the first part of the qualitative data that was gathered through semi-structured interviews. Largely, in agreement with the findings of the quantitative survey, the analysis of the qualitative data revealed that parents felt that full-time Muslim faith-based schools play a constructive role within the community and wider society through an utmost endeavour to address the religious, cultural and education needs of Muslim children under their care. According to participants, Muslim schools do not only teach their students how to be good Muslims by incorporating the teachings of Islam, into their daily lives but also build up their moral character, values and skills for living within a diverse society. Participants shared the view that Muslim schools focus on both secular education as well as Islamic Education. They suggested the presence of balanced Islamic and national or secular dimensions of the curriculum. However, some parents also raised the concern over the need that Muslim schools should do more to enable students to gain better academic achievement and more effectively prepare them to integrate into the wider society. The next chapter will present the findings concerning the teachers (based in the selected Muslim faith-based

schools) and the graduates of the Muslim faith-based schools regarding the role and expectations of the Islamic schooling in multi-faith and largely secular social context of Birmingham city.

CHAPTER EIGHT (Qualitative Data Analysis: III)

**Exploring Perceptions of Teachers and Graduates of
Muslim faith-based schools about Islamic Schooling in
Multicultural Secular British society**

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis concerning teachers' and pupils' views on broad issues related to Islamic Schooling within the culturally and religiously diverse Birmingham city. It is important to note the survey results presented in chapter six regarding the pupils' and teachers' views on the topic. This is the last section of the qualitative data in the study where through 'focus group discussions' and 'semi-structured interviews', the views of teachers and pupils participating the study were further explored.

The current study was primarily focused on exploring the parental expectations from the Muslim faith-based schools. However, to offer a balanced and broad view on Islamic schools, it did include views of teachers and pupils who were based in these schools. This has enabled the researcher to find out the feelings and thoughts of those who were 'insiders' to the whole educational process. The process of interviewing a selected group of the teachers and graduates revealed the importance of their views as actual actors in these schools. 12 teachers and 5 graduates were selected across the participating Muslim schools in the study. This small sample had almost equal number of male and female participants who were based in both independent and voluntary aided (maintained) Islamic schools at both primary and secondary level of schooling. The teachers were those who were mainly in charge of teaching or coordinating Islamic studies and Islamic education related subjects. The students were selected from the secondary schools as they were better able to express their experience about studying in the Islamic schools. The semi-structured interviews included similar questions about the Islamic schools that were presented to the parents in this study. However, the focus of the teacher-interviews was, mostly, on Islamic Education ethos of the schools and the quality of generic and Islamic Education provision offered within Muslim faith-based schools. The

students were mainly, asked to reflect on their experience of studying in these schools and the impact of this experience upon their educational, social, religious and spiritual development.

8.2 The perspectives of teachers and managers of Muslim schools

In order to contextualise the parental expectations and create a balanced and fair understanding on Muslim faith-based schooling, the researcher has decided to include the perspective of the school managers about the nature and function of Islamic schooling within the minority Muslim context of Birmingham. As mentioned above, parents, teachers, school managers and a selected group of graduates of diverse forms of Muslim faith-based schools were interviewed in order to explore this often highly sensitive issues around Islamic schooling in multicultural and largely secular context of the British society. The study initially through using the survey technique posed the similar set of questions to a selected group of school administrators and teachers.

The sample of this particular focused survey was made up of 34 participants 9 of whom were females. Most of the participants were head teachers and teachers mainly in charge of Islamic Education and Islamic studies provisions at the schools (subject leaders). The data analysis revealed that Muslim faith-based schools catered for age group of 5 to 16 plus. However, the majority of Muslim schools in the context of Birmingham that participated in this study were the schools that catered for the pupils aged between 11-16. Most of the students who attended these schools come from the Indian sub-continent (Asian Pakistani) heritage.

Most of the Muslim faith-based schools which participated in the study were established between 1990 and 1995. Reflecting the communities' migration patterns, the first Muslim faith-based schools appeared in early 1980 and 1985. It appears in 2005 there was another peak of establishing Muslim faith-based schools in Birmingham in particular and in the UK in

general. The schools had almost equal numbers of single sex and mix gender schools. The school intake varied between a minimum of 50 and a maximum of 500.

Teachers' and Managers' choices of schooling

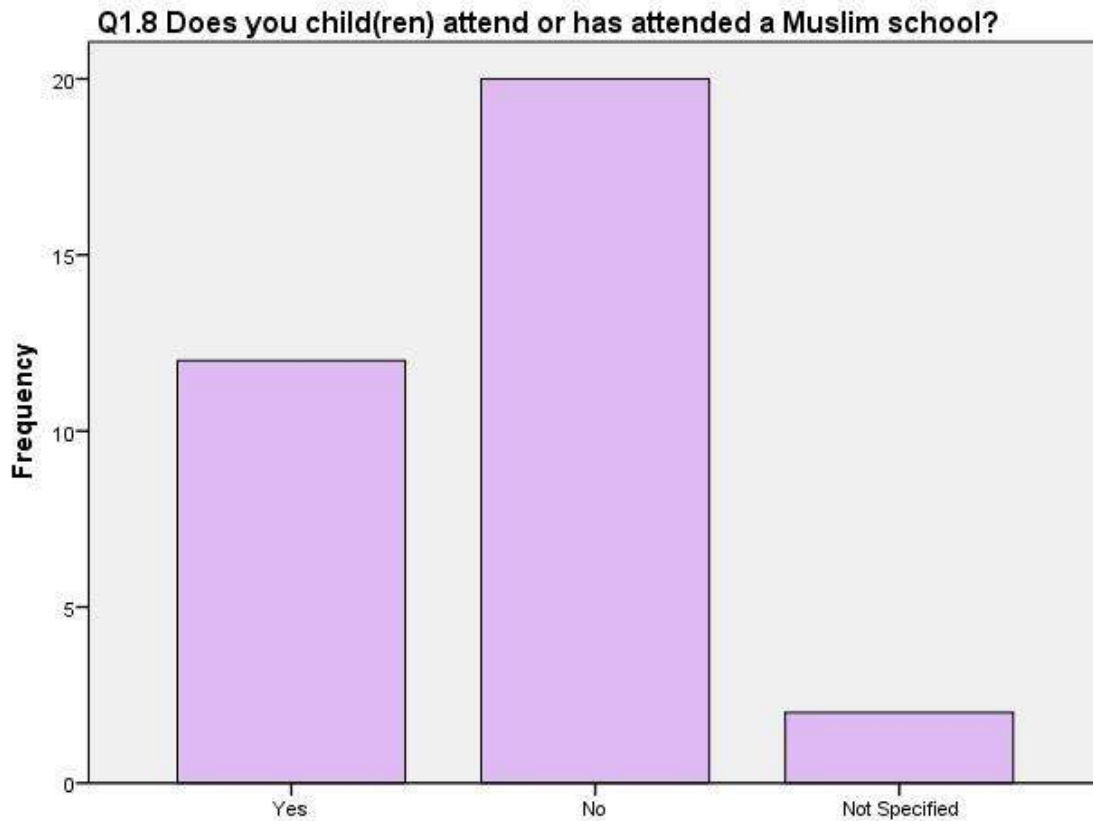


Figure 8.2.1 Teachers' and Managers' choices of schooling fro their children

As the above bar chart clearly shows, it is interesting to note that majority of teachers and management staff did not choose to send their children to Muslim faith-based schools (almost 60%). However, majority of them had relatives who attended the Muslim schools. Most of the participants preferred single sex education. Just like parents, the teachers and administrators also wanted to see a balanced curriculum where secular and Islamic subjects were taught

together. On the other hand, majority of them felt that the schools should not operate only to teach for employability motives but should prioritise the nurturing Islamic faith among the children. Similarly, they also felt that the mainstream schools were unable to meet the spiritual religious and moral needs of Muslim children.

It appeared that the majority of the school staff agreed that parents selected their schools because they felt that students would get a good '*tarbiya*' (Islamic values) and understanding of their faith. It is interesting to note that the majority of staff 73% felt that having high degree of discipline to be an effective way to achieve the Islamic education goals i.e. moral discipline and getting students to observe the main Islamic rituals in their daily lives known as '*tadib*'. As such, teachers felt that they acted as religious leaders and role models for the students. Ultimately, they suggested that in addition to this specific Islamic Education ethos, they all felt that Muslim schools should produce good citizens.

8.3 Views of the graduates about the Muslim schools

Most of the graduates reported positive reception of the aspects of having discipline and Muslim teachers as role models in the Muslim faith-based schools; they also expressed increased level of rapture amongst Muslim children since they were able to express their feelings without fear or hesitation. According to Ahmed, who graduated from one of the Muslim faith-based schools in the city, he is of the opinion that the students have a higher level of reverence for their teachers in Muslim schools. He believes this enables pupils to relate better to the teachers and the wider school community.

However, while majority of the graduates 38% thought that Muslim faith-based schools do not cause sectarian prejudices to be replicated among the young generations of the Muslims, a

considerable number 18% agreed that Muslims faith-based schools somehow contributed to the existing intra-religious differences to persist across generations. A large majority of participants appeared to be uncertain on the issue which in turn suggest at least ambiguity towards the presence of sectarian attitudes within the community. Almost similar type of responses were recorded when the question was raised i.e. asking whether the school actually positively engaged addressing the sectarian issues that exist within the community. Almost 18% of the graduates felt that schools by the virtue of the fact that created alongside the sectarian fault-lines. However, a high number, almost 75% of the participants, felt that Muslim faith-based schools did not deliberately promote sectarianism or religious narrow mindedness. This finding further implies that the existing organisation of the community structures, ethnicity and religious lines are reproduced across the young generations of Muslims.

Some students also felt that lack of modern equipment and teaching materials have been a reason for some Muslim parents not to send their children to Muslim faith-based schools. It must be noted while 40% of graduates felt satisfied and contented with the academic achievement of the Muslim faith-based schools they attended, the combined percentage of those who were dissatisfied and those who were unsure were also very high (almost more than half the overall survey participants). Similarly, only above 30% of the graduates thought that Muslim faith-based schools were performing better than that of the state schools. But almost 70% of study sample agreed that the Muslim faith-based schools need to work harder to achieve higher desired academic achievement. The majority of graduates felt that the Islamic ethos of these schools and a close community-based reality all have made positive contributions to gaining better overall academic achievement in the Muslim faith-based schools.

The response of the graduates about the central question of whether the Muslim faith-based schools contribute to the isolation or integration of Muslim young people depicted a degree of ambiguity and uncertainty. Albeit 30% felt that they were tentative, yet, almost 28% percent of graduates felt that some parents do have fear that Muslim faith-based schools might isolate their children from the mainstream society. Although during the interviews and group discussions, it was clear and articulate that much of this fear was generated by the negative media coverage about Muslim faith-based schools.

Almost half of the graduates felt that by employing more non-Muslim teachers, the Muslim schools could enable greater diversity and create links to the wider society within the Muslim schools, and in this way they thought Muslim children would be better integrated to the wider society.

Both teachers and students were asked about the reasons behind the establishment of Muslim faith-based schools initially. The teachers' views showed high degree of similarity with the views of the parents that were summarised above. The views expressed by Abu Bakr, a male teacher with five years experience of teaching in the Islamic schools, was the same reason suggested by other teachers:

“...my own opinion based on the feedback I've heard from parents when we speak to them on parents evening and stuff, I feel like these schools came into existence just to provide the security, maybe the moral security [...] They don't want their children to be affected by what's going around. Muslim schools were established so that children can learn about our 'deen' (religion/ Islam) and get Islamic knowledge; learn about moral values and Islamic practices.”

This main religious motive behind the establishment of Muslim schools was clearly identified. As parents suggested, the interviewed teachers also felt that Muslim children could not take the much-needed Islamic instruction and moral upbringing within the main stream schools as

not every other person holds the same religion and values as Muslims. Therefore, the teachers argued, the Islamic schools came into existence to fill this important gap within overall education of Muslim students in the UK. In other words, there is an assumption that Muslim children will be safer and most importantly will have the opportunity of learning their faith in an educational environment that nurtures and supports Islamic faith and morality in the lives of Muslim children.

Fatimah, a female teacher who had seven years of teaching experience in a private Muslim faith-based school said that:

“...obviously because of their practices [...] I guess it’s a way of also being in the west you need to make sure they - the children know their roots from the start – from a very young age so they grow up with Muslim understanding and Islamic understanding and Islamic way of life...”

As explained in the literature review chapter in detail, because of the persisting concerns over the faith-based Muslim schools in the UK, the researcher asked the participants how they felt about the wider public concerns over Muslims schools. Some of the participants pointed out to the discussions around ‘Trojan Horse’ as a quintessence of how the officials and the wider society have been suspicious and spiteful of the Muslim community. Ali, a senior teacher who has been teaching in one of the very first maintained secondary Muslim schools, expressed concerns that ‘the Trojan Horse predicament once more illustrated the Islamophobic attitude of the media and the wider political establishment towards the Muslims in general and the Islamic schools in particular’.

The teachers were clearly aware of the wider community’s expectations that Muslim faith-based schools will ensure they continue holding to the religious and cultural narratives of identity that have been brought from parents’ countries of origin to the context of Birmingham.

The teachers took on board the vital important parental expectation of high academic achievement, but some teachers felt that the achievement of this task requires close co-operation between parents and schools and most significantly, the willingness of parents to show real interest in the education of their children. The teachers felt without such a vital co-operation it is impossible that the Muslim schools on their own could achieve this crucial task.

One of the young head teachers, Halima, particularly drew attention to the need for Muslim schools to address the communication gaps that sometimes exist between the teachers, head-teachers and parents. She felt if everyone has the same goal of achieving high in Muslim faith-based schools then parents need to increase co-operation with the Muslim schools:

“...parents’ support with regard to homework and making children attend the school regularly is very important..often we have parents that simply expect miracles from us but hardly attend parents evenings or any other school activity...like any education with parental support we cannot be achieving the wider Islamic vision of the school...”

Furthermore, the teachers also seem to be aware that some parents desire to see their children are safe from secular teachings. Some parents regard faith to be most important for them than that of the academic achievement. Aqil, an experienced teacher, stressed this parental desire clearly:

“...my own opinion based on the feedback I’ve had from parents when we speak to them on parents evening is that.. I feel like these (Muslim) schools came into existence just to provide the security, maybe the moral security [...] they don't want their children to be affected by what’s going around”.

It must be noted that, teachers expressed that parents had fear about what they depicted as a threatening secular culture and its possible impact on their children too. However, some of the teachers felt that in the Islamic schools there is often an unnecessary strong culture of discipline that may put children under unnecessary pressure and hence de-motivates them in developing confidence and self-esteem. The teachers did emphasise the need to achieve a

balance between a total lack of discipline which is suggested to be happening in mainstream schools, and a counterproductive culture of excessive monitoring and disciplining in the Muslim faith-based schools. The latter is suggested to be causing students to lose confidence and not be able to take initiatives on their own. Bashir, a new teacher who had a previous experience of the teaching in the mainstream schools clearly shared this view:

“I think in Islamic schools they are too strict that sometimes make pupils to feel less confident in themselves.....So there is discipline and maybe in state schools they are too lenient but I feel there needs to be a balance. None is good”

However, the teachers who conspicuously were part of the reality of the Islamic schools were acutely aware of the difficulties of meeting these daunting expectations. The teachers pointed out the inadequacy of the facilities within some of the Muslim faith-based schools and felt that despite being a large sector these schools suffer from lack of proper funding.

For example, Elif who coordinated the Islamic Studies or Islamic Education programme in a private girls’ Muslim school, expressed the following concerns over the need for Muslim schools to improve their resources and facilities. It is important to note that he saw a link between lack of proper facilities with and decrease in students’ aspiration and motivation:

“...I think improving the resources [...] and the teaching and learning facilities including sports, resources for science or maths that we need – will motivate the girls and increase their aspiration...This is the second Muslim school that I am working for and the need to improve the facilities remains the same I am afraid.....”.

The teachers, despite this apparent ongoing shortage in the facilities, stressed that one of the main aims of the Muslim schools is to offer a competent Islamic Education ethos in the schools and enable children to learn about their faith and practise it. However, when asked to what

extent schools actually achieve this overall Islamic Education vision, teachers were unable to provide straight answers as expected. They emphasised that all of the school activities were geared towards achieving this Islamic goal. When teachers were asked to provide examples, it appeared that they were trying to bring an Islamic dimension to all curriculum subjects as much as they could. This process seemed to be happening quite arbitrarily without actual by following an Islamised curricula or teaching materials. Elif's comments in this regard reflected the overall manner in which the school appeared to be offering Islamic approach to diverse subjects taught in the school including the sciences and maths:

"..Yes we do try to bring Islam to what we teach at the school.... We always look at how science is involved in everyday activities obviously to the outside to their (students) life this week – how they are going to make use of science and we link Islam to it as well. If we are talking about maths we do the same thing how they are going to use maths for their everyday life and similarly we make sure Islam guides their everyday life too..".

The analysis of teacher interviews suggested that teachers felt that Islamic schools were continuation of the community efforts and therefore the school reflected religious and cultural values of the community. In this sense, all of the teachers highlighted they were aware that they were perceived as role models by the students. Being role a model was suggested to be more effective way of actualising the Islamic ethos of the school. Halima an experienced teacher expressed very clearly:

'I believe that the teacher is the best resource for the children, I mean as a role model we have opportunities of influencing children's behaviour and attitude... Also during the schools assemblies we use lots of Islamic themes and as you can see (point to walls and display units) verses and the prophetic sayings are all there to constantly remind the pupils that they are in an Islamic environment...."

Hasan, a very enthusiastic maths teacher, further explained how he used all of the opportunities to convey the Islamic message to children:

“I think we ourselves as teachers need to know what our role is in the school and that's not always clear you know when you go in and if you want to teach mathematics you just go into the subject but I remember teaching mathematics through saying how many – when I was teaching fractions or how many parts of the *Qur'an* and what is one juz its 1/30th part of *Qur'an*...”

Similarly, Ali echoed the same views by suggesting that the general activities at the school are all aimed at providing students with an Islamic education environment:

“...Teaching Islam and Islamic morality I mean *Tarbiya* are all promoted through the religious subjects (Islamic Studies) and also through assemblies and also while they (students) are eating and praying and things like thatbecause we teach them to say the *du'a* (prayers) before eating, we encourage them to pray at the school and in assemblies they will have Muslim assemblies you know so I think yes it is being promoted through assemblies as well as through the playground areas”.

However, when teachers were asked about the actual teaching of Islam in the school and the manner in which it was taught it becomes clear that Islamic Education provision was not really well structured. It was important to note that the teachers delegated to teach Islamic Studies or Islamic Education subjects were on the whole unqualified teachers i.e. they did not seem to have teacher training certificates of Islam.

Ahmed, who is originally from Jordan, teaches Arabic (part-time) in his local independent primary Muslim faith-based school pointed out that most of teachers delivering the general curriculum subjects were qualified. This appears not to have been the case with those teaching the Islamic subjects:

“I teach in the primary school and the school follows the mainstream English curriculum. The teachers are all qualified. But I see that mostly, Islamic subjects are taught by non qualified teachers such as Imams or community leaders. I teach the *Qur'an* and Arabic here and I was trained in my country (Jordan). Although I feel I need more time to understand life in

Birmingham but I think that the school need to make sure the Islamic Studies teachers are also properly trained”.

Furthermore, the data analysis revealed that some of the teachers felt that the curriculum in the Islamic schools should be improved in such a way that the students understand other people’s faiths and religions. Ali, an experienced teacher who worked in several Muslim faith-based schools in Birmingham suggested that Islamic schools in addition to teaching Muslim children’s faith, Islam, should also teach other faiths as they are growing up in multi-faith societies. He added that according to Islam learning about other faiths like Judaism and Christianity in particular actually are important as, according to Islam, Muslim children need to know more about the ‘people of the book’. More significantly, Ali connected the idea of learning other faiths will be helping to gradually develop tolerance and acceptance of people of different views and faiths among the students. He thus, highlighted the possible contribution of Islamic schools in achieving social and community cohesion within the wider British society:

“Muslim schools when explicitly including the teaching of other faiths in their curriculum, they will be sending a strong message to the wider society that they are not aiming to isolate students from the wider society but encourage them to develop a deeper sense of belonging to a wider multi-faith and multicultural British society. We should not forget that our children are not isolated from the wider society because Muslims and non-Muslim interact on a daily basis”.

While talking about the role of Muslim faith-based schools in isolating or integrating Muslim children in British society, the discussion inevitably included reflections of the infamous ‘Trojan Horse’ controversy that took place in Birmingham which alleged presence of an organised attempt by some Muslim parents and teachers to take over the public schools where majority of children are Muslims and impose a certain vision of Islam. It appeared that most of the participants explained this controversy in terms of elaborating conspiracy against Muslims

where particularly right wing politicians and the media conspired to attack Muslims. Ali, who strongly, suggested that Muslim schools should teach other faiths and about the wider life in the UK skills felt that the 'Trojan Horse' episode showed the reality of persisting Islamophobia in the UK society:

"I have spoken to many parents about this event (The Trojan Horse) particularly the parents of students who are attending those schools (where this alleged Muslim conspiracy took place). Nobody was aware of this take over or any systemic attempt to Islamise these schools. They are saying this is not true and – this is downright fake and there is an agenda behind it to demean Islam and Muslims in the UK."

Another teacher suggested a similar line of thought by emphasising the community's fear about the rising phobia against Muslims and Muslim schools. He also raised a point that Trojan Horse is an example of this negative development and suspicion;

"I think there are fears because this Islamophobia is a phenomenal at this day and age...Terrorism and so on so people hear a false fear at the back of their mind and that is the downside of it. There is now a great suspicion about Muslim schools in general because of this unfortunate infamous Trojan Horse event."

However, he added that Muslim faith-based schools needed to send a positive message to the wider society that they were part of the solution as they can actively encourage integration of Muslim children into the wider society. Similarly, teachers agreed with the parents' expectations that school curriculum should be broad and balanced containing both Islamic and national curriculum subjects. Participants felt the curriculum should be improved in such a way that the students understand other people's faiths and religions.

Aqil, a newly qualified teacher who was in charge of the humanities subjects, offered the following observation:

"... Islamic curriculum and national curriculum should complement each other... curriculum is actually broader... in our schools students are inevitably facing a difficult task of studying the

national curriculum as well as additional Islamic subjects... so I know some of the Muslim schools they might not be improving in those areas so they should actually focus on national curriculum side at the same time focusing on the religious education.”

As Aqil’s comments suggest parents were very serious about the academic achievement of Muslim schools and they appeared not to be happy until both the Islamic and national curriculum were taught at the highest standard possible. This high academic expectation as well as insistence on providing quality Islamic Education by parents poses a series of challenges to Muslim schools. The funding problems inevitably hinder the school to be able to attract competent and experienced teaching staff, while particularly the mainstream schools do get qualified teachers for the national curriculum subjects; the actual teaching staff who are entrusted to deliver the Islamic studies and Islamic education remain on the whole not trained properly.

When participants were asked about the degree to which Muslim schools have achieved their goals, both in terms of the general educational goals as well as the specific Islamic Education goals, there was a rather ambivalent response. Considering the fact that majority of Muslim schools in Birmingham were not getting government funding and therefore were independent schools, it was difficult to have the necessary resources to achieve their goals. This is despite the fact that some secondary voluntary aided Muslim schools were having high and positive results in their GCSE’s exams.

For example, Ali’s response indicated that he was not sure whether the Muslim schools were achieving their overall academic and as well as the Islamic educational goals:

“In Birmingham, I think not majority (of Muslim schools) are achieving the goals that they are established for. Because there are many problems they face. For example, Muslim schools were established so that the children can be learning properly about their faith and gaining an adequate general education that will prepare them to achieve the best in their lives. However, lack of resources, funding and qualified teaching staff resulted in not achieving many of these goals...”

Similarly, Aisha, a newly appointed head teacher to a voluntary aided Muslim school echoed similar views:

“Yes, I would say that better staff and better curriculum are needed to achieve both the Islamic as well as general educational targets and the vision. We don't have long term teachers like teachers are changing or if we have to call supply teachers [...]The children cannot work with – they have to have one permanent teacher to make teaching and learning better. Also we need more parental involvement in monitoring children’s attendance and particularly helping them with their home work and generally showing interest in the education of their children”.

It appeared that most of the teachers felt that Muslim schools’, overall, need to improve their academic achievement. Another teacher Sultan clearly summarised the overall views of the rest of study participants by suggesting that “Muslim schools are achieving their overall academic goal to a certain extent. They are not totally failing but they are not 100% successful”.

It was interesting to note that Aisha felt that the Islamic education goals called ‘*tarbiyah*’, could be achieved through the use of gentle force:

“We know that Islamic *Tarbiyyah*(education) that cannot be achieved in state schools and therefore most of the parents send their children to Muslim schools. We have a special duty in order to inculcate Islamic way of life in children and sometimes we need to force ‘*tarbiya*’ on them so that it becomes part of their personality or when they grow up then they won’t miss that.”

Aisha further explained what she meant by 'force' it becomes clearer that she did not mean the use of corporal punishment as such, but a mixture of encouragement and persuasion to motivate children to observe the Islamic teachings and practices in their lives. As such she drew attention to the important role of parents in achieving the specific '*tarbiya*' (educational upbringing and nurture) goal of helping children to develop good moral and religious character. She further added that Muslim schools primarily focus on Islamic educational goals, they also encourage children to realise that they are part of the wider society. Their religious, moral, social development required them to acknowledge the plurality of cultures and religions in the contemporary society. She argued that children should be respecting everyone regardless of their belief or religion.

Another participant, (Rizwan) who had a considerable experience of teaching in the independent Muslim schools drew attention to the importance of teaching properly the *Qur'an* as he felt that in order to practise *tarbiyyah (education/nurture)*, children had to understand *Qur'an* as the *Qur'an* itself is the basis for '*tarbiyyah*'. He further commented on the persisting issue in many Muslim faith-based schools that has caused annoyance in this regard among parents and those who are critical of Islamic schools in general. Despite the fact that Islamic schools aim to teach proper Islam and '*tarbiya*'. Most of the Muslim children still have to attend the after school informal Islamic education provision known as *maktab or madrassa*. Muslim faith-based schools often suggest lack of time for this obvious negligence as the expectation from the statutory bodies like Ofsted and local authorities are so much that it is impossible to have the additional provision to teach the *Qur'an* and other Islamic related subjects in the Muslim faith-based schools. It is well know that the teaching and learning practices in the *Madrassas* are often rigid and emphasis on routinised learning. This has often

created a conflict and gap in the learning and the general educational experience of the children as the mainstream schools emphasis independent learning and encourages children to think for themselves. It appeared that some of the Muslim faith-based schools felt this shortcoming. As a way of responding to this concerning issue, some Muslim schools began opening the weekend Islamic education provision in their own premises. This, at least, appears to help children to have a sense of continuation in terms of the physical environment of learning.

8.4 Focus-group discussion with graduates of Muslim schools

During the focused group discussions, the limitations of some Muslim schools in GCSE's subjects option was repeatedly highlighted. This shortcoming was again explained in terms of lack of funding, resources and sufficient qualified teaching staff in these schools.

Another theme that emerged out of the focused group discussions was the awareness that participants believed that the state schools have to be unbiased while teaching religious education. They argued that the publicly-funded nature of mainstream schools prevents them to promote one faith community over another. This finding implies that Muslim parents gradually came to appreciate the broad educational rationale behind the teaching of multi-faith Religious Education in the mainstream schools. That is to say inclusive RE aims to enable students to develop religious literacy competence and contribute to their overall spiritual and social development. It is remarkable that this educationally inclusive aspect of RE is recognised by Muslim parents who are often said to be perceiving the subject as a threat to the religious identity of their children. The Islamic Education provision was also suggested to be broad and inclusive of the richness and diversity of Islam. The participants suggested that Muslim schools

were established to broaden children's knowledge about the teachings of Islam just like any other faith-based school striving for their students.

The graduate group discussions generated interesting contrasting impressions of Muslim schools, their relevance in multicultural societies and the degree to which they can respond to the changing educational and personal needs of Muslim children and their parents' expectations. Similarly, the individual interviews some of the participants in the group discussions suggested an ambiguous attitude to uniqueness of Islamic schools. For example, Othman who studied at mainstream schools as well as attended an Islamic school in Birmingham, while responding to the question over similarities and differences between Muslim and mainstream schools, he said that:

"I don't know to be honest the only extra thing that I see in the Islamic based school is. [...] I don't see it, I think they are just being taught by unseen force for example if I go to school I don't think the children – [...] you taught something you don't you can't see the value there's I still see half of them still swearing outside when I go to [...] I mean that's obviously not all of them but the parents should enforce that as well even if they do it doesn't necessary mean that they implementing it".

These reflections and, to a degree self-critical comments, suggest that student behaviour and overall character may not necessarily reflect the desired Islamic moral and religious values. Most importantly Muslim children may show similar laxity over observing basic Islamic manners regardless of the kind of schools they attended. The participant went on to suggest that some Muslim children would prefer state schools, because the Islamic schooling was not allowing them to socialise adequately with people of other faiths, races and culture. Moreover, some children felt that the Islamic school environment was rather controlling and limiting. Similarly another participant (Salih) suggested that some Muslim children preferred state

school as they want to be more westernised and enjoy the freedom rather than feel over controlled by a strict schooling environment.

Another graduate (Aisha) from Islamic school, while reflecting on as to why some Muslim children wanted to attend mainstream schools, offered the following interesting observation:

“I don't think that they just want to westernise, they just want to enjoy the freedom of life [...] so they don't want to say oh I go to an Islamic school because they prefer the idea of a western and they watch too much movies and they probably just prefer the idea, because they are not in there they just want to go there to experience.”

The same participant when asked to consider whether some of the Muslim schools feel naturally isolating as they only admit Muslim children. Aisha voiced the concern that independent Muslim faith-based schools can cause isolation of Muslims from the wider society. However, all of the participants stressed that the issue of isolation and segregation is much more complex, and can go beyond the schooling experience. They (the participants) drew attention to the wider social factors such as the fact that some Muslim communities often live in self-contained units within the large cities like Birmingham. They further suggested that the existence of ‘ghetto-like communities’ or ‘wards’ often emerge as a result lack of social mobility and poor socio economic conditions. Thus, one of the female participants (Safa) argued that even the phenomenon of self-segregation obviously cannot be attributed to Muslim schools only. Her reflections were quite revealing:

“Being segregated or isolated...that's not really students' fault or schools' fault..if children live in an area that is predominately Muslim, children don't have much interaction with outside society. I mean even I myself could not be interacting with other people much if I did not go to University where in my life for the first time I met so many different people. So I'd say the feeling of being isolated and not integrated had a wider community dimension too.”

Clearly this particular student thought that there was an issue of self-segregation within the Muslim community because of its' lack of interaction with the wider society. She felt that regardless of attending Muslim schools, some of these students were already isolated as most of them live in the areas that are predominately populated with people who share the similar cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. However, she feels they are not fully isolated as they will encounter people of different cultures and values inevitably in their everyday lives.

Some participants suggested that Muslim schools prepare children to recognise the diversity within the wider society and develop positive attitudes towards the religious and cultural plurality. According to the majority of participants, Muslim faith-based schools do not encourage their students to be friends with people of other or no faiths. Instead, they encourage them to develop attitudes of respect and tolerance towards other cultures and faiths.

The graduates showed a distinct awareness about the diversity of cultural practice and values that sometimes show conflict with Islamic cultural practices. But they mostly suggested acceptance and tolerance towards such practices. For example, Ali, who graduated from his local Muslim school, said that:

“There are a lot of values in the wider society that go against the Islamic morals and teaching but, I believe that we have to just accept that we are living in non-Muslim culture.”

Ali continued by questioning the value of some of the independent Muslim schooling particularly the institutions that provide exclusive religious training like, *dar al-uluums*, by pointing out that their certified degree is not recognised and therefore students despite

spending years of receiving the exclusive Islamic Education provision, do not have any carrier options as they cannot continue with their further education:

“For example, in my Alim course, if I was completing my education there, I would have had no recognised qualifications at all.”

Clearly, Ali did not feel isolated from the wider society. However, his remarkable reflections suggested that he was drawing attention to a wider and more serious problem; he was making connections between an exclusive inward-looking Islamic Education provision (*tarbiya*) and developing ‘foreclosed mindsets’ suggested by Sahin (2014) and inactive sense of being a citizen within secular and plural modern British society.

However, other participants suggested that a competent open Islamic Education provision could build Muslim children’s confidence to relate better with the wider society:

“I will go further in saying not just better Muslim but citizen as well because [...] I was given a good *Tarbiyyah* [...] it made me realise my rights and responsibilities in a better way than I would have been given in the state schools, I think”.

On the other hand, most of the graduates of Muslim schools who were studying at the university were showing, and having, higher career aspiration. Some of the graduates showed awareness of growing hostility towards the Muslim faith-based schools in the media and the wider society, particularly after the Trojan Horse incident and this appeared to have pushed some of the parents not to send their children to Muslim faith-based schools at all. These participants even suggested that the negative media coverage of Muslim faith-based schools as places of indoctrination and fear of political pressure have caused some Muslim parents to develop rather equally strong negative perception of Islamic schooling.

One of the experienced teachers (Saima) who was also a graduate of a Muslim school, appeared very annoyed with the media as well as the Ofsted inspectors as they were conducting regular inspections to the point of disrupting the students' education. She thought that the media was the biggest culprit behind growing lack of trust for Muslim faith-based schools. She believed that the Trojan Horse issue was also increasingly becoming a reservation for parents in general as they are concerned that the government might take over their schools and change their ethos. "This unfortunate" high polarised situation appeared to have a large negative perception on Muslim faith-based school and was causing a feeling of paranoia and insecurity among Muslim parents. The reflection below shows very clearly the overwhelming shared feeling:

"The whole media coverage made the issue like an attack on Muslims and Islamic schools. I mean it a bit, everyday my dad gets text messages and says oh petition and obviously they are going to get worried about why they always – they don't mind – but why is there always media ? Because obviously your children go to this school, you put your trust in this school and they are probably worried about what's going to happen because they sent their children off to a faith school... Is that going to be taken over? Is it going to become a state school? I mean what's going to happen with it? That's the worry and concern; I mean not really academically any concerns but more sort of the media taking over."

Most of the participants were concerned that people from the wider society would conclude and have fear that Muslim faith-based schools are threat within and they may be producing fanatics. One of the graduates (Faris) suggested that peer group sometimes is a key factor for their choice of attending schools.

It was interesting to note that participants overwhelmingly felt that the Trojan horse affair was a conspiracy. They argued that Muslim parents like other parents were encouraged to support the schooling of their children and this was their democratic and civic right. As long as they are observing legal rule and regulations it should not be a problem. They found it offensive that

ignorant people are blindly saying things, which hurt the feelings of Muslims. He feels Ofsted and the local authority may be educationally smart but he feels they are not wise enough and do not have enough experience about what actually goes on in Islamic schools, because if they do actually look closely they will see Muslim school students are normal people just trying to live their lives.

However, this defence of the Muslim schools did not prevent some of the participants to suggest that they would have gone to a normal mainstream school if they had a choice:

“I’ll probably choose the state [...] probably because more people that I know have come from (...) have gone to state school instead, nobody has come to the school that I am going to which is an Islamic school.”

It was interesting to note that some students who went to the mainstream school did not at all regret their choice.

“I went to state school I came out perfectly fine, Alhamdulillah I just think it depends upon family life and home and also how – how – who you hang around with and bad you influenced by them.[...]well, I don't, I can't really say if they are gaining more than all the children in state schools or probably gaining more than most of them depends on what type of state school you go, I mean some children probably go to state school and they probably gain the exact same thing[...].”

One of the participants (Atif) who recently graduated and wished to go to university one day felt that attending university in the future may become a challenge due to the fixed timetables; this may make it difficult to pray on time. He also appeared to be concerned that he would encounter different cultures and experience that he has not been prepared for or used to. Despite the lack of experiencing diversity of cultures, he was hopeful that he would get used to the new experience of diversity gradually. He appeared to acknowledge that Muslim faith-

based schools offer overwhelmingly a monolithic culture of Islamic Education and as a result once students are out they will need time to adjust to the outside reality. He appeared to be aware of some of the negative consequences of single faith education.

Similarly, when graduates were asked their opinion about which type of schooling they would prefer for their own children. It was interesting to note that most of them suggested that they would be looking at school achievement and the overall academic attainment of the school regardless of their status as faith-based or not. Another student participant (Ali) felt that he does not know of any of his peers who failed their GCSE's. However, he believes he probably would have achieved better grades if he had attended a state school. Some of the participants questioned why a Muslim child attending Muslim faith-based schools would also need to attend a *madrassa* (Islamic supplementary school).

The discussion over whether the Islamic schools promoted British values or exclusively Islamic values also attracted reflections. Some of the female participants highlighted this as they define themselves as 'British Muslims' and did not see any contradiction or concerns with British values being promoted in the Islamic schools such as, the ones that they went to. One of the participants (Omar) said:

"Islam promotes tolerance and respect of other cultures and faiths so do the British values. Therefore, there was a clear compatibility between both being British and Muslim without having an impact on any of the identities."

Another participant (Sohail) added that the school he attended promoted the British and Islamic values in a complete manner:

"Visiting other places of worship and learning about faiths other than Islam helped them to respect others and their beliefs. Having non-Muslim staff also enhances respect towards other

religions and cultures, especially as they work to promote the Islamic ethos of the school, which makes us respect those more.”

When participants were asked to comment on the Islamic ethos of Muslim faith-based schools and whether it clashed with secular schooling, they emphasised that the schools often incorporated all of the values and therefore they did not hear much of conflict with the British values.

The student interviews showed enthusiasm for extra-curricular activities, both Islamic events as well as others including charity events, trips to house of parliament and universities, taking part in national quiz as well as social trips. They felt that they were able to gain academically as well as having to maintain a good Muslim identity and being responsible citizens of the country who can play their part in the British society.

Graduates further emphasised that they enjoyed taking leadership of the school tuck-shop and were happy with the results of concerns they raised in school councils. They felt that they did not miss out events and activities due to being in a faith school and their opportunities were not limited to one style of learning. Two of the students mentioned that they previously attended independent Islamic schools, who were more traditional. They felt that the Islamic schools incorporated both aspects British and Islamic culture and values.

Although, when questioned about what it means to be a ‘British Muslim’ the graduates of Muslim schools acknowledged that it could sometimes be hard as they have to keep two perspectives in mind; the Islamic and British ones. He added that ‘I enjoyed learning about our British culture and at the same time learning about my religion that the school provided’.

8.5 Conclusion

The analysis of the focus group discussions with graduates of Muslim faith-based schools suggested that, overall they had positive attitudes towards Islamic schooling. Studying in a single gender school was suggested to have helped them to study better and, in this sense, they saw value in attending Muslim faith-based schools as they were mostly offered a single gender schooling model. They further thought that Muslim faith-based schools offered an Islamic environment conducive of developing Islamic moral and religious behaviour. This has helped some to develop a good understanding of Islam and observe Islamic moral and cultural values.

The analysis revealed existence of some mixed feelings about the degree to which the schools offered an adequate Islamic Education provision. They appeared to be concerned that they had to attend additional Islamic Education instruction (*madrassa/maktabs*), a provision that was supposed to be offered by Islamic Schools. Similarly, they felt that, although they did not condone the laxity of the mainstream schooling, they did not agree with the strong discipline often applied in the Muslim schools.

Concerning the issue of whether Muslim faith-based schools cause segregation, thus are a threat to social cohesion within multicultural societies, they overwhelmingly felt that this was not the case. They suggested that as far as their experience was concerned, Muslim faith-based schools did not deliberately segregate students but encourage social and cultural integration. The analysis revealed that they were concerned with the negative coverage of Islamic schooling and fear of public backlash which even has made some Muslim parents fearful of Muslim faith-based schools. In this regard, it was significant to note that they felt that Muslim community and Islamic schools community were under suspicions and attack as illustrated by the Trojan Horse episode in Birmingham.

The analysis also revealed that most of the graduates were aware of some of the limitations attached to Islamic schooling. They felt that Muslim faith-based schools in particular needed to prepare students better to live in a multicultural society, offer better provisions to study Islam and improve their overall academic standards so that graduates do not miss out on further life opportunities.

CHAPTER NINE (Discussion of Findings)

9.1 Introduction

This study aimed to explore the role of Muslim faith-based schooling within the context of modern British society in meeting the religious, cultural and educational needs of Muslim pupils. The research explored Muslim faith-based schools in the Birmingham region to explore the main research question i.e. how do Muslim faith-based schools in Birmingham respond to the religious, cultural and educational needs of Muslim children and the expectations of parents. The study further aimed to find out the type of Muslim faith-based schools currently operating within the Birmingham context; the parents' motives in sending their children to Muslim faith-based schools and finally exploring the extent to which Muslim faith-based schools achieve their overall educational ethos and specific Islamic education vision. More significantly, this research project aimed to critically explore the extent to which the specific Islamic Education provision of these schools reflect the reality of the wider multicultural society and contribute to the overall personal development of Muslim children. The previous three chapters (chapters 6, 7 and 8) have presented analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data gathered to explore the central research questions. This chapter highlights the significant findings of the study and offers a contextual discussion of these results through considering the findings of the previous relevant literature.

9.2 Type of Muslim faith-based schools and parental perceptions of Islamic schooling

The analysis, presented in the previous chapters, clearly suggested that, overall parents held positive views of the Muslim schools but at the same time had high expectations about both the general academic achievement as well as the Islamic provision in these schools. In this regard, the majority of parents shared the view that Muslim faith-based schools needed to adopt a more integrated approach to the curriculum striking the balance between Islamic and

secular subjects. Parents overwhelmingly thought the Muslim faith-based schools did contribute to the social and cultural of integration of Muslim children into the wider multicultural and multi-faith society. As such Muslim faith-based schools appear to be helping and maintaining the social and community cohesion by promoting educational and cultural integration through actively nurturing the positive appreciation and understanding of the religious and cultural diversity in the society. However, one of the significant findings of the survey analysis was the fact that parents appeared to be ambiguous about the overall achievement of schools in meeting academic and Islamic religious, moral and spiritual needs of their children. These findings as well as several other important themes that emerged from the survey analysis were discussed in depth by the study participants through semi-structured interviews that also included a selected group of teachers, head teachers, students and so forth.

The analysis of the focus group discussions with graduates of Muslim faith-based schools, on the other hand suggested that, overall, the positive attitudes towards Islamic schooling had a great impact upon the society. Studying in a single gender school was suggested to have helped them to focus better and in this sense, they saw value in attending Muslim schools as they were mostly offered a single gender schooling model. They further thought that Muslim schools offered an Islamic environment conducive of developing Islamic moral and religious behaviour. This helped some to develop a good understanding of Islam and observe Islamic moral and cultural values.

The analysis revealed existence of some mixed feelings about the degree to which the schools offered an adequate Islamic Education provision. They appeared to be concerned that they had to attend additional Islamic Education instruction (*madrassa or maktab*s), a provision that was

supposed to be offered by Islamic Schools. Similarly, they felt that, although they did not condone the laxity of the mainstream schooling, yet, they did not agree with the strong discipline often applied in the Muslim schools.

Concerning the issue of whether Muslim schools cause segregation, thus are threat to social cohesion within multicultural societies, they overwhelmingly felt that this was not the case. They suggested that as part of their experience, Muslim faith-based schools did not deliberately segregate students but encourage social and cultural integration. The analysis revealed that they were concerned with the negative coverage of Islamic schooling and fear of public backlash which even had made some Muslim parents fearful of Muslim faith-based schools. In this regard, it was significant to note that they felt that Muslim community and Islamic schools community were under suspicions and attack as illustrated by the Trojan Horse episode in Birmingham,

The analysis also revealed that most of the graduates were generally aware of the limitations attached to Islamic schooling. They felt that Muslim schools needed to prepare students better to live in a multicultural society, offer better provisions in the study of Islam and improve their overall academic standards.

9.3 Some of the controversial issues towards Islamic schooling

Below is a brief analysis of some of the controversial issues related to Islamic schooling that have been highlighted during the undertaken research. The discussion draws on some of the recent literature that is close to the findings of the current study.

9.3.1 Nature and presumptions of formal and informal Islamic schooling in the UK

It must be noted that despite many commonalities, formal and informal Islamic school settings will vary from one to the other in terms of religious instruction and pedagogic methods used. Formal settings have a better organised structure and will offer full-time courses of Islamic Studies or Islamic Education as well as the national curriculum. Although, these establishments are regulated by the government, yet, they have some flexibility in their method of teaching, when it comes to Islamic studies (Moulton, 2008).

The recent events such as the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks including the most recent Trojan Horse Affair, amongst others, portrayed deeper challenges of European Muslims to integrate themselves to the wider society. The media's misrepresentations had a huge impact of the image of Islam as well as Muslims and brought about a drastic change towards the global Muslim population, bringing Muslim identity to the forefront of global media (Van, 1993). Media played a significant role in pointing out these Islamic radicalism and causing a threat than perceived, although they constituted a significant minority of the Muslim population yet media portrayed it in a manner that all Muslims think and believe in almost the same way and that they do not fit in the western society.

Islamic schools particularly informal Muslim education, *Madrasahs*, have come under a lot of scrutiny as they have been depicted as harbouring extremist ideologies.

The government aims to ensure that all children should have access to secure, safe and socially useful religious education. This can create a background against which faith schools in particular *madrassas* and Muslim communities can carry out the much-needed theological and epistemological debates about the place of Islamic schools and *madrassas* in today's society.

The discussions taking place about 'extremism' being taught in Muslim faith-based schools, with particular emphasis on Islamic establishments, such as *madrassas* as well as Islamic schools is clearly politically motivated. Furthermore, there is a strong viewpoint to either abandon faith schools, within the state system altogether, or reduce their existence by ensuring they include pupils from other faiths, or those of no faith at all (Gardner et al 2005).

As S. Khan a free-lance writer points out that the problem is not the introduction of teaching other faiths but the problem lies within the underlying presumptions being made, that faith schools really are a problem, and that children in these schools are being isolated from society. They are being taught narrow prejudiced 'religious' views which then can be elaborated that they will grow into adults, hostile, towards those in wider society(Khan, 2014). However, it is also important to recognize the impact that religious education has made in promoting plurality, which exists in each tradition (Bates et al, 2006).

The question here lies whether faith-based Islamic schools, can adapt their curriculum to meet the needs of 'British values' as well as instilling the core concepts of Islamic values to satisfy both needs. One response to this is that it can be achieved through means of justification from Islamic traditions; an open critical study makes possible a convergence of the Western and Islamic religious education, which can then help resolve present tensions between both (Bates et al 2006).

It must also be noted that the literature refers to the phenomenon of ‘parallel lives,’ existing in Britain which refers to the arrangements made for separate educational institutions, places of worship and cultural networks where, for instance, these lives may not touch upon and even less overlap, which leads to the drive of improving the community cohesion. The lack of social interaction and involvement, is argued, will lead to ignorance about one another and even develop prejudice (Viner, 2009 p.139).

Some of the concerns raised from these traditional Islamic institutions are that they do not adequately cater for the wider Muslim needs in Britain; they do not respond Islamically to the rapid drastic changes and challenges of secular multicultural society. Many young Muslims having gone through secular critical education then come across with the Islamic Education at the Islamic schools which is not critical at all. Sahin, (2014) suggests that unless Islamic Education provision is also critical and reflective, young British Muslims will struggle to integrate their faith with the wider society. Perhaps this is one of the most significant aspects of the current study as parents, graduates and teachers have voiced the need to enable Muslim schools to develop one and reflective educational culture so that Muslim pupils could develop a proper understanding of their faith and contextualise it within the reality of their lives in the UK.

9.4 The controversial debate over ‘British values’ and Islamic Schools

The above described tension is most reflected in the concerns over lack of teaching ‘British values’ in Muslim schools. It must be noted that the main objective of the Islamic ethos stated by the schools participated in this study claimed that they aimed “to provide an Islamic environment where pupils receive quality education embedded with the Islamic and British

values. These values were further defined as 'promoting gender equality, combating discrimination, actively promoting British values, respecting all cultures and faiths', as well as other values mentioned in their school ethos policy (Al-Hijrah School Website, 2016).

Most of the Muslim faith-based schools' websites stated that the aim of the school was to "create an environment which celebrates both Islamic and British heritage." However, when interviewing the PSHE leader some of the concerns raised regarding the term 'British values' were "...That there is no clear definition, as it can be applied to other cultures and religions." "These are general themes to adapt as a multi-cultural aspect, although they are not restricted or forced." The study participants suggested that the problem lies in things such as homosexuality, although they cannot promote it due to religious beliefs, but they make the students aware of it and not to discriminate against it, as well as supporting anti-bullying, as bullies are always cowards. But the issue remains in where to draw the line when 'actively promoting British values.'

It appeared that the schools were aiming to nurture a sense of being British Muslim among the students. In addition, the Muslim schools also emphasised that they aim to promote social justice, stewardship and common good which are also the values represented strongly in Islam. In the Qur'an it states that 'men and women have been created as *'khalifah'* on earth, which is interpreted as being sent to uphold peace and just social orders of God'. The possibility of forging wider links for the common good can be reduced down to two things, to clarify the values we subscribe to and greater emphasis on interfaith social action as opposed to just interfaith dialogue.

As such, most of the parents who participated in the study, suggested that Muslim schools should teach British values such as tolerance, adaptability and creativity as they were also

'Islamic' and indeed universal values. They argued that it is wrong to assume that they are only 'British values'. Mainstream Islamic scholarship would also regard civic engagement, as highly desirable for Muslim citizens. Although, Muslims have rights and responsibilities in keeping up with the Islamic teachings, for British Muslims this is possible to practise the faith with respect.

9.5 Conclusion

This chapter has offered a discussion regarding some of the key findings of the study. The positive aspects of Muslim schooling as well as some of the controversial and sensitive issues related to Islamic schooling in the context of British society have been highlighted. Right to education is a fundamental human right and as such faith based schooling should be available to all communities living in a democratic society. However, the faith-based education, in its informal (madrassas/Mosques) and formal settings (full-time Islamic schools) needs to be ethically responsible to the wider society and should offer an inclusive educational experience. The chapter concluded by stressing the central importance of developing a reflective and integrating Islamic educational provision within the Muslim schools so that young British Muslims develop a mature sense of belonging to their faith and wider cultural and religious by diverse secular society.

CHAPTER TEN (Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations of the Study)

This study aimed to explore the role of Muslim faith-based schooling within the context of modern British society in meeting the religious, cultural and educational needs of Muslim students, i.e. how do Muslim faith-based schools in Birmingham respond to the religious, cultural and educational needs of Muslim children and the expectations of their parents. The study further aimed to find out the types of Muslim faith-based schools currently operating within the Birmingham context; the parents' motives in sending their children to Muslim schools and finally exploring the extent to which Muslim faith-based schools achieve their overall educational ethos and specific Islamic education vision. More significantly this research project aimed to critically explore the extent to which the specific Islamic education provision of these schools reflect the reality of the wider multicultural society and contribute to the overall personal development of Muslim children.

The research has adopted an empirically case study framework and a mixed-methods designed to explore its central questions that were focused on exploring the role and function of Muslim schools within the context of Muslim communities settled in the city of Birmingham. Birmingham is the second largest city in the UK and historically has become the destination for a diverse set of Muslims migrants who originate from different parts of the Muslim world. While there is a clear diversity among Muslim population in Birmingham, just like the rest of the UK, due to historical reasons the majority of the UK Muslims are originated from the Indian sub-continent. Largely, because of the early British multicultural social policy most of the early migrants were attracted to Birmingham for labour work. Initially, people had the legal status of being guest workers then they were eventually granted citizenship rights. One of the main consequences of this policy meant that families and children of migrants could join them in the UK. Once the families were reunited, the Muslim communities began to feel the challenges of

living within a largely secular and multicultural or multi-faith British societies more directly. As such, Muslims initially, had set up Mosques which included provision of teaching Islam to their children (*Maktab or madrassa*) to respond to the religious needs of their youngsters.

The results of the main survey conducted explored the views and perceptions of Muslim parents who sent their children off to diverse forms of Islamic schooling in the city of Birmingham. The descriptive statistical analysis revealed that there was an equal number of male and female participants who turned up from similar socio-economic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Through the application of inferential data analysis procedures, the main bulk of the data was explored. The overall quantitative data analysis was carried by following a thematic presentation style that focused on exploring reasons behind parents' choice of choosing different types of Islamic schooling for their children and their views concerning the value of Islamic schooling and the wider mainstream schooling.

The analysis clearly suggested that, overall, parents held positive views of the Muslim schools but at the same had high expectations about both the general academic achievement as well as the Islamic provision in these schools. In this regard, majority of the parents shared their view that Muslim schools needed to adopt a more integrated approach to the curriculum striking the balance between Islamic and secular subjects. Parents overwhelmingly thought the Muslim schools did contribute to the social and cultural of integration of Muslim children into the wider multicultural and multi-faith society. As such Muslim schools, they argued, help maintain the social and community cohesion by promoting educational and cultural integration through actively nurturing the positive appreciation and understanding of the religious and cultural diversity in their society. However, one of the significant findings of the survey analysis was the fact that parents appeared to be ambiguous about the overall achievement of Muslim schools

in meeting academic and Islamic religious, moral and spiritual needs of their children. These interesting findings as well as several other important themes that emerged from the survey analysis were discussed in depth by the study participants through semi-structured interviews that also included a selected group of teachers, head teachers and students. This data analysis concerning the first part of the qualitative data that was gathered through semi-structured interviews. Largely, in agreement with the findings of the survey, the interview analysis revealed that parents felt that full-time Muslim schools play an overall constructive role within society in addressing the religious, cultural and education needs of Muslim community and its youngsters. It appeared that most of the Muslim schools realised the significance of integrating the secular and Islamic education goals in the interest of pupils.

The analysis of the focus group discussion with graduates of Muslim schools suggested that, overall, they had positive attitudes towards Islamic schooling. Studying in a single gender school was suggested to have helped them to better study, and in this sense, they saw value in attending Muslim schools as they were mostly offered a single gender schooling model. They further thought that Muslim schools offered an Islamic environment conducive of developing Islamic moral and religious behaviour. This has helped many to develop a good understanding of Islam and observe Islamic moral and cultural values.

The analysis revealed an existence of some mixed feelings about the degree to which the schools offered an adequate Islamic Education provision. They appeared to be concerned that they had to attend additional Islamic Education instruction (*madrassa or maktab*s), a provision that was supposed to be offered by Islamic Schools. Similarly they felt that, although they did not condone the laxity of the mainstream schooling, yet, they did not agree with the strong discipline often applied in the Muslim schools.

Concerning the issue of whether Muslim schools cause segregation, thus are a threat to social cohesion within multicultural societies, they overwhelmingly felt that this is not the case. They suggested that as far as their experience was concerned, Muslim schools did not deliberately segregate students, but encourage social and cultural integration. The analysis revealed that they were concerned with the negative coverage by media about Islamic schooling and fear of public backlash which even had made some Muslim parents fearful of Muslim schools. In this regard, it was significant to note that they felt that Muslim community and Muslim faith-based schools community were under suspicions and attack as illustrated by the Trojan Horse episode in Birmingham,

The analysis also revealed that most of the graduates were also aware of the limitations attached to Islamic schooling. Particularly they felt that schools needed to prepare students better to live in multicultural societies, offer better provision when teaching Islam and improve their overall academic standards.

In light of the above findings, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- ✚ It must be noted that access to faith-based schooling is a democratic right that modern liberal and pluralist societies need to make it available to their citizens and communities. Education is a universal human right enshrined within the UN declaration of human rights as it is related to how individuals, families, communities and societies keep their values and identities across generations. The study recommends that this right needs to be shared equally by all communities within the society. However, the study also recommends that Muslim faith-based schooling while building the confidence of minority faith groups should also prepare young people to live an integrated life within the wider values of the society. Sense of feeling deeply rooted

within one's specific culture and religion should be integrated with learning and interaction with the diverse cultures around the students. In this regard, a sense of shared citizenship and active civic engagement skills and competences need to be nurtured. Above all, respect and acknowledgement of the diversity and differences must be the core and crucial point within all kinds of schooling experiences. The study recommends 'a responsible and rights-based' attitude towards faith-based schooling.

✚ The study strongly recommends that Muslim community should not be reactionary towards the wider hostile attitudes towards Islamic schooling and focus on how to improve the overall quality of Islamic Education ethos and provisions in these schools. As such, Islamic Education needs to become a field that is research-based and reflect creative educational thought and values of Islam. This study was intended to be such empirically-based contribution to the growing field of Islamic Education research.

✚ Muslim educators need to conduct social scientific research into formation of identities and values of Muslim pupils attending Muslim faith-based schools. Furthermore, the research needs to compare the worldviews of Muslim pupils attending mainstream schools as well as Muslim faith-based schools. There is also an urgent need to develop curriculum, text books and teachers training for the staff responsible to teach Islamic Education or Islamic Studies subjects. Muslim schools should not only improve the secular curriculum but invest on the Islamic Education dimension of their schooling experience. This requires a close collaboration with educational departments of the major universities in the UK.

✚ The study recommends the formation of a community-based watchdog i.e. equivalent to Ofsted, for overseeing the quality of Islamic Education within the formal and informal Muslim educational settings. This will ensure quality of education in these institutions

but also assess Muslim schools' role in achieving better social cohesion and integration. Their role will not be surveillance but rather support to better facilitate education and care within these institutions. To avoid bias and to gain the trust of Muslim schools and the community, Muslim educationalists would need to come forward to lead this programme to create harmony within Muslims as well as within the wider society. This will lead to developing benchmarks and standards for Islamic Education in Muslim schools. In order to improve the quality of Muslim faith-based schooling, the issue needs to be looked within an overall educational, social and community cohesion perspective rather than framing it within a political correctness angle.

- ✚ Due to time and resource limitations, the study confined itself to the Muslim schooling within the context of Birmingham. Although Birmingham Muslim community reflects the characteristics of the wider Muslim demographic values in the UK, there is a need to conduct similar research among different Muslim communities (with different ethnic or cultural backgrounds) based in different regions within the UK.
- ✚ Local educational authorities, Muslim faith-based schools and Muslim parents need to collaborate better over education of their children.
- ✚ Muslim faith-based schools need to introduce evidence-based practices in their sector and open more scrutiny and accountability to both parents or community as well as the wider society in providing high standard educational provision in both general curriculum areas as well as in Islamic Education and Islamic Studies related subjects.

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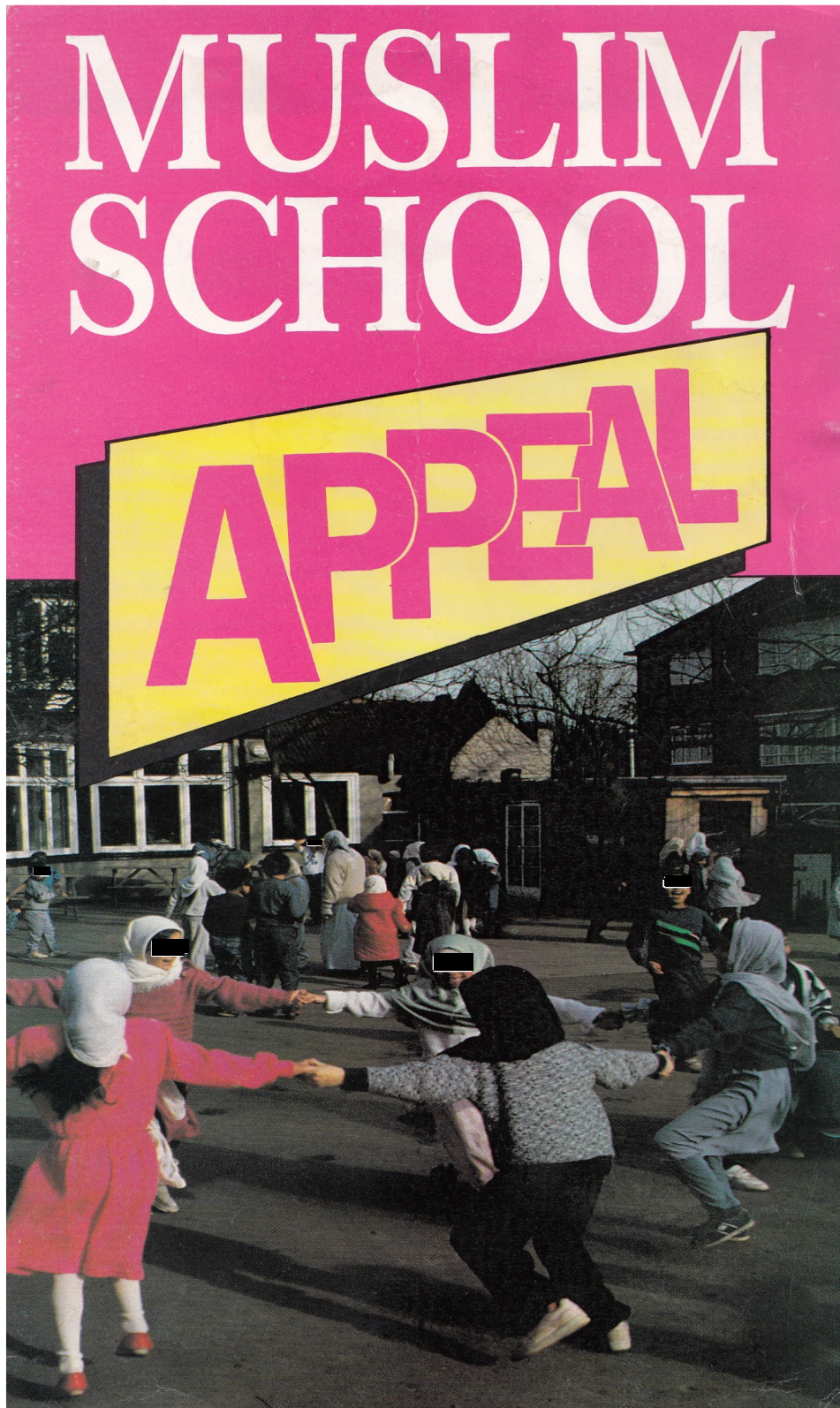
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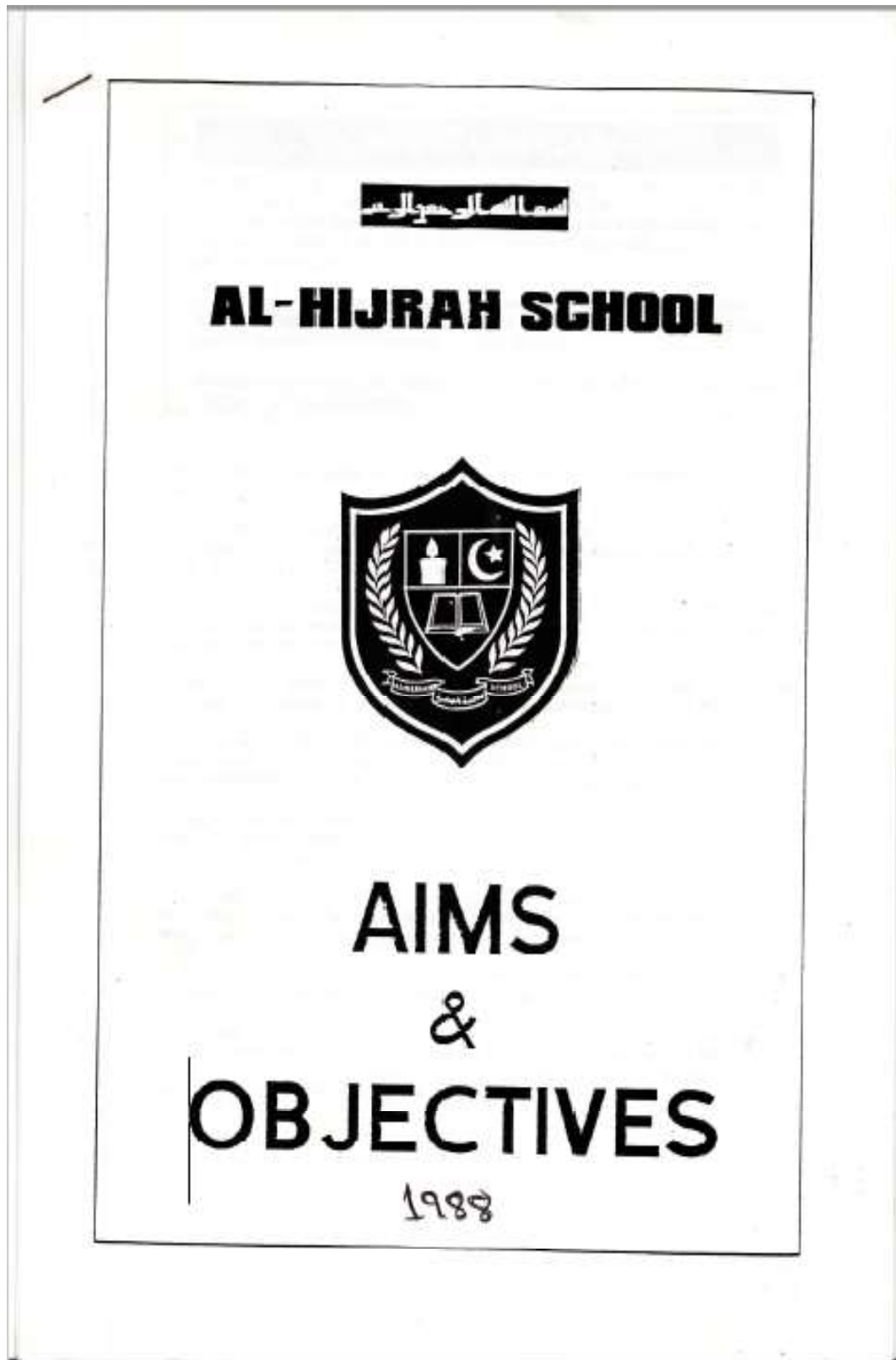
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Appendix

Appendix 1.1



Appendix 1.2



**EDUCATION AND THE MUSLIM SOCIETY
IN GREAT BRITAIN**

by

Syed Ali Ashraf

Appendix 1.4.1 GCSEs: Independent Islamic schools lead the list of top 20 Birmingham schools in 2014

As teenagers across Birmingham are tomorrow due to receive their GCSE results, latest Department for Education statistics show that three Muslim schools in the city had the top 20 results in 2014



Independent Islamic schools in Birmingham are proving to be the cream of the crop when it comes to GCSE results, latest figures have revealed.

As teenagers across Birmingham are tomorrow due to receive their GCSE results, latest Department for Education statistics show that three Muslim schools in the city had the top 20 results last summer.

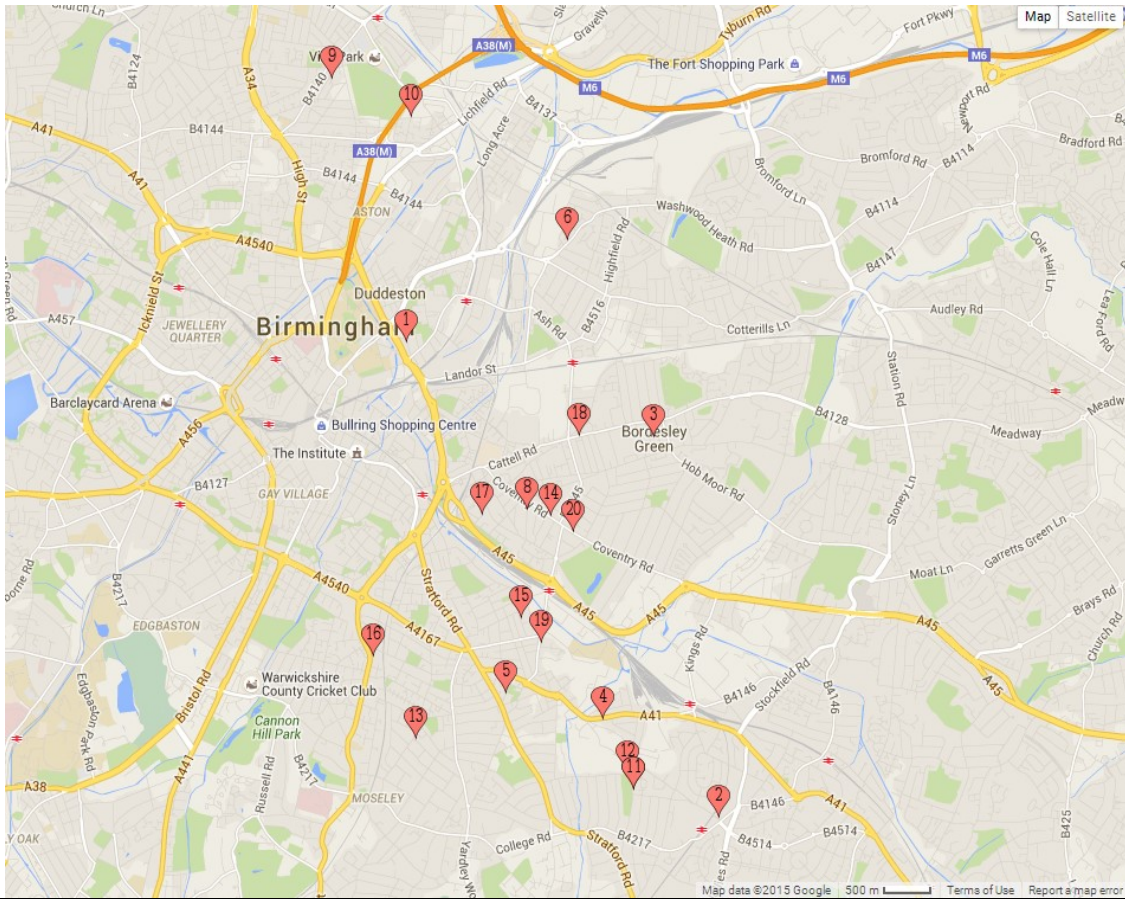
Al-Burhan Grammar School, run from Spring Road Centre in Acocks Green, had 100 per cent of its pupils attaining at least five GCSEs grades A*-C, including maths and English

Appendix 1.4.2 BRUM'S TOP 20 SCHOOLS FOR GCSE RESULTS IN 2013/14

School// percentage achieving five or more A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and maths

1. Al-Burhan Grammar School// 100%
2. Al-Furqan Community College// 100%
3. Edgbaston High School for Girls// 100%
4. King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys// 100%
5. King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls// 100%
6. King Edward VI Five Ways School// 100%
7. King Edward VI Handsworth School// 99%
8. Sutton Coldfield Grammar School for Girls// 99%
9. Bishop Vesey's Grammar School// 97%
10. King Edward VI Aston School// 96%
11. Handsworth Grammar School// 92%
12. Highclare School// 89%
13. Bishop Challoner Catholic College// 82%
14. Darul Uloom Islamic High School// 81%
15. Kings Norton Girls' School// 81%
16. St Paul's School for Girls// 80%
17. The Arthur Terry School// 79%
18. Selly Park Technology College for Girls// 78%
19. Bishop Walsh Catholic School// 77%
10. Perry Beeches the Academy// 77%

Appendix 1.5 (Muslim faith-based Schools within Birmingham region)



Type	Gender	Locality	AMS UK Member School	Number of Pupils	Year of Establishment
(1) Independent Primary School	Mixed	Nechells, Birmingham	Yes	131	2008
(2) Independent Primary School	Mixed	Tyseley, Birmingham	Yes	178	2005
(3) Independent Secondary Grammar School	Girls	Tyseley, Birmingham	Yes	95	2002
(4) Independent Secondary	Boys	Tyseley, Birmingham.	No	60	2010

and Further Education Community College					
(5) Independent Secondary Community College	Girls	Tyseley, Birmingham	No	75	1990
(6) Independent Primary School	Mixed	Tyseley, Birmingham	No	529	1998
(7) State Funded Primary and Secondary School	Mixed	Bordesley Green, Birmingham	Yes	767	2001
(8) Independent Secondary School	Girls	Saltley, Birmingham	Yes	74	1992
(9) Independent Secondary College	Girls	Sparkhill, Birmingham	Yes	36	2009
(10) Independent Nursery and Primary Academy	Mixed	Small Heath, Birmingham	Yes	-	2008
(11) Independent Secondary Academy	Mixed	Bordesley Green, Birmingham	No	48	2013
(12) Independent Secondary School	Girls	Aston, Birmingham	Yes	134	1990
(13) Independent Primary School	Mixed	Small Heath, Birmingham	No	71	2001
(14) Independent Secondary and Further Education School	Boys	Small Heath, Birmingham	Yes	132	1985

(15) Independent Nursery and Primary School	Mixed	Bordesley Green, Birmingham	Yes	206	1998
(16) Independent Secondary School	Girls	Small Heath, Birmingham	Yes	109	2010
(17) Independent Secondary and Further Education School	Mixed	Sparkbrook, Birmingham	No	154	2003
(18) Independent Secondary and Further Education Academy	Mixed	Balsall Heath, Birmingham	No	147	2011
(19) Independent Primary School	Mixed	Small Heath, Birmingham	No	151	2002
(20) Independent Secondary School	Girls	Moseley, Birmingham	Yes	68	1997

Appendix 1.6.1

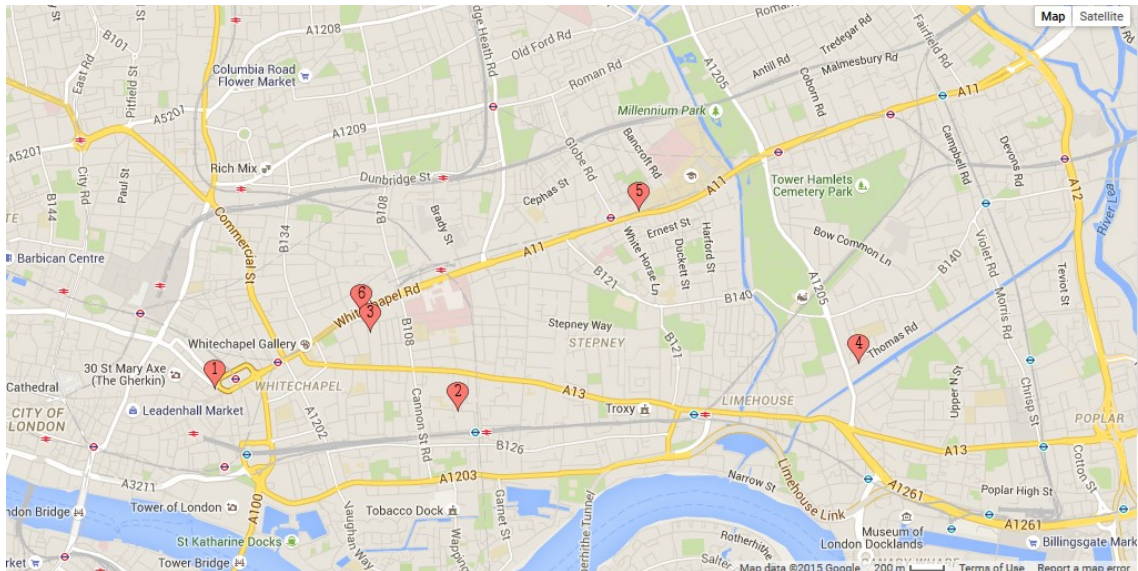
Trojan Horse: 21 Schools Investigated

<u>School</u>	<u>Report Findings</u>
1 Adderley Primary School	Rated good
2 Alston Primary School	Rated inadequate
3 Golden Hillock School - A Park View Academy (current Ark Boulton Academy)	Rated inadequate in all categories
4 Gracelands Nursery School	Rated good
5 Heathfield Primary School	Requires improvement
6 Highfield Junior and Infant School	Requires improvement
7 Ladypool Primary School	Requires improvement
8 Marlborough Junior School	Rated good
9 Montgomery Primary Academy	Not previously rated
10 Nansen Primary School - A Park View Academy	Rated inadequate for safety of pupils and leadership, while pupils' achievement and quality of teaching has been labelled "requires improvement"
11 Ninestiles School, an Academy	Rated outstanding
12 Regents Park Community Primary School	Rated outstanding
13 Shaw Hill Primary School	Rated good
14 Small Heath School	Rated outstanding
15 Washwood Heath Academy	Not previously rated
16 Waverley School	Rated outstanding
17 Welford Primary School	Rated good
18 Oldknow Academy (currently Ark Chamber Primary Academy)	Rated inadequate overall, receiving the same label for both leadership and the safety of pupils. However, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement were both rated outstanding.
19 Park View School (currently Rockwood Academy)	Rated inadequate overall, receiving the same label for both leadership and the safety of pupils. However, the quality of teaching and the pupils' achievement was rated good.
20 Saltley School and Specialist Science College	Rated inadequate in all categories
21 Chilwell Croft Academy	Not previously rated

Appendix 1.6.2

Operation Trojan Horse

Tower Hamlets - London



- 1 Sir John Cass's Foundation and Red Coat Church of England school
- 2 Jamiatul Ummah
- 3 Ebrahim Academy
- 4 East London Islamic School
- 5 Mazahirul Uloom school.
- 6 Al Mizan East London Academy

Appendix 2.1

General letter to participate in the study
--

Mr Mohammad Arif
72 Hob Moor Rd
Small Heath
Birmingham
B10 9BU

Tel: 0121 766 5454
Mob: 07939 034162
Email: m664arif@yahoo.co.uk

Date:

Dear Sir / Madam

Assalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullah wa Barakatuh

I am currently conducting research for the award of PhD with Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE) and the title of my research is '**Exploring the role of Muslim faith-based schools, of Birmingham, in meeting the religious, cultural and educational needs of Muslim children and expectations of their parents**'. The aim of the questionnaire is to find out and assess views on education provided by Muslim faith-based schools.

I am a teacher and Imam by profession and have taught in Muslim faith-based schools in Birmingham for over fifteen years. I am a self-financed student and I hope the outcome of my research will add new knowledge and contribute positively to the field of education of Muslims living within the UK.

You are kindly requested to fill in your details below if you are interested in participating in a semi-structured interview or group discussion and return it to me in the enclosed pre-paid envelope. I assure you that if you choose to participate in an interview your responses as well as your identity will be treated with absolute confidentiality; no information about individuals or schools will be made available to public other than the final results of the research.

Name.....

Tel: Email:

Should you need any further clarification or more information, Please do not hesitate to contact me using the contact details above.

Once again, thank you very much for your time and contribution to this research.

Wassalam alaikum wa rahmatullah Wa Barakatuh,

Yours faithfully,

Mohammad Arif (Researcher)

Appendix 2.2.1 Letter attached to the Questionnaire for parents

Letter attached to the Questionnaire for Parents

Mr Mohammad Arif
72 Hob Moor Rd
Small Heath
Birmingham
B10 9BU

Tel: 0121 766 5454
Mob: 07939 034162
Email: m664arif@yahoo.co.uk

Date:

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I am a teacher and Imam by profession and have taught in Muslim faith-based schools in Birmingham for over fifteen years. I am self-financed student and I hope the outcome of my research will add new knowledge and contribute positively to the field of education of Muslims living within the UK.

You are kindly requested to complete the questionnaire and return it to me at the end of the programme. May I assure you that your responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality; no information about individuals or schools will be made available to public other than the final results of the research.

Should you need any clarification or more information, please do not hesitate to contact me using the contact details above.

Once again, thank you very much for your time and contribution to this research.

Wassalam alaikum wa rahmatullah Wa Barakatuh

Yours faithfully

Mohammad Arif
Researcher

Appendix 2.2.2 Questionnaire: parents

Questionnaire: Parents

1.1. How would you describe your gender?

Please tick the appropriate answer.

		Tick
1	Male	
2	Female	

1.2. What is your age group?

Please tick the appropriate answer.

		Tick
1	Under 20	
2	21-30	
3	31-40	
4	41-60	
5	61 +	

.....

1.3. What is your country of Origin / ethnicity? (OPTIONAL)

Please tick the appropriate answer; you may tick more than one answer.

		Tick
1	Asian (Mirpuri/ Kashmiri/Pakistani)	
2	Asian (Indian)	
3	Asian (Bengali)	
4	Arab	
5	Somali	
6	Turkish	

Other (Please specify).....

1.4. Does your child(ren) attend or has attended a Muslim faith-based School (Muslim school)?

Please tick the appropriate answer.

		Tick
1	Yes	
2	No	

1.4.1. If yes, do you think you made the right decision for your child?

Please tick the appropriate answer.

		Tick
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Not sure	

1.5. Do you have family members whose child (ren) attend or have attended a Muslim School?

Please tick the appropriate answer.

		Tick
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Not sure	

1.6. Do you think your children would have benefited more by attending a state school?

Please tick the appropriate answer.

		Tick
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Not sure	

1.7. Would you advise other Muslim parents to choose a Muslim school over a state school?

Please tick the appropriate answer.

		Tick
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Not sure	

1.8. Does your child (ren) attend or has attended a state school?

Please tick the appropriate answer.

		Tick
1	Yes	
2	No	

1.8.1. If yes, would you have preferred your child to have attended a Muslim school instead?

Please tick the appropriate answer.

		Tick
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Not sure	

1.9. Do you think your child is able to integrate well with people of other or no faith?

Please tick the appropriate answer.

		Tick
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Not sure	

2.1. In your opinion, what type(s) of education do Muslim parents seek for their children from Muslim Schools?

Please tick the appropriate answer; you may tick more than one answer.

		Agree (1)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (2)
A	Qur'anic and Islamic teaching only			
B	Both secular as well as Islamic teaching			
C	Secular teaching only			
D	Developing skills for future employment only			

Please add here any other views/opinions, comments, etc related to question 2.1.

.....

.....

2.2. In your opinion, why did Muslims establish separate Muslim schools?

Please tick ONE answer from **each** statement below.

	Because...	Agree (1)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (2)
A	State schools are unable to meet the needs of Muslim children adequately			
B	Some Muslims feel state schools do not promote Islamic ethics and morals			
C	Some parents consider state schools environment not suitable for their children			
D	Some Muslims feel secularism is welcomed in current state schools and this is reflected in the teaching approaches adopted			
E	Some Muslim parents feel that Christianity is prevalent (widespread) in state schools			
F	Full Islamic values are difficult to be achieved in state schools			

Please add here any other views/opinions, comments, etc related to question 2.2.

.....

.....

2.3. Are you aware of the different types of Muslim schools that operate within the UK?

Please tick the appropriate answer.

		Tick
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Not Sure	

2.4. Which type of Muslim school do you support?

Please tick the appropriate answer; you may tick more than one answer.

		Tick
1	Single gender Muslim schools for girls only	
2	Single gender Muslim schools for boys only	
3	*Dual Muslim schools, for boys and girls	
4	Full-board Residential schools such as Dar al Uloom schools	
5	I do not support separate Muslim schools	

*Boys and girls taught separately in the same school

Please add here any other views/opinions, comments, etc related to question 2.4.

.....

.....

3.1. In your opinion, why do some Muslims choose to send their child (ren) to fee paying Muslim schools rather than to state schools? This is because Muslim schools...

Please tick ONE answer from **each** statement below.

		Agree (1)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (2)
A	Compliment Islamic home environment			
B	Tend to have higher academic achievement			
C	Are single gender schools			
D	Encourage good <i>Tarbiyyah</i> (upbringing) and Islamic manners			

E	Incorporate Islamic curriculum and academic subjects			
F	Have strong discipline within them			
G	Teachers act as religious role models for the children			
H	Teach religious and community languages such as Arabic & Urdu			
I	Produce balanced and good citizens			

Please add here any other views/opinions, comments, etc related to question 3.1.

.....

.....

3.2. In your opinion, why do some Muslims choose NOT to send their child (ren) to Muslim schools?

Please tick ONE answer from **each** statement below.

		Agree (1)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (2)
A	Not local			
B	Transport issues			
C	Fee unaffordable			
D	Muslim schools are too strict			
E	Lack modern teaching facilities & resources			
F	Fear that Muslim schools may breed fanatics			
G	Fear that they may isolate children from integration into the wider society			

H	Fear that the child may become more religious than parents' liking			
I	Absence of clear aims & objectives or vision of schools			

Please add here any other views/opinions, comments, etc related to question 3.2.

.....

.....

4.1. What is your view about the curriculum of Muslim schools?

Please tick ONE answer from **each** statement.

		Agree (1)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (2)
A	The curriculum of Muslim schools effectively prepares children to live within the wider society			
B	The curriculum of Muslim schools promotes cohesion and community integration			
C	The curriculum of Muslim schools is underpinned by Islamic principles			
D	The curriculum of Muslim schools prepares children for both worlds, <i>Deen</i> and <i>Dunia</i> (Here and Hereafter)			

Please add here any other views/opinions, comments, etc related to question 4.1.

.....

.....

4.2. In your view, how are the Islamic principles incorporated into the curriculum of Muslim schools?

Please tick ONE answer from **each** statement below.

		Agree (1)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (2)
A	By introducing Islamic festivals into the curriculum			
B	By incorporating the practices of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his companions into the curriculum			
C	By creating a culture that encourages the religious practices such as the daily prayers and fasting during Ramadan			
D	By organising trips as part of the curriculum to religious sites			

E	By recruiting teachers who uphold Islamic principles as a way of life			
F	By co-opting Islamic and community languages such as Arabic and Urdu, as part of the curriculum			
G	By Islamising the curriculum & teaching approaches			

Please add here any other views/opinions, comments, etc related to question 4.2.

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.....

5.1. What is your view about the academic performance of Muslim schools?

Please tick ONE answer from **each** statement below.

		Agree (1)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (2)
A	I am satisfied with the performance standards achieved in Muslim schools			
B	Muslim schools are performing better than state schools			
C	Single gender schools perform better than mixed schools			
D	Muslim schools need to work harder and produce better results			

Please add here any other views/opinions, comments, etc related to question 5.1.

.....

.....

5.2. Some Muslims believe that Muslim children achieve better academic standards when they are taught within Muslim schools? What do you think are the reasons?

Please tick ONE answer from **each** statement below.

		Agree (1)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (2)
A	Class size is small			
B	Admission criteria is selective			
C	Schools and parents share commitment			
D	Schools are single gender			
E	Existence of religious and community spirit			
F	Better role models			

Please add here any other views/opinions, comments, etc related to question 5.2.

.....

.....

6.1. In your opinion, do Muslim schools have strategies to prepare children for the wider multi-faith society?

Please tick the appropriate answer.

		Tick
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Not sure	

6.2. In your view, how do Muslim schools prepare children for integration into a multi-faith society?

Please tick ONE answer from **each** statement below.

		Agree (1)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (2)
A	By taking active part in local and national events			
B	By taking active part in interschool sport events			
C	By employing teachers of other or no faith			
D	By organising trips to places of worship of other faiths			
E	By arranging visits to other schools, theme parks and Museums			

Please add here any other views/opinions, comments, etc related to question 6.2.

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.....

6.3. In your opinion, do you think Muslim schools support religious narrow-mindedness (intolerance) against Muslims of other sects?

Please tick ONE answer from **each** statement below.

		Agree (1)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (2)
A	Muslim schools do not promote religious narrow-mindedness against Muslims of other sects			
B	Some Muslim schools may express religious narrow-mindedness against Muslims of other sects			
C	Muslim schools promote community cohesion between different sects of Muslims			
D	Muslim schools support religious sectarianism			

Please add here any other views/opinions, comments, etc related to question 6.3.

.....

.....

6.4. In your opinion, do you think Muslim schools support religious narrow-mindedness (intolerance) against Non-Muslims or the wider society?

Please tick ONE answer from **each** statement below.

		Agree (1)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (2)
A	Muslim schools do not support religious narrow-mindedness against non-Muslims or the wider society			
B	Some Muslim schools may express religious narrow-mindedness against non-Muslims or the wider society			
C	Muslim schools promote Isolation of Muslims from the wider society			
D	Muslim schools discourage children from having friendship with non-Muslims			

Please add here any other views/opinions, comments, etc related to question 6.4.

.....

7.1. Would you be interested in participating further in this study: such as an interview?

Please tick the appropriate answer.

		Tick
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Not Sure	

7.1.2. If yes, please fill in your contact details below:

Name.....

Tel: Email:

8.1. Please use the space below to add any further comments or views that you feel are important for this study.

.....

.....

.....

.....

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Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.

Mohammad Arif

Researcher

Appendix 2.3 Interview questions for parents

Interview questions for parents

Question 1 Objective 1

Topics to cover

- Types of full-time Muslim Schools.
 - Differences between full-time Muslim schools.
1. Are you aware of the different types of full-time Muslim Schools?
 2. What do you think are the main differences between them, if any?
 3. Do you support full-time Muslim schools?
 4. In your opinion, which type of full-time Muslim school do you feel is more effective?

Question 2 Objective 2

Topics to cover

- Theory of Islamic education.
- Why full-time Muslim schools
- Upbringing (Tarbiyyah) standards of full-time Muslim schools.

Note: Hereunder 'Muslim school/s' mean 'full-time Muslim school/s'.

1. Do you think there was a need to establish separate Muslim schools?
2. Why do you think Muslim schools were established?
3. Would you prefer your child to attend a Muslim school over a state school?
4. What criteria do you have while selecting a Muslim school for your child?
5. Do you think the teachings of Islam add value to the Tarbiyyah?
6. How do you feel about the Tarbiyyah standards or aspects of Muslim schools? Do you think there are areas to improve?
7. Do you feel your child would have achieved better Tarbiyyah by attending a state school?
8. Do you know of any parents who may choose a state school over a Muslim school? What do you think are the reasons?

Question 3 Objective 3

Topics to cover

- Does the curriculum reflect the wider reality?
 - Does the curriculum incorporate educational principles of Islam?
 - Ethos of full-time Muslim schools.
 - Do full-time Muslim schools achieve their goals?
-
1. Do you think the subjects or curriculum taught in Muslim schools prepares the children for a Multi-faith society?
 2. Do you think Muslim schools prepare children to be dutiful to Allah's rules by practising Islam?
 3. Are you generally happy with the ethos of Muslim schools?
 4. Do you think Muslim schools are able to uphold their ethos?
 5. Do you think Muslim schools achieve their goals?
 6. What additional qualities/aspects would you like to see incorporated in Muslim schools?

Question 4 objective 4

Topics to cover

- Academic achievement.
 - Concerns of parents & community.
 - Main challenges.
 - Integration of Muslim children to the wider society.
-
1. Are you satisfied with the academic achievement of Muslim schools in general?
 2. Do you think Muslim schools, generally, meet the concerns of the Muslim parents and the community?
 3. What do you think are the main challenges that Muslim schools should address?
 4. Do you think Muslim schools generally prepare children to live within the wider society?

5. Do you think graduate of Muslim schools are able to contribute positively and live side by side within the multi-faith society?
6. Do you think the gradual increasing number of Muslim schools promotes isolation of Muslim children from the wider society?

Appendix 2.4 (Group Discussion transcript sample)

Group Discussion transcript sample

Type: Group Discussion

Date:

Time Specified: 45 – 60mins

Group Discussion 5: 2 Participants

- **1 Male Muslim faith-based school graduate**
- **1 Male Muslim faith-based school student**

Researcher: Assalamu alaykum Brothers

Participants: Walaykum salaam

Researcher: Brother [REDACTED] and Brother [REDACTED] how are you today?

Participant 1: Alhamdulillah

Researcher: Brother [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] Jazak Allahu Khayr for giving me the time to interview

Participant 1: no problem

Researcher: Barakallahu fikum. Insha'Allah it will be about 30 minutes to 40 minutes. I am conducting a research for my PhD in Islamic Education

Participant 1: okay

Researcher: I am trying to see your views about Muslim Schools. Have you studied in Muslim Schools?

Participant 1: yeah

Participant 2: I've been all my life.

Researcher: all life?

Participant 2: yeah

Researcher: how old were you when you started Muslim School?

Participant 2: 4

Researcher: Masha'Allah. How about you?

Participant 1: I think I was about 4 as well. 5.

Researcher: 4/5?

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: Do you mind if I record it because it will be – your name will not be mentioned anywhere and your school name will not be mentioned anywhere, it's just for my study purposes, is that okay?

Participant 2: yeah

Participant 1: that's fine.

Researcher: Barakallahu fik. So Masha'Allah you studied all your life in a Muslim School?

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: and you graduated?

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: Masha'Allah, last year or the year before?

Participant 1: last year

Researcher: what about you?

Participant 2: I'm in year 9 going into year 10

Researcher: year 10, Masha'Allah. Okay, Jazak Allahu Khayr. As I have mentioned everything we discuss will be confidential, it will not be released anything to anyone other than my study purposes, yeah?

Participant 1: yeah.

Researcher: Insha'Allah, Jazak Allahu Khayr. You are aware of different type of Muslim schools?

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: yeah?

Participant 2: yes

Researcher: So if you can tell me a little bit more?

Participant 1: are you talking about different – the different followings?

Researcher: like boarding Muslim school and -

Participant 1: okay

Researcher: other Muslim schools. Which one did you attend? Boarding Muslim school?

Participant 1: no, normal one.

Researcher: normal and you?

Participant 2: same.

Researcher: same, okay. So which one do you think is better for Muslim children? Boarding Muslim school or the normal one?

Participant 1: personally I think it's the normal one.

Researcher: what makes you think so?

Participant 1: because you know you learn the things from there and implement it within your own home and obviously it's great to stay with your family rather than being sent off somewhere.

Researcher: I see. Okay. What do you think? You'd rather be in a state school or boarding Muslim school?

Participant 2: a normal state school because-

Researcher: normal Muslim state school?

Participant 2: yeah normal Muslim state school because when you come home from school you can actually tell your parents what you learnt about Islam and like you said you can implement it at home

Researcher: I see

Participant 2: and you can pray at home as well rather than staying at a boarding school without all the family.

Researcher: Masha'Allah. Okay we move to another area now which is to do with the theory – why Muslims established Muslim schools in your opinion and the Tarbiyyah standard in Muslim schools. Of course you lot studied or are studying at Muslim schools -

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: so you will know what better than many who are not in Muslim schools-

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: because you are inside product, yeah?

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: So do you think there was a need to establish separate Muslim schools?

Participant 1: I think so, yeah. There's certain things like the level of respect that is shown to teachers in Muslim schools which is completely different compared to normal schools because in Islam you believe that your teachers are almost you know given the same respect as your parents so you'll see that the level of respect different and once you respect the teacher you can obviously have relationship with them and learn better.

Researcher: So do you think so?

Participant 2: I think Islamic schools are actually good for the Muslim community since the child benefits from learning about Islam as well as normal studies because people think in an Islamic school you just learn about Islam and not normal education like maths, science and English we actually do as well as do Islamic studies stuff because I know people from other schools and they lack knowledge in their own religion

Researcher: I see.

Participant 2: and so I tell them a bit about it.

Researcher: so you have faith friends who are studying in state schools?

Participant 2: yes

Researcher: and you think you know as good as them and even better?

Participant 2: yeah

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: Masha'Allah, why do you think Muslim established Muslim schools? Why?

Participant 2: so our – like this generation when we grow up we know about our religion and we can actually spread it because if this – the elder people who actually created the Islamic schools they didn't teach us anything about Islam then Islam would just disappear into the world and no one would know about it in the future.

Researcher: I see. So they came to make you good Muslims?

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: and for better educational standards you think?

Participant 1: yeah, I mean school is something that everyone grows up with and the reason why they probably established Muslim schools is so that the children who actually going to the schools they growing up learning about Islam as well as normal education and Islam isn't just you know something that we learn and teach it's a way of life.

Researcher: Masha'Allah. Would you prefer you had a choice studying in a state school over a Muslim school?

Participant 2: I would say Islamic school.

Researcher: Islamic school? What about you [REDACTED]?

Participant 1: I prefer to stay at an Islamic school.

Researcher: why? Why?

Participant 1: simply just the fact that I don't know I just get along with the people there you are relate and the different activities that we do, yeah especially in a Islamic school that are different such things like praying and using them kind of things together you can almost relate with other people.

Researcher: I see. If you had the choice today would you choose state school or would you remain in your school?

Participant 1: I'm not in an Islamic school right now.

Researcher: you finished?

Participant 1: yeah.

Researcher: what about you [REDACTED]?

Participant 2: I will remain.

Researcher: you will remain? Would you go to [REDACTED] School?

Participant 2: no

Researcher: no? You'd rather be in your school?

Participant 2: yeah

Researcher: I see. What makes you so confident?

Participant 2: the Islamic ethos is there rather than [REDACTED] might be Muslims in [REDACTED] like there's no time to pray, there's no actual praying area while in [REDACTED] there's an actual prayer hall where we have standard times to pray and we actually have better religious studies and we have Muslim teachers.

Researcher: in [REDACTED] their grades is 74 whereas in your school the grade is 72 would you sacrifice the grade?

Participant 2: 2% isn't that big so I'd stay in an Islamic school.

Researcher: do you think you'd catch up?

Participant 2: yeah

Researcher: okay, what about the Tarbiyyah standard of your school? Islamic Tarbiyyah and others? How do you look into it?

Participant 1: like I said before people respect their teachers more and they don't raise their voices and their teachers actually give a command once before it is fulfilled so it's definitely greater compared to other schools whereas people you know there's a lot more – there's a higher level of incidents that's tolerated there simply due to the fact that some of the people over there aren't controlled and come from you know different backgrounds and maybe even violent backgrounds so it's slightly different for them to relate to the teachers whereas the teachers in Islamic school look at their pupils as Muslim brothers they embrace them more.

Researcher: [REDACTED]? What do you think of the Tarbiyyah standards in your school?

Participant 2: like I said before its Islamic ethos so you can get along with your Muslim brothers and friends – it's easier to make friends there, like most of them are like Pakistani but then they are like Arab as well so you can learn a lot about differ Muslim cultures at the same time.

Researcher: what do you think are there areas to improve?

Participant 2: money wise and stuff like that they can improve.

Researcher: okay, what do you think [REDACTED]?

Participant 1: in terms of facilities for like the past 50 years I think Islamic schools have been lacking a lot simply due to the fact they haven't got as much funding compared to other schools and support from the government but I think slowly, gradually they are getting out of that and they are getting a little more support and thereby little by little they are improving every single day, yeah.

Researcher: okay. Would you think if were in a state school you would have better Tarbiyyah?

Participant 1: no

Researcher: no?

Participant 2: not really, no.

Researcher: no? Where you if you where in a state school do you think you'd have better grades?

Participant 1: no

Researcher: no? What do you think?

Participant 2: I don't really know, I don't think so. I don't think I'd gotten better grades.

Researcher: what makes you think so?

Participant 2: because there is a lot of things that are allowed in state schools, things from the western culture which aren't actually even allowed through the gates of you know Muslim schools which definitely helps keeps a safe learning environment but it's easier for students to learn and co-operate with other people.

Researcher: so do you think that you achieved since you finished your GCSE's? Do you think that you achieved better grades because you are in an Islamic school?

Participant 1: I think you would have, yeah definitely you know it's substantially better compared to what it would have been if I went to a normal state school.

Researcher: what about you [REDACTED]?

Participant 2: in state school and Islamic school you do learn the same things but you learn additional stuff in Islamic school but you'll still be learning the same curriculum, the same thing in history, English, science so I think the grades would be the same but there are stuff that can distract you in state schools that are not in Islamic schools so you can get better grades in Islamic schools.

Researcher: Alright so you think you are likely to get better grades in Islamic schools because less distractions and or distractions? Okay do you know of any students in your school who rather be in a state school than an Islamic school?

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: what makes you – what makes them feel that they'd rather be in a state school?

Participant 1: I think everyone at one point while going to an Islamic school felt that they had to go to a state school but by the end of you know they just graduated like last year by the time everyone finished they were so happy that they never made that decision to move simply due to the fact that they were able to learn and keep their heads down and focus for the past you know 9/10 years that they were at this school.

Researcher: what about you do you know of any child that would rather be in a state school?

Participant 2: almost everybody to be honest at a certain time because like [REDACTED] schools and maybe other Islamic schools they lack facilities and people wish they be at better schools that have much better facilities but at the end of the day they do realise that they learn about their own religion and they get to pray at the same time.

Researcher: so your students -your friends was it – was it because your schools are strict that's why or because there is too much homework that why or it's because of sport facilities or not there that's why?

Participant 1: everyone just wanted a sort of pitch and I think that's the main reason why they wanted to swap schools

Researcher: I see

Participant 1: apart from that there was – the learning environment was pretty normal compared to another school and we would obviously go to other schools and visit sometimes and people would be the same but you could tell there's a difference in learning environment and with most Islamic schools there are smaller classes and its more secluded which allows teachers to obviously concentrate more on each pupil.

Researcher: and do you think the other children who were in state school they were happier than you?

Participant 1: I don't really know. What would you mean by happiness?

Researcher: happier because they looked after better by their teachers? They were happier because they got more qualified teachers? What do you think that wasn't there?

Participant 1: not really too sure.

Researcher: what about you?

Participant 2: I don't think they would be – they probably the same level of happiness because – well maybe even less in state school because maybe in state schools I'm not sure but teachers would just go there to teach and then finish their job while in [REDACTED] you actually have a relationship with your teacher he knows like what kind of pupil you are and he actually help you to improve your grade.

Researcher: okay. If you had the choice to leave a state school – an Islamic school and go to state school what would be the main reason for you to do so?

Participant 1: I would probably leave if the other school had a sort of pitch to play football apart from that I don't think there are any reasons to leave a perfectly normal Islamic school.

Researcher: I see. What about you?

Participant 2: exact same reason if they had better sports facilities.

Researcher: so the sports facilities and do you think why Muslim schools don't have better sports facilities?

Participant 1: due to lack of contribution and stuff like that from the government and the surrounding schools.

Researcher: I see. I see. So is the funding the problem?

Participant 1: yeah that's one of the main problems.

Researcher: okay, excellent we move to another area now Insha'Allah which is curriculum of your school. Does the curriculum builds you and prepares you to become good citizen and to fit into the non-Muslim society, also the ethos of your school and full-time Muslim schools do you think – do they achieve their goals. So do you think the subject taught in your schools prepare you to live in a non-Muslim society?

Participant 1: yeah because like I said we did use to visit other schools would certain sports activities and stuff we would visit and go off campus and see what it was like in other schools and just in the general surrounding area and there was a lot of non-Muslims and also there was a couple of non-Muslim teachers which come in and share their thoughts so it's pretty easy to get along with the rest of the world.

Researcher: so leaving a Islamic school getting graduated from an Islamic school and you went for a college for the first year

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: do you think you fit in with Muslims as well as non-Muslims?

Participant 1: yeah it's perfectly fine.

Researcher: you don't find any gaps or difficulties in communicating with them?

Participant 1: no.

Researcher: no?

Participant 1: no.

Researcher: what about you? Do you think that your school prepares you well to live with the non-Muslims?

Participant 2: yeah in Islamic studies and religious education they actually tell us like the dangers that in the outside world and they prepare us well and even science you have a science teacher he tells us what can happen in college and stay away from this and that so yeah they prepare us well.

Researcher: and do you think you will have difficulty because in your school you're almost like a boys with boys and girls with girls, salah and fasting and everything is looked after so when you go to the wider society do you think that is a problem?

Participant 1: no because there's obviously every single campus is going to have their own little set people which are obviously still going to be following religion and have come from these kinds of schools where there is - from different sides of this city it's still that surrounding community is still going to be there and it be easy for you to find the people and fit in.

Researcher: so do you think that you are – you are easy to because you use to have largely Muslim teachers now the majority are maybe not Muslim teachers

Participant 1: yeah all of them for me.

Researcher: all of them are not Muslim? You used to have all Muslim friends in the past -

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: now you are largely maybe non-Muslims?

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: so do you feel any problem getting on with them?

Participant 1: no

Researcher: how do you fit with them?

Participant 1: I don't know in terms of religion nobody really talks about religion I mean I don't know you just work as you would normally.

Researcher: you don't find it a challenge or -

Participant 1: no I don't think there are any challenges.

Researcher: no challenges? Good. So they prepared you well to fit in?

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: Alhamdulillah. Okay excellent some say that Muslim children become fanatical when they study in Islamic schools? What do you think of their views? [REDACTED]?

Participant 2: what's the definition of fanatic?

Researcher: fanatic that you become like terrorists? Extremist?

Participant 2: that's bull

Researcher: no?

[Laughing]

Participant 2: that's just a lie.

Researcher: okay.

Participant 2: Some people they will like – they want to - they want revenge

Researcher: okay

Participant 2: on the like the Americans

Researcher: okay

Participant 2: and they just get brainwashed by some next things I don't know what goes up in their heads but they know that in Islam that's wrong I don't know why they continue to do it. They probably have a wrong state of mind.

Researcher: what do you think?

Participant 1: what is the question?

Researcher: that some say that Muslim schools produce fanatics and terrorists?

Participant 1: I don't really think any terrorism is taught within Muslim schools firstly it wouldn't be allowed, secondary its illegal and we obviously have Ofsted checking in they'll be sure to find any terrorists if there was any which you know there hasn't been and I haven't heard any stories of any terrorists being produced from my school or surrounding schools and you know for someone to make a statement like that is you know completely wrong.

Researcher: so you think they just make up things without any proper findings?

Participant 1: I mean to say – to claim such a statement you know someone might even be mentally challenged to be saying something so offensive which can offend thousands people they should definitely reconsider this statement before giving it out.

Researcher: excellent, okay. Okay do you think Muslim schools achieved their goals? Of course they came they were built from within - the contributions of the community, little fees from the parents and donations from here and there. So they came for a reason as be said earlier so do you think Muslim schools are successful and they achieve their goals?

Participant 1: I think every single person who actually passes through with good grades from these Muslim schools is definitely you know a goal achieved, every single person because they learnt at least one good thing in their life apart from education they must have learnt at least one thing which definitely will help them out with the rest of their life which has derived from Islam.

Researcher: so you think you are achieving your goals?

Participant 1: maybe not to a certain extent that all the goals that you know that the person who founded the school wants to give at the start but little by little they're achieving more goals.

Researcher: they achieving more goals?

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: the main goals for those who established Muslim schools were to get good results for the students, good GCSE results and good Muslims, boys and girls. So do you think they are achieving these two?

Participant 1: yeah I think they are.

Researcher: what do you think [REDACTED]?

Participant 2: I think the same but it can vary from student to student.

Researcher: what makes it vary?

Participant 2: it depends on how the upbringing of the child was like if the background of the family they might have been drug dealers, they might have been some apparent bad-man or something like that then it can actually mess up the child's childhood and adulthood.

Researcher: so do you think generally your friends are able to understand Islam and the grades are expected to be high?

Participant 2: yeah, I mean the school does its best for like let's say SCN students.

Researcher: yeah.

Participant 2: They have better – not better but like the teachers focus more on them now and they have separate classes for them as well.

Researcher: excellent. Good now we move to another area, just one more question before we move to another area. What additional things would you like to see incorporated in your school?

Participant 1: better sport facilities.

Researcher: better sport?

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: any other improvement area?

Participant 1: apart from that I don't know. I never used to complain about any other things apart from that. Sometimes there would be a shortage of staff and you know there would even be times where you would obviously have to miss that lesson or the cover work wouldn't be completed simply due to the fact there was no one able to supervise.

Researcher: some say mixing classes would be good idea for Muslims as long as they are taught how to respect each other. What do you think of that?

Participant 1: no I think once you get to college you're perfectly – its fine there's no problems and its normal communication you treat everyone how you would whether you were a girl or a boy back in school.

Researcher: what do you think?

Participant 2: it's actually the funding, the billing and the facilities, that's the only thing like everything else the teaching standards, everything else is fine. The ethos of the school that's fine as well.

Researcher: do you think the mixed classes, boys and girls; do you think that is a good idea?

Participant 2: I don't think it is, no.

Researcher: what makes you think so?

Participant 2: because there's like they'll be sitting right next to each other the terrible things can happen literally.

[Laughing]

Researcher: they say if you are teaching them how to behave well it's no problem in that?

Participant 2: let's say you go to school you are taught not to speak over the teacher but you find many students do that every single day.

Researcher: I see.

Participant 2: if they told them not to talk to the girls they'll probably end up doing that anyway.

Researcher: so you think it's better and to be separate it is better?

Participant 2: yeah

Researcher: okay. Good now we're moving to another area Insha'Allah which is the last area. Academic achievement, concerns of parents and community, main challenges and integration which we have touched on integration a bit earlier as well. So are you satisfied with the academic achievement of your school? [REDACTED]?

Participant 2: yeah I am but there is one problem.

Researcher: yeah?

Participant 2: since I'm going into year 10 we can't actually do one GCSE or which is PE or Art or Food Tech or DT. We can't do any of that because our curriculum – our lessons we don't have any time for it.

Researcher: I see.

Participant 2: so we have additional GCSE's and stuff to do while other schools don't have to do that, they can do the PE or Art GCSE that they wanted to do.

Researcher: so you'll be missing RE – no you're missing PE and you'll be missing what else?

Participant 2: art.

Researcher: art?

Participant 2: because they have two opinions PE or Art and we don't get to choose any of them since we're in triple science but the double science and maybe BTEC science actually have that choice.

Researcher: I see, so you will be missing on little bit there? And what are you gaining then? Do you think you are gaining something else?

Participant 2: I think we would be gaining more on science since we have more slots for that itself than the other lessons which is PE or art so we can actually like get A* in science and get better jobs.

Researcher: excellent. So you think it's good?

Participant 2: yeah its good and bad you miss out of the fun PE lesson but then you are gaining a lot in the later on in life.

Researcher: in the science?

Participant 2: yeah

Researcher: are you missing anything?

Participant 1: can you repeat the question?

Researcher: Academic achievements are you happy with it?

Participant 1: yeah I think its fine like you said it's like 2% difference compared to ██████████ and that's not really a lot considering the fact that they probably don't have as much funding as ██████████ and support from the government but its fine.

Researcher: okay do you think Muslim schools meet the concerns of the children and the community?

Participant 1: can you repeat the question?

Researcher: do you think Muslim schools meet the concerns of the children and the community?

Participant 1: what kind of concerns are these?

Researcher: like if the parents raise any concerns regarding the education of their children or Tarbiyyah of the children, do you think Muslim schools do listen to them?

Participant 1: I think they definitely do we've had certain changes which have been implemented throughout my school life that were obviously given by different parents and ideas which are noted down upon and a couple of months later where implemented.

Researcher: I see so they do listen?

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: what do you think?

Participant 2: yeah they do listen because like we – some parents were saying the children they don't get to play football and that actually happened because they bought football nets in the playground and they actually had a full timetable for that to play football. We actually have better facilities now when the new head teacher came in – she's now gone but a lot of improvements happened facility wise.

Researcher: I see. What do you think are the main challenges, you did mention the sport do you think there are any other challenges that your school has?

Participant 1: not really

Researcher: no? Do you think that the teachers are well qualified?

Participant 1: pretty sure most of them are otherwise they wouldn't really get the job I mean if the teachers aren't well qualified then there must be something wrong with the management but in terms of qualifications I think it should be fine.

Researcher: do you think anything else?

Participant 2: no not really.

Researcher: no? So if they done well in sport do you think your school would be one of the best in Birmingham?

Participant 1: no not really.

Researcher: so what else would you like them to improve?

Participant 1: I'm not really too sure.

Researcher: if you where the head-teacher from September what changes would you like to bring about?

Participant 1: I don't really know

Researcher: to attract the best teachers in the city, to attract the best students in the city, what changes would you bring about?

Participant 1: I'd definitely get a new site, a new building something that is more ascetically pleasing and would you know obviously help build the future of the school and expand it to other projects. And invite other communities as well; get a lot more people involved.

Researcher: okay, good.

Participant 2: I would satisfy the students with things that they actually want like maybe better footballs, better playground, better building as well because once they're happy then their parents are going to be happy as well so the school will be getting good reviews like good news about the school will be going around the community it will bring more people into the school.

Researcher: some saying the increasing number of Muslim schools like if we look ten years ago there were less Muslim schools in Birmingham now there is much more Muslim schools in Birmingham some say it is not a good idea. What would you advice? Masha'Allah his enjoying the games, so some say increasing number of Muslim schools is not a good idea, what do you think?

Participant 2: I think it's a fine idea if you, they are learning the same thing like the same curriculum as well as additional Islamic stuff so in the future if they have any trouble with like religion or money problems then they can deal with it Islamic wise - to a Islamic way, yeah.

Researcher: so they deal with it islamically?

Participant 2: yeah

Researcher: instead of going on stealing and other things? Okay, what do you think Islamic schools to increase is that a good idea?

Participant 1: I mean I think I'd definitely help the students because if you look at other schools there's secularisation when it comes to students like if someone's like a Muslim they prefer to hang around people would maybe even make their own little gangs but in a Muslim school everyone's a Muslim and everyone has something in common and it's also there's less bullying in Muslim schools as well.

Researcher: some say it is not a good idea because you are separating Muslim children from non-Muslims and as a result there would be only Muslims against non-Muslims. What do you think?

Participant 2: non-Muslims and Muslims I mean maybe what non-Muslims do like what they eat or drink other than that its actually fine like we do – we play the same sports, we like have the same hobbies etcetera so I think we can get along well. It's just the haram stuff for us.

Researcher: yeah, what do you think?

Participant 1: we used to go to other non-Muslim schools and normal schools and we used to play foot ball and have matches and they seem like perfectly normal people exactly like us just like the environment is different and couple beliefs are slightly different but in terms when you get out of school you are not going to be in school all day when you get out you'll definitely see the world and you'll just you know go about it with your daily life.

Researcher: so do you think when they assuming there will be fights in the society, Muslims against non-Muslims, do you think that is incorrect?

Participant 1: I think they definitely trying to insinuate a problem that's no there from my personal firsthand experience I haven't really had any problems with non-Muslims and right now we are living in you know the western society and we are living in England which the majority of the people are non-Muslims so to say that there is going to be problems when I've experienced firsthand that there are no problems it's just wrong.

Researcher: do you think so as well?

Participant 2: what was the question?

Researcher: the question is saying that there would be – if more Muslim schools come into existence there would be Muslim children fighting non-Muslims?

Participant 2: they wouldn't exactly fight because like I haven't in counted that happening, I've had no problems with non-Muslims either I mean in school we are not learnt to hate non-Muslims they just human beings like God created us the same its just our upbringing has been different.

Researcher: so does your school tell you to hate non-Muslims?

Participant 2: no

Researcher: or does your school teaches you to love, respect them because they human being?

Participant 2: love and respect them because they are human being I mean why would you hate a human being for no reason because of their religion I mean that's just wrong and Islam doesn't teach that.

Researcher: good excellent. Okay we come to the last one. Would you like me to ask you anything or would you like to shed light on anything that you've think I missed or should have asked you about?

Participant 1: no the questions are fine, there were a couple of questions and quotes that were slightly upset but I think its fine apart from that.

Researcher: would you like to increase a little bit more there were little questions, you said something about?

Participant 1: I said some of the statements that you quoted weren't really too appropriate and they did actually offend me a lot so I don't think things like that should be said but in the general discussion I think they were great questions to ask and it's great that I can obviously answer then and give my two cents about the whole situation.

Researcher: Masha'Allah. Jazak Allahu Khayr. So would you like to highlight which areas you did not like or you did not like it?

Participant 1: I don't like the fact that you know statements were given to me in a certain manner and they were insinuating, implying certain things about this community and Islam I just think it was you know I think it was rolled off ignorant tongues, it wasn't really suitable.

Researcher: so these statements you think they were just made up by some individuals and they don't have any base in reality?

Participant 1: I mean nearly anyone could have made that up and I think it's definitely someone who hasn't experienced normal life what's like to live around normal people and other human beings some who's ignorant and really hasn't been experiencing like in the 21st century to be a modern Muslim we've just been living around normal people.

Researcher: excellent. We end up with something a bit different, you must have heard about the Trojan horse and all these things and Muslims are overtaking state schools and they are Islamising state schools

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: what do you think of that?

Participant 1: I personally think that, I don't know it's a whole conspiratory, it's just the fact that you know Muslims are already here then they simply, they not taking over they're simply attending the school and obviously if this is their habitat somewhere they've been living for you know a descent about of time then it should be fine even if there are people that have newly moved in I mean the UK's been

perfectly fine with people moving as long as its legal and it someone's legally attending the school then it shouldn't really be a problem.

Researcher: they are saying they are Islamising schools? Islamising state schools and making them jihadists?

Participant 1: I think that's statement is really offensive it shouldn't really be given out.

Researcher: what it is out?

Participant 1: yeah I don't know I think it's just rolled out ignorant tongues. People who are -

Researcher: well they are ministers of education; they are local authority, Ofsted inspectors

Participant 1: yeah

Researcher: so they are not ignorant people?

Participant 1: I mean it depends on how you looking at you know in terms of ignorance where they've been – I mean education is different compared to wisdom, they two different things these people are claiming certain things that they clearly haven't experience I mean I'm pretty sure if they spent even a day in an Islamic school they will know exactly you know what these teachers teach, what people think. We're just normal people trying to live our lives the best that we can.

Researcher: Jazak Allahu Khayr I really enjoyed your interview, may Allah bless you.

Participant 1: we really enjoyed it as well.

Researcher: Barakallahu fikum. Thank you very much for your time. Jazak Allahu Khayr

Appendix 2.5 (Semi-Structured interview transcript sample)

Semi-structured Interview transcript sample

Type: Semi-Structured Interview

Date:

Time Specified: 45 – 60mins

Student Interview 3

Male Muslim faith-based school graduate

Researcher: As-salamu alaykum Brother Zain

Participant: wa alaikum assalam wa rahmatullah

Researcher: Jazak Allahu Khayr for giving me the chance to interview you. I just want to make it clear the reason of the interview is PhD study and Insha'Allah it will take about 30 minutes and all what you will say your name, your school name, everything will remain confidential and it will only be utilised and used for the study purpose only. Is that okay with you akhi?

Participant: that's fine.

Researcher: Jazak Allahu Khayr, brother [REDACTED] how long you studied at an Islamic school?

Participant: well I started in year 7

Researcher: year 7

Participant: and I was there until year 11 so I did 5 year.

Researcher: I see. Was any of your brothers or sisters students of an Islamic school as well?

Participant: never I was the first one in my family to go to an Islamic school, yeah.

Researcher: did you enjoy your time?

Participant: it was interesting, the experience was quite interesting.

Researcher: okay Brother [REDACTED], you are aware that there are different types of Muslim schools? Some are residential and others are full-time school only. So which one do you think is better for Muslim children? Residential Islamic school or full-time Muslim school?

Participant: you mean full-time by just a normal kind of state school

Researcher: Islamic school, yeah.

Participant: like [REDACTED] for example?

Researcher: yeah

Participant: okay I think they both probably have their pros and cons. In the residential school obviously you'd probably get a more if they put into practise probably gotten more if they put into practise probably a holistic of kind of upbringing in an Islamic manner if you know what I'm talking about

Researcher: yeah

Participant: it's a bit more kind of holistic in how the teachers would be able to approach it would be easier for them to implement certain ways to teach certain things sense they there all the time but

at the same time the school it allows a break from all that – normal state school which we said full-time school

Researcher: yeah

Participant: it allows you to kind of have that same privacy at the same time then it allows the child to just come away and think for himself because a lot of you know education – a lot of education is to do with thinking for yourself and actually developing yourself by yourself so I think it allows that more to develop in the child maybe a independent side to the student, so I mean personally I'll probably prefer the full-time school because that way – myself I prefer to work independently rather than be you know rely on teachers or colleagues or anything like that.

Researcher: I see. Do you think which of the two types are more effective? Do you think the full-time or is it the boarding do you think?

Participant: well I guess you have to look at the objectives of the schools, if the schools objective is simply to provide an education in – in just provide an education in and within an Islamic ethos then probably a full-time but if the school objective is to you know bring up a child in a well round Muslim kind of human perhaps that might be better achieving that in that regard because I know like if you look historically a lot of schools in like – around the world Islamic education like in universities almost most of them they have a full-time kind of education and that's allows them to look at other aspects of their life as well.

Researcher: okay

Participant: so I think they both have their own objectives which they probably fulfil.

Researcher: do you think you would have been happier if you were in a state school?

Participant: probably not, not personally, no. I think being in an Islamic school allowed me to nurture certain parts of my own personality and stuff because I mean with what I would view my life I think Islamic school definitely helped me realise what my strengths were, I think because the school I went to personally was quite small as well, it definitely allowed me to have more attention, personally as well I could speak to teachers and they could highlight you know weaknesses within me and so I can fix them and allow me to work on my strengths whereas I don't think I would have got the same kind of attention in state school.

Researcher: was it your choice or was it consulted or was it parental choice that you went to an Islamic school?

Participant: well intentionally to be honest I wanted to go to a state school myself but the reason I wanted to go there was because I had a couple of friends who were going to those schools as well, quite a few to be honest and but in the end it did – it was my parents choice, ultimately they did pick for me because in the end I was only 11 years old and I can appreciate why they might – I think in the end it did work out for the best.

Researcher: so were you consulted or were you just picked up?

Participant: I was told and they asked me which one would you prefer and then after that I said like maybe [REDACTED] we put that second or third but I was told about it and eventually the final choice was left to my parents.

Researcher: I see. Would you have – do you think they have made the right choice for you or do you think it – do you regret their choice?

Participant: I wouldn't necessary regret it; I mean again there's kind of two sides to everything. How I think to think of it is, in certain ways [REDACTED] and maybe Islamic schools are very good for me but the only thing was because Islamic school, the way [REDACTED] is made is so different it's almost as if you living in a bubble compared to other state schools, you don't really tend to you know feel the what life is really like for most people out there and if you do want to impact people in that way it kind of limits you for example this is the reason why I went to a normal secular kind of [REDACTED] college because I wanted to feel life, how life is like for the majority of the people rather than just for those living in a bubble in secondary then going to like a sixth form or something

Researcher: yeah

Participant: then again it kind of limits what you can get from that life to be honest probably the only shortcoming I can think of anyway.

Researcher: Jazak Allahu Khayr, we move to another area. Why full-time Muslim schools and the Tarbiyyah standards in Muslim schools? So if we take the first question, what do you think – why do you think Muslims – why do you think Muslim schools were established?

Participant: in the first place?

Researcher: yeah.

Participant: it makes sense to me that it's probably like the parents and people you know elders what you call the elders of the community those people at the top and actually like take care of the communities anyway historically you know the Muslims came to the UK and stuff they were kind of you know isolated kind of bunch initially especially so maybe they wanted something specific for their children you know it's a bit more familiar to them as well as to their children it's trying bring them up in a similar way that might not necessary be the best thing but probably the familiarity made them more comfortable sending their children there.

Researcher: so if we say that the top two reasons why Muslims established Muslim school, what would you say are the reason?

Participant: obviously one thing is to do like to kind of cultivate their Islamic knowledge and what you call Tarbiyyah and the second reason probably have to be why they made Islamic schools, second reason probably would have to be why they made Islamic schools, second reason probably for me personally would probably to something which its very relatable for a lot of people so it's made more comfortable there.

Researcher: do you think one of the reasons was that some felt Muslims schools would be doing better academically?

Participant: I don't think necessary that's always the kind of objective people have in mind because I mean there's a lot of other schools that do academically very well [REDACTED] and all sorts people tend to focus on those for the grades but I think Islamic schools have their own kind of niche which they good at and to be honest that might be the best for them.

Researcher: I see. If you had the choice would you prefer to attend a Muslim school over a state school?

Participant: Muslim school

Researcher: yeah

Participant: yeah I think being able to gone through that and gone through that and going it, I definitely most probably prefer Muslim school.

Researcher: Muslim school?

Participant: I mean because I go college now as well it's a bit more different

Researcher: and would you have preferred to be in a state school than a Muslim?

Participant: probably not to be honest because at the end of the day I've been to college now and you know in my head I'm assuming that a state school is quite similar to what my college is like right now and although it does give you that freedom and gives you that more independence and stuff but it does I think for somebody of my age especially in secondary school its quite easily to go off the rail in terms of what you call your deen and your Tarbiyyah for someone especially younger than myself when we get to college we become a bit more mature and we tend to look after ourselves a little bit more as well.

Researcher: okay, good, okay do you think in your Muslim school you are learning enough about Islam and its values? Or do you think there were short comings?

Participant: the one that I went to myself I think there definitely were shortcomings in terms that there was – initially it was quite good in the way every single week we did tajweed and we have Islamic studies but then it became more and more focussed on GCSE's and so on even when we were studying – even when we were studying Islamic studies we were studying like GCSE Islamic Studies and realistically any person who like kind of starts taking you know Islamic knowledge a bit more seriously you can understand where the discrepancy are where you have to write your exam answers in a particular way and argue it from a black and white point of view when many of them are really aren't. I think as you got older there was less and less focus on that part of reading and I can understand why the school needed to do that obviously we need to get GCSE results at the end of the day which is very

important it's the reason why you go secondary school but again I think there could be things done to help enrich that sides of the students knowledge and stuff – Islamic knowledge especially.

Researcher: okay.

[Tape Recorder Switched Off and On Again]

Researcher: okay, do you think your school other subjects given more enough time as much as Islam or do you think other subjects are given more time than Islam?

Participant: definitely other subjects are given a lot more time to be honest I think maybe not necessary too much but I don't think enough time is given to the Islamic if consistency if you think about an objective of an Islamic school are there to cultivate that I don't really think there is enough time given to cultivate that it's not enough to be honest I mean assembly a week really doesn't catch (...) one jumma kutabah I don't think that's enough to be honest.

Researcher: so if you had the choice how would you change it so you know the time – hours will you extend the hours? What will you do to get the standard-

Participant: I mean I would – I wouldn't really extend the hours because realistically speaking I don't think many students will be in favour of that and if students aren't happy then they not going to work, if they don't work it's no point bring them to school and I mean perhaps if you going to extend it by little bit even maybe perhaps shortening the lessons of other lessons and then I mean for example this is something they tried in year 11 when I was – what they did they shortened the lessons so they made them rather than an hour, 50 minutes each lesson and the cumulatively like a total free time at the end of the lesson they turn that into a tutorial now that was a very, very good time to make use of your – I thought it was a fantastic idea when they first started it but then it was misused quite a bit all they literally gave us a book and said 'oh read this book' and then me being the way I was definitely it was only a year ago I used to suit there with a couple of friends pointing out mistakes that I thought was wrong in the book and then it was then they just put on maybe if we were good then they put on the whiteboard story like on a CD player like a stories and it was very childish for 6/7 year olds and it really wasn't that effective I think they could have used that time probably better if they got maybe people – probably people from the community coming because at the end of the day Tarbiyyah is more than just learning Qur'an, speaking nice and good manners its really having an active part in your communities and society and I think not necessary enough is done to do to push that kind of part of it.

Researcher: okay. if we say do you think you are better Muslim person because you attended a Muslim school, do you think Muslim school played a role in your upbringing or do you think you would have been same when you attended Muslim school or state school?

Participant: I think because whilst growing up I was doing hifiz of the Qur'an and stuff I used to spend a lot of the time in the masjid anyway and a lot of the time because I actually fond it a quite difficult to like the way it was taught hifiz I found it very difficult to do so I got every board quite quickly and often there was lectures on in the masjid and they were like talks going on and I was always like trying to listen it and I found it a lot more interesting and then I actually started a Alimah course with [REDACTED] institute and they taught very well, I actually loved the way they taught like it was really up to date and quite interactive and stuff but then so Alhamdulillah I had that kind of thing going for me at the same time in terms of [REDACTED] school it stopped the necessary what you call fitnah like in terms

of like you know especially to like interact with sister, I mean maybe even people got critical how they dealt with that because like if you try and safeguard from sisters too much when eventually let out there you kind of like its uncontrollable a lot of – I know a lot of brothers in my class to be honest they can't even speak probably and are very nervous to talking to woman and stuff and if you want to live in the world you need to be able to do that it's something that goes without saying it's not even necessary from the sunnah, who says its haram to talk to sisters which isn't true but I sure you know that already and in that way I guess it did protect you I mean as a child from those kind of like some parts of your life that will lead you to a distraction and stuff in terms of making you a better Muslim necessary I wouldn't think it did anything active in that it did protect you from things that could remove you from there I would say

Researcher: do they help you then?

Participant: in a way yeah I could say it did help me I can't say it was completely pointless, yeah.

Researcher: do you think generally Muslim schools played role in developing Islamic side?

Participant: yeah it did more than if I had comparing it with a state school it did play a bigger part than that. Yeah.

Researcher: okay good and you think if you attended a state school you may not have been as good Muslim as you are today? You could have missed some parts of it?

Participant: I guess I mean I think generally it's difficult to contrast because in some ways my college this is what I'm using as my point of reference my college, in some way my college helped me a lot more than my school did like for example it really opening up my mind and really getting involved and doing things and trying to help people out more its allowed me to do that but at the same time it hasn't necessary actively pushed me in way to kind of like study Islam do this because at the end of the day it's a secular college they not going to try and do that, they'll probably get into trouble for trying to do that to you.

Researcher: do you know of any students would rather be in a state school than Islamic school?

Participant: yeah, I do.

Researcher: what do you think are the reasons?

Participant: I think maybe due to a lack of understanding perhaps even too much pushing by the school in certain policies and stuff they really didn't enjoy how life at school and because they didn't enjoy it they would have felt more comfortable elsewhere maybe potentially done better at school as well but at the end of the day I think it's just that maybe cause everyone they say everyone is at a different level like I don't want to say piety because you don't know how pious someone really is but in terms of how involved they are with their religion and there are people at different levels and you know similar you need to have something for everybody and you need to ease everybody in their own pace if you try to do it too fast then people are just going to reject it and they not going to be very comfortable with it, it's like actually no I was going to give you an example but it's not really a

Researcher: okay, no you can give example.

Participant: I was going to say for example if you I mean ever talk a lot of people give stigma for example sisters nowadays and they don't necessary come with the rest of the package and they'll be on no sister why are you wearing this and they turn around and say okay who are you to judge me and eventually they might even turn around and take that off as well and everyone's like at their own level to do with the different things they need to ease them into it if you really want to make lasting changes.

Researcher: you mentioned that they did not enjoy what type of things did they not enjoy?

Participant: there are a couple of things I mean in terms of like they didn't necessary feel for example I mean this is one of the small things to be honest about the hair concerning the school made a big deal 'no the hair cut needs to be you know definitely all one size all the way around' and even I mean you can argue there are opinions out there which allow it but the school is very stern like you know you have to have it like this otherwise you know they send you home effectively

Researcher: okay

Participant: and other things they were quite strict on was I mean interacting with between genders and stuff I think they didn't really appreciate it when they were like held in detention for saying 'excuse me sister can you help me with this' and so I mean I thinks that's probably one of the major points there might be a couple of others but this is what is coming to my mind right now.

Researcher: okay, do you think today since you left the school for a year now do you think your parents made the right choice for you?

Participant: yeah Alhamdulillah I wouldn't, I wouldn't – If I had the chance I would probably if I knew what the school would do for me I would definitely like be in agreement with my parents 5 years ago.

Researcher: so do you regret then now?

Participant: no, no not at all.

Researcher: okay

Participant: I think maybe the reason I don't regret it is because it's not necessary because of the religious side, the school developed things in me like my confidence grew a lot simply from using Islamic things like Jumma Kutabahs and stuff and because of that Alhamdulillah my confidence really allowed me to excel in other parts like now I'm working in a shop on Coventry Road which is a very popular shop and the manager said only reason he hired me was because of my confidence and I'm able to talk to people quite confidently without being awkward without being – without being unnecessary strange and weird to talk to and its Alhamdulillah its worked out well for me. Yeah.

Researcher: do you think your teachers acted as role models for you?

Participant: my teachers act as role models, some of them where very good in terms of like having if I can name one of them maybe [REDACTED] he was somebody who I really, really did look up to, I almost in a way like modelled myself on him and even personal issues I had things that I wanted to do in my life and stuff and I'd come and talk to him and he'd really advise me quite a bit and it's because I think he had so much experience because he'd been around the world travelled and all sorts and he was

really one of a kind, other teachers I think they were just better at teaching that were they kind of liked help in the state.

Researcher: do you think in the state school you would have had better role models than in an Islamic school?

Participant: not necessary

Researcher: no

Participant: not necessary I don't think necessary I had a better role model from Islamic school either because I think I could have potentially found brother [REDACTED] in teaching in a state school or a brother [REDACTED] who is teaching in another state school as well so I don't necessary think the role model thing is exclusive either.

Researcher: I see.

[Tape Recorder Switched Off and On Again]

Researcher: okay we move to another area, curriculum. Did the curriculum reflect the wider society, the non-Muslim society? We – the ethos of Muslim school and do you think Muslim schools in general achieve their goals? So if we ask the first question, did your school promoted and inspire you to respect all people of other and non-faith?

Participant: yeah, yeah they really did, I mean I think that was probably one of the biggest things I mean I'm not sure if this is necessary what the school promoted but the teacher who did teach me he was actually a Muslim revert and he use to really stress about this quite a bit like he actually really taught us to think about it in a really wise open minded way that the end of the day you know they all part – everyone in this world – alive right now is part of the Ummah and there's something you need to give them respect for he wasn't standing there 'oh no this brother his a kafir and you know his going to hell and it was nothing, absolutely nothing like that I mean the amount of respect he taught you to have it wasn't just empty statements he was 'oh we're trying to bring community cohesion' there where things that the teacher would teach us from the sunnah , the Prophet SAW he took help from you know non-Muslims and he like really respected them and for example his uncle was really something which was alive and present within that classroom when we were studying Islamic studies. It wasn't anything like you'd think it be.

Researcher: I see

Participant: what some people think it be anyway.

Researcher: okay. so do you think you where inspired to have friends of other faith?

Participant: I don't necessary think inspired to have like he didn't tell me go actively seek out people who have different faith from you that wasn't the case and I probably still as in I feel more comfortable having Muslim friends not necessary just because you know you have the same thingy there's more to talk about effectively. It's easier to talk about it and at the same time I go to college now and I have friends who are like atheist I have friends who are like Christian's people who like are Sikhs quite a few of them you know it nothing come up I've never had a issue having friends like that either.

Researcher: Some say Muslim schools isolate their students from the wider society? What do you think?

Participant: I don't think necessary from the wider society in terms of like there's a lot I go back to the same lesson R.S is was a lot more like a multi kind of lesson just a multi-issue lesson, whenever there was a big issue when the (...) happened for example we actively discussed that in class, whenever there was anything that happened it was quite sad, the Muslim grooming thing that happened the Muslim men and we discussed that in the class and we went home and we come up with some really we came up with some views and evidence and it was really personally it was quite important for us in terms so it did isolate – it didn't isolate from the wider world you knew as a child in [REDACTED] school, I knew what was going on probably a lot better than most of the kids in most of the schools, it really did tell you effectively to stay alert what's going on in the world but however in terms of your local community I think it was like I said before it's like a bubble like you didn't really come across the problems that you'd normally come across in other places, you didn't really find guys breaking down over like home issues and stuff in the middle of the school (...) what I've seen in colleges people having all sorts of problems with like for example their fathers have left them, my friends they won't they come out and they just told me they've had issues that in [REDACTED] it was never a case like that perhaps the nature of the people they send them there but those kind of issues, especially social you never had much exposure to.

Researcher: do you view that as a positive or a negative?

Participant: I don't – I like sitting on the fence for a lot of things. I think it's positive in terms like I mean it's positive definitely for the people who are going through it I mean there was no one in the class unfortunately they had to go through those problems but in terms of negative that for myself I tend to be like I don't mean to – I'm not trying to boast or anything but a lot of my friends look up to me in a way they could come to me for advice and stuff and I try to help them where I can and even hours, when somebody came with that out I didn't know what to say I was like 'wow okay' I was like I think one of my friends he said 'yeah yeah my dad left us for - about 9/10 years ago' I was like and he was like cause it just came up I was like 'why don't you ask your dad' and he goes 'oh my dad left us 8/9/10 years ago' I was at that point quite fazed I didn't know what to say in terms of that maybe but I mean it's not necessary important that you have to have gone through every experience in your life by the age of 16.

Researcher: okay, what do you think about the discipline? How's the discipline do you think your school is better discipline than state schools or it's the same?

Participant: in some ways – in some ways I would definitely agree that kids are generally more calmed down and they don't you don't tend to find rowdy behaviour you won't exactly normally find a teacher – a student throwing a chair you know at a teacher, it was nothing like that. I mean you had a couple of students having tantrums with their teachers or they had their fights between each other which is things that happen anyway it's kind of inevitable anyway but you never really found anything too big – too at the end of the day the student you never had any case of a student actually abusing a teacher or anything like that to be honest

Researcher: so discipline you think in your school -

Participant: I think it was quite good, it was quite good to be honest

Researcher: okay

Participant: I think everyone in the school was just kind of chatty and the teachers get annoyed by that so everyone had a mouth on them.

Researcher: yeah

Participant: because it was quite small so everyone knew each other, everyone was quite comfortable with each other and everyone was always talking.

Researcher: yeah

Participant: so that might be an issue but that's not really much of a disciplinary issue.

Researcher: okay, some say that Islamic schools – children who go to Islamic schools they don't feel to be proud to be British, what do you think of that?

Participant: I just thinking – can you just explain what you mean by that?

Researcher: they don't feel British

Participant: they don't -

Researcher: they feel that they belong to another nation not to their home country?

Participant: I guess I mean how you describe it I mean nationalism in concepts they may even (...) the issue isn't about Islamic schools it about how religion feels about it especially and in Islam nationalism having national pride like actual pride and feeling that oh my nation is better than your nation because our nation you know that's happened in history and its caused world wars to happen over it, Islam is something that is against nationalism and effectively to some extent even nationalism can come to can create racism in a way as well and I think the issues more about people don't want to necessary affiliate themselves oh I'm very British and I love being British and because I'm British I'm better than you I mean that's when you start getting into extreme levels so they'll recognised themselves as being British being British citizens, Muslims born in the UK but they may not necessary feel that 'oh okay I have a reason to have pride' because I mean myself I don't necessary feel that its why would you its – I haven't put any effort into it to be I didn't actively try and become British so there's nothing every much to be proud of, you can be proud that – okay you can feel happy that you know you were born in a more privilege part of the world but there's very little to feel that 'oh okay I've done so much for this country' which I mean I think nationalism is just an image it's a bit I don't know I disagree with it myself.

Researcher: so do you feel happy that you are British?

Participant: I don't mind telling people that I am British I was on twitter the other day and somebody called foot-soccer they said 'oh okay I love people – you know I play soccer' and I said 'no its called football' and they said 'are you British?' and I was like 'yeah man I'm British' and I didn't shy away from saying it I was happy to say it

Researcher: so you think that those that think that Muslim students who attend Muslims schools they tend to – not to be proud to be British is incorrect?

Participant: yeah I mean definitely in terms of like what and again I think it's like loaded question where that is what you are saying is that if you're not proud to be British that means you don't want to live

here anymore or like you hate the rest of the country which isn't the case you dis- I mean there are 100s of people in this country who are born British you know white Anglo-Saxon people who they disagree with policies of the country and I know a lot of people who are actually big journalists like John Pilger and like – people like what's it Robert Fitts who said that they were ashamed of things that the country done, I know this is leading – turning into more political things but I mean you don't necessary have to support the countries policies to be proud of you know being born there so if that's what you mean by being – if you mean by being proud that you know recognised yourself as being British and be happy to say it to people then yeah if proud means being supportive in everything they do then no I would disagree with that, I'd say yeah fine they not proud to be British just like a lot of journalists and you know scholars and such.

Researcher: okay, do you think having Muslim schools is good idea for the Muslims living in Britain?

Participant: I think – yeah I would say yeah it does help – it helps the lives it depends I think people tent to characterise Muslims on different levels so you have your modern Muslims, you know you have a conservative Muslim, you have a more ra- kind of like sorry not radical I mean liberal Muslim so I mean it really affects what kind of background you are from, it'll help some people and other people it won't help – some people I'm being perfectly honest it won't help them it will be maybe the worst thing for them so at the end of the day I mean I think it's down to the person themselves.

Researcher: so generally do you think Muslim schools is a good idea for non-Muslims?

Participant: for the vast majority of Muslims I think it will definitely help them, yeah the vast majority.

Researcher: are you generally happy with the culture and traditions that your school upholds?

Participant: not all – if you mean by culture and traditions like how they feel about certain things then no I disagree with some of the things policies that the school had, I think maybe you know even looking into Islam a bit more you'd see that a lot of scholars agree that Islam is a bit more open, a bit more you know what you'd call liberal, a bit more accepting than people realise but then my school itself I'm not going to try and like you know say it was the worst school ever you know they just told us the one thing, it was quite open and they had Muslims from all kinds of backgrounds there but at the same time it kind of suppressed certain parts a bit more I mean prime example is that the all the sister thing – the sister/brother interaction thing the school treated it as basically- effectively if you talk to a sister that's it you know you've committed like a major sin right there that's how a lot of students felt and at certain times I felt the same way as well now if you go study Islam a bit more you know a lot of people won't you'll see that it's not necessary haram, it's not necessary something that is prohibited oh you speaking to a sister obviously you speaking to her for a reason you know the flirting can lead to other things that's you know something's that's blameworthy but I think certain things maybe needs to be taken a bit lighter because at the end of the day they going to leave their one day and if they not prepared to deal with those issues in the real world then they just going to pop it's going to be like a pot of lids it's going to pop.

Researcher: so what do you suggest they should let the boys talk to girls and girls talk to boys?

Participant: not completely freely but then I mean I think this is something that you need to think about a bit more like one of my teachers proposed he said instead of having like a complete you know I think I mean maybe just for the record our school had completely different lunch times girls and boys,

completely different floors, you wouldn't see the girls, boys wouldn't see the girls, girls wouldn't see the boys unless they where you know just happened to be crossing each other like you know lunch times that was it and you know they found – because they wanted to interact they found other ways of doing it I'll be – I know from experience in my class they found other ways of doing it to be honest and one of the teachers said he goes that at the end of the day at the time of the sahabah what would happen is men would sit in front of the women, women will sit behind in a Masjid that's how the prophet SAW would teach, maybe employing something like that in a class having the front having the boys and the girls at the back or something like that having half the class boys, half girls and then having effectively perhaps I'm not saying necessary this is best case scenario but I think this is something you need to sit down and discuss it's not something I can give a solution for right now

Researcher: so you think -

Participant: but I think – I think definitely you should a parent might

Researcher: parents will be alright, parents will support it?

Participant: see this is it, this is just it as in the parents, the school matches the parents, the parents will be fine with it but at the end of the day some of the student's point of view and realistically speaking Islam is something which is quite

Researcher: so if it leads to marriages it that okay?

Participant: well if it leads to marriages I wouldn't have a problem with it, if it leads to other things [laughing] then we can have a little talk about that but I think you know considering to be perfectly frank about it you need to really sit down and talk about it I think they definitely need to lighten up about it because if you are going to like completely come down on it people are going to find other ways to do it and I'm telling you they have found other ways doing it, I telling you [laughing] and it has led to other things. I'm sure the school had many experiences when dealing with those issues and effectively I think you know you just need to find something that works because at the end of the day you know what some of the people don't realise is Islam it kind of in some ways it'll adapt to the society its living in some which is relevant now for example something which is relevant now you know hundreds and hundreds of years ago isn't necessary relevant in our society a lot people bring up the thing about clothing so a thobe for example right is that Islamic clothing? What's Islamic clothing? People say you dress the way society dresses that's Islamic clothing other people say no you have to wear a thobe and which I disagree with but I think it's definitely something which you know even parents need to be more educated about and like you need to just really understand how your cultures working I think you know I don't mean to go on about this I just want to give one example one of my teachers somebody asked him and he goes okay if a husband, If a man is married to his wife is he allowed to hold hands with her in public? His not being intimate, his not doing anything haram because it's his wife, can he hold her hand public? And the scholar- sheikh said what he said he goes that people really need to be educated it depends on what society you are living in, if it's something which your elders would shy away from they feel oh okay you know this is a bit too much for us it's not something that de-modest then that's blameworthy but if you are in a society where you know it's a common thing happening then you know its fine, it's not a issue with it so I think it's something that need to – it depends on where you live.

Researcher: okay what additional curriculum subjects would you like to add o your school then?

Participant: sorry?

Researcher: what additional things would you like to add to your school?

Participant: practical things?

Researcher: urhum

Participant: definitely I'd hope they spend more time really on what actively kind of like teaching you about your religion as in – I've seen – sorry as in what a full-time boarding school does, definitely you know it gives you a more realistic version of Islam, I mean that it'll really teach you more than you'd learn as a average Muslim, what an average Muslim would know. Yeah it can what it effectively turns you into like a scholar almost - a semi-scholar at the end of the day I think Muslim school can definitely do more to teach us kids more at least start with that.

Researcher: with the same time or do you think they can cope or should they add hours?

Participant: I think within the same time would be feasible as long as they organise it well.

Researcher: I see

Participant: as long as they organise it properly its easy people can do it at the same time.

Researcher: so they can keep the academic good achievement as well as the Islamic?

Participant: yeah I think it probably might complement each other in a way to be honest some of the subjects for example the classical subjects they teach mantiq that they teach in boarding schools mantiq is logic and that's kind of like another views it's kind of like maths but with words and they taught it like you know in ethical liberal arts when they teach in universities and stuff and teaching something like that it's an Islamic subject which scholars learn for hundreds and hundreds of years and maybe even incorporated some of that, you know like really classical versions, golden age what you would call golden age, some classical understandings of Islam those kind of subjects would really help the students.

Researcher: okay we move to another area -

Participant: can I just say one thing – one last thing was that I think perhaps the school has definitely shyed away from the problem of scitisms you know within the Muslim community obviously you have your you call you typical selfis, dubundis, brulfis and stuff I think people tend to wake - waking up now and they like coming more and more to accept each other not as in, I think – well the schools policy was that I'm a Muslim, you're a Muslim, the prophet SAW was a Muslim he wasn't a dubundi or he wasn't a salafi or anything like that and that was the schools policy for a lot of the time I think to be honest to deal with the wider community problems we probably need to deal with them in the community but school would be an ideal place to deal with them that my own view on it is and I know a lot of people share this view is that you know be what you want to be and then but live and let live kind of thing so you might disagree with somebody else but you know they are entitled to their own view and that was a classical understanding for a lot of these things, I mean they say about the 4 mathabs what did they say

about each other, I'm correct possibly of being incorrect, his incorrect with the possibility in – correct sorry so I mean as long as you, when you start dealing with these kind of problem I think these are the roots of kind of the Muslim community problems, you start dealing with those you really start to bring the community together.

Researcher: so do you think Muslim schools promote these mathabs?

Participant: no they don't at all, they don't necessary promote them but I think they shy away from them and it's a problem that they shy away from, they shouldn't – they should recognise them and they should you know really try to build tolerance to them because they've been around for a long time they don't kind of go anywhere and to deal with the problem and the problem is a lot of people don't like them because of those and to deal with that problem you need to see - face them because if you don't you just shy away from it, it's not going to make any progress.

Researcher: do you think they'd rather not touch on it because it will not faze?

Participant: yeah, I mean

Researcher: so they rather teach people rather common?

Participant: I think because maybe a lot of kids who are going to know about it they very serious about it so they'll get into these big debates with the teachers and stuff and maybe the teachers to be honest aren't well equipped to deal with the subjects either and you know at the end of the day they need somebody who knows about it, to answer the questions of the students, I know for example in [REDACTED] school there was a teacher there and he was actually a mufti himself and he had discussions with the students every single lesson and they became a lot – I know some people of the class they became very open minded with regards to things and now they happy and you know it's working quite well, I have some of them come to my college and Alhamdulillah they fantastic they work with us really well and because of that now Alhamdulillah I've had my - I've learnt most my - like what you'd call open mindedness from this place, so far they taught me you know you need to be more tolerant and stuff when I first came there I was very hardcore I was – I didn't want anything to do with anyone else I thought I was right and that's it there no other way going around it but because of that now Alhamdulillah I've opened up and really start making progress in college and like Alhamdulillah in college only a thousand people we have easy a hundred people turning up to Jummah a week and I think they from all backgrounds its only because we've got kind of - me and your son Brother [REDACTED] we get to give a Jummah Kutabah and we highlighted this issue on tolerance and now Alhamdulillah our college society has really, really come together flourished fantastically. So I don't think we need to shy away from it but I think we need to take it head on but do it wisely and have somebody there who can deal with it

Researcher: okay we come to another our final area which is academic achievement, concerns of parents and community, main challenges and integration. Are you satisfied with the academic achievement of Muslim schools or your Muslim school?

Participant: I know there was a steady decrease in the years above me and you know it was kind of like foreseeing it, it was almost like a graph you could see that each year the results were going down and down since I think originally they were a private school and they became and since then you can check the figures yourself it's been going down every year so I think to be honest how everyone – whatever

they were doing before, they were doing really well and I know from people who were there back then they said that the Islamic education was better as well and they felt more fulfilled Muslims because of the school I can't necessary make that point for myself you know we discussed it before anyway but they felt that they were more academically well rounded as well as you know islamically.

Researcher: so what do you think are the reasons?

Participant: I don't know I think maybe in terms since they became a public school in terms like they were funded by the government and stuff. The government's regulations how they need to do things, what they need to do, how they need to do it because I even spoke to one of my teachers in college and they said - I said 'miss what kind of like - how much freedom do you get from you know I use the word Michael Gove, I said 'how much freedom Michael Gove giving you in terms of what you can teach and how you can teach it?' and my teacher said 'imagine sitting in a cell block that's how much freedom we get' and I was like 'really miss?' and she was like 'yeah, basically they almost giving you a plans now you've got to teach it this way, this is how you got to teach it, this is why you've got to teach it and you can't really stray away from that' the hours we get from what we need to teach isn't enough so we can't really do other things to make you understand things in any other ways we have to do it in a way that we've been told to do it almost in a way I think if you ever read -

Researcher: do you think the funding was the reason?

Participant: for the decrease? Yeah.

Researcher: for the decrease?

Participant: almost an Orwellian in the army I'm sure you know George Orwell like it's an Orwellian kind of like regimented way they have to teach now I mean that's what it seems to me now anyway I think that's lead to maybe an decrease because at the end of the day different people learn different ways and you need to appreciate that if you want to make progress.

Researcher: did your school take - intake all students when they came funded?

Participant: they did, I think in the end they did, they didn't initially but in the end eventually they started to take more students

Researcher: so they did, do you think increase of number largely had an input?

Participant: no because the results started decreasing before they took more students, the results started going down before

Researcher: okay so funding was the reason?

Participant: I think, yeah I mean it's changed, it's changed so much sense it's became funded, I think well I've been there I've noticed things been changed and things have become more and more I don't know I mean I'm not really in the crooks of the matter, I don't really know what was going on at the centre of it but it's definitely changed since I was there - when I started and when I left

Researcher: so do you think you would have achieved better grades by attending a state school over your school?

Participant: probably not because we still even though I do – I did say we were doing worst each year we still a relatively good to be honest compared to other schools around the country I think it was like 73% or something which was quite good to be honest.

Researcher: what challenges do you think the school has?

Participant: challenges? I think the biggest challenge is being able to give at the time to both an academic perspective and an Islamic perspective and giving time, enough time to both of those aspects of a student's life as well as trying to teach lesson in a way which happen to be Islamic but also happen to you know go the way the government wants them to happen – happen the way the government wants them to happen so I think maybe that a major challenge, I mean to be honest there's a lot of challenges in the community right now there's big problems in what you'll call Muslim community problems in terms of what people are doing and dealing with those challenges like you have like I don't want to say that there's – you have off-shoot Muslims now with more very, very, very liberal Muslims so you have you know people like Ishaq Manji and whole gay/lesbian Islam and stuff and right with orthodox Muslim community I think most Muslim schools tend to feel the need to keep on the orthodox way and need to keep students that way so I think maybe those of the raising challenges of today like even people I had my friends in school to be honest and his a Muslim, his been a Muslim his whole life he went to green lane mosque for a lot of his life and I think one of the things with Green Lane Mosque one of the shortcomings in the way they taught in the Madrassa there is very, very strict it was like only us, only we can do it our way and this is the only way we need to redo the will and everybody else s wrong for hundredths of centuries and he came out to me and he said '■■■■ tell me I don't understand how a 14 hundred year old book can be relevant today' and he goes you know questions like that it's because, it's kind of like a problem of faith in a way – crisis of faith you could call it that if you really wanted to make it higher that's probably one of the challenges of today to be honest that Muslim schools really should you know get there head in on and to be honest I think you need to deal with the Muslim community problem before you can even try and tackle the whole like I said with the whole divisions you need to be one before you can try to deal with communal problems.

Researcher: I see, if you were the head teacher what changes will you bring about? From September?

Participant: yeah, oh from this September?

Researcher: urhuh

Participant: to be honest I don't know -

Researcher: to make it ideal school?

Participant: the ideal school, okay, well what I would do is I don't want to make it the elitist Islamic school so I'm not going to like you know make it extremely difficult to get in then, only the best of the best can get in there and only those with the hundreds of pounds with some funding in, nothing like that to be honest because in fact I don't think that deals with the needs coming at all that just appeases some people at the top

Researcher: yeah

Participant:but what I think I would have to sit down with the you know board of governors or people who really know what – how to do it and potentially scholars and people who've been really studying Islamic education and stuff for a while like a sheikh and like really discuss how you can accommodate these so starting with the problem with divisions I would deal with that first really because at the end of the day they the youth and as long as you can convince them you can change the world I've grown up with that feeling and I still belief in that very, very much so that I'm going to change the world one day and I would inspire make other students and inspire to do that, I would deal with the problems that we can deal with myself personally start with the whole differences and not necessary the differences but you know intolerance towards each other, yeah so I would actively say – teach basically and I'd try and – I think the best way – one of the ways to teach is teaching more Islamic history because only buy studying Islam history do you start to open up on okay this is how they did it for hundreds of years because people think that oh okay it was the Prophet SAW

Researcher: SAW

Participant: and what happened to the Sahabah after that then it was all just smooth whereas I've been looking into Islamic history myself and it's a bit of a roller coaster we all up and down, you really – it really teaches you how human scholars are and how human thinks and it really teaches you tolerance so that's the second problem I'll deal with. Third problem I'd start to deal with is the you know the youths problems so you know what you'd call the crisis of faith, those not necessary going – sending – but bringing in people who are really good at dealing with these things for example like someone called Hamza Tzortzis his actively on you know really trying to do these things, scholars like Nouman Ali Khan, you know Umar Sulayman even Sheikh Zahid Mahmood one of my own teachers, really they understand because they've been there a long time and allow these – you call them clerics but they not necessarily clerics they really not just like you know MT Clergyman they actively take a role in their own communities and stuff like that really not necessary employ them up allow people like them to come in really help shape the minds of you know the future and I mean I can go on if you want many more

[Laughing]

Researcher: yeah Insha'Allah what will you do if you head teacher?

Participant: more? Okay.

Researcher: other than this?

Participant: oh besides this, oh okay besides this then okay -

Researcher: you want ideal Islamic schools with good grades at the same time good students

Participant: yeah and then – so I think you really need to have a – I think you know I wouldn't put it in terms from September, I wouldn't role out a plan from September I would wait at least a year or two and id come up with a proper informative plan and have this fully vetted, fully checked by you know Scholars, you know people who have been in studies Islamic education things you can use form the sunnah how the Prophet SAW did things to teach and you know and I'd have a complete curriculum which can incorporate both education – secular education and then roll out that plan after 2/3 years I wouldn't, I really wouldn't try putting anything in short term.

Researcher: I see.

Participant: yeah.

Researcher: I see, Insha'Allah.

Participant: I mean to be honest I've forgotten – coming from this interview it's kind of inspiring me a bit maybe I should do this

[laughing]

Researcher: yeah it does open your mind up, doesn't it?

Participant: yeah

Researcher: okay, do you have friends who are non-Muslims?

Participant: yeah, loads, many.

Researcher: loads? So some say Islamic schools stop children from have friends of other faith or no faith? How much do you think that is right?

Participant: well I mean you have other faith schools like you have Jewish schools, catholic schools and stuff and you do have 10 times – a lot of Muslims actually come there but you have a lot of Muslims tend to go there and stuff because generally the reason isn't because they faith schools it tends to be because they closest in vicinity, I think it doesn't necessary stop them because myself I've got many non-Muslim friends I don't have issue getting along with anybody like that it teaches you to be a lot more comfortable with them but I don't think it stops you I can't make this argument oh because of you – a person's own lack of self esteem that they won't be friends with somebody with a different faith, I thinks that's kind of flawed if you try and blame the Islamic school for being unable to do that.

Researcher: do you think – some say that Muslim schools produce fanatics and terrorists?

Participant: [laughing]

Researcher: what do you think of that statement?

Participant: [laughing] I think – I think that questions only been asked because it's a Muslim school to be honest, I had an interview the other day that somebody said it was an interview about intervention in Syria and it asked the (...) and he asked do you condemn ISIS and he said what has that got to do with anything why you asking me that, why don't you ask the other panellist and its a loaded question I think that a – its quite – I'm not going to say I'm offended by that question but why would you restrict that to Muslim schools? I think any – if anything I mean people try – tend to ignore fanatics from other religions I mean what 3 years ago there was a man whose going with a loaded exhuses in his car towards a birth control clinic in America, I mean I know they didn't get much news but isn't that technically a fanatic? You could say that the IDF right now are fanatic about the way they dealing with Gaza and stuff and you have hundreds of Britons' who have gone over and gone and they've you know they've joined the IDF, IDF's responsible – they've broken hundreds of war crimes and the UN's condemn the many, many times for thing that they have done, many of the generals personal responsibilities – this isn't anything about

Researcher: so do you think this is

Participant: I think that is a very, very unfair question to be honest and I don't particularly want to answer it.

Researcher: yeah

Participant: it is a very unfair question.

Researcher: and do you think those who assume this is happening by Muslim schools they don't have real facts?

Participant: yeah I think this is very- you're looking through a very, very biased lenses right there. I'll tell you one thing you really want to have a look at if anybody takes anything from this interview is that I read an article the other day where orthodox Jewish schools – so orthodox Jews tend to be the ones with the black suits, they keep long hair, they have the beards and stuff and they said that they were taught in their schools that the outside world hated them and that's why they were taught to be so reserved and I think they might be perhaps a reason why you know people are feeling that they need to be necessary a Jewish only state because the rest of the world hates them and its anti-Semitic and stuff, I think that's a bigger issue right now because if you been brought up that the whole world hates you and that's then you going to support undeniably you know unconditionally support a state like Israel you know breaches hundreds of human rights on you know on a yearly basis I mean even the truce now recently I heard the artillery shots coming from the ships anyway sorry I'm going off topic

[Laughing]

Researcher: Jazak Allah

Participant: it's something I feel quite passionate about sometimes. I – so – I mean in conclusion

Researcher: yeah

Participant: I don't wanna answer that question because it's a loaded question

Researcher: yeah

Participant: and its really unfair to target that at Muslims only - schools.

Researcher: Jazak Allah, of course you are been in university or going towards university studies

Participant: yeah hopefully.

Researcher: so do you find challenges coming out of an Islamic school and fitting into the wider society?

Participant: in terms – I think the only challenge is some people – I don't have to be honest I can't complain, I'm perfectly fine Alhamdulillah, I really get along- I think it's just going back to the thing the school nurtured me to be confident and stuff – like I was confident in myself and the school really helped me with that. I can like talk to as many as I personally don't have a problem with it but I think the only thing certain people because they – I think this is less of a problem Islamic only specific school but more of a problem how small the school was because they didn't really interact with many people and they

were quite comfortable where they are – going to a bigger place it's just but this isn't a problem about Muslim schools – this is a problem about shy people that they feel that they don't conform to what society says is normal and they don't conform to like what's normal to be interested in and you have outcasts and people who don't feel like they part of society and everything in America and not necessary even Muslims either.

Researcher: some feel that because they've been isolated for so many years and they've been into just one or similar group which is Muslim group so when they come out they don't fit into the society.

Participant: well, I think again I - you know any school has – in any fine you can say that about an Islamic school right but then you can say that about any other school in the UK – ever- every single school will have its students - each students will have its groups of friends they fall into a clique somewhere and they'll stay with them throughout the 5 years and that well be literally no different from how they dealing with other people, I think you know everyone's in – whatever school you go to you are going to be part of some sort of clique, you're going to find your own group of friends and you're not going to move from them, simple as. There'll be certain people who travel around and go to each clique and be comfortable with everyone but majority of people no everyone is going to be – everyone is isolated in a way which ever school you go to they'll isolated to groups.

Researcher: okay, do you face any type of challenges when you are into your college or the wider society?

Participant: any kind of challenges as a result of going to a Muslim school?

Researcher: yeah

Participant: okay, what would I say?

Researcher: fitting into the society?

Participant: no not myself, not personally I've never had an issue ever. I've never ever had an issue.

Researcher: so you think you fit in well enough like any other child?

Participant: yeah, I mean I don't really have an issue, I can sit-

Researcher: with white? Black? Muslim? Non-Muslim? Anyone else?

Participant: it doesn't really make a difference to be to be honest; I can sit with whoever I need to talk to. I know certain people; see I think this is just again the clique thing come in to it maybe I just so happens a lot of Muslim people tend to be shy but or they just tend to be and – but then you can say that look I live in Inner City Birmingham, [REDACTED] School isn't a Islamic school, [REDACTED] isn't a Islamic school mostly these schools they are density populated with Muslims there not going to – the people from there aren't going to face any - challenges aren't any different from anybody who goes to a Islamic school. It just so happens that most Islamic schools are occupied by most you know other places are occupied by Pakistani, Indian you know all from that region mostly Pakistanis and that's the same issue I'm not – from a child from a Muslim school I'm not going to face any different challenges from anybody who goes inner city Islamic school, I mean inner city non-Islamic school in Birmingham. I think it's mostly -

Researcher: so you think it's just fear that somebody - some people have in them but it's not the reality?

Participant: no I think it's more just I think if you flip the tables over somebody who'd been in a lets say a full white school their entire life if they were sitting at tables of full of like mostly Asians they'd feel just you maybe just as uncomfortable.

Researcher: I see.

Participant: yeah, I don't think so – I think it's just what you used to. I think it just takes time to get used to it and even though they shy eventually if they try hard themselves I think anybody can get used to anything.

Researcher: some say that Muslim schools create division, increasing number of Muslim schools would create division into the society they will be group of Muslims and again this group of others, what is your view on that?

Participant: no, not necessary. Well I can understand why people are putting that point of view forward but I think you're looking at the wrong reason, the reason isn't because they from a Islamic school, the reason is because there is a school which they happen to go to and there's a lot of Pakistanis there it's nothing to do with Islam and it just so happens if I put let's say another school – catholic school somewhere else in Birmingham which happen to be – let's say we put it in Kings Norton you know there's more non-Muslims there than Muslims you'll generally find more non-Muslims there and you're going to say oh okay we happen to put a school there and now because we put it there its created division you can't argue that. It's just – it's just a preference people go to and it comes down to the same thing which I mentioned before it's just a personal preference thing that people do and I don't think it makes much of a difference.

Researcher: okay. What is your general view about the increasing number of Muslim schools? Do you support them?

Participant: do I support them? I think the only reason why they popping up is because there is a need – people – I mean I do economics you only ever supply something when there's a demand and if there's a demand for it then I don't understand why that can't be thingy then you could argue okay there's a demand for drugs doesn't mean you have to start supplying them

[Laughing]

Participant: right, but sorry I had a hole in my argument there but realistically Islamic schools aren't drugs and Islamic schools are – it's something which cater for the needs of certain communities which they feel you know fulfils there you know fulfils there kind of rights- no not rights sorry fulfils their needs more effectively than a normal school would and gives it more holistic of what they think life is and if there's a need for it and its completely legal and they not necessary disclosing any necessary problems – problems I mean serious problems there's evidence for it not just people speculating oh okay there's a division here and there's an division there because divisions would pop up anywhere . I just want to say going back to the same again if I – if there were – if there was – for example if there was one area location and I put a Muslim school there it was free and this place happened to be a Muslim area if I made that a Muslim school if I made that a just a typical state school I'm pretty sure you'll get similar numbers there might be slightly less Muslims in the state school, slightly ever so

slightly. I'm pretty sure you'd get the same number probably the same people turning up to both, well if they were right next to each other you'd get the same you know what's the word – I forgot the word

Researcher: the word prefer?

Participant: you know there preference. I mean they wouldn't necessarily – I don't think they'll necessary prefer either one if either one there they going to go to them anyway so it's like – it's just a matter of -

Researcher: so it's just Islamic school is more applicable to the Muslim community?

Participant: I think so, yeah in Muslim schools you'll generally find in a Muslim area and if they not – if they going to be state schools you'll still find the same people going to them it just so happens – I don't think, I think that – I hope that answers your questions

Researcher: Jazak Allahu Khayr. Would you like to add anything that you think I have missed?

Participant: about Islamic schools?

Researcher: yeah, what I should have asked you about?

Participant: I think it's just maybe you should have emphasised one thing a bit more. Just how like one thing I could probably complain about Islamic schools which they fall shorter not because like necessary – it isn't necessary because they Islamic schools but this is something that they aren't doing enough because people assume that they the mosques – like the mosques is surpassed to deal with the Muslims problems but the mosques aren't doing it so and people think the community leaders of local – you know local leaders and MPs and stuff like that deal with the problems, they not doing to deal with it. Scholar's necessary – I mean they taking a bit more of an active role now especially new scholars you know younger scholars and stuff and they try to deal more social problems but not enough and the schools are in a prime position to really make effect – take effect of you know the influence that they have over students and they could realistically reshape – I mean I'm being honest here a school has the potential to reshape an entire community from the head to bottom to the way they think – they say all education is an indoctrination – you can't help it with either one so they can really change a society and I don't think they taking advantage of that enough and because of that there's a lot of people dealing with – having a lot of problems right now when they've got no-one to deal with them so I mean for me Muslim schools should give birth to a group of leaders and not because they had the opportunity to have 5 years actively you know in an Islamic environment where they been taught to kind of like be aware of society they living in and they should really take advantage – children should be made to take advantage of that and really use that to have a positive effect on the rest of the community

Researcher: Jazak Allahu Khayr

Participant: yeah

Researcher: Barkiallh FiQ, thank you.

Participant: thank your Sheikh

Researcher: that you very much for your time

Participant: thank you sheikh

Researcher: may Allah bless you. Jazak Allahu Khayr.

Appendix 2.6 (Semi-Structured Interview Summary)

Semi-structured interview summary

Date:

Time Specified: 45 – 60mins

Student Interview 3: Male Muslim faith-based school graduate

Themes	Subtheme	Quotes	Explanation
Significance of Religion in Islamic schools	Segregation if discipline standards are not high.	1 “and other things they were quite strict on was I mean interacting with between genders and stuff I think they didn’t really appreciate it [...]”	1 – The participant feels his Muslim school was strict in terms of the interaction between opposite genders.
	Discipline Standard in Muslim Schools	<p>1 “[...] one of the small things to be honest about the hair concerning the school made a big deal [...] but the school is very stern like you know you have to have it like this otherwise you know they send you home effectively”</p> <p>2 “I would definitely agree that kids are generally more calmed down and they don't you don't tend to find rowdy behaviour you won't exactly normally find a teacher – a student throwing a chair you know at a teacher, it was nothing like that. I mean you had a couple of students having tantrums with their teachers or they had their fights between each other which is things that happen anyway it's kind of inevitable anyway but you never really found anything too big [...]”</p> <p>3 “one of my teachers proposed he said instead of having like a complete you know I think I mean maybe just for the record our school had completely different lunch times girls and boys,</p>	<p>1 – The participant felt his Muslim school was too strict with regards to the hairstyle of the students, the participant mention his Muslim school would effectively sent a student home because of their hairstyle.</p> <p>2 – The participant agrees that students in his school are more disciplined and are respectful to teachers however he mentioned some children do participate in fights but he felt that was enviable part of school life.</p> <p>3 – the participant mentioned his Muslim schools was set out in a way there was minimal interaction between the opposite genders however he believes segregation of genders is not an ideal solution as student found other ways to free mix. He believes his school should incorporate the mixing of genders but in a controlled environment following the teachings of the Prophet SAW.</p>

		<p>completely different floors, you wouldn't see the girls, boys wouldn't see the girls, girls wouldn't see the boys unless they where you know just happened to be crossing each other like you know lunch times that was it and you know they found – because they wanted to interact they found other ways of doing it I'll be – I know from experience in my class they found other ways of doing it to be honest and one of the teachers said he goes that at the end of the day at the time of the sahabah what would happen is men would sit in front of the women, women will sit behind in a Masjid that's how the Prophet SAW would teach, maybe employing something like that in a class [...]"</p>	
Challenges of Muslim Schools	Financial Strain of Muslim schools and Parents.	<p>1 "since they became a public school in terms like they were funded by the government and stuff. The government's regulations how they need to do things, what they need to do, how they need to do it"</p> <p>2 "it's changed so much sense it's became funded, I think well I've been there I've noticed things been changed [...]"</p>	<p>1 – The participant believes since his school become government funded the government has implemented regulations and has more control over the school.</p> <p>2 – The participant believes his school has changed a lot since it has become government funded.</p>
	Improvement in Islamic schools as time passes.	<p>1 "I wouldn't really extend the hours because realistically speaking I don't think many students will be in favour of that and if students aren't happy then they not going to work, if they don't work it's no point bring them to school and I mean perhaps if you going to extend it by little bit even maybe perhaps shortening the lessons"</p> <p>2 " I think to be honest to deal with the wider community problems we probably need to deal with them in the community but school would be an ideal place to deal with them</p>	<p>1 – The participant believes realistically increasing the school hours it would not be beneficial he feels it would be ideal if the school shortens existing lessons so there can be time allocated to Islamic studies.</p> <p>2 – The participant believes the school is an ideal place to deal with the wider community problems as he feels if they deal with the roots of the problems then it would bring the community together.</p>

		<p>that my own view on it”</p> <p>3 “I think the biggest challenge is being able to give at the time to both an academic perspective and an Islamic perspective and giving time, enough time to both of those aspects of a student’s life as well as trying to teach lesson in a way which happen to be Islamic but also happen to you know go the way the government wants them to happen [...]”</p> <p>4 “discuss how you can accommodate these so starting with the problem with divisions I would deal with that first really because at the end of the day they the youth and as long as you can convince them you can change the world I’ve grown up with that feeling and I still belief in that very, very much so that I’m going to change the world one day and I would inspire make other students and inspire to do that [...]”</p> <p>5 “ I mean I’m being honest here a school has the potential to reshape an entire community from the head to bottom to the way they think – they say all education is an indoctrination – [...]Muslim schools should give birth to a group of leaders and not because they had the opportunity to have 5 years actively you know in an Islamic environment where they been taught to kind of like be aware of society they living in and they should really take advantage – children should be made to take advantage of that and really use that to have a positive effect on the rest of the community”</p>	<p>3 – The participant believes one of the main challenges of Muslim schools is giving enough time to both Islamic and national curriculum while pleasing the government’s wishes.</p> <p>4 - The participant would improve the school by dealing with the divisions in society and he would improve tolerance between the communities.</p> <p>5 – The participant believes school has the potential to reshape the community however they are not taking advantage of this, he feels all education is a form of indoctrination and they should use this to positively change society.</p>
Standard of Education	Islamic education (types of Muslim	1 “I think they both probably have their pros and cons. In the residential school obviously you’d probably get a more if they put	1 – The participant believes Muslim boarding schools have their pros and cons he feels they have the ability to practise

	Schools)	<p>into practise probably 'getten' more if they put into practise probably a holistic of kind of upbringing in an Islamic manner if you know what I'm talking about[...] it's a bit more kind of holistic in how the teachers would be able to approach it would be easier for them to implement certain ways to teach certain things sense they there all the time but at the same time the school it allows a break from all that – normal state school which we said full-time school”</p> <p>2 “[...] a lot of education is to do with thinking for yourself and actually developing yourself by yourself so I think it allows that more to develop in the child maybe a independent side to the student, so I mean personally I'll probably prefer the full-time school because that way – myself I prefer to work independently rather than be you know rely on teachers or colleagues or anything like that.”</p> <p>3 “makes sense to me that it's probably like the parents and people you know elders what you call the elders of the community those people at the top and actually like take care of the communities anyway historically you know the Muslims came to the UK and stuff they were kind of you know isolated kind of bunch initially especially so maybe they wanted something specific for their children you know it's a bit more familiar to them as well as to their children it's trying bring them up in a similar way that might not necessary be the best thing but probably the familiarity made them more comfortable sending their children there.”</p> <p>4 “I'd hope they spend more time</p>	<p>what they teach and it would be easier for boarding schools to implement what they teach.</p> <p>2 – The participant personally prefers full-time Muslim school as he feels it allows children to be more independent.</p> <p>3 – The participant believes Muslim schools was established as the first generation in the UK felt isolated and they wanted some familiarity for their children.</p> <p>4 – The participant feels Muslim boarding schools gives students a more realistic version of Islam and he feels they teach you more than an average Muslim.</p> <p>5 – The participant believes the only reason Muslim schools are increasing in number is because there is a need and if threes a need you have to supply to that need if it is completely legal.</p>
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	More time required for Curriculum subjects.	<p>1 "the one that I went to myself I think there definitely were shortcomings in terms that there was – initially it was quite good in the way every single week we did tajweed and we have Islamic studies but then it became more and more focussed on GCSE's and so on even when we were studying – even when we were studying Islamic studies we were studying like GCSE Islamic Studies [...] I think as you got older there was less and less focus on that part of reading and I can understand why the school needed to do that obviously we need to get GCSE results at the end of the day which is very important it's the reason why you go secondary school but again I think there could be things done to help enrich that sides of the students knowledge and stuff – Islamic knowledge especially."</p>	<p>1 – The participant feels as they progressed further along their academic education, national curriculum subjects were given preference over Islamic curriculum and he understands GCSE's is important but he feels there could be more done to improve the Islamic education.</p>
	High <i>Tarbiyyah</i> (Upbringing) in Islamic schools.	<p>1 "[...] at the end of the day Tarbiyyah is more than just learning Qur'an, speaking nice and good manners its really having an</p>	<p>1 - The participant feels upbringing is more than just learning the Qur'an and manners but also having an</p>

		<p>active part in your communities and society and I think not necessary enough is done to do to push that kind of part of it.”</p> <p>2 “obviously one thing is to do like to kind of cultivate their Islamic knowledge and what you call Tarbiyyah and the second reason probably have to be why they made Islamic schools [...]”</p>	<p>active part in the surrounding community.</p> <p>2 - Participant believes Tarbiyyah was one of the main reason Muslim schools was established.</p>
<p>Muslim schools do not Promote Isolation instead prepares children for wider society.</p>	<p>Isolation to minimise wider society influence.</p>	<p>1 “the way ██████ is made is so different it’s almost as if you living in a bubble compared to other state schools, you don't really tend to you know feel the what life is really like for most people out there and if you do want to impact people in that way it kind of limits you for example this is the reason why I went to a normal secular kind of ██████ college because I wanted to feel life, how life is like for the majority of the people rather than just for those living in a bubble in secondary then going to like a sixth form or something[...]then again it kind of limits what you can get from that life to be honest probably the only shortcoming I can think of anyway.”</p> <p>2 “I don't think necessary from the wider society in terms of like there’s a lot I go back to the same lesson R.S is was a lot more like a multi kind of lesson just a multi-issue lesson, whenever there was a big issue [...] we actively discussed that in class, [...] it didn't isolate from the wider world you knew as a child in ██████ school[...] like I said before it’s like a bubble like you didn’t really come across the problems that you’d normally come across in other places, you didn’t really find guys breaking down over like home issues and stuff in the middle of the school (...) what I’ve seen in colleges</p>	<p>1 – The participant admits attending Muslim school is almost like living in a bubble and he feels they are in a way limited.</p> <p>2 –The participant felt religious education made the student more aware of issues going on in the world which they would actively discuss in that since he believed they were not isolated from wider society. The participant however believes his schools sheltered it students from social problems.</p> <p>3 –The participant states his school had various students from different backgrounds but he felt the school was a bit extreme in his precautions to limit opposite gender interaction.</p> <p>4– the participant believes the school nurtured him to be confident and he can interact with all kinds of people he feels that students who feel isolated is due to their own shyness and they do not feel comfortable to interact with some people.</p> <p>5– The participant feels whatever school a person attends they will be part of a group who they will stay with throughout the detraction of</p>

	<p>people having all sorts of problems with like for example their fathers have left them [...] but those kind of issues, especially social you never had much exposure to.”</p> <p>3 “ [...] it was quite open and they had Muslims from all kinds of backgrounds there but at the same time it kind of suppressed certain parts a bit more I mean prime example is that the all the sister thing – the sister/brother interaction thing the school treated it as basically- effectively if you talk to a sister that's it you know you've committed like a major sin right there that's how a lot of students felt and at certain times I felt the same way as well [...]”</p> <p>4 “ I think it's just going back to the thing the school nurtured me to be confident and stuff – like I was confident in myself and the school really helped me with that. I can like talk to as many as I personally don't have a problem with it but I think the only thing certain people because [...] this is a problem about shy people that they feel that they don't conform to what society says is normal and they don't conform to like what's normal to be interested in and you have outcasts and people who don't feel like they part of society [...].”</p> <p>5 “you can say that about any other school in the UK [...] whatever school you go to you are going to be part of some sort of clique, you're going to find your own group of friends and you're not going to move from them, simple as. There'll be certain people who travel around and go to each clique and be comfortable with everyone but majority of people no [...] everyone is isolated</p>	<p>their studies, he admits there are some people who are comfortable with everyone but he feels the majority of people would stick to their own cliques. So he feels that everyone is isolated in groups.</p> <p>6– the participant feels that Muslim schools are not the only schools that can isolate it students he feels that if a school is predominately white they won't feel comfortable in an all Asian community and it would take time for them to get use to it.</p>
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	<p>in a way which ever school you go to they'll isolated to groups."</p> <p>6 "no I think it's more just I think if you flip the tables over somebody who'd been in a let's say a full white school their entire life if they were sitting at tables of full of like mostly Asians they'd feel just you maybe just as uncomfortable.[...]I don't think so – I think it's just what you used to. I think it just takes time to get used to it and even though they shy eventually if they try hard themselves I think anybody can get used to anything."</p>	
<p>Muslim schools Prepare children for further education.</p>	<p>1 " I mean because I go college now as well it's a bit more different"</p> <p>2 "it's not necessary important that you have to have gone through every experience in your life by the age of 16."</p>	<p>1 – The participant admits college life is different than that at his full-time Muslim school.</p> <p>2 – The participant feels it is not important that a child has gone through every experience by the time he finished secondary school.</p>
<p>Muslim schools do not breed Fanatics.</p>	<p>1 "why would you restrict that to Muslim schools? I think any – if anything I mean people try – tend to ignore fanatics from other religions I mean what 3 years ago there was a man whose going with a loaded exhuses in his car towards a birth control clinic in America, I mean I know they didn't get much news but isn't that technically a fanatic? You could say that the IDF right now are fanatic about the way they dealing with Gaza and stuff and you have hundreds of Britons' who have gone over and gone and they've you know they've joined the IDF, IDF's responsible – they've broken hundreds of war crimes and the UN's condemn the many, many times for thing that they have done, many of the generals personal responsibilities"</p> <p>2 "I think that is a very, very unfair</p>	<p>1 – The participant believes it is unfair to restrict fanatics to Muslim schools he feels people tend to ignore fanatical behaviour people of other religions or backgrounds mentioning examples of fanatical behaviour taking place in today's society.</p> <p>2 – The participant feels people who claim Muslim schools are fanatical are biased. He mentioned how some orthodox Jewish schools teach their students that the whole world hates them, he feels that is fanatical as it would create hostility and division making some Jewish school graduated accept unconditionally support all the wrong that the Israel state does.</p>

		<p>question to be honest and I don't particularly what to answer it [...] you're looking through a very, very biased lenses right there. I'll tell you one thing you really want to have a look at if anybody takes anything from this interview is that I read an article the other day where orthodox Jewish schools – so orthodox Jews tend to be the ones with the blacks suit, they keep long hair, they and the beards and stuff and they said that they were taught in their schools that the outside world hated them and that's why they were taught to be so reserved and I think they might be perhaps a reason why you know people are feeling that they needs to be necessary a Jewish only state because the rest of the world hates them and its anti-Semitic and stuff[...]"</p>	
	<p>Muslim schools teach respecting people of other faith and no faith.</p>	<p>1 "the school developed things in me like my confidence grew a lot simply from using Islamic things like Jumma Kutabahs and stuff and because of that Alhamdulillah my confidence really allowed me to excel in other parts like now I'm working in a shop on Coventry Road which is a very popular shop and the manager said only reason he hired me was because of my confidence and I'm able to talk to people quite confidently without being awkward [...]"</p> <p>2 "[...]I go to college now and I have friends who are like atheist I have friends who are like Christian's people who like are Sikhs quite a few of them you know it nothing come up I've never had a issue having friends like that either."</p> <p>3 "in Islam nationalism having national pride like actual pride and feeling that oh my nation is better</p>	<p>1 – The participant believes his full time Muslim schools helped his confidence grow and help him excel his working life as he is able to confidently interact with people of all faiths.</p> <p>2 – The participant mentioned he has friends of all faiths and no faith at his college.</p> <p>3 – The participant believes Islam does not promote nationalism as he feels to some it extent it can promote racism and in the past it has even created wars.</p> <p>4 – The participate believes you do not have to be proud to be British in order to want to live in this country and it does not mean you hate the rest of the country, you can disagree with the countries policies but at the same time you can recognise yourself as being British.</p>

	<p>than your nation because our nation you know that's happened in history and its caused world wars to happen over it, Islam is something that is against nationalism and effectively to some extent even nationalism can come to can create racism[...]"</p> <p>4 "if you're not proud to be British that means you don't want to live here anymore or like you hate the rest of the country which isn't the case you dis- I mean there are 100s of people in this country who are born British you know white Anglo-Saxon people who they disagree with policies of the country and I know a lot of people who are actually big journalists like John Pilger and like – people like what's it Robert Fitts who said that they were ashamed of things that the country done[...] if you mean by being proud that you know recognised yourself as being British and be happy to say it to people then yeah if proud means being supportive in everything they do then no I would disagree with that, I'd say yeah fine they not proud to be British just like a lot of journalists and you know scholars and such."</p> <p>5 "I know for example in [redacted] school there was a teacher there and he was actually a mufti himself and he had discussions with the students every single lesson [...] I know some people of the class they became very open minded with regards to things and now they happy and you know it's working quite well, I have some of them come to my college and Alhamdulillah they fantastic they work with us really well and because of that now Alhamdulillah - I've learnt most my - like what you'd call open</p>	<p>5 – the participant mentioned a Muslim school that employs an Mufti that made the students open minded, he mentioned he met some of his students in college and they helped him become more open minded and tolerant to other people.</p> <p>6 – the participant believes Muslim schools do not stop them from being friends with non-Muslims because he has many friends who are non-Muslim however he feels a person own lack of self esteem will result in them not being friends with people of other faiths therefore he believes it has nothing to do with Muslim schools.</p>
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		<p>mindedness from this place, so far they taught me you know you need to be more tolerant and stuff [...]"</p> <p>6 "I think it doesn't necessary stop them because myself I've got many non-Muslim friends I don't have issue getting along with anybody like that it teaches you to be a lot more comfortable with them but I don't think it stops you [...] a person's own lack of self esteem that they won't be friends with somebody with a different faith, I thinks that's kind of flawed if you try and blame the Islamic school for being unable to do that."</p>	
Comparison between participant's achievement and peers who studied in state schools.		<p>1 "Researcher: If you had the choice would you prefer to attend a Muslim school over a state school? Participant: Muslim school [...] yeah I think being able to gone through that and gone through that and going it, I definitely most probably prefer Muslim school."</p> <p>2 "probably not to be honest because at the end of the day I've been to college now and you know in my head I'm assuming that a state school is quite similar to what my college is like right now and although it does give you that freedom and gives you that more independence and stuff but it does I think for somebody of my age especially in secondary school its quite easily to go off the rail in terms of what you call your <i>Deen</i> and your <i>Tarbiyyah</i> for someone especially younger than myself when we get to college we become a bit more mature and we tend to look after ourselves a little bit more as well."</p>	<p>1 – The participant mentioned he would prefer to attend Muslim school over state school especially going through the experience.</p> <p>2 – The participant believes Islamic school has made him more mature so he would not choose state school over Muslim school.</p>
Happiness in relation		1 " I think being in an Islamic school allowed me to nurture	1 – the participant feels being in a Muslim school nurtured him

to full-time Muslim schools.		certain parts of my own personality and stuff because I mean with what I would view my life I think Islamic school definitely helped me realise what my strengths were, I think because the school I went to personally was quite small as well, it definitely allowed me to have more attention, personally as well I could speak to teachers and they could highlight you know weaknesses within me and so I can fix them and allow me to work on my strengths whereas I don't think I would have got the same kind of attention in state school."	and shaped certain parts of his personality and he feels by attending his Muslim school it allowed him to realise his strengths and weaknesses so he can work at them.
Reasons for choosing full-time Muslim school		<p>1 "well intentionally to be honest I wanted to go to a state school myself but the reason I wanted to go there was because I had a couple of friends who were going to those schools as well, quite a few to be honest and but in the end it did – it was my parents choice, ultimately they did pick for me because in the end I was only 11 years old and I can appreciate why they might – I think in the end it did work out for the best [...]"</p> <p>2 " Researcher: okay, do you think today since you left the school for a year now do you think your parents made the right choice for you? Participant: yeah Alhamdulillah I wouldn't, I wouldn't – If I had the chance I would probably if I knew what the school would do for me I would definitely like be in agreement with my parents 5 years ago."</p>	<p>1 – the participant mentioned he would have liked to attended a state school but he realises he was only 11 years old and the final choice about what school to send him to was made by his parents.</p> <p>2 – The participant feels his parents made the right decision when choosing full-time Muslim school for him.</p>
Role Models		1 "my teachers act as role models, some of them where very good in	1 – the participant feels his teachers where good role

<p>and teachers</p>		<p>terms of like having if I can name one of them maybe [REDACTED] [REDACTED] he was somebody who I really, really did look up to, I almost in a way like modelled myself on him and even personal issues I had things that I wanted to do in my life and stuff and I'd come and talk to him and he'd really advise me [...]"</p> <p>2 "not necessary I don't think necessary I had a better role model from Islamic school either because I think I could have potentially found brother [REDACTED] in teaching in a state school or a brother [REDACTED] who is teaching in another state school as well so I don't necessary think the role model thing is exclusive either."</p>	<p>models and he looked up to some of his teachers and he even went as far to say he modelled himself on a particular teachers of his full-time Muslim school.</p> <p>2 – The participant feels role models can come from both Islamic schools as well as state funded schools.</p>
<p>Goal and achievement of Muslim schools.</p>		<p>1 " I know there was a steady decrease in the years above me and you know it was kind of like foreseeing it, it was almost like a graph you could see that each year the results were going down and down since I think originally they were a private school and they became and since then you can check the figures yourself it's been going down every year so I think to be honest how everyone – whatever they were doing before, they were doing really well and I know from people who were there back then they said that the Islamic education was better as well and they felt more fulfilled Muslims because of the school [...]they felt that they were more academically well rounded as well as you know islamically."</p> <p>2 " it's an Orwellian kind of like regimented way they have to teach now I mean that's what it seems to me now anyway I think that's lead to maybe an decrease because at the end of the day different people</p>	<p>1 – the participant believes that the academic achievement of his Muslim school has gradually decreased over recent years, he feels since the school became state funded they grades has decreased he feel that the standard of education in the past was better as it made more fulfilled Muslims more where more academically successful.</p> <p>2 – The participant believes the rules and regulations of the government has resulted in the decrease in academic achievement.</p> <p>3 – The participant believes given the decrease in academic achievement over resent year he feels his school is still doing fairly well.</p>

		<p>learn different ways and you need to appreciate that if you want to make progress.”</p> <p>3 “ I did say we were doing worst each year we still a relatively good to be honest compared to other schools around the country I think it was like 73% or something which was quite good to be honest.”</p>	
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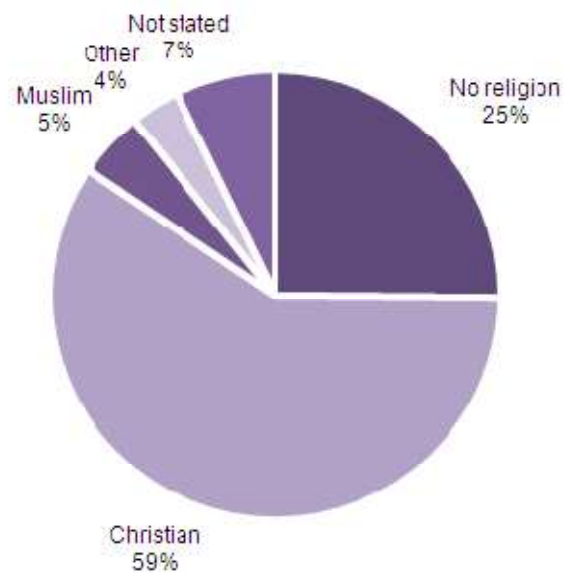
Appendix 2.7 Census 2011

Census 2011 - Office for National Statistics: Religious Affiliation

Data for Figure 1
Religious Affiliation, 2011

England and Wales	Percentages
No religion	25.1
Christian	59.3
Muslim	4.8
Other	3.6
Not stated	7.2

Source: Census 2011, Office for National Statistics



Census 2011 - Office for National Statistics: Minority religious groups

Census 2011 - Office for National Statistics: Religion by age

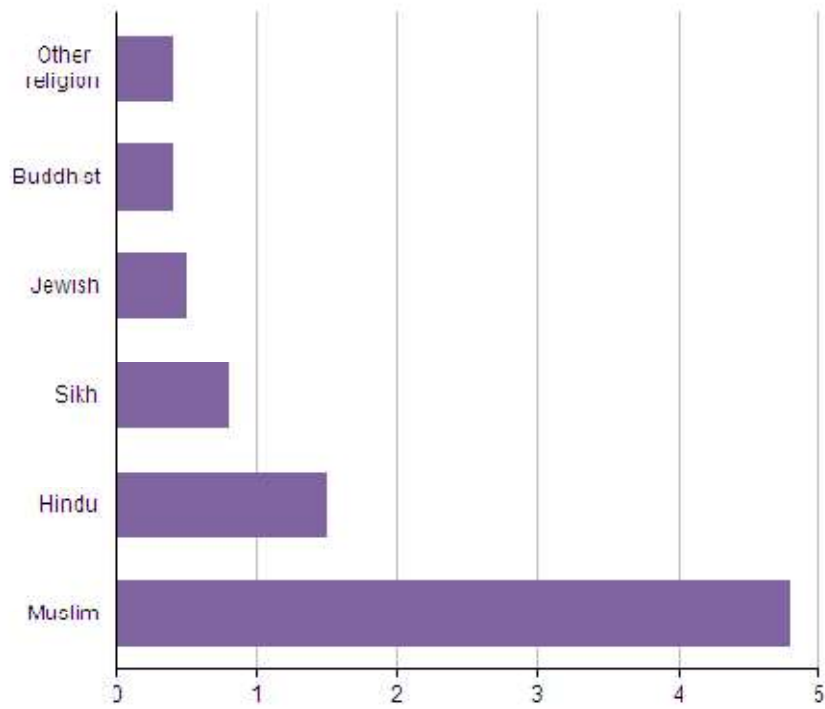
Data table for Figure 2

Minority religious groups, 2011

England and Wales,	Percentages
Muslim	4.8
Hindu	1.5
Sikh	0.8
Jewish	0.5
Buddhist	0.4
Other religion	0.4

Source: Census 2011, Office for National Statistics

Data for Figure 1



Religion by age, England and Wales, 2011

Percentages

	All	Other religion	Sikh	Muslim	Jewish	Hindu	Buddhist	Christian	No religion
0 – 24	30.7	18.7	34.4	48.4	30.2	31.5	25.2	25.5	39.4
25 – 49	34.7	47.7	41.6	39.5	30.2	45.2	50.3	31.0	42.2
50 – 64	18.1	24.3	15.6	8.1	18.7	15.2	18.3	21.1	12.8
Age 65 +	16.4	9.2	8.3	3.9	21.0	8.1	6.2	22.3	5.6

Source: Census 2011, Office for National Statistics