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**An exploratory study of primary school teachers' perceptions of group work as a way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab.**

by

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*Dedicated to*

*My wife Faiza and my kids Ayan and Rohan*

# Abstract

This study was designed to explore primary teachers' perceptions of group work as a way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab. In particular, the study attempted to ascertain how primary teachers view group work, whether they think it may have benefits and/or drawbacks if implemented as a way of teaching English in the primary classroom and what are their perceived impediments to implementing it in public sector primary schools of Punjab To explore the aspects stated above, I adopted a mixed methods qualitative approach for the research. Twenty participants from eight primary schools of District Jhang were selected for data collection. The participants were given questionnaires and data collected from questionnaires provided a baseline to decide what to further investigate in the interviews. The questionnaire responses guided me to further investigate participants' understanding of group work in terms of it as (1) a way of teaching English (2) the perceived benefits and/or drawbacks of implementing group work in primary English classroom, and (3) factors that may impede the implementation of group work as a way of teaching English.

To analyse the data obtained by questionnaires and interviews, I adopted a hybrid deductive/inductive thematic analysis. The initial analysis of participants' responses suggested that participants had a flawed understanding of group work. Participants' responses further suggested that physical layout and teaching practices as perceived by the participants were traditional or teacher-centred and that current settings in primary schools were unlikely to support group work as a teaching methodology. The analysis also informed that participants perceived a number of factors in the current primary school settings which may not support group work as a way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab. These factors included conditions in primary school, poor supply of teaching resources, flawed teacher training, lack of teacher autonomy among others. Moreover, the analysis of participants' responses suggested that primary teachers work in difficult conditions which do not encourage them to reflect on their teaching and adopt different ways of activity-based learning. During the later stages of thematic analysis, an underlying theme of professional identity began to unfold, which was found compelling due to its relationship with teachers' apparent lack of interest in initiatives to try to change the current status of classroom layout and use various methodologies of teaching English in primary classroom. The emergence of this theme changed the focus of

the thesis, as it was clear that lack of agency, confidence and autonomy were the key to the teachers' reluctance to engage with new pedagogical practices.

It is clear from the findings that for participants to feel enabled to adopt more activity-based methodologies such as group work, changes to their working conditions, better training opportunities and greater teacher autonomy in decision making, both collegiately and regarding pedagogy, are necessary. In addition, teachers' poor perception of their professional roles and responsibilities needs to be enhanced through purposeful teacher training. If these changes are put in place, teachers may become more motivated and willing to try new approaches in their classrooms. However, after conducting this research, I consider that introducing such changes in the primary school settings in Pakistan would be a laborious, time-consuming and expensive process. In the present scenario, it would be necessary for the head teachers to provide teachers greater opportunities to reflect on their classroom practices and discuss issues with colleagues. In addition, primary schools could engage researchers and student-teachers from local universities and training colleges to work together with primary teachers to ensure that teachers have the chance to have a a broader sense of a variety of teaching approaches and how they may be implemented with support.

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## Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| **CT** | Certificate of Teaching |
| **CIS** | Communicative Instructional Setting |
| **DSD** | Directorate of Staff Development |
| **EFA** | Education for All |
| **ICT** | Information and Communications Technology |
| **GCEs** | Government Colleges for Education |
| **GCETs** | Government Colleges for Teachers |
| **GoP** | Government of Pakistan |
| **GTM** | Grammar Translation Method |
| **GW** | Group Work |
| **LEAPS** | Learning and Educational Achievements in Punjab Schools |
| **MoE** | Ministry of Education |
| **NAS** | Natural Acquisition Setting |
| **NQT** | Newly Qualified Teachers |
| **PEP-ILE** | Primary Education Project-Improved Learning Environment |
| **PTC** | Primary Teaching Certificate |
| **RITEs** | Regional Institutes for Teacher Education |
| **SAP** | Social Action Program |
| **SBIS** | Structured-Based Instructional Setting |
| **SLA** | Second Language Acquisition |
| **SLL** | Second Language Learning |
| **SPRinG** | Social Pedagogic Research into Group-work |
| **STEP** | Strengthening Teacher Education in Pakistan |
| **UDHR** | the Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| **ZPD** | Zone of Proximal Development |

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**Author's Declaration**

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature: _____

*Hafiz Muhammad Arshad*

## Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the content and context of this study. The main focus of this study was to explore primary teachers' perceptions of group work as a way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab. I start this chapter by presenting my personal and professional motivation to undertake this research and move on by giving a brief picture of the Education System in Pakistan and rationale for the study. This chapter also explains the purpose and significance of the study. The last part of this chapter reflects on the research questions that underpin the study. As part of the reflection on the research questions, I also include a personal reflection in order to explain to the reader how the focus of the research changed after I had scrutinised the data. Having started with one focus, it became clear during the analysis process that there were unexpected factors which arose from the data, which could not be ignored, as they appeared fundamental to the teachers' situation and their self-perception. The chapter concludes by setting out the organization of this thesis.

## 1.2 Personal and professional motivation:

After completing my primary school education, I was admitted to a Madrassa school where, for three years, I memorised the Holy Quran, a long religious book, without understanding the meanings of it. Memorizing the Holy Quran proved a good exercise to sharpen my memorizing abilities which played a major role in my life at high school achievements afterwards. I performed very well by memorizing my high school lessons and achieved good grades up to intermediate level (grade 12). However, I started facing problems at graduation and Masters in English and Education where memorizing had a very small part to play because higher education also required creativity along with memorization. Like most Pakistani students in primary schools and Madrassas, I was rarely taught how to be creative although I was still considered a brilliant student by my teachers. However, I always believed that my schooling did not develop the required four English language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) in me which are considered central to language learning.

After I graduated from the university, I started my career as a part-time Primary and secondary school English teacher and started to explore ways of teaching English. Subsequently, I started a full-time job as a Subject Specialist (SS) in a project run by a private educational institute, Beaconhouse School System (BSS), where I had to prepare lesson plans for English for primary school teachers. The teaching philosophy of BSS was based on activity-based learning and I read and learnt with my colleagues how to plan an activity-based lesson and how to engage students in different conversations and activities to practise English language. During my job as a teacher trainer at BSS, I continuously interacted with teachers in training sessions who provided feedback on my lesson plans. In the light of teachers' feedback, I improved my lesson plans to make them more practical for the teachers to implement in classrooms. From that point, I started to look at the outcomes of conducting group work in the English classroom and, from teachers' feedback and classroom observations found that group work was helpful for students to learn their lessons quickly and retain them effectively. At this point, my interaction was with primary English teachers in the private sector from which I realised the potential of group work as a way of teaching English.

In 2009, The Directorate of Staff Development, Punjab (DSD), initiated an Early Childhood Education program (ECE) and DSD hired some trainers from Beaconhouse School System. I was among the selected candidates who were assigned to train public primary school teachers for ECE. My interaction with public sector primary teachers convinced me that they had rarely seen anything such as group work taking place in their classrooms. When I spoke to these teachers about what they thought of activity-based learning, they gave me varied responses. The majority of them termed the idea of teaching English by group work as futile, impracticable and a waste of time. On the other hand, I had seen private school teachers who found group work interesting and who reported that they were already doing some group work activities in their English classrooms. Juxtaposing the opinions of public and private teachers, I assumed that one of the reasons behind better performance of private schools in the province Punjab, might be that private school teachers have greater opportunities for conducting activities such as group work in their classrooms. Thus, I wanted to explore whether or not group work might also work as an effective methodology in public sector primary schools of Punjab. I started shaping questions in my mind to finalise a workable plan for a piece of research and decided to compare the traditional, lecture-dominated method of teaching English with the use of

group work as a way of teaching English in the government primary schools of Punjab, Pakistan.

In the beginning, I devised a plan to introduce an intervention and use group work as a way of teaching English in a government primary school of Punjab and record its impact on students' interaction in class and on their learning of English. However, the outcomes of a pilot study proved that intervention work would take too long to complete and the impact of group work on students would be hard to record due to limited time for data collection and the complexity of the Pakistani context. Thus, I decided to investigate teachers' perceptions of group work as a possible way of teaching English.

In the light of discussion presented above, this study aimed:

- to investigate participants' perceptions of group work as a way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab.
- to investigate teachers' perceptions about possible benefits and drawbacks of teaching English by group work in primary schools of Punjab.
- to investigate participants' perceptions of challenges which may impede the practice of group work for teaching of English in public sector primary schools of Punjab.

**1.3 Education System in Pakistan:**

This section will briefly introduce the education system in Pakistan for the reader to develop an understanding of the context in which this study was conducted. Education in Pakistan is federally administered by the Ministry of Education of the Government of Pakistan. In the light of latest research available, researchers (Andrabi et al., 2007; Irfan 2010; Westbrook et al, 2009) believe that the education system of Pakistan may be divided into three categories: Public, Private and Madaris (religious institutions). Qaisar (2011) elaborates these categories and argues that (i) Public sector institutions are state-run with a low fee structure. These institutions are largely Urdu-medium schools and provide education to the middle and poor classes of society. These schools are poorly financed and considered to be constantly ignored by the successive governments, ultimately lacking in resources and infrastructure (Pardhan & Theissen, 2006).

(ii) Private education institutions may further be categorised into two types on the basis of fee structures: (a) 'the elitist private educational institutions' with a high fee structure, are English medium and cater to the needs of the upper and upper middle classes of society and (b) 'non-elitist private institutions' are 'so called English-medium private schools' where the curriculum is in English, but students and teachers predominantly communicate in Urdu language (Qaisar, 2011. p.1). These schools exist in densely populated urban and rural areas and cater for a large number of students from the middle and lower middle classes of society. They are comparatively popular in the areas where the public-sector institutions are considered insufficient in number or inefficient in their academic performance. The private schools are considered appropriate options by parents who, otherwise, would have had to send their children to government funded public sector schools (Andrabi et al., 2007 p.85).

Recent research (Andrabi et al., 2009, 2002, 2007; Harlech-Jones et al., 2005; Lloyd et al. 2005) suggests that the private sector has emerged as an important education provider even in the poor communities in the country. Andrabi et al. (2002) and Irvine (2004) argues that parents have shown more interest in sending their children to private schools because they can afford to send their children to these schools and because of the low quality of teaching and poor infrastructure of public sector primary schools.

(iii) Madaris or Madrassas are charity-based schools which provide education, predominantly religious, to the poor and deprived sections of society (Andrabi et al., 2007 p.21). The majority of these religious schools are charity based and provide food and shelter to their students with minimal control from the government (Andrabi et al., 2009). However, after strong criticism from society it is acknowledged that 'the madrassah schools offer almost no instruction beyond the memorizing of the Quran' (Andrabi et al., 2009 p.1). Singer (2001) argues that the state has no system of supervision for curriculum and teaching in Madrassas which allows propagation of extremist explanation of religion that is sympathetic to militancy (Singer, 2001; Andrabi et al., 2009).

In the light of the discussion presented above, it may be said that the three education providers have an important role in providing education to the society, however, the state plays a central role in providing education to four out of five school-going children in the country (Rizvi & Elliot, 2005) within which federal and provincial governments have different tasks and responsibilities.

After an approval of the 18th amendment of 2010 in the constitution, provinces have been given more powers in implementing educational reforms (Adeney, 2012). As a result of the 18th amendment, as Qaisar (2011) reports, provincial governments were made responsible to formulate and implement rules regarding broader academic and administrative matters in all academic institutions. The federal government, on the other hand, assists the provincial governments in the areas of curriculum development, official approval and financial support to conduct research projects (Qaisar, 2011, p.1). The education in Pakistan is generally divided into five levels: primary (Kachi/Nursery, Grade 1-5), middle (Grade 6-8), high (Grade 9-10), intermediate (11-12) and University programs (Graduation and higher degrees) (Ali, 1998; Westbrook et al, 2009).

Studies (Warwick et al., 1991; Westbrook et al., 2009; Ali, 2000) indicate that teachers in primary schools in Pakistan are poorly paid, which may be a strong reason to claim that motivated and talented individuals are not usually attracted to the teaching profession. Teaching is often considered the last choice for male teachers and teachers are often appointed on political affiliation rather than on merit (Ali, 2000). As a result, as research (Mohammad, 2004; Ali, 2000; UNESCO, 2004) indicates, there are gaps in teachers' knowledge and teaching skills and despite the international consensus which suggests that quality teaching may only be assured through a learner-centred classroom (UNESCO, 2004), Pakistani classrooms are characterised by 'traditional' pedagogy where transmission of knowledge and rote learning are predominantly used as teaching methodology (Westbrook et al., 2009). Such conditions in primary classrooms raise questions about the quality of teacher training for primary teachers.

Teacher training in Pakistan is reported as highly stratified (Westbrook et al., 2009). Information about pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes has been provided in Chapter two. I shall describe here an overall picture of teacher training in Pakistan. Government Colleges of Elementary Education (GCETs) train primary and middle school teachers for one year. There are two pre-service training courses; Primary Teaching Certificate (PTC) and Certificate in Teaching (CT) for primary and middle school teaching positions respectively (ibid) and in-service training after the teachers have qualified. However, despite a range of these pre-service and in-service training sessions, teachers predominantly use traditional methods of teaching (Ali, 2000; Mohammad, 2006; Mohammad and Harlech-Jones, 2008). Ashraf et al. (2005) and Rugh et al. (1991) explain that the persistence of traditional pedagogy in the primary classroom is linked with the highly theoretical content of teacher training modules. Ashraf et al. (2005) further explain

that teacher training programmes comprise a curriculum based on 'ill-defined' theories and 'imported ideas' with little support to translate them into practice. These training sessions are taught to the participants through lectures which might emphasise use of activity-based teaching, learner-centred classrooms, teaching through cooperative group work, group discussion and presentations, however, the trainees are rarely exposed to such learning themselves (ibid).

This study was conducted in selected public sector primary schools of Punjab. This section explained the context in which the study was conducted and primary education system in Punjab, and the status of teachers and teaching and teacher training have been briefly explained. A detailed background will be presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The next section will present the researcher's point of view on the rationale of the study.

## 1.4 Rationale for the study:

In this section, I shall explain why this study was conducted. There are two parts in this section. The first part will relate research which emphasises the sociocultural aspect of second language learning in which interaction is believed to play a crucial role (Long & Porter, 1985). In the light of sociocultural theory and keeping in mind the interactional function of group work (Long & Porter, 1985), I considered that group work might be used as an effective way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab where at present the primary classroom is considered to be traditional, examination-oriented and teacher centred (Qaisar, 2011). The second part of this section narrates the account of researcher's personal and professional motivation which gave him the confidence to conduct this study.

The sociocultural nature of second language learning lays central emphasis on two crucial aspects known as 'interaction' and 'input'. These factors are believed to facilitate the process of language learning (Muho and Kurani, 2014). The role of interaction in language pedagogy has been an area of great interest for linguists. For example, as Ellis (2005) claims, Krashen's Monitor Model (Krashen, 1981), Long's Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1981), DeKeyser's skill-learning theory (DeKeyser, 1998), VanPatten's input processing theory (VanPatten, 1996 and VanPatten, 2002) and Ellis's theory of instructed language learning (Ellis, 1994) address the role of instruction in L2 acquisition where interaction and input play a crucial role. Therefore, researchers and practitioners of second language

learning advocate learner-centred classrooms in which activity-based teaching and learning occur. Teachers and practitioners adopt various methods for classroom instruction and communication on the basis of certain theoretical frameworks (Qaisar, 2011; Webb et al., 1999) in which collaborative group work is seen as an effective way of solving teachers' pedagogical issues around the world (Long & Porter, 1985; Galton & Hargreaves, 2009). Recent research in primary schools in the UK and Scotland (see The SPRinG Project by Blatchford and colleagues, Kutnick & Blatchford, 2014; Bains et al., 2016) and in primary schools in Pakistan (Qaisar, 2011) confirm the effectiveness of group work in enhancing students' academic achievements in subjects such as English Language, Mathematics and Science and also improvement of their interpersonal skills. The SPRinG project continued for 4 years (2004-2008) in which teachers and researchers worked together to develop strategies for conducting group work to teach the subjects of Mathematics, Science and Language in primary schools. Findings from this project supported group work as an effective way of teaching which enhanced students' learning and behaviour (Bains et al., 2007; 2016).

A general view of the Pakistani education system, reported in policy documents and educational reports and surveys suggests that there are gaps in the commitment and implementation of educational policies which lead to the low performance of the system (Mirza, 2003, Andrabi et al., 2007; National Education Policy, 2009). The studies cited above suggest that opportunities for successful implementation of activity-based methodology of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Pakistan may not be encouraging. Despite policy guidelines which advocate the provision of quality education in terms of enhanced activity-based methodologies of teaching English, and a range of pre-service and in-service training programmes, teachers predominantly use traditional and conservative methods of teaching in classrooms (Ali, 2000; Mohammad, 2006; Mohammad & Harlech-Jones, 2008) which may be a big hindrance to achieving quality in education through activity-based teaching. A typical picture of traditional teaching or the teacher-centred approach as Novak (2010) describes, is that the teacher is the controller of the learning environment. In the traditional mind-set of teachers, students are treated as 'knowledge holes' that need to be filled with information (Novak, 2010, P. 9). Studies (Ali, 2000; Mohammad, 2006; Mohammad & Harlech-Jones, 2008) indicate that this type of teaching method is predominantly used in primary schools of Punjab.

In contrast to the whole class teacher-centred teaching methods used in primary schools of Pakistan, group work has established itself as a practical alternative to traditional teaching

and has proven its effectiveness in hundreds of studies throughout the world (Slavin, 2010). While working in groups, children interact with one another and with the teacher to guide and help each other through problem solving and knowledge building. In group work, teachers move among the groups to monitor their progress and provide specific assistance (Gillies, 2006), and the teacher's role is seen as 'the guide on the side, not the sage on the stage' (Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1992, p.77). While teaching and learning using group work, knowledge is socially constructed, and teachers are very careful in their use of language when they interact with the students or intervene during group work (Gresalfi, 2009). I consider that group work teaching in the Western English classroom context offers a picture of the classroom that is different from traditional settings in Pakistani English classrooms. As stated in the beginning of this section, the rationale for this study has two aspects. One is the popularity of group work among researchers and practitioners around the world as an effective methodology of teaching English, supported by recent research as cited above. Second is the researcher's personal and professional experience as a learner and as a teacher trainer in a well-known private educational institution in Pakistan.

Mirza (2003) states that since its creation in 1947, the government of Pakistan took a deep interest in educational development and signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and many other declarations, down to the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) (1990), the World Education Forum: Dakar Framework for Action (2000), the Recife Declaration of E-9 Countries (2000) and the Beijing Declaration of E-9 Countries on ICT and EFA (2001). However, despite policy statements and target setting in various education policies and five-year plans, Pakistan is still far below universal primary education access and retention rates (p.5). Thus, the government's priority still seems to be the expansion of basic educational opportunity for all citizens rather than improving the quality of education. However, with the growing international emphasis on the quality of education, Pakistan is now also readdressing the quality issues at all educational levels. For the last couple of decades, the education policy of Pakistan has adopted a two-pronged approach based on quantitative expansion of education along with quality enhancement, particularly since 1998, in the 7th Five Year Plan (Mirza, 2003. p.9). The National Education Policy (1998) included many strategies regarding teacher training and curriculum changes for improving quality at elementary level. These changes were revised and refined in the policy document in 2009.

The national education policy (Ministry of Education, 2009) of the country has become more focused on the provision of activity-based education in the primary schools (National

Education Policy, 2009). It clearly indicated that improving the quality of education requires action in the areas of teacher quality, curriculum and pedagogy, textbook, assessment approaches, and in learning environment and facilities. In the light of National Education Policy (Ministry of Education, 2009), the proposed action plan may be understood from the figure 1.1 below which describes a quality-controlled model proposed by Mirza (2003). Mirza explained that recommendations in the national education policy set targets to achieve quality in primary education by ensuring assessment and monitoring at all level of schooling process.
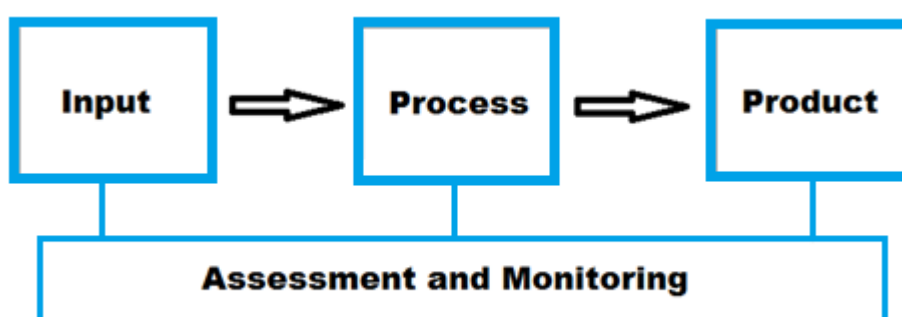


**Fig. 1.1 Quality control model in primary school (Mirza, 2003)**

The assumption which guided procedures in this study is that group work (GW) may be used as a productive strategy while teaching English in Pakistani state-run primary schools, however, it depends upon the context of the classroom. If students happen to be engaged in activities and tasks that require individual as well as collective attention and concentration, group work may work as a productive methodology of teaching English, however, the classroom setting must support learning through group work (Qaisar, 2011). Effective teaching, as Corden (2004) suggests, needs a variety of approaches which includes a balanced combination of whole class, small group and individual tasks. A careful match between learning objectives, classroom organization, and teaching tasks may facilitate academic achievement. However, the teacher holds a key role for these decisions. Teachers' control and timely intervention during teaching may ensure that activities such as group work along with other strategies are working in a productive combination.

The assumption presented above is linked with a comparison between performances of private and public sector primary schools of Pakistan which has been highlighted in relevant studies. A rapid increase in the number and increasing enrolment of students in

private schools indicate parents' growing trust in private schools in contrast with public primary schools (Andrabi et al., 2002; 2007; 2008). Andrabi et al. (2002, 2007) argue that private primary schools are considered 'better' due to their better infrastructure and teachers' commitment and accountability. Many chains of private schools have flourished during the last two decades in Pakistan. Other than better infrastructure, the prominent chains of schools have introduced a centralised system of lesson planning in which activity-based teaching is enforced and monitored. The researcher, having a background of teacher trainer assumed that group work might work as an effective methodology of teaching English in public sector primary schools as it had been seen to work effectively in the private sector primary schools. Thus, this study was conducted to explore how participants, who were practising teachers from selected public sector primary schools of Punjab, perceived whether or not group work might be a viable methodology in public primary schools of Punjab.

During this study, a mixed method research methodology was employed in which a combination of interviews and questionnaires was used for data collection. The questionnaires and interviews were developed by keeping in mind the different purposes of both tools. The instrumentation will be discussed in detail in chapter four which discusses the methodology of the study. Participants' responses from the questionnaires and interviews were examined from which various themes emerged. The analysis of data in this study revealed the extent to which participants believed that group work might be used as a viable teaching strategy in English classrooms. It also revealed significant issues with regard to the teachers' perceptions of their professional identity and self-esteem, which I had not expected, but which are considered so important that they cannot be ignored. This will be discussed in section 1.7.

## 1.5 Significance of the study:

This study is timely as the debate on the quality of education is an important question in Pakistani society. This study adds to the knowledge relating to a number of factors which are linked with quality for primary education in Pakistan. Participants' status is crucial in this study because they are the agents of implementing education policies in classrooms. This study presents their perceptions on various issues in primary schools and the teaching of English in primary schools of Punjab. The study highlights these issues which contribute

to the understanding of the educational context in Punjab. The role of the provincial government of Punjab is crucial in raising the quality of education in the province. This study will inform the concerned planning bodies of the factors that may support or impede implementation of activity-based teaching such as group work in primary schools of Punjab.

This study provides an opportunity for primary teachers to review their teaching practices and consider using group work to see for themselves whether or not group work may be used as an effective strategy to support teaching of English in line with available research on effectiveness of group work and the educational policy of the country. This study has used numerous theoretical perspectives and recent research studies which provided a framework in which to situate this study.

This study provides evidence for the trainers to review their training modules which, at present are considered highly theoretical and which teachers find difficult to translate into their day to day practice (Westbrook et al., 2009). The results of this study may support trainers to find ways to make their training modules relevant to the classroom practices. The study also exposes issues identified by the teachers relating to their working conditions and professional identity, which need to be taken account of in any planned training.

**1.6 Research questions:**

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. How do teachers perceive group work as a way of teaching English at primary school?
2. What are teachers' perceptions about possible benefits and/or drawbacks of group work while teaching English in the Primary school classroom?
3. How do teachers perceive the challenges that impede the practice of active learning pedagogy in English classrooms?

**1.7 Reflection on research process:**

Although I started looking at group work as a way of teaching and learning English in public sector primary schools of Punjab, what emerged was much more related to teachers' identity. So, I would like to make it clear to the reader that this study goes beyond its initial objective of exploring participants' perceptions of group work as a way of teaching English. In this short reflection, the aim is to disrupt the expected narrative before it begins. Although the research questions were related to group work, what emerged was much more revealing, not only about the way that the teachers perceived themselves, but also about the way they felt they were perceived by their superiors and the wider public. My impression of how group work may be operated in the primary classroom was based on my work in the Beaconhouse School System, a private chain of schools in Pakistan and I conducted this research to explore if similar approaches to group work might be implemented in public sector primary schools. However, I now feel that the difference between the private and public sector primary school setting was so great that it meant that my results were very different to anything that I had expected and actually did not really address the question of whether group work could be implemented in state schools. I want to clarify here that I did not anticipate when I was formulating my research questions, what my data was going to offer at the analysis stage. It was only at the time of analysing my data that I realised that four themes emerged from participants' responses which informed me about teachers' views of themselves and their role in the state sector, rather than their perceptions of group work and whether it was achievable in their classrooms.

The data collected in this study was very rich and it exposed participants' flawed understanding of group work. To my surprise, the participants continually highlighted several issues such as lack of resources and teachers' heavy workload which they considered as having adversely affected primary teachers working in public sector primary schools. From their interviews, I learned that while trying to justify their inability to implement different active-learning strategies in their schools, they ignored themselves as a powerful teaching resource who could involve their students in working together and negotiating among themselves for learning achievements. For example, most participants talked about group work on a very superficial level claiming that group work was not workable due to lack of resources and time, without seeming to think about what they might be able to do to enable a more active learning atmosphere.

As noted above the data analysis suggested that participants' understanding of group work was flawed as they did not appear to understand how it might support the learning process and provide some measure of autonomy for the learners. What emerged from their responses could be considered more interesting relating to important educational issues in the Pakistani context, linked to the reasons behind their consideration that group work might not work in current primary school settings in the public sector.

In addition, as the analysis of the data progressed, I realised that my interest in group work was based on an understanding of constructivist theory which is firmly rooted in a western approach to teaching and learning. To the teachers, this concept was alien to the reality which they had to deal with in their classrooms in the Punjab and what emerged was how primary teachers perceive themselves and their working conditions. Although the stimulus for the interviews was to explore their perceptions of how group work approaches could be implemented in their classrooms as a different way of teaching English, their responses clearly highlighted serious issues in the state sector of Pakistan regarding teacher identity.

For me as a researcher, there were many lessons to be learned from this research. I realised how challenging research procedures may be and how researchers' beliefs might change during the conduct of a research study. There were challenges at every step of my research journey which I accepted with an open mind and I tried to learn from the lessons which these challenges offered. As I became more deeply immersed in the analysis of the data, it was necessary to reflect why the teachers were so keen to talk about resourcing and their positions. Subsequently, I realised that the teachers' sense of professional identity was what appeared to be preventing them from adopting interactive and group work strategies in the classroom. This led me to read around the nature of teacher identity and I was thus better able to understand the complexity of their situation and how a western-style teaching and learning approach would not be considered by them to be relevant in their context.

I realised that participants showed a low level of interest in filling in the questionnaires and responding to the interview questions, however, I insisted on completing the process of data collection. At this point, I had to face the limitation of paper-pencil questionnaire. As I received some filled questionnaires, I found that teachers responses tended to highlight their inability to conduct group work in their classrooms and gave various reasons for that. The questionnaires restricted participants' responses because they did not provide sufficient space to them to fully express reasons of not being able to conduct group work. However, the questionnaires provided me with data which contained a strong message

about teachers' perception of their professional identity which, participants' responses suggested, was the main reason of their inability to implement group work as a way of teaching English language in their primary classroom. Similarly, during their interviews, participants wanted to explain why they thought they were not able to implement group work. I tried to restrict their responses to my research questions. However, as I realised that participants' main concerns were related with workload and conditions, I allowed my participants to digress from responding to the research questions because I found their concerns interesting for this study.

The teachers rejected the idea of implementing group work in primary classroom and portrayed primary teachers as working under immense pressure of workload and administration. From this research, I understood that context is an important factor which needs to be studied in depth before conducting a research. My acquaintance with the Pakistani context supported me to conduct and complete this study. In addition, I learnt how to deal with participants in a Pakistani research context, however, I had not taken context into account regarding the subject of the research. This study changed my point of view about teaching to a large extent. Before conducting this research, I considered that teaching is an interesting profession and that the primary teachers must be very happy doing their jobs. I also considered that the idea of implementation of group work as a way of teaching English would be welcomed by primary teachers in the public sector, but, after conducting this research, I learnt that teaching may not be an interesting profession for many even though they are professional teachers. The main themes arising from the data related to the practitioners' understanding of their roles and identities and which seemed more important than their practical understanding of how they consider a strategy such as group work might work in their context.

During data collection, I realised that teachers, the participants, were keen to highlight their issues such as poor supply of resources and lack of autonomy in classroom. I noted that this happened when I asked them about the potential of group work as a way of teaching English in their schools. Keeping in mind their responses, I noted that they clearly did not seem ready to implement group work in their classroom. It could be because of their professional realities such as lack of resources, high workload and time management which prevented them from implementing group work. It was also evident from their responses that they were trying to present these problems as a justification for not trying any intervention in their existing professional settings. In the light of participants' interview

responses, I was initially convinced that they either did not understand how to conduct group work or they were afraid that group work might increase their burden.

I recorded participants' responses and figured out different trends in my data. The pattern in the data informed me that participants in my research seem to be under the influence of insecure 'wobbly' identities. Although professional identity was not directly linked with my research question, it emerged as an interesting and compelling aspect of my data. Thus, I decided to look into professional identity of participants and realised that teachers' professional identity was a complex phenomenon (Slay & Smith, 2011) which could possibly be a reason why participants were not ready to try various teaching methods in their classrooms. I would like to clarify here that the theme of professional identity organically appeared from my data and I only realised at the data analysis stage that the theme of professional identity deserved to be discussed as a major theme.

## 1.8 Structure of thesis:

The thesis consists of seven chapters. The detailed structure of the thesis is below:

Chapter 1: This introductory chapter presents an introduction to the study by explaining its concerns and main aims. It also throws light on my personal and professional motivation to undertake this research. The chapter explains the purpose of the study and explains how the purpose was achieved. In the end, the significance of the study has been explained and research questions have been stated. I have also included a personal reflection on the research, which explains the shift in focus which took place as a result of the analysis of the data, clarifying why the research questions were not adequate to explain what the teachers were telling me about their perceived professional identity and their self-esteem.

Chapter 2: This chapter on the background of the research presents a detailed background of educational progress in Pakistan since its creation in 1947. A historical perspective of English language has been presented to establish a connection between the status of English in the pre-partition and post-partition era up to the present scenario for the status and learning of English language in Pakistan. This chapter also reports teaching approaches being used by teachers in Pakistan with a special focus on teachers, teacher training, and teaching of English in primary schools in Pakistan. This chapter explains the

traditional nature of classroom practices in which teachers emphasize lecture methods and rote learning.

Chapter 3 consists of the literature review that deals with issues relevant to this study. Within this chapter, I have discussed theories of language learning in which I have explained the reasons for my selection of group work to investigate as a method of teaching English. I have discussed research evidence to provide understanding of what group work is and what research evidence is available to understand its role in learning a second language. I have also looked at the interactional aspect of group work in the English classroom highlighting its advantages and disadvantages with research evidence. Chapter 3 ends by exploring research studies which indicate a need of a paradigm shift in the role of teachers and learners in English classroom under group work methodology.

Chapter 4, which details the methodology, outlines the aims of the study, research questions and explanation of the research paradigm employed in this study. Chapter 4 explains the mixed method design chosen for this study and elaborates why mixed methods were applicable in this study and how the research tools, i.e. questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were developed and administered for data collection. After providing information on instrumentation, the study site and participants, this chapter explains how the questionnaires and interviews were conducted with the participants and how difficulties and considerations related to the research methods were addressed. In the end, this chapter explains the method of data analysis adopted in this study and discusses how ethical issues were addressed.

Chapter 5 presents the findings derived from questionnaires and interview data. Various themes which emerged from the data are reported in this chapter. This chapter is completed in two parts in which findings from questionnaires and interviews were reported and it is also highlighted where interview responses confirm or otherwise the findings from questionnaires. This chapter also presents a crucial section based on theme of professional identity. During the later stages of data analysis, I realised that participants' responses suggested that they had a flawed understanding of themselves and their responsibilities. That is why, I decided to deal with this aspect in a separate section.

Chapter 6 contains discussion on the main themes which emerged from data analysis. This chapter discusses findings which were focused on the research questions and highlighted

themes which were not main focus of the study, yet had a strong link to understand the context and implications of the study.

Chapter 7, the last chapter draws general conclusions from the study, highlights contributions and limitations, and suggests some implications for the implementation of group work practices in Pakistani schools.

In this chapter, I have introduced this study. The next chapter will present the historical background of English language in Pakistan.

**Chapter Two: English in Pakistan**

**A pre-partition and post-partition perspective**

## 2.1 Introduction:

This chapter was included to set the scene and to describe the context of English teaching in Pakistan so that the reader has a clear picture of the context of the study. This chapter comprises two parts. In the first part, I inform the reader of the complex nature of the progress of English language in the Indian subcontinent which Pakistan inherited after its creation in 1947. The introduction of English language in Pakistan has its roots in the history of British rule in India. Since Pakistan was part of the Indian subcontinent before its partition in 1947, a historical and social explanation of the pre-partition Indian subcontinent would be helpful to understand the phases of development of English in this region. From the study of Indian history, it is clear that India was a vast region with complex and diverse cultural realities, in which different groups used their languages as their identities. Thus, conflicts among the local nationalist groups on the basis of language created a space for a third language to flourish as a neutral way of communication to make progress. English, being the language of the rulers and traders (British), became the first option for Indians to adopt and move on.

This chapter will highlight major language conflicts among two dominant groups in India i.e. Hindus and Muslims, and develop an argument on how linguistic conflicts supported English to flourish in the Indian subcontinent. Part one of the chapter also highlights how Pakistan inherited similar nationalistic issues which further divided the country and shows how English became an essential language to adopt to compete with other nations on the globe. This is followed by a section on the socio-linguistic profile of Pakistan and motivation for learning English for the people of Pakistan. Finally, part two of the chapter briefly explains the state of primary education and teacher training in Pakistan. A historical background of English language contact in Pakistan will be presented in the following section. I consider that this study has a direct link with the historical background presented in this chapter as the current scenario of English language teaching in Pakistan may be considered as part of the issue regarding learning English which was inherited from a majority of Muslims of the Indian subcontinent.

**Part One**

**2.2 Historical background**

**2.2.1 English Language Contact in the Subcontinent: Pre-Independence**

The British ruled India after the fall of the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century and English language was introduced in the Indian subcontinent. During the Mughal era, Persian was the official language which was later replaced with English by the British government. Rubin (1971, 1983 as cited in Mahboob, 2002) argues that the replacement of Persian with English was done for extra-linguistic purposes by the British. Rubin (ibid) explains that the motive behind the replacement was to introduce English culture and values among Indians to 'civilize them' (p. 18). The idea of civilizing India was based on the British belief that the natives lacked culture and it was 'The White Man's Burden' to civilize the 'new-caught sullen people/ half-devil and half child' people of the newly captured lands. The phrases used in the above sentence have been quoted from a famous poem by Kipling (1899 cited in Mahboob, 2002) who supported the belief that it was the responsibility of the Whites to 'Christianize heathens and save them from eternal damnation (ibid p. 35). Thus, the underlying purpose of introducing English in the Indian subcontinent was extra-linguistic. However, Mahboob (2002) argues that the replacement of languages also symbolized a corresponding change in the power structure. As already mentioned, Persian was the official language in the Mughal era and seen as a symbol of Muslim unity, therefore the subsequent change in the official language affirmed that the British had established their power in India. The British policy regarding a shift in the official language proved so highly effective that English language flourished even after half a century of independence from British Raj rule (Mahboob, 2002; Pathan et al., 2010). The following section will discuss developments during the pre-independence era.

**2.2.2 1835-1947**

An overview of the period between 1837 and 1947 is important to explore the relationship between Indians and English because the political change in India had a direct impact on the development of English in the region. Particularly, as a result of the British policies

regarding English language, Indian Muslims developed an antagonistic attitude towards English during this era (Basu, 1952 as cited in Mahboob, 2002). The British brought English language into India through education (Pathan et al., 2010; Schneider, 2007). However, due to the diversity of culture and languages in India, there was a difference of approaches among officials and advisors to the British government who recommended different ways to adopt to govern Indians and educate them.

Spring (1998) states that, during the British rule in India, there were two major schools of thoughts among British elites on how to rule India; the Orientalist and the Anglicists. The Orientalists believed that India had a great past and there was a lot to learn from Indian history, language, religion and tradition. They also believed that Indians should be ruled in accordance with their tradition and culture. In the early years of the British rule, the Orientalists gained attention from the government and native traditions and languages flourished under the British rule. Persian was maintained as an official language and native literature was given due space to flourish. In this way, the natives comfortably went along with the government policies. However, the Orientalists lost control in Britain and a new political set up emerged which influenced the British language policy in India. The new political system supported the Anglicists' belief which considered 'English culture superior to that of Indians' (Spring, 1998, p10-13). In contrast to the Orientalists, the Anglicists believed in the notion of 'The White Man's Burden' (Kipling, 1899 cited in Mahboob, 2002). They emphasized that the British must perform their duty to civilize the natives through the introduction of English values and traditions (ibid). As a result, the 1813 Charter Act legalized missionary work in India in which English classes were introduced for the first time. However, rather than educating Indians, the introduction of English, in the light of the 1813 Charter Act, was made to maintain a contact between the rulers and the subjects for economic benefits to the British. They introduced English as an additional language and created demand by offering jobs for Indians who received English education, while Persian was still used as an official language (Rahman, 2008).

Lord Macaulay's 'Minutes of February 2', 1835 are seen as a landmark in Indian history regarding British language policy. According to Curtain (1971 cited in Mahboob, 2002), the Governor General of India approved Macaulay's recommendations which emphasized that the objective of English language education in India was to create 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour but English in taste and intellect' (p.34). Macaulay's Minutes rejected the policy of giving education to Indians in their native languages, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. They recommended that it would be more useful to give education in English

because, they believed that, being a language of science, English was superior to native languages and it would serve the British objectives of civilizing Indians in a better way. Thus, as Viswanath, (1987 cited in Rahman, 2002, p.161) found, the teaching of English through English language and literature in India played a crucial role to disseminate British culture and values which were helpful to control Indians not by force but by convincing them that the British culture and civilization were superior to theirs and beneficial for them to make progress in future. As a result of the shift on use of language, it was recommended that Persian, the official language at that time be replaced by English.

**2.2.3 English replaces Persian**

Before the British, the Mughals ruled India and Persian had a symbolic significance for Muslims in India. Persian was a symbol of Muslim rule, an official language, the national lingua franca, and a language of science, education and literature (Pathan et al., 2010). However, in 1837, the Governor-General of India started the process of language shift. In the beginning, the British government replaced Persian with Indian vernaculars in law courts. This policy had significant implications for Indians. The replacement of Persian with vernaculars at a local level gave rise to nationalistic sentiments among various ethnic groups in India which were used by the British for their advantages (Pathan et al., 2010, Mahboob, 2002; Phillipson, 1996). The British used the nationalistic sentiments and adopted the policy of 'divide and rule' (Mahboob, 2002 p.19). At the same time, elimination of Persian created a space for Indians to consider English, which was the language of the new ruler, to become the lingua franca and language of education and trade in India (Rahman, 2008).

However, English was not imposed directly in the Indian education. The Governor-General approved the opening of English medium schools and vernacular schools. English medium schools gave admissions to rich Indians, the majority of whom belonged to the loyal families of 'Rajas' and feudal landlords. These schools charged a high fee from the students and provided high quality education. Graduates from these English medium schools were given priority in jobs with excellent salaries. In contrast to English medium schools, vernacular schools offered education to a relatively poor class. Rahman (2002) concludes that the English medium and vernacular schools served the British in different ways where the former produced a class of Indian elite who were educated in English and

employed by the British as local representatives and the latter produced a class who would become subordinate staff and political support for the nationalists.

Mahboob (2002) argues that Indian Muslims did not welcome the decision of a language shift which replaced Persian with English. In addition, the Muslim religious scholars announced that it was against the teaching of Islam to learn English. Rahman (2002) explains that Indian Muslims hated the British and considered that learning a language of the intruders was a sin. Thus, the Indian Muslims were not inclined to learn English. Hindus, on the other hand, welcomed the decision because they wanted to demolish the superior position of Persian. The policy of language shift also had an instrumental motivation for the Indians. As mentioned earlier, the British government adopted the policy of offering more jobs and higher salaries to those who were educated in English medium schools. Soon, English became a medium of education, trade and commerce in India. The Hindu community took advantage of English education while Muslims of India remained poor and deprived of advantages that were linked with English education (Rahman, 2002, p.164). As a result, Muslims in India remained a deprived class while Hindus were able to get closer to the British and find better job opportunities and favours from the British. A hostile attitude from Muslim religious orthodoxy continued and resulted in the Mutiny of 1857 which increased the gap further between the British and Muslims. However, many Muslim reformers such as Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Jamal-ud-Din Afghani, Nawab Abdul Latif and their contemporaneous Muslim figures anticipated that religious orthodoxy would further destroy Muslim identity (Pathan, 2012).

## 2.2.4 Acceptance of English by Muslims in India

Muslim reformers preached harmony and persuaded Muslims to leave religious orthodoxy for their survival in the future (Pathan, 2012). They emphasized that English was essential for Muslims to end conflicts with the British (ibid). Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, in particular, encouraged Indian Muslims to learn English. For that purpose, he led a movement during the post-mutiny era which is known as Ali-Garh Movement (see Lelyveld, 1996; Smith, 1946). Ali Garh Movement played a crucial role to bring Muslims and the British together. Urdu writings of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan were published with English translation which educated Muslims to accept the significance of English to move on.

Nawab Abdul Latif, a Bengali British civil servant was another prominent Muslim figure who officially requested the British government to introduce English in Muslim institutions (Rahman, 2008, p.166). The efforts made by the Muslim reformers were accompanied by religious proclamations ('Fatwa') made by unorthodox, enlightened religious scholars such as Shah Abdul Aziz who declared that the Islamic law (Sharia'h) allows learning of foreign languages and that there was no harm learning English for a better future. Shah Abdul Latif's proclamations were followed by other contemporary Muslim scholars who affirmed that learning English was not a sinful act as long as it did not impair basic religious beliefs (ibid). As a result of religious backing, the majority of Muslims changed their points of view about English education. However, a vast majority of them were not studying in English schools and were still in the lower ranks of society (Pathan et al., 2010). There were still some Muslim groups who did not accept the supremacy of English language and considered the Persian language to be an essential requirement for a better religious education. Pathan et al. (2010) state that a minority of Muslim parents insisted on getting Persian education along with English.

### 2.2.5 1947-1971 Post-Independence perspective

In 1947, the Muslim majority areas were separated to form an independent state of Pakistan. After World War II, the Labour Party wanted to be rid of the tensions in India and thus, the division of India might be seen as a result of Britain's 'hurried withdrawal' which left the newly formed states with a lot of problems (Bates, 2011). Language policy was one of many challenges for both the new states of India and Pakistan. The newly formed state of Pakistan comprised two parts: East Pakistan with 55% of Bengali speaking community (modern Bangladesh) and West Pakistan (the territory 1700 km away, known as Pakistan at present) with many local languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto and Balochi (Pathan et al, 2010).

**Fig. 2.1 Map of Pakistan after partition of India in 1947 (*Dr Crispin Bates, 2011*)**

Mahboob (2002) states that Pakistan faced a lot of problems while developing a language policy because of the diversity of culture and variety of languages spoken in different areas of the country. However, Bengali and Urdu were two dominant languages spoken in the eastern and western parts of Pakistan respectively. During the struggle for independence, Urdu was used as a symbol of unity and integrity of Muslims in India. On the other hand, Bengali had its significance for being a native language of more than 50% of the population of Pakistan living in the eastern part. People in East Pakistan demanded that Bengali be the national language while West Pakistan supported Urdu for the same status (2002:21).

Ayub Khan, the commander in chief imposed martial law in the country in 1958, and the powerful military rule favoured English to continue as an official language and to satisfy nationalists. Under the military rule, the 'Sharif Commission' was formed to address the language issues in Pakistan. The commission recommended that the state was not ready to implement Urdu as a medium of instruction at a higher level and that Urdu and Bengali would be the medium of instruction from (class 6 up to Matric) in the government secondary schools in West and East Pakistan respectively (Shamim, 2008; Mahboob, 2002). The commission also predicted that the state would require fifteen years to develop Urdu as a medium of instruction at higher level (Mahboob, 2002, p.21). During the

suggested fifteen years, English would continue as second language. In this way English medium schools flourished in the country under military rule (ibid).

At the time of independence, the state machinery was using English as an official language inherited from the British and all the documentation in government offices at that time was in English which was maintained because no material was available in Urdu. Thus, English was maintained as an official language to run the state affairs smoothly (Mahboob, 2002). However, Abbas (1993 as cited in Mahboob, 2002) argues that, from the early years of its independence, Pakistan followed a policy of having strong ties with other countries, particularly, America. The elite class in Pakistan knew that English was going to play a crucial part in developing ties with other countries. That is why the state imposed a language policy in which English was maintained as an official language in the field of commerce, business, diplomacy, governance, and judiciary and as a compulsory subject from tertiary up to graduation level in education. Meanwhile, the political and linguistic differences between East and West Pakistan grew greater which ultimately resulted in the separation of the Eastern part of Pakistan and Bangladesh emerged as an independent state on the globe in 1971 (Pathan, 2012).

## 2.2.6 1971-1978

According to Shamim (2008) and Haque (1993), the separation of Bangladesh in 1971 simplified the language controversy in remaining Pakistan to a large extent and Urdu was declared as the national language to satisfy the nationalist sentiments of people of the remaining western part of Pakistan. In 1972, schools were nationalized, and a new lease of fifteen years was given to English to be replaced by Urdu in the constitution of 1973. English medium schools were given legal protection to continue working in the post 1971 years (Shamim, 2008 p.238). Rahman (2005) argues that the influence of the military played a crucial role in the spread of English in the country after 1971. The Fauji Foundation, a foundation for the welfare of retired military officers' families, was established in 1954 which opened English- medium schools across the country to provide high quality education to the children of retired and deceased army officers. Similarly, two other branches of armed forces i.e. the Air Force and the Navy, ran many English-schools and colleges to provide education to the families of officers currently serving (Rahman,

2005). As the arrangements were never finalised for implementing Urdu as an official language, English continued flourishing in Pakistan (Mahboob, 2002).

The constitution of Pakistan passed language policy with no change from the previous status. Article 251 of The Constitution of Pakistan (1973) included the following clauses on status of official language:

Clause 1: The national language of Pakistan is Urdu and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years of commencing date.

Clause 2: Subject to Clause (1) the English language may be used for official purposes until arrangements are made for its replacement by Urdu.

Thus, English continued as an official language in state institutions (Pathan, 2012).

## 2.2.7 1978-1988

Mahboob (2002) states that Z.A. Bhutto's democratic government was taken over in 1977 by General Zia ul Haque, another powerful military dictator. Zia's rule is known for its Islamization policies in the country under the impact of an ongoing Jihad in Afghanistan with the USSR in which Pakistan was playing a leading role. An emphasis on implementation of Urdu as an official language was a distinct characteristic of Zia's regime along with the addition of Arabic as a compulsory subject in Pakistani schools. Initially, the Government imposed Urdu as a medium of instruction in all government schools in a hope to extend it to colleges and universities later on. For that purpose, Urdu was imposed as a compulsory subject from Class 1 and English was not introduced until class 6. However, the new language policy was strictly imposed in the government schools only and elite English schools were spared from its impact. In 1979, the War in Afghanistan ended and the Russian armies left Afghanistan. Zia's government had time to review the impact of the Urdu only policy in the country which was found to be discouraging. The over emphasis on the 'Urdu only' policy of Zia had also increased distrust from nationalists especially in the province of Sindh which resulted in a constant conflict between Sindhi nationalists and the Urdu speaking community in Karachi. Thus, in

the history of Pakistan, Zia's regime is criticized for implementation of a language policy which lacked 'serious and well-researched language planning' (Mahboob, 2002 p.25).

**2.2.8 1988-1999**

After the demise of General Zia in 1988 in a plane crash, Pakistan experienced the worse political crisis in the country for a decade (Shamim, 2008, p. 238). This political crisis not only pushed Pakistan into economic problems, it also had a negative impact on education. However, there were some important changes on the government's stance on English. The government of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) gave a special importance to English by introducing it from class 1 in government schools in 1988. The provincial governments of Punjab and Sindh implemented this policy in government schools to provide good quality education to the poor class. However, Urdu was maintained as a medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools in North West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtun Khwah, KPK) and Baluchistan provinces (Mahboob, 2002, p.26).

**2.2.9 1999- present**

The political turmoil of the 1990s ended in 1999 when the Army Chief, General Pervaiz Musharraf took over the government from the Pakistan Muslim League. Pervaiz Musharraf's rule is criticized for its pro-American policies, however, his anti-terrorist policies and his approach of 'enlightened moderation' gave a new hope to education and educated people, and the country progressed economically and in education (Shamim, 2008). During Musharraf's rule, the government of Pakistan introduced English language Teaching Reforms (ELTR). Musharraf's government worked on developing ties with the international community particularly USA and the UK and received financial support for educational development in Pakistan. However, most of the educational reforms were focused on higher education during Musharraf's Era. The media highlighted major issues in Pakistan and helped to develop motivation to get education and learn English (Pathan et al, 2010). When the Pakistan People's Party came into power they announced an Education policy in 2009 in which English was made compulsory from class 1 onward. Under president Zardari, the government of Pakistan continued receiving financial aid from USA, UK, The World Bank, and Asian Educational Foundation for educational development in the country.

**2.3 Socio-linguistic Profile of Pakistan**

The most recent national census at the time of writing this thesis was conducted in 2017, however, the statistics in detail are not available as yet. So, according to the national census of 1998, Pakistan has a population of one hundred and eighteen million people. Pathan et al. (2010) suggest that Pakistan is a multilingual and multicultural country with six major and fifty-nine minor languages spoken across the country (Rahman, 2002; Pathan et.al, 2010). Urdu is used in the government and private offices, corporate sector, educational institutions and media and considered the language of power and prestige at the indigenous level and English at the higher and international relations level (Rahman, 2002). Interestingly, the number of Urdu speaking people is reported as low as 7.57%. Other four major languages are (a) Punjabi, spoken by 44.15% people, (b) Pashto, 15.42% (c) Sindhi, 14.10%, and (d) Balochi 3.5%. Due to a considerably low number of Urdu speakers and on the basis of a greater number of speakers of indigenous languages across provinces, the nationalists across the country have been demanding the government to declare four languages as national languages (Pathan et al., 2010).



**Fig. 2.2 Map of Pakistan after 1971**

**(http://ontheworldmap.com/pakistan/administrative-divisions-map-of-pakistan.html)**

English occupies a crucial space in Pakistan as it is still an official language in the country. The motivation for learning English exists among the educated and secular classes in the

country. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan delivered his first speech to the parliament in English which is symbolically seen as supporting the role of English language in the education system for the country's future (Mahboob, 2004). Mahboob (2004) sees English as an emerging language in the outer circle of English speakers in Pakistan. To explain the current position of English in Pakistan, Kachru (2006) divides English speakers in three circles (figure 2.3).

**The 'Expanding Circle'**
China, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Russia, Zimbabwe

**The 'Outer Circle'**
Hong Kong, Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri, Lanka, Tanzania, Zambia

**The 'Inner Circle'**
USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
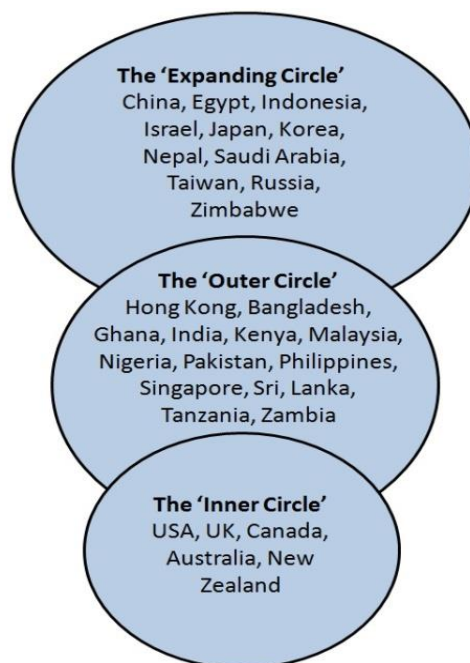
**Fig. 2.3 The three circles of English speaking communities**

**adopted from Kachru (2006)**

The inner circle, according to him, includes countries such as the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand in which English is spoken as a native or primary language. The outer circle includes a non-English context such as India, Nigeria, Zambia, Pakistan, Nepal etc. which remained under colonization of primary speakers of English. The outer circle is characterized by a 'large speech community with great diversity and distinct characteristics' (p.242). English has a vital position in the language policies of the countries in the outer circle. For example, in Nigeria, it is an official language; in Zambia, it is recognized as one of the state languages, in Singapore, English is a major language of government, the legal system and education. Pakistan is included in the outer circle of English speaking countries where English is still an official language. The third circle is termed as the expanding circle which includes countries such as China and Japan where it is recognized that English is an important international language.

**2.4 Motivation for learning English in Pakistan:**

According to Pathan (2012) English language is used in various fields in Pakistan, such as education, the banking sector, the military, the legal system (Supreme Court and High Courts), civil administration and bureaucracy at provincial and federal level. All competitive exams in civil and military departments are conducted in English (Pathan 2012; Rahman, 2004). The private sector, in particular, prefers to offer jobs to people who are proficient in English language. Thus, English learning is considered a token for progress in Pakistan (Pathan et al., 2010). Rahman (2004) and Abbas (1998) noted that access to the media is a noticeable motivation for English language learning in Pakistan. A large number of newspapers are published in English. Similarly, many international channels such as CNN (US), BBC (UK), HBO (films), National Geographic, and local channels such as Geo News, and Dawn News are watched across the country. Moreover, a large number of advertising companies use English for the display of their signboards (Pathan et al., 2010). Thus, there are greater employment opportunities for people who learn English in Pakistan. The progress in the private sector institutions has created a high demand for learning English. In recent decades, the government of Pakistan has realised that English is no longer a language of high status and prestige; rather it is the right of every Pakistani to get an English education for a better future (ibid).

**2.5 Education Policies in Pakistan and English Language Teaching:**

It is evident from the discussion presented in the previous section that a clear language policy has been a challenge for governments in Pakistan. A critical study of education policy documents in Pakistan suggests that these documents were developed during the confusing political instability in the country. This instability posed hurdles in the implementation of these policies (Ahmed, 2012; Memon, 2007). As a result, education policies could not play an effective role to decide the status of languages such as Urdu and English in the country. Ahmed (2012) argues that failure of implementation of education policies raised questions about their planning and ownership from the government officials. He criticizes the educational policies for setting unrealistic goals which lacked due support from the government that was unable to provide sufficient resources for their successful implementation. In his first speech as leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the

founder of Pakistan emphasized the need for education for progress in Pakistan. In the light of his directions, the government of Pakistan brought about several educational reforms to provide quality education for the citizens of Pakistan. However, unstable political conditions in the country delayed the provision of quality education. The government on one hand lacked a long-term education plan and on the other, implementation of education policies did not continue for long. The language policy regarding English was affected accordingly. Since independence, the government of Pakistan has formulated seven education policies, several five-year or ten-year prospective plans and Education Sector Reforms (ESRs) which introduced major changes in the education sector. However, these policies were interrupted or reversed due to changes in the government (Akhtar, 2013; Ahmed, 2008; Siddiqui, 2007). The country remained in crisis for more than a decade since its creation.

In addition, these plans addressed issues regarding initial teacher training, professional development of teachers, and teachers' incentive systems (Ahmed, 2012). The effectiveness of the plan related to initial teacher education was reviewed in 2001 and strengthened by revising reforms in teacher education, school curriculum, and teachers' professional development. Akhtar (2013) argues that Musharraf's rule had a significant impact on the education system in Pakistan. His period was politically stable and the progress of electronic media during Musharraf's regime provided a better opportunity for debate on educational issues and reforms. An overall criticism on different aspects of the National Education Plan (1998-2010), such as the content of the school curriculum, led to further improved policy. Musharraf took many steps to persuade his allies (mainly USA, UK and UN) to provide financial support to improve the quality of education and the education system in the country. Finally, in order to face the new challenges of globalization, the latest Education Policy (2009) realized the need to promote activity-based teaching and learning at school level (Akhtar, 2013).

Akhtar (2013) argues that almost all policy documents highlighted the need to provide opportunities for teachers' professional development through teacher training programs after a careful analysis of needs. However, this aspiration was further strengthened in the policy document in 2009. The policy suggested that the provincial governments would use the private sector through public-private partnership in the fields of teacher education and professional development programs. The policy also recommended adjustments in the curriculum of teacher education programs to promote student-centred teaching in schools (MoE, 2009a). However, Ahmed (2012) argues that, although the policy recommended

providing quality education by recommending a shift in the role of teachers from 'teacher as a dictator' to 'teacher as a facilitator', guidance on the policy implementation was missing and no action was prescribed for monitoring quality in teacher education programs. Thus, the proposed element of quality remained in documents and was never assessed.

In the light of the discussion presented above, it may be concluded that there has been a huge gap between educational planning and implementation in Pakistan. The political turmoil in the country and failure of implementation of education policies had a negative impact on the state's policy regarding English. In the light of literature cited above, it can be argued that until 1971, the government of Pakistan was not able to give due space to English due to conflicts on the status of Urdu and Bengali. However, the post 1971 era started to consider English as a necessary inclusion in education. Until 1989, the policy on English language did not become a part of an education policy document. It was only in 1989 under the government of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) rule that English was made compulsory for students from grade 1 (Shamim, 2008). Although English medium schools and cadet colleges progressed predominantly under military rule in Pakistan, the democratic government of PPP took the first initiative to introduce English to the masses which was continued by the successive governments.

In the following section, I shall present an overview of primary education and teacher training in Pakistan in order to provide a further context for the study.

**Part Two**

**2.6 Primary Education in Pakistan:**

Mirza (2003) highlighted that student enrolment and quality of education are two major challenges for primary education in Pakistan. However, the Punjab government has taken many steps to ensure students' enrolment which are supported by recent statistics (World Bank, 2017) on primary education. The statistics reported in World Bank (2017) documents on primary education in Pakistan confirm an increase in the student enrolment, retention and completion of primary education (ibid). However, Mirza (2003) raised doubts that in trying to meet enrolment targets in primary education, the quality of education is being ignored. This argument is supported by findings of the LEAPS project which found students performing below average in English, Urdu and Mathematics (Andrabi et al., 2007; Das et al. 2006). The emerging international emphasis on quality of education put greater responsibility on Pakistan to address quality in education in addition to access and retention.

Pakistan is a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (UDHR) and many other declarations such as the World Declaration on Education for All, 1990 (EFA), the World Education Forum, Dakar Framework for Action 2000, the Recife Declaration of E-9 Countries 2000 and the Beijing Declaration of E-9 Countries on ICT and EFA 2001. However, despite policy statements and target setting in various education policies and five-year plans, Pakistan is still far from achieving universal primary education access and students' retention (Mirza, 2003). The priority is still on the expansion of basic educational opportunities for all to achieve one hundred percent enrolments of students at school going age. The Dakar Framework of Action (2000) emphasizes universal primary school access while 'Improving every aspect of quality of education, and ensuring their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills'. (Goal 6, Dakar Framework of Action, 2000). However, results of the Social Action Plan (SAP) confirm that although there has been an increase in the net enrolment of both male and female students, the achievement of good quality is still a secondary objective of primary education in Pakistan (Memon, 2007, p.52). Das et al. (2006) state that most of the research in Pakistan determines the educational status of a student by indicating how long he has studied at any educational

institution. Similarly, educational policies of Pakistan have been focused predominantly on how many students enrolled in schools but ignore the quality of what they learn at schools. The government of Pakistan introduced many interventions (such as midday meals, free textbooks, stipends for girls) in primary schools which were focused on bringing children to school but did not monitor what these children learn or what effect these interventions have on their learning. However, the central message of the Social Action Plan (SAP II) and Education for All (EFA) was to use quality as a tool for students' retention at primary schools. Similarly, The World Bank report (1997) highlighted the need to use quality as a tool for achieving targets of universal access and retention of students at primary level in Pakistan. The report states:

> *"The best way to improve access is to improve quality which would make coming to school or staying in school a more attractive option from the perspective of parents as well as children. Moreover, effort to improve quality will tend to increase the efficiency of the public expenditure and will encourage parents to contribute to children education."*
>
> *(The World Bank, 1997 as cited in Mirza, 2003)*

The World Bank statement implies that teaching methodologies should be used which children may find interesting. These methodologies, according to modern thinking, should provide more opportunities for students to talk, interact and raise questions in the classroom environment. However, research (Mirza, 2003) on primary education suggests that any attempt to introduce quality input has rarely worked in the primary schools of Pakistan. Mirza (2003) reviewed more than twenty studies which were conducted during the 1980s and 1990s and found that most of these studies were conducted to improve educational access across the country. She found that only three of these studies i.e. Primary Teaching Kit, Supplementary Readers, and Primary Education Project-Improved Learning Environment (PEP-ILE) were successful in achieving their targets. However, the government did not show interest to continue. One of the characteristics of the most successful projects Mirza (2003) finds is 'the interventions reaching directly to the classrooms and students'. The Primary Teaching Kit, Supplementary Readers, and other learning material are good examples of such interventions which according to Mirza, were reported as having a positive impact on the quality of primary education. To support her views on these interventions, Mirza (2003) says that the integrated curriculum, which was a quality output under the effect of (PEP-ILE) resulted in the reduced 'school bag load' of

children. Similarly, The National Teaching Kit for primary classes is considered one of the most effective quality inputs in primary schools of all provinces during the 1980s and90s. The project was launched in accordance with the Education Policy (1972-80). The national Teaching Kit included library and instructional material, equipment to use while teaching and teaching a variety of learning strategies to teachers. The objective of using the teaching kit was to improve teaching in the primary classroom with the help of activity-based experiences for students. Students were encouraged to engage with teaching material actively and develop a deep understanding rather than memorizing facts. The National Teaching kit remained in use by the end of 1990s. In addition, the Education Policy 1998, advised primary schools to provide teaching material for activity-based teaching.

From the discussion above, it may be concluded that primary education in Pakistan has been a target of experimentation in which different experiments were made without long-term planning. Many experiments failed due to lack of interest or funding by the successive governments. The situation of primary education in Pakistan, in the light of literature (Mirza, 2003; Andrabi et al., 2007; Das et al., 2006) indicates that Pakistan is far from achieving its international commitments on the quality of primary education.

The available literature on primary education in Pakistan ((Mirza, 2003; Andrabi et al., 2007; Das et al., 2006)) suggests that the major issue regarding low quality of primary education may be linked with low quality of teaching input in the English classroom (Mirza, 2003). Research (Shamim & Allen, 2000; Shamim, 2008; Das et al., 2006) highlights that primary teachers in Punjab teach all subjects including English language by using a typical, whole class, teacher-led and traditional, lecture-type way of teaching. Due to this didactic way of teaching, students show a low level of learning and achievement in English, which is similar to achievement in other subjects such as Urdu and Mathematics (Das et al., 2006: 241).

The discussion presented above implies that primary teachers in Pakistan seem to be poorly prepared professionally. Westbrook et al. (2009) argue that teachers are not provided sufficient training so they may adopt collaborative approaches in teaching English and other subjects in their classrooms. On the contrary, teaching students are taught by using traditional, teacher-centred approaches of teaching by their tutors in which students find limited opportunities for conceptual learning (Shamim & Allen, 2000; Shamim, 2008). There may be many reasons for teachers using traditional methodologies in primary classroom in Pakistan. However, there have been a limited number of studies

conducted on teaching of English in primary schools in Pakistan. In the light of my experience as a teacher trainer and available research (Shamim, 2008; Ashraf et al., 2005), one indirect focus of this research study was to investigate whether teacher education, both at pre-service and in-service levels in Pakistan has a direct impact on teaching practices in primary schools of Pakistan. In the following section, I shall present an overview of initial teacher training in Pakistan to understand how well these trainings prepare novice teachers.

**2.7 Teachers and Teacher training in Pakistan:**

The need to improve the quality of education has been argued for throughout the world (Darling-Hammond, 2008). The debate on how to ensure more effective teaching practices in classrooms has informed policy makers to promote the introduction of modern techniques through intensive and purposeful teacher training. The increased challenges and technological advances in every walk of modern life has also had a strong impact on education. The modern agenda of achieving quality in education lays a central focus on the changing role of teachers because teachers are the agents of implementation of theories and policies (Darling-Hammond, 2008). In the light of increased demand for quality learning in modern times, as Darling-Hammond (2008) suggests, teachers need to have a holistic understanding of the teaching and learning process through updated knowledge of teaching and teaching skills. Darling-Hammond (2008) explains three further aspects of teachers' preparation, Firstly, teachers need to have a deep knowledge of subject matter so that they may link their teaching with real life examples to clarify students' misconceptions about a topic. Secondly, teachers need to have a deep understanding of teaching methodologies so that they may be able to ensure participation of all types of students in the classroom. Finally, teachers need to be able to reflect on their practice and discuss any problems with other colleagues to find solutions to their daily issues in classrooms. In particular, as Darling- Hammond (2008) states, there is an agreement among researchers across the globe that teachers need to adopt methodologies which promote democratic values and in which students have more opportunities for collaboration and sharing for a better understanding of the world around them (p. 92).

The issues with the theory and practice gap are reported to have been present in all parts of the world (Westbrook et al., 2009). Researchers (see Galton & Hargreaves, 2009; Baines et al. 2003; Galton & MacBeath, 2008) believe that a large majority of teachers fail to

implement teaching methodologies which may assist high standard objectives of schooling. However, Westbrook et al. (2009) argue that this gap is more evident in underdeveloped and developing countries such as Pakistan. This gap suggests that there is a need to further investigate how novice teachers prepare themselves for the teaching profession and how in-service teachers update their knowledge to meet the changing demands of the schooling process. In this section, I shall review literature on teachers' preparation and subsequent teaching approaches in primary schools of Pakistan. I will start by reviewing literature on teacher education in Pakistan and proceed with a section which will discuss literature on teaching approaches being commonly used in primary schools of Pakistan so that the reader fully understands the context of the study.

In the light of challenges posed by the modern era, Pakistan has addressed the issue of quality assurance in education by setting professional standards for primary teachers through teacher education (Mushtaq & Mustafa, 2015). For the same purpose, the department of policy and planning of the Ministry of Education (MoE) is running a project called 'Strengthening Teacher Education in Pakistan (STEP) in collaboration with United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This project is funded by the United States' Agency for International Development (USAID). This project has adopted a standard-based quality assurance approach to improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers in Pakistan, particularly at primary level. The provincial governments including the Government of Punjab have officially committed to adopt the professional standard for teachers set by STEP in 2008. These professional standards recommend that primary teachers should:

- have an updated knowledge of subject they teach
- have a deep knowledge of instructional tools, strategies and pedagogical skills
- have knowledge of various methods of assessments
  (MoE, 2009, p.1)

There are ten professional standards for teachers which comprehensively inform teachers and teacher-educators about the expectation of education policy of the country. These standards have been listed below:

Standard 1:     Subject matter knowledge

Standard 2:     Human growth and development

Standard 3:     Knowledge of Islamic ethical values and social life skills

Standard 4:    Instructional planning and strategies

Standard 5:    Assessment

Standard 6:    Learning environment

Standard 7:    Effective communication and proficient use of Information Communication Technologies (ICT)

Standard 8:    Collaboration and partnership

Standard 9:    Continuous professional development and code of conduct

Standard 10:    Teaching of English as second language.

(MoE, 2009, p. 9)

It is evident from the list of professional standards that the STEP project recommends a holistic professional development for primary teachers so that they have an updated knowledge of teaching processes and teaching skills. It is pertinent to mention that each standard is further elaborated by three aspects which are

a. teacher's knowledge and understanding of the content

b. teacher's disposition (what kind of behaviour, attitude and values teacher should exhibit)

c. performance (how teacher should conduct an activity in classroom)

(MoE, 2009)

Thus, the professional standards set by STEP may be regarded as comprehensive guiding principles for teachers and teacher-educators. If teacher-educators keep these standards in mind while conducting teacher training, it may be an effective step towards teachers' professional development. The Ministry of Education (2009) also highlighted the main issues with teacher education in Pakistan which will be discussed in the following section.

Teacher education and professional development are provincial responsibilities (Ahmed, 2012). After the 18th Constitutional Amendments passed by the National Assembly in 2010, Pakistan's federal government is mainly responsible for planning and financing educational projects to establish teacher education institutions through its curriculum wing (Akhtar, 2013; Khan & Saeed, 2009; Ali, 2011). The provinces were given more responsibilities after the said constitutional amendment. The Punjab province, the locus of this study, has a distinct centralized organizational structure which manages preparation of teachers for different school levels such as primary, middle and secondary through

provincial departments of Education which have administrative and curricular control. Teacher training in Pakistan may be divided into pre-service and in-service training courses for primary and secondary teachers. Government Colleges for Education (GCEs); Government Colleges for Teachers (GCETs) and Regional Institutes for Teacher Education (RITEs) provide pre-service and in-service teacher training programs to primary school teachers. The government of Punjab established the Directorate of Staff Development (DSD) in 2004. The DSD is responsible for designing and implementing pre-service and in-service programs of professional development in all 35 public sector colleges of teacher education (Khan & Saeed, 2009). A typical program of initial teacher education for primary level includes general courses on teaching methodology and classroom management, which educate teachers to teach compulsory subjects such as Urdu, English, Mutalia Pakistan (Study of Pakistan's History) and Islamiat. However, the Directorate of Staff Development introduced many courses in 2006 such as a Subject Matter Improvement Course, and Teaching Skills Development Course and Continuous Professional Development of primary school teachers (Directorate of Staff Development, 2006) which lay a central focus on subject-specific teacher training (Saeed, 2002 as cited in Akhtar, 2013).

The minimum academic requirement for the post of primary and elementary teachers are matriculation (after completing secondary school) and intermediate certificates (after completing two years of college education) respectively. The Government Colleges of Education (GCE) train the candidates for teaching jobs for one year. On successful completion of these courses, candidates for primary teaching posts receive the Primary Teaching Certificate (PTC) and receive the Certificate of Teaching (CT) for elementary teaching posts (Hunzai, 2009). The academic and professional qualification of teachers at different levels has been shown in figure 2.4 and table 2.5.

# Teacher Education in Pakistan

**Academic**

**Professional**

| Matriculation (Grade X) | ⟹ | Primary Training Certificate (PTC) |

| Intermediate (Grade XII) | ⟹ | Certificate of teaching (CT) |

| Graduation (14 Years) | ⟹ | B.Ed. |

| Masters (Any Discipline) | | M.Ed. |
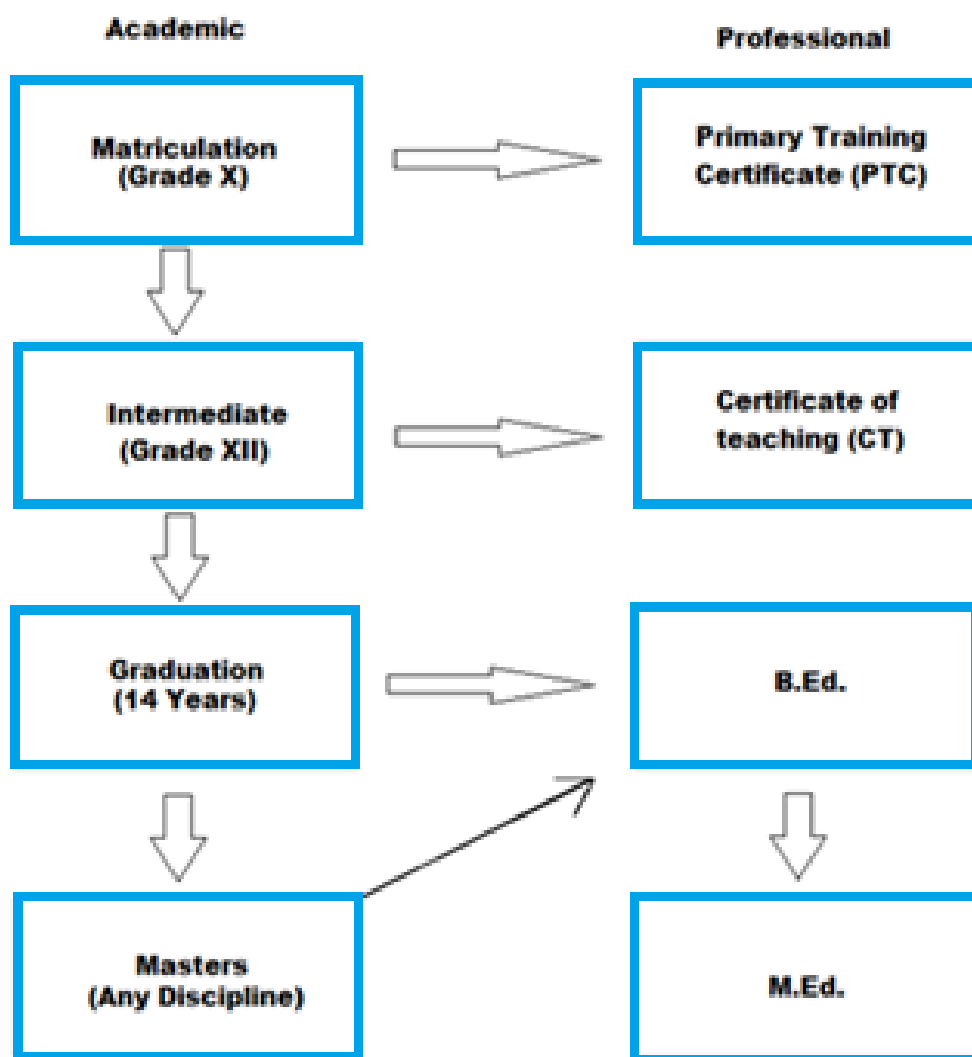
**Fig. 2.4 Academic and professional qualifications for teaching in Pakistan (Hunzai, 2009)**

| Teachers' trainings | Qualification | Awarding body | Career option as a teacher |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-service training | Primary Teacher Certificate (PTC) | Government Colleges of Elementary Teachers | ECE / Katchi teacher and primary teacher |
| | Certificate of Teaching (CT) | Government Colleges of Elementary Teachers | Primary teacher, secondary teacher (up to grade 8) |
| | Bachelor of Education (BEd) | Colleges of Education | Higher secondary school teachers |
| | Med | University | |
| In-service | Refresher courses based on generic teaching skills and subject specific teaching | Directorate of Staff Development (DSD) Punjab | Continuing training for Professional Development |

**Table. 2.1 Pre-service and in-service teacher training in Pakistan (Hunzai, 2009)**

The details of teacher training programs detailed in the table above indicate that primary teachers have opportunities of pre-service and in-service training. However, the frequency, quality and impact of this teacher training have been criticized in the education policy documents (MoE, 2009). The Ministry of Education (2009) realizes that the academic and professional criteria for selection of primary teachers may not be sufficient to appoint efficient teachers because ten or twelve years of schooling with a PTC or CT certificate may not sufficiently prepare a teacher for teaching resourcefully. Moreover, many primary teachers in Punjab (26%) are not able to attend any in-service training (ibid: 7). Memon (2007) shares similar findings and reported a disproportion of training for in-service teachers. He argues that many teachers receive no in-service training because the public-sector institutions of teacher training cannot provide training to all primary school teachers (p. 50). Research (Ali, 2000, 2011; Mohammad, 2006; Mohammad and Harlech-Jones, 2008; Memon, 2007) also indicates that teaching practice in the classroom shows a limited

impact of teacher training because primary teachers would not try implementing training in their classroom practice.

Such a state of classroom affairs raises pertinent questions on the quality and the influence of pre-service teacher training which aims to prepare newly inducted teachers and of in-service teacher training sessions which are conducted for teachers' professional development.

Davis & Iqbal (1997) criticized the criteria by which teacher educators are selected in Punjab. They state that anyone having a master's degree in any subject with a one-year B.Ed. may be appointed as lecturer in government teacher training colleges without any prior teaching experience. Many of these teacher educators may not fully understand the context in which teachers have to teach. A large number of primary schools have been reported as being poorly managed with short supply of resources and few basic facilities such as furniture and shelter. These conditions and their impact on teachers' ability to implement training in classrooms are seldom considered when planning and conducting teacher training programs.

Research studies (Davis & Iqbal, 1997; Westbrook et al., 2009; Ashraf et al., 2005) suggest that teacher-educators prepare their training material in isolation which may not take into account the real conditions of primary schools. They train teachers by using complex theoretical content which is taken as irrelevant by trainees. Thus, the contextual factor is rarely taken care of while conducting teacher training (Ashraf et al., 2005 p. 276). Ashraf et al. (2005) support this argument and claim that teacher training programs have little impact on teaching practice in the primary classroom because they are not prepared in accordance with the context of teaching. These training programs follow a rigid curricular structure which comprises content on philosophy, psychology and sociology of education.

Moreover, Ashraf et al. (2005) argue that teachers ignore the benefits of training programs which may play a constructive role to enhance their teaching skills; rather, they only understand that rote-learning of content of teacher training may be sufficient to pass the examination at the end of a training session to receive a certificate of professional qualification. Davis & Iqbal (1997) state similar findings and argue that teacher training modules are followed by an examination in which participants are mainly tested on theoretical content and only partly on practical demonstration. Thus, teachers focus their efforts to rote-learn the major theoretical part and pay less attention to the practical side of

teacher training. Ashraf et al. (2005) criticize the content and the way in which these trainings are conducted. They argue that teacher educators predominantly use the lecture method to deliver 'ill-defined' theories and imported teaching ideas. They rarely demonstrate for teachers how to translate these theories in classroom practice (p. 276).

The study by Ashraf et al. (2005) reiterates that although teacher training programs might stress the use of activity-based teaching methodologies such as group and pair work, the trainees are rarely exposed to such learning in their training sessions. In addition, during these trainer-led teacher training sessions, the trainees have little chance to ask questions and if they do, trainers would not provide a satisfactory answer because they are not fully aware of the context in which teacher is teaching (Ashraf et al. 2005; Westbrook et al. 2009). Thus, teacher training appears to have little impact on teaching practice in primary schools of Punjab. Westbrook et al. (2009) go further to explore teaching practice after teacher training and found that teacher training programs neither prepare newly inducted teachers for effective classroom practice nor do the conditions in real classrooms allow them to implement activity-based teaching. The newly inducted teachers are discouraged by unsupportive school conditions and an overloaded curriculum (p. 438). Rarieya (2005) argues that primary teachers' performance may be enhanced by giving them opportunities to be involved in reflective dialogues. However, schools' unsupportive conditions such as uneven workload on teachers reduce time for teachers to have reflective dialogues to reduce constraints and to refine and improve their teaching practice.

## 2.7.1 Teacher training in the Public and Private Sectors

Teacher education programs are run by both public and private institutions across the country. However, the majority of institutions of teacher education are still run by the government of Pakistan (Farah & Rizvi, 2007). The programs taught in the public sector have long been criticized for being substandard and impractical (Hunzai, 2009). Literature on teacher education in Pakistan (Westbrook et al., 2009; Ali, 2011; Mohammed, 2006; Iqbal & Khan, 2011; Hunzai, 2009) informs us that teacher training programs have no noticeable impact on the pedagogical skills of teachers. This argument is supported by Khan & Saeed (2009) who claim that curricula of teacher training programs do not develop the required pedagogical skills among teachers. These training programs are characterised by 'chalk-and-talk', memorization or lecture methods and the majority of teachers

complete these courses to add to their CV to receive benefits from the government (Akhtar, 2013; Khan and Saeed, 2009). Therefore, public sector institutions of teacher education are criticized for their ineffectiveness. However, Gulzar et al., (2005) noted that the private sector has emerged as an effective provider of teacher education in Pakistan. These institutions provide teacher training to teachers of all levels at a reasonable price. The majority of private sector chains of schools send their teachers in these institutions. Effectiveness of private sector teacher training institutions will be discussed further in the following paragraph.

For the last decade or so, there has been a rapid increase in the establishment of private schools (Andrabi et al. 2002) which has created a demand for private sector institutions of teacher training. These private sector training institutions train the teachers on practical aspects of teaching which promote conceptual learning, critical thinking and problem-solving skills through activity-based teaching among student-teachers (Saleem, 2009). Akhtar (2013) states that the performance of private sector teacher training institutions may be considered better than that of public sector training institutions in providing quality education to teachers. Literature on performance of private schools (Andrabi et al., 2002) confirms that the private sector is leading the public sector in the quality of teaching, teacher education and provision of other educational resources. Researchers (Akhtar, 2013; Farah and Rizvi, 2007) suggest that a partnership between public and private sector may be useful to enhance teaching skills of teachers in the public sector. However, this partnership is missing altogether at present. This study highlighted perceptions of primary teachers who confirmed the poor training facilities provided by public sector institutions. In addition, this study further highlights participants' concerns about major issues in teacher training and its impact on teaching practices in public sector primary schools of Punjab.

The discussion presented above clearly suggests that poor quality of teacher training and a lack of teacher support systems may be the main obstacles for primary teachers to translate their training into classroom practice. Thus, primary teachers start their career as less-prepared if not unprepared teachers in Punjab (Mirza, 2003; Mohammad, 2006). In the light of discussion on teacher training in Pakistan, the reader would want to know what teaching approaches are being used in primary schools of Punjab. The following section will review the literature to find out what research informs us to answer this question.

**2.8 Teaching Approaches in Pakistan:**

Teaching practice may necessarily be regarded as the outcome of teacher training because teachers may adopt teaching approaches in the classroom in the light of how they are trained. As Rizvi (2003) argues, teachers in Pakistan teach the way they were taught, implying that the majority of teachers in Pakistan are trained in the public-sector training colleges in which teacher educators adopt conventional approaches of teacher training and train teachers by lecturing (Westbrook et al., 2009). Available research on classroom practice in Pakistan (Shamim, 1993; Shamim & Allen, 2000; Shamim, 2008; Memon & Badger, 2007) informs us that teachers commonly adopt a conventional way of teaching in which teachers focus on 'doing a lesson' as described by Shamim (2008 p. 240). Shamim explains that doing a lesson means that teachers teach their student by using lecture as the main method of teaching. Their teaching approach is similar to that by which they were trained in teacher training sessions. Shamim (2008) names this teaching method as the 'traditional' way of teaching which is teacher-centred and in which students have limited chances of participation. Shamim (2008) further indicates that the pattern of teaching practice in schools has not changed much for the last couple of decades and the same traditional way of teaching is prevalent. (p.240). The following section will discuss the nature of what is meant by the traditional way of teaching which is commonly found in schools, colleges and even in most of the universities of Pakistan.

Researchers (Shamim, 2008; Memon & Badger, 2007) describe traditional teaching as following a predictable, three-step process in which teacher talk has a major role to play during teaching time. Although the study by Memon & Badger (2007) was conducted with teachers of a local university in Sindh province, the procedure to complete a lesson was found to be similar to findings from Shamim (1993) and Shamim & Allen (2010). Memon & Badger (2007) found that a traditional lesson would necessarily start with the teacher's introduction of the topic in which he explains what the lesson would be about. In the opening part, students are required to listen attentively to understand the topic of lesson. Similarly, in the last part of the lesson, the teacher would recap what has been taught during the lesson. Here the teacher might ask some questions to guess if students understood the lesson, however, during the lesson they remain passive most of the time. The middle part of the lesson is again a lengthy episode of explanation of the content provided by teacher. During this part, students are generally silent listeners, however, a short question/answer episode may take place. A typical lesson plan in any teacher training

session in Pakistan follows the similar procedure. Memon & Badger (2007) found out that in the traditional classroom, it depends on the discretion of the teacher who asks questions.

In the majority of traditional classrooms, there are a limited number of students who challenge what the teacher says. Many students get bored and start talking with other students (p. 556). Memon & Badger (2007) argue that in the traditional classroom, the teacher has a dominant role. The teaching time is mainly used by teacher talk in which he explains and instructs students to take notes. Particularly, in the language class, teachers focus on translating text and interpreting it in the first language. Memon & Badger (2007), however, also found that the traditional way of teaching is easy for both teachers and students, because it does not require them to put effort into teaching and learning. Memon & Badger (2007) also found that the main resource a teacher would use in the traditional classroom is the textbook. Teachers would rely on text and its translation or explanation in Urdu language to complete their lesson. For example, Memon & Badger (2007) found that teachers in their study were teaching without using extra teaching material. Students in their classroom mostly relied on textbook reading and copying according to teachers' direction. Shamim (2008) offers a similar picture of classroom teaching in primary schools Pakistan where a teacher, while 'doing a lesson' (p. 240) starts his lesson by introducing the topic to students. Then he reads the text and asks students to read one by one after he finishes reading. While students read, the teacher would occasionally interrupt reading to correct or explain the text in Urdu. Shamim (2008) found that despite these common features presented above, there was a difference in the use of native language. Teachers in public sector Urdu-medium schools used Urdu and local language while those in the private schools used a mixture of English and Urdu languages. Thus, we may conclude from the discussion presented above that the state sector primary classroom in Pakistan lacks variety of methods and that teachers predominantly use conventional methods of teaching.

A deeper understanding of primary classrooms of Punjab suggest that there is an urgent need to introduce reforms in primary schools which promote use of variety of activity-based teaching methodologies such as group work to replace conventional, lecture-based teaching. A review of literature on group work (Blatchford et al., 2006) informs us that group work may be used as an effective way of teaching subjects including English because it provides increased opportunities for students to participate in classroom activities. I will review literature on group work in chapter 3 which will explain how group work may be useful for learning English and other subjects. In this study, I have explored

teachers' perception of group work as a way to teach English to ensure activity and students' participation in classroom.

## 2.9 Summary of chapter two:

In this chapter, I have presented a detailed background of this study. Part one of this chapter covered a historical background of English in the subcontinent before the partition in 1947 and different phases of progress of English in the post-partition period in Pakistan. The chapter highlighted the complex nature of the relationship between English and the people of Pakistan. The variety and diversity of culture and ethnic groups of people of Pakistan caused a delay in deciding the status of English in educational policies for the different governments in Pakistan. Due to various pressure groups in the country, only military rulers provided shelter for English to keep a connection with the elites. However, the democratic system during 1990s allowed the masses to access English education in the public sector primary schools. Part two of this chapter explained the current state of primary education in Pakistan and discussed the different levels of teacher training and its impact on teaching practices in primary classroom. The next chapter will look in more detail at the literature regarding classroom practices in the English language primary classroom, focusing on what might be considered 'good' practice. In the following chapter, I will also look at language learning by using activity-based teaching methodologies such as group work.

**Chapter Three: Literature Review**

**3.1 Introduction:**

The field of second language learning is a wide area linked with other areas of studies such as Psychology and Linguistics. The multidisciplinary nature of this field makes it challenging for linguists and researchers to claim how second languages are learned (Mitchell & Myles, 2013). Different researchers offer various points of views to explain the process of language learning. However, this study was conducted within the framework of Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory. Vygotsky (1978) viewed learning as a social phenomenon in which individuals' learning takes place as a result of interaction with one another, particularly with more knowledgeable others such as parents and elder siblings who have more knowledge of the world around the learner. In the light of studies conducted within Vygotsky's socio-cultural perspective of learning, recent research (Blatchford et al., 2003; Bains et al., 2007) indicates that collaborative group work may be exploited as a potential method of teaching subjects such as English language, Mathematics and Science in primary classrooms. In this chapter, I started with a definition of group work to inform the reader of the sense in which this study used group work. this section moves on to differentiate between collaborative and cooperative learning. This section concludes with a sample group work lesson plan. Then, I reviewed literature on second language learning to understand theoretical perspectives in this field. In this section, I highlighted the theoretical and practical issues from the literature that informed my thinking about conducting research on group work. This chapter concludes with a section on teacher's role while conducting group work. The following section will elaborate group work for the readers to understand what kind of group work I was interested in to conduct this study.

**3.2 Defining Group Work:**

This study has used the term 'group work' with a specific meaning. The umbrella term, 'group work' is often used to describe different types of learning activities which take place in the classroom, however, there are important differences in the kind of tasks that may be the focus for learning (Hammar Chiriac, 2014). For example, many teachers use

the expressions 'collaborative learning' and 'cooperative learning' interchangeably, but each describes a particular approach to learning. In this section, I shall differentiate between cooperative and collaborative learning to identify for the reader the kind of group work I was interested to explore in this study.

## 3.3 Collaborative vs Cooperative group work

For researchers who are interested in studying interaction and its role in learning, the two terms are very important i.e. cooperative and collaborative learning. Cooperative and collaborative learning are, sometimes, used as interchangeable terms but they have different meanings (Qaisar, 2013; McInnerney & Roberts, 2004). Edwards (2004 cited in Qaisar, 2013) differentiates between the two expressions. Edwards considers that cooperative learning occurs when students regulate their actions, share resources and work together to achieve a specific goal or develop an end product which is usually content specific. Similarly, McInnerney & Roberts (2004) explain that 'cooperative is an adjective meaning to work or act together as one to achieve a common goal, while tending to de-emphasize the input of particular individuals' (p. 205). The term cooperative learning may be further understood by the following figure.
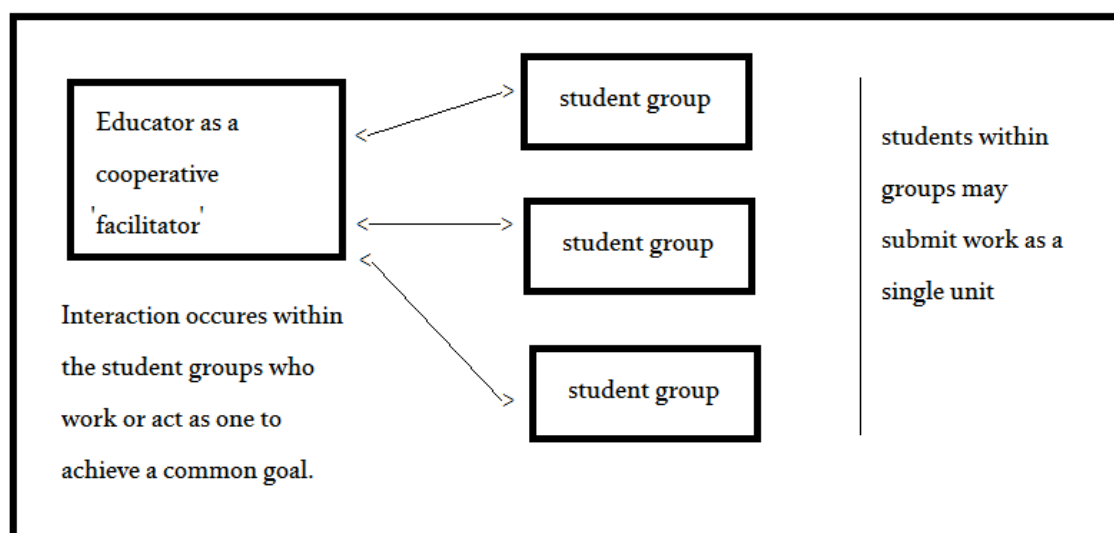


**Fig.3.1 Cooperative learning**

This figure clearly explains that in cooperative learning, the teacher acts as a facilitator who facilitates cooperation among groups to assist completion of task assigned to the groups. The interaction among group members occurs to facilitate cooperation among

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them. The outcome of cooperative learning, according to the table above, suggests that the work of the group may be submitted in the form of a single unit. In addition, cooperative learning is often structured and controlled by the teacher who instructs students to work together to achieve a learning task (Qaisar, 2013). Since this section is aimed at distinguishing between cooperative and collaborative learning, it is pertinent to mention Panitz (1996 cited in Roberts, 2004) who argued that 'cooperation is the structure of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a specific end product or goal through people working together in groups whereas collaboration is a philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle where individuals are responsible for their actions, including learning and respect the abilities and contributions of fellow group members' (p. 206). Panitz (1996 cited in Roberts, 2004) adds that in cooperative learning a teacher maintains complete control of groups' activities but groups assume almost total responsibility.

In collaborative learning, learners adjust their actions through agreement or disagreement with group members on a shared task to achieve a shared goal. The purpose of collaborative learning is to reach a consensus through cooperation by group members (Qaisar, 2013).
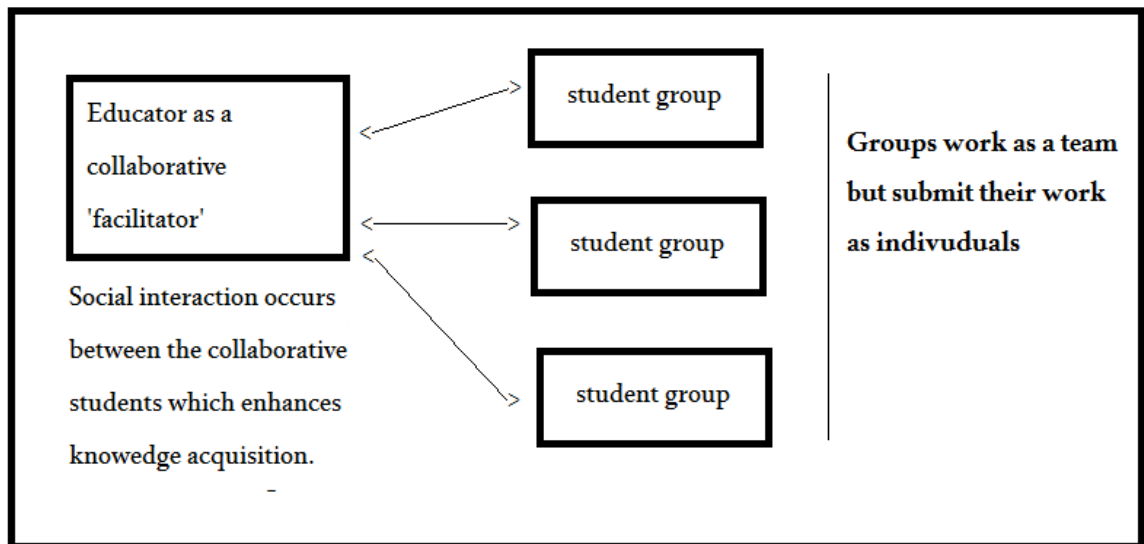


**Fig. 3.2 Collaborative learning**

The table clarifies the essential process of collaboration which includes social interaction among group members and results in submission of individual work by the group members. From the discussion and explanation of cooperative and collaborative learning presented above, it may be agreed that cooperative learning is related with a common task

to accomplish through cooperation among group members while collaborative learning is related with social interaction among group members to build mutual knowledge to complete individual tasks. I was interested in collaborative learning because I wanted to explore group work in which students may construct knowledge by social interaction with one another and, at the end, they are also responsible for their individual work. I was not interested in cooperative group work in particular because, I consider that the end product of cooperative learning may not offer an opportunity to all students to present their work.

As explained earlier, in this study, group work is taken as collaborative group work which refers to classroom activities which involve the teacher as a guide who delegates his authority to students to work independently within the group and make decisions autonomously while working on a learning task. In the following section, I shall look at collaborative learning and collaborative group work to assist the reader in understanding what kind of collaborative learning was in my mind while conducting this study.

Collaborative learning is seen as an effective teaching learning strategy which provides the opportunity for all students to participate in the classroom (Qaisar, 2013). Johnson & Johnson (2002) believe that collaborative learning benefits students with a range of diverse learning needs. Cohen & Lotan (2014) define group work as 'students working together in a group small enough so that everyone can participate on a clearly assigned learning task' (p.2). Cohen & Lotan (2014) further distinguish collaborative group work from ability grouping where teachers divide their class on the basis of students' ability, where teachers form these ability groups to teach more homogeneous groups of students. They also distinguish collaborative group work from flexible and temporary grouping of students. Teachers compose these kinds of grouping for intensive teaching. The data in this study, for example, revealed that participants were using ability grouping, flexible or temporary grouping of students which they utilised to teach the subjects of Mathematics and Science. To define collaborative group work, my point of view is closer to agreement with Cohen & Lotan (2014) that is, a certain number of students (5-6) who are working together on a task assigned to them such as working in groups to produce and practice a dialogue between doctor and patient. In this sense of group work, each member in a group has some task to perform. It is not where some students work and others act as 'freeloaders' as may be in case of cooperative group work (Parsons and Kasabova, 2002; Mellor, 2012). On the contrary, all group members work in collaborative group work. They assist one another by asking questions and clarifying at each step of group work. It is important for teachers to recognise the need to be flexible about groupings and be better informed about the benefits

forming groups with a range of abilities so that children can learn from each other. This would need to form part of intensive practical training for teachers to enable them to think more deeply about the way group work may be implemented successfully.

This brings me here to state precisely various features of group work which represent the kind of group work implied in this study. Cohen and Lotan (2014) listed three features of group work which may ensure effective learning of students in language classroom. These features were kept in mind during the study to inform whether group work might be used as an effective methodology of teaching English in public sector schools in the Punjab. I will discuss these features in the following section.

The first feature of collaborative group work according to Cohen & Lotan (2014) is delegation of authority during group work. As described earlier, the teacher has a different role in conducting group work in classroom. The teacher has to relinquish strict control over who speaks and which decisions are made regarding how the work may be done. On the contrary, students make independent decisions in group work. The group members negotiate among themselves and decide how to achieve the objective of lesson. Moreover, they would decide who does what. However, this would not mean that the teacher would let the lesson go uncontrolled. In fact, the teacher in collaborative group work would move among the groups to ensure that the groups are working on task and all group members are involved in working on the lesson, providing advice if required. For the teachers in the study, this may be a challenge and would need specific guidance and training, followed by reflection and discussion, so that the teachers themselves operated within their ZPD as they learned how to conduct group work effectively in their context.

A second feature of group work identified by Cohen & Lotan (2014) is the interaction among group members. Group members need one another to some degree to interact. Their interaction is an important aspect of group work. During interaction, they ask questions, explain, make suggestions, criticise, listen, agree, disagree and make joint decisions giving more opportunities to language skills to develop. Frey, Fisher, & Everlove (2009) termed this interaction as positive interdependence, implying that successful group work would require group members to work cooperatively to achieve the objective of a lesson Cohen & Lotan (2014).

A third important feature of successful group work is the nature of the task. Cohen & Lotan (2014) suggest that the teacher needs to think thoroughly what task would be

assigned to students to work on in group work. For example, in an English classroom, if a teacher wants students to practise reading some text, the task would be simple. On the other hand, if the teacher wants his students to engage in deep discussion to discuss the content in depth, the task would be complex. However, the students' capacity would be kept in mind while devising complex tasks (ibid: p.3).

Recent studies (Qaisar, 2013; Blatchford et al. 2007) confirm effectiveness of group work in enhancing students' academic achievements and their interpersonal skills. Qaisar (2013) while working in private sector primary schools of Pakistan, noted that students working in collaborative group work in Mathematics, showed increased participation in group discussions and developed valuable skills of negotiation, to agree and disagree and to reach an agreed solution to their learning tasks. In a language learning context, researchers such as Mercer & Littleton (2007) put a special focus on students' dialogue while working in groups because dialogues in collaborative groups are multidirectional, implying that group work gives students more opportunities to discuss various aspects of a problem to reach a well thought and socially constructed conclusion (p.18).

Slavin (2010) considers that collaborative group work has established itself as an effective solution to the issues, such as passivity and boredom which are generally seen in traditional or teacher centred classrooms. Numerous studies (Bains et al., 2003; Blatchford et al., 2006; Qaisar, 2013; Gillies, 2006; Johnson & Johnson, 2002) confirm that group work which promotes interaction and cooperation among students may be regarded as an alternative methodology of teaching in primary classrooms. The study by Slavin (2010) values the potential of studies which confirm group work as an effective methodology of teaching English. In this study, I was interested in group work which would promote interaction among students and, in which teachers have a limited involvement in students' working because I wanted to explore participants' perception whether group work might be used to enhance students' participation in the primary classroom and to amend teachers' current role from 'a sage on the stage' to 'a guide on the side' (Gillies, 2006 p.272) to understand how group work may be used in the English class. Unlike teachers in a traditional classroom where a teacher speaks for most of the teaching time in the classroom, in collaborative group work the teacher moves among groups to monitor working of groups to ensure that students are working on task (Gillies, 2006). For example, there are various teaching strategies used to ensure students participation such as think-pair-share, the jigsaw technique and role-play. For readers' understanding, an example of a

collaborative group work lesson from my experience for an English class in the Pakistani context is shared in the following table.

**3.4 Sample group work lesson Plan (40 Minutes):**

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| **Content to be covered: Visit to the doctor/pharmacist** |
| **Objectives of the lesson:** |
| <ul><li>Review vocabulary: parts of body, where to go to find medicine (type of store)</li><li>Review grammar: command forms of verbs 'Take two aspirin every morning'</li><li>New vocabulary: ways to describe illness and methods of remedying it</li><li>New grammar: giving advice "I would recommend" + [verb+ing]</li></ul> |
| **Activities (10-15 minutes):** |
| - The teacher will ask students to read the text from their textbooks and quickly summarise it to each other, before checking for understanding. He will present a quick review of parts of the body and material used by a doctor in his clinic such as stethoscope, by asking questions to the whole class. This will be done using a variety of stimuli: visuals, actions and vocabulary. <br><br> - He will elicit from the learners common ailment vocabulary related to the different parts of the body, such as 'headache, stomach pain, vomiting etc. This will be done using a variety of stimuli: visuals, actions and vocabulary, checking for comprehension <br><br> - He will introduce simple advice language such as 'take two tablets of aspirin' etc. <br><br> - Teacher will present a model dialogue related to a visit to the doctor in front of whole class to demonstrate what students are going to do in group work. He will then ask a student to interact with the teacher to play the part of patient and doctor. Teacher will emphasize use of sentences such as 'I am not feeling well. I have a bad throat. I have a headache' etc. <br><br> - Teacher will write the dialogue between a doctor and a patient on white board, with contributions from students. He will ask students to copy the dialogue in their notebooks. He will ask them orally for contributions as to how they might adapt this dialogue for other ailments or for other advice. Then he will ask them to work in groups of 3-4 to come up with a variety of dialogues using the same pattern. |
| **A Model Dialogue to be used by group members during group work:** |
| Doctor: How are you Mr Ahmed? <br> Ahmed: I am not feeling well. |

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| Doctor: What happened? |
| Ahmed: I have bad throat since last night. |
| Doctor: I see. Let me examine your throat. Yes, you have really bad throat. *(The doctor pretends to examine patient's throat)* I advise you to gargle with warm water with disprin in it. Here is your prescription. I would recommend taking two tablets of paracetamol three times a day for three days and you will be fine. |
| Ahmed: Thank you doctor! |
| Doctor: You are welcome! |
| **Group work (15-20 minutes):** |
| Teacher will ask students to sit as groups of four and roleplay as doctor and patients, using the model dialogue firstly, then producing their own versions. <br> Students will play doctor and patient, and practice the model dialogue provided earlier. <br> Teacher will circulate and monitor the groups, providing guidance and assistance if necessary. |
| **Follow up of group work/recap (10 Minutes):** |
| Teacher will ask at least one student from each group to describe the patients' ailment. <br> Similarly, some students will be asked to repeat what doctor advised. <br> Teacher will then ask some pairs of students to perform the dialogues. <br> Teacher will provide feedback, highlighting well formed and creative usage of language and point out common mistakes and suggest improvements. |
| **Homework:** Write a dialogue between a doctor and a patient. |
| **Materials:** Worksheets with dialogues and word replacement suggestions, large picture of human body to review parts of body. |

**Table 3.1 Sample group work lesson plan**

In this sample lesson, I tried to enable the students to practice all four language skills. Students have an opportunity to read, write, listen and speak. In addition, there is a limited role of teacher as, after the introductory stage, he only guides students during group work. It is the students' responsibility to develop and practice their dialogues as directed by the teacher. At this point, the teacher's role is crucial. He would ensure that all groups and group members are involved in the working of groups. He would also need to ensure that no group is ignored in case they need the teacher to intervene for guidance. In this type of group work learners construct knowledge as a result of negotiation with group members.

Students are accountable to their classmates as well as to the teacher regarding the learning objective, however, they make decisions on their own and the teacher would only monitor their progress and would only step in to assist the groups if there were any problems with their understanding or if the discussion in group was going off task (Hoffman & Mercer 2016). The group work in which I was interested, involves teachers playing a crucial role as I consider the teachers' role as central to a successful outcome of group work. In particular, teachers' careful use of language is essential to create successful group work. Teachers need to avoid giving direct orders; rather they would need to offer various suggestions to the students. For example, if the teacher notices that group members are going wrong, he may step in and offer some suggestions to the group members to keep them on task (Gresalfi et al., 2009). Hertz-Lazarowitz & Shachar (1990) give further advice on teacher's language and suggest that teachers need to be more spontaneous, friendly and creative while intervening during group work. Teachers' careful use of language would communicate a positive message to their students. Thus, teacher's use of language is crucial in conducting productive group work.

Keeping in mind the type of group work elaborated above, this study sought to investigate the potential for a changed image of primary English lessons in public sector primary schools in Punjab. This changed image of the primary classroom is believed by many teachers in Pakistan to be new and more interactive and cooperative than the current teacher-centred approach (Qaisar, 2013). I was interested to look at this type of group work in public sector primary schools of Punjab for several reasons. Firstly, recent research (Qaisar, 2013; Bains et al., 2016) indicates that teachers across the globe practice group work in their classrooms due to its proved effectiveness. The Education policy of Pakistan (National Education Policy, 2009) also considers collaborative learning as a solution to the issues of primary education across the country. From the literature cited above, it could be assumed that group work may be an effective way of teaching English through which students may construct knowledge socially. In the light of literature cited above, this study explored whether or not teachers perceived collaborative group work as a potential way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab.

In the light of Vygotskian (1978) perspectives which place a crucial emphasis on verbal interaction among learners to promote thinking, it seems logical to understand that dialogic exchange among learners could enhance students' cognitive development of second language (Mercer, 1996; Mercer & Littleton, 2007). Mercer & Littleton (2007) consider dialogue a natural way to communicate which may be brought into practice in classrooms

to enhance language skills by creating a natural language acquisition setting where students may be able to argue, ask questions and provide answers to the questions raised. The open debate that takes place in dialogues enables participants to clarify their points of view giving opportunities to group members to listen, argue, read and write the language content. Thus, collaborative group work is believed to imply a more interactive role for the learners in the classroom. Similarly, group work implies a different role for the teacher. Qaisar (2013) contrasts the role of teachers in a traditional classroom with that in which group work is used. He considers that the teacher plays the role of a guide while group work is underway in classroom. In particular, the teachers' language is more personal and less authoritative as they work closely with the small groups.

In the light of research on language learning, first language acquisition can be seen as a crucial phenomenon which informs us on aspects of second language learning too. That is why, an overview of major theories in second language acquisition and their relevance with this study would be useful to deeply understanding the role played by interaction through group work in the English classroom. In the section on second language learning theories, I have discussed the Grammar Teaching Method and its relevance to primary schools in Pakistan. A discussion on Krashen's Monitor Model and interactive Hypothesis is followed by a section on socio-cultural theory in which I have discussed the central concepts of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory which are Mediation, Scaffolding and Zone of Proximal Development. The section on theories concludes with a brief discussion of Mercer's 'Thinking Together' approach and Ellis' pragmatic approach to second language learning. In the next section, I have discussed three perspectives of classroom instruction in which I have developed my argument to conclude that in the light of theory, there may be three kinds of second language learning contexts. Before the discussion moves on the status of group work as a way of teaching English in primary classrooms, it is important to have a brief look at the theories that guide us towards understanding the process of second language learning.

## 3.5 Second Language Learning (SLL)

In this section, I shall present a brief review of literature on second language learning. Before we go further in the discussion of language learning, it is important to highlight the difference between 'language acquisition' and 'language learning'. To

understand the difference between two terms, Saville-Troike (2006) relates an example of two individuals; one is a small child learning to speak unconsciously in the natural environment of his home and second, a student in a classroom who is studying rules of using English as a second language under the supervision of his teacher. The first instance may be taken as a clear picture of language acquisition while the second one is that of language learning (Saville-Troike, 2006). A similar distinction may be found from Krashen's Monitor Model which will be discussed later in this chapter. However, Gass (2013) argues that different researchers have different point of views on the process of second language learning as the field is closely linked with several disciplines including linguistics, sociolinguistics, psychology, neuroscience, and education. Thus, the literature of SLL offers various explanations of this process. However, for researchers, any explanation would be acceptable if guided by some form of theory (Mitchell and Myles, 2013, p. 6). Generally, it is noted that researchers and theorists tend to use the term Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as a sub-discipline of applied linguistics is considered a young field of study (Ellis, 2005; Gass & Slinker, 2007). While it may be hard to spot its precise starting point in history, researchers (Ellis, 2005; Gass & Slinker, 2007; Gass, 2013) agree that during the 1960s, linguists started taking empirical and theoretical interest to explore how languages are learned. Although there has been plenty of research work since the 1960s which guides us to understand the process of language learning and acquisition, it is hard to tell precisely how languages are learnt (Mitchell & Myles, 2013). Mitchell & Myles (2013) argue that a large number of second language learners may inform us which activities supported their learning of a second language, however, they may not be able to formulate general rules of learning second language (p.7).

This review will provide information of processes which researchers believe have influenced teaching practice in second language learning over time. This review is also important for the reader to understand how well this study is backed by an appropriate theory. To understand the nature of language learning, or acquisition, Saville-Troike (2006) relates the example of an interesting Asian fable in which three blind men

are asked to describe an elephant. One of these blind men feels the tail and describes elephant as like a rope; another feeling the sides says that it is flat and rubbery; the third one feels the trunk and says that it is like a long rubber hose. Similarly, the field of second language acquisition is different for different people coming from different perspectives (p.3). Different perspectives offer different explanations of how languages are learned yet none provides a complete account of this process. This study was designed in line with the Socio-cultural theory of second language learning and a major part of this section will comprise a review of literature on Socio-cultural theory. However, it is necessary to discuss in brief the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) which is a popular methodology of teaching English in the Pakistani primary school context (Shamim, 2008; Durrani, 2016; Khan et. al., 2015). A brief discussion on Krashen's Monitor Model was considered appropriate to deeply understand the process of second language learning. Applied linguists who are primarily interested studying implications of theory and research, take certain theoretical explanations and practical implications of one or more of relevant theories which inform them on previous research work (Saville-Troike, 2006).

There are two broad categories of approaches which provide explanations of the process of second language learning in two different ways. The first category comprises researchers who primarily see the language learner as an autonomous individual and for them, second language learning is an internal, cognitive process similar to any other type of human learning. On the other hand, the second category of theorists view learning of a second language as necessarily a social phenomenon and believes that humans learn languages as a result of interaction with fellow learners or peers. These theorists are interested to study the input that a learner receives, the output he produces and the role of environment in promoting second language learning. This study was conducted to explore teachers' perceptions of group work in English classroom, and has focused on a framework based on socio-cultural and interactional aspects of English language learning. However, it is important to be aware of different approaches. I will start with discussion on the Grammar Translation Method which is one of the most popular ways of teaching English in Pakistan (Shamim, 2008; Durrani, 2016; Khan et. al., 2015).

## 3.6 Grammar translation method (GTM):

The use of GTM for instruction is, generally, linked with teaching of classical languages such as Greek and Latin (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Durrani, 2016). Larsen-Freeman & Anderson (2013) maintain that in the early twentieth century, at a time of colonialism, the purpose of using GTM by the ruling nations was to introduce the language of rulers in the colonies. Thus, the foreign languages were introduced to assist the native students read and appreciate foreign language literature (p.2). In the Grammar Translation Method, a learner is exposed to extensive use of reading and writing to translate texts from one language to another and grammar rules are taught explicitly to assist the second language learner to understand language and its use with the help of grammatical rules (Durrani, 2016, p.168). Khan et. al. (2015) highlight some advantages of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and argue that all benefits associated with GTM go in favour of the teacher. For example, while teaching English by using GTM, a teacher enjoys the liberty of using native language (Urdu or Punjabi in Pakistan) while explaining text in the second language. Khan et. al. (2015) consider that GTM is a teacher centred method of teaching English language which is easy for teachers to adopt. In this method, native language plays a scaffolding role on which teachers predominantly depend during their teaching. A frequent use of native language makes it easy for teachers to explain a concept and for students to understand it quickly. In addition, GTM stresses both structure and meaning. Students keep on learning new vocabulary on the daily basis and reproduce a variety of structures in their writings in the second language (ibid:629). Thus, the GTM is appreciated due to certain advantages.

However, the method is not as simple as it seems because the learners' mind is occupied by two languages at a time in this method which may create issues for the learner. The impact of interference of first or native language, according to Khan et. al. (2015), restricts the production of second language as teachers and students develop a habit of using native language for explanation of answers. In addition, there is another factor regarding translation which raises doubts on the effectiveness of GTM. Khan et. al. (2015) argue that it is almost impossible to translate one

language into another because the impact of the original message of text being translated would change when translated in another language (ibid:630). From my experience of teacher training in Beaconhouse school system, our foreigner trainers always advised their trainees to keep in mind that the foreign textbook series were written by people of different cultures and that the translation method might ignore the culture factor which would result in miscommunication of the original message in the text.

GTM is also criticised as being the traditional method of teaching foreign or second language which is being used in most Pakistani schools. In this method, the teacher is the only source of communication in the classroom who may be, sometimes, ridiculously wrong (Durrani, 2016; Akhtar, 2013; Shamim, 1996). However, Durrani (2016) found that students appreciate GTM as a methodology of teaching English and find it easy to understand difficult concepts by the grammar translation method. Researchers (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013; Celce-Murica, 2014; Howatt, 1984) believe that GTM is useful for learning a second language with an examination point of view. They believe that GTM may be useful to pass an examination at the end of a language course, however, it may not be helpful to develop a deeper understanding of the second language. Studies (Durrani, 2016; Akhtar; 2013; Shamim, 1996) indicate that GTM is predominantly used by primary teachers in Pakistan where the focus of teaching is to pass the examination. In this section, I have presented a discussion on Grammar Translation Method to inform the readers what methodology is popular among teachers in Pakistan. In the following section, I shall discuss Krashen's Monitor Model which is considered a landmark in the field of second language learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Mitchell & Myles, 1998).

## 3.7 Krashen's Monitor Model:

One model of second language acquisition which evolved during the late 1970s and early 1980s was led by Stephen Krashen (1982). Researchers (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Mitchell & Myles, 1998) consider that the monitor model was a significant

attempt to address issues of second language learning in the 1970s. Krashen wrote a series of books (see for example, Krashen, 1981, 1983, 1985) in which he contextualized his theory which was called 'The Monitor Model'. This was probably the first comprehensive explanation of second language learning. Krashen based his general theory on five basic hypotheses which offered considerable explanation of second language acquisition. These hypotheses are summarized in this section and a brief analysis of the theory is presented. The purpose behind presenting Krashen's Monitor Model is to inform reader of the complexity of the phenomenon of second language learning. This model is relevant to understand various ideas such as input and interaction and their role in first and second language learning.

### 3.7.1 The acquisition-learning hypothesis:

Krashen (1982) contrasts two terms that are frequently used in second language learning contexts, i.e. acquisition and learning. He explains that there are two distinct systems working in learner's mind for developing competence in a second language. According to Krashen, (1982) 'acquisition' and 'learning' take place in two different and independent conditions. Children 'acquire' their first language in a natural environment 'with no conscious attention to form' (p.10). He argues that the learner acquires his first language when exposed to the samples of language in the natural environment. On the other hand, 'learning' refers to the conscious process of learning a second language in which the learner gains knowledge of his second language through conscious attention to form and rules (p. 10). Krashen (1982) claims that learning cannot turn into acquisition however, adults may access the same natural 'language acquisition device (LAD)' to acquire second language which children use while acquiring first language (Gregg, 1984). Researchers (Gregg, 1984; McLaughlin, 1987; Myles et al. 1999; Mitchell & Myles, 2004) criticised Krashen's claim. Mitchell & Myles, (2004) argued that the distinction between conscious and subconscious production of language is vague as we may not be able to tell when the learner's language production is conscious and when it

is not (p.45). From the learning/acquisition hypotheses, an important aspect is related to second language learning which suggests that during second language learning, knowledge about the process of first language acquisition would be helpful for teachers to understand second language learning. I consider that learning/ acquisition may have a strong link with this study, as primary teachers need to have a clear understanding of the process of first language acquisition. As children grow up, they develop their first language as a result of interaction with their parents or other care givers. Similarly, if teachers understand how to create similar opportunities for students which may involve them to practice the second language, they may learn the second language more effectively.

### 3.7.2 The Monitor Hypothesis:

The second hypothesis in Krashen's theory is the 'monitor hypothesis' which suggests that learning only functions as a 'Monitor or editor' to correct the acquired system of language (McLaughlin, 1987 p.2). However, Krashen added that the Monitor can only work when three conditions are met: (1) the learner has sufficient 'time' to use his learning to correct the acquired system, (2) the learner has a 'focus on form' to realise the need for correctness, and (3) the learner has knowledge of the rule (Gregg, 1984). It means that utterance of a language is initiated by the acquired system and learning comes to play its part as a monitor that corrects the errors of the acquired language (McLaughlin, 1987). Despite the intuitive appeal it offers, the Monitor Hypothesis faced a strong criticism against which, according to Gregg (1984), Krashen himself did not reply. Similarly, Mitchell and Myles (2006) reject the possibility of testing functions of acquisition and learning proposed by the Monitor Hypothesis.

### 3.7.3 The Natural Order Hypothesis:

The natural order hypothesis states that learners of a second language acquire rules of language in a predictable sequence and that 'the order of acquiring rules cannot

be determined. It means that learners of second language may acquire a difficult rule first and easy one later. Lightbown & Spada (2006) explain that the rules which are easier to state are not necessarily first to be acquired. For example, a simple rule of grammar is to add s/es to a third person singular in the present tense. This rule is easy to state but a large number of fluent second language speakers fail to apply it in their conversations (p.37). Krashen presented a limited explanation of this hypothesis as he only explained it with reference to morpheme studies. The natural order hypothesis received a high volume of criticism from contemporary linguists. Gregg (1984) viewed the natural hypothesis as absurd because this hypothesis may not be generalized to explain the acquisition of structure of second language. Similarly, Zafar (2011) and Mitchells & Myles (2013) claimed that Krashen's Natural Order Hypothesis presented a narrow and unsatisfactory explanation as it was based on the morpheme studies only. Zafar (2011) claimed that the Natural Order Hypothesis also ignored the influence of L1 on L2. He argued that the learner adopts a natural order while acquiring first language. In the case of second language acquisition which occurs later on, the already acquired order may pose a negative or positive impact on second language learning. Thus, the natural order hypothesis altogether ignores the influence of L1 on L2 learning. From my understanding of natural order hypothesis, I consider that while learning English as a second language, students in Pakistan may face difficulty in learning the structure of English language because the language structure of Urdu and English is altogether different. Thus, English teachers in Pakistan need to understand that Urdu speaking students would tend to learn English sentences on the pattern of Urdu sentences which may be corrected at an appropriate time during teaching.

### 3.7.4 The Input Hypothesis:

Krashen (1980) claims that The Input Hypothesis 'may be the simple most important concept in second language acquisition' (p.168 cited in Zafar, 2011). The input hypothesis suggests that acquisition occurs when the learner is exposed to comprehensible input. Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis suggests that 'speech

cannot be taught but emerges on its own as a result of building competence via comprehensible input' (Krashen, 1985 p.2). Krashen further explains that learners acquire a second language in a natural order. The teacher does not need to teach the language rules directly and one by one, rather, he must make sure that the rules are present in the comprehensible input (teacher's speech or text) in appropriate quantity. This comprehensible input will be automatically reviewed by the learner. If a learner's current competence is '$i$' then comprehensible input should be '$i+1$' (Krashen, 1982 p.22). Literature (Shamim, 2011; Shamim & Allen, 2000; Ali, 2000) on English language learning in Pakistan suggests that students in the English classroom are not exposed to such input. Most teachers use native language and translate text to teach students. Within this study, it was considered pertinent to explore participants' perceptions of the input factor by employing group work in their classroom practices.

### 3.7.5 The Affective Filter Hypothesis:

The idea of the affective filter was originally used by Dulay and Burt (1977, cited in Gregg, 1984) by the name 'affective delimiters'. Krashen called it 'affective filter' to incorporate affective variables in his theory (Gregg, 1984, p. 90). The affective filter hypothesis suggests that mere provision of comprehensible input may not be sufficient for a learner to acquire a second language, rather, the 'affective filter' determines how receptive a learner is going to be to available comprehensible input. Lightbown & Spada (2006) argue that 'Affect' refers to feeling, motives, needs, attitudes and the emotional state of a learner which allows the learner to 'let the input in' or filter it out if he is anxious, tense or bored (p.37). This study was taken in the context where students are believed to act passively in the classroom because of teacher fear and low level of second language interaction. I considered that students in the context of this study were likely to have a high affective filter when asked to speak English in classrooms.

Krashen's Monitor model, despite strong criticism, signifies a crucial progress in linguistic research. It provided a new beginning to explore second language

acquisition and guided many researchers to study different aspects of language acquisition and learning. In particular, the input hypothesis was further studied and refined by the researchers who followed. For example, 'the interaction hypothesis' (Long, 1983) and 'the comprehensible output hypothesis' (Swain, 1985) were important extensions of Krashen's input hypothesis which will be discussed in the following section.

## 3.8 The interaction Hypothesis:

According to Ellis (1991), the interaction hypothesis claims that 'comprehensible input is necessary for second language acquisition' and, modifications in conversational interactions help to make input comprehensible in acquiring second language (p. 4). The interactionists (Hatch, 1978; Long, 1983, 1996; Pica, 1994, and Gass, 1977) consider that conversational interaction occupies a crucial place in second language acquisition. These researchers claim that for language acquisition, the dialogic or conversational interaction may not be a sufficient element but it is an essential factor for this process. Ellis (1991) views interactionists' claims as an extension of Krashen's (1984) and Hatch's (1978) work. As discussed earlier, Krashen (1984) argued that second language acquisition takes place when a learner is exposed to comprehensible input, while Hatch (1978) used a 'discourse analysis' approach to show a direct relationship between interactions and second language acquisition (p. 4). Long (1983) agreed with Krashen and considered comprehensible input as a necessary condition for second language acquisition. However, he was more interested in studying how speakers, in conversations with the learners, might modify their interaction and speech to make them comprehensible for the learners (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). He assumed that the process of second language acquisition was necessarily governed by a mechanism of modified interactions which made language comprehensible (p.43). Long (1983) added that comprehensible input in the form of simplified language might not be a sufficient condition to provide comprehensible input, rather, it was necessary for the learner to interact with other speakers, to work with them and to negotiate with them to

develop a mutual understanding of language. Through these interactions, the interlocutors would figure out what they might need to do to keep the conversation going and make the input comprehensible for the learner. Thus, Long (1983) claimed that modification of interaction in native-speaker/learner communication was an essential condition for any learner acquiring second language.

In the classroom context of second language acquisition, Allwright (1984 cited in Ellis, 1991) considered interaction as 'a fundamental fact of pedagogy', however, Ellis (1991) argues that classroom instruction might include many factors other than interaction such as reading and writing activities which have a crucial part to assist second language acquisition and, thus, might not be ignored. Language learning classrooms in Pakistan are believed to lack such interaction which is essential for second language learning. This study has highlighted literature which confirms that such interaction is a missing factor which may be regarded as the cause behind the low participation of students in English classrooms. In the following section, I will review literature on socio-cultural perspective of second language learning.

## 3.9 Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory (SCT)

In this section, I will provide a brief introduction of Vygotsky's work highlighting the role of interaction in second language learning. I start with Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory and discuss the principal concepts of socio-cultural theory such as Mediation, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Scaffolding, and their implications in second language learning. These concepts inform us how the process of learning takes place in humans and language learning may be seen as a part of an overall process of learning. However, links will be established to explain and discuss language learning in the socio-cultural context. Let us start with an introduction to socio-cultural theory.

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory lays a central focus on social interaction, particularly the one that takes place between individuals, in the process of a child's cognitive development including language development (Lightbown & Spada,

2006). The socio-cultural perspective proposed that the interaction was not just a source of 'input', rather, it offered much more for learners to learn (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Vygotsky's ideas about child development were so influential that they were adopted by psychologists such as Jerome Bruner (1985), James Wertsch (1985) and Barbara Rogoff (1990) and applied in educational contexts by many educational theorists (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). I shall discuss the main concepts regarding socio-cultural theory in the following section which will further clarify socio-cultural theory for the readers.

**3.9.1 Mediation:**

SCT suggests that the most important forms of human mental activity take place through interaction within the social and material environments (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). The Vygotskian version of learning gives high value to mediation in mental functioning. SCT tends to disagree with cognitivists who claim that speaking and thinking are two independent functions, and asserts that speaking and thinking are closely linked where 'speaking mediates thinking'. This means that learners internalise what they learn as a result of dialogic interactions with others (ibid, p.193). Socio-cultural theory proposes that human mental activity is a mediated process (ibid). Before I talk about mediation in the light of socio-cultural theory, for a better understanding of what is mediation, I offer a simple description of a mediation model proposed by Hayes (2013) who proposed that when a researcher wants to explore how a factor 'X' exerts its effect to produce an outcome 'Y', there are two ways to study X's impact. First is to study relationship between 'X' and 'Y' as a direct process where no other variables and their affect to 'Y' are recorded. A second way of studying the relationship between 'X' and 'Y' is to examine the relationship as a result of some other variable(s) 'M' which is causally located in the process. The second type of description would bring into account the impact of mediating factors 'M' to explore a relationship between two factors, X and Y (p. 7). His model may be described with a simple diagram given below:
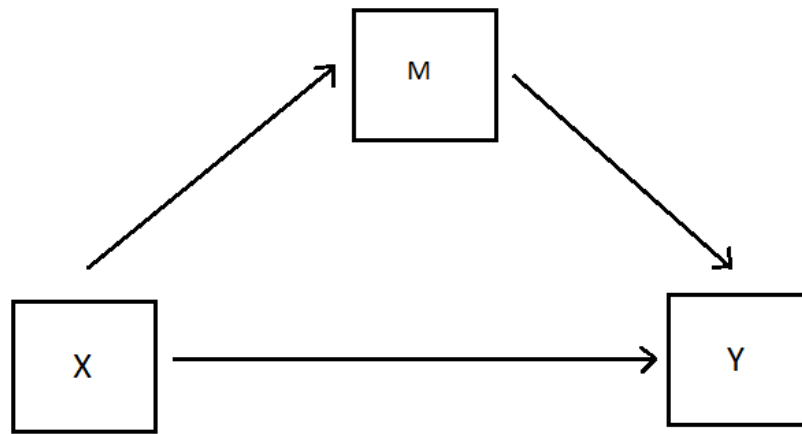
**Fig. 3.3 Mediation Model (Hayes, 2013)**

The example of the mediation model proposed by Hayes (2013) may be helpful to understand mediation in socio-cultural theory. I will explain Vygotsky's concept of mediation with reference to Hayes's (2013) mediation model for a clearer understanding of the reader. Vygotsky (1987) argued that 'humans (as X in Hayes's Model) do not act automatically to produce an impact (Y in Hayes's model) but, humans rely on some tools (M in Hayes's model) to produce certain impact (Y). Similarly, humans use symbolic tools to mediate and regulate their relationship with others and with themselves (p. 80). Since the 1980s, Lantolf has been one of the prominent writers who has studied relevance and application of socio-cultural theory to second language learning (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Lantolf & Thorne (2007) explained mediation by narrating a simple example. They stated that if a human had to dig a hole in the earth to plant a tree, the process of digging can be done by following the behaviour of another species such as a dog that digs by using its forearms. But as a result of a mediated process of the human mind, humans have learnt from their culture to, easily and accurately, dig a hole by using a shovel (p.199). It means that rather than digging a hole with hands like dogs do, humans have learnt to dig a hole by using a shovel. Humans have learnt this from other humans through interaction. This is an example of performing a simple task in the physical world. Similarly, if a human is to convey some information to others, he will use some form of language, spoken or written, to convey his message. Lantolf & Thorn (2007) further explained that humans had developed a large number of physical and symbolic tools which mediate learning. Symbolic tools may include 'numbers and arithmetic systems, music, art and languages' (ibid, p. 61). By using these tools humans create an indirect relationship with the world and explore new ways of learning which are passed on to the next generations through culture

(ibid). The mediation process in the light of Hayes's (2013) model may look as presented in the following figure.
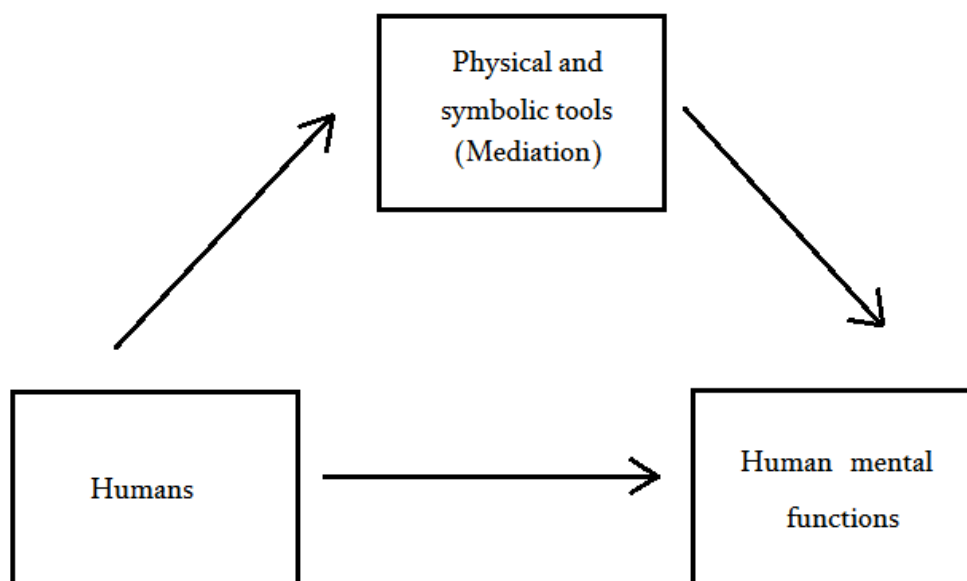


**Fig. 3.4. Mediation in Socio-cultural perspective (Hayes, 2013)**

Figure 3.2 shows that the socio-cultural perspective views the function of the human mind as a mediating process. In this process as Mitchell & Myles (2004) explain, language is used as 'a means of mediation' or as a 'tool for thought' in mental activity. By using language as a tool, humans may learn to perform many functions which would be difficult without language use. For example, language helps us to formulate a step-by-step plan to solve a problem which would be difficult to solve otherwise (ibid, p.194). Thus, tools make it easy to understand and solve issues in daily life. Similarly, to understand the role of language as a mediator, Olson (1995 as cited in Mitchell and Myles, 2004) argues that before the introduction of a writing system, we had no categories to understand different parts of speech. It became possible only after the emergence of writing systems that we were able to define and categorise language into groups such as 'words', 'sentences' and 'phonemes' (p.195).

Second language learning is seen in the same manner in socio-cultural theory which takes place as a result of social interaction and shared processes such as discussions. Similarly, Ratner (2002) summarises that Vygotsky's SCT suggests that functioning of the human mind is fundamentally 'a mediated process organized by social activities (such as producing goods, raising children, treating diseases, educating the public, and producing

art), cultural artefacts (such as tools, books, pottery, weapons, eating utensils, clothing, furniture, toys and technologies etc.), and concepts (about things and people which vary in different societies with their system of law, religion and customs)' (p. 10). Ratner's emphasis on the social role in learning implies that learners make use of existing artefacts present in culture and create new ones which permit them to regulate their biological and behavioural activities. Thus, socio-cultural theory lays more emphasis on learning as a mediated process in which physical and symbolic tools (Mitchell and Myles, 2004) or social activities, cultural artifacts and concepts assist humans to perform higher mental functions. However, socio-cultural theory lays a special focus on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Scaffolding. These terms will be discussed in the following section.

The terms Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding are central to Vygotskian socio-cultural perspectives (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). These two terms are interlinked as scaffolding is considered to take place through the ZPD (ibid, p. 13). Vygotsky (1978) suggests that most productive learning takes place in a particular domain, a metaphorical location or site (Lightbown & Spada, 2004). Vygotsky (1978) terms this domain as the 'Zone of Proximal Development' which is, as perceived by Mitchell & Myles (2004) 'the domain of knowledge and skill where the learner is not yet capable of independent functioning but can achieve the desired outcome by receiving relevant scaffolding (p. 196). I will elaborate the concepts of ZPD and Scaffolding in the following sections.

**3.9.2 Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD):**

Vygotsky (1978) introduced the construct of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). He stated it is:

> *The difference between the child's developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p.85).*

To understand the above quote, consider a student who has achieved a certain skill. He attempts to perform a task to learn the next or proximal skill but fails doing so while attempting on his own. Then, a more skilled person such as teacher, peer or a

fellow student, who already has learnt to do this task, assists him and demonstrates how to perform that task by highlighting a step-by-step procedure. Ultimately, the learner understands the process and internalises it after some practice. This is how the concept of the zone of proximal development assists teachers to identify the current level of students' learning and guides them to extend their support to the learner to achieve the next proximal level of learning. Vygotsky (1978) explains further:

> *The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in embryonic state (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).*

In this quotation, Vygotsky (1978) identifies the functions which the learner has not yet learnt to perform, however, they are next in line to be learnt by the learner as a result of support by his teacher or by someone who has already learnt this function ('more knowledgeable other'). After developing a deeper understanding of the task as a result of the teacher's scaffolding, the learner would be able to perform this task unaided in future (Mitchell & Myle, 2004, p.196; Mercer & Littleton, 2007, p.12). Zone of Proximal Development has been shown in figure (3.3)
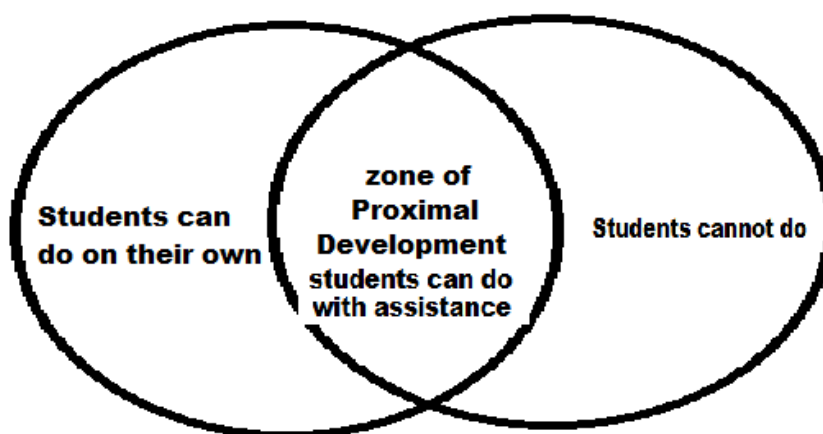


**Fig. 3.5 Zone of proximal development**

Figure. 3.3 shows three categories of the learner's ability to perform different tasks. First, the tasks which a learner can perform on his own; the last category comprises tasks which are too difficult for learners to perform. However, the area in the middle of the figure indicates tasks that a learner cannot perform on his own which, however, may be

completed with the assistance of teachers. These tasks are in the area which is next to the learner's current stage of learning. Vygotsky (1978) considers that identifying ZPD is a crucial step for teacher so that while planning the teaching tasks, the teacher may consider students' ZPD to link his instruction with the appropriate level of child's development because chances of learning are maximised here (Daniel, 2005 p.285). Mitchell & Myles (2004) argued that socio-cultural theory may be applied in second language learning. Children's collaborative activities at an early age support their early language acquisition where they learn to use language as a tool for meaning construction. Similarly, in the case of second language learning, collaborative talk with comparatively more fluent speakers may provide chances for the second language learners to create more tools to construct meaning (p.200). As Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory is viewed from both social and psychological perspectives, Lightbown and Spada (2006) argue that some people compare the zone of proximal development with Krashen's '$i$+1' (discussed earlier in this chapter). However, researchers (Dunn & Lantolf, 1998 and Kinginger, 2001) distinguish both by arguing that Krashen's 'input' comes from outside. These researchers believe that Krashen's input hypothesis considers that teacher feed input and as a result, students receive this input to achieve 'i+1' level. On the contrary, the zone of proximal development is a metaphorical location in which learner learns as a result of interaction not the input. Mitchell & Myles (2004) argue that the 'zone of proximal development links the processes of instruction, organized learning and naturalistic development or acquisition in a single site' (p. 200). Thus, ZPD assumes that collaboration provides essential opportunities for the learner to construct jointly the knowledge of second language in the formal setting of a classroom. This study was undertaken with a special focus on Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory. The idea of ZPD may inform language teachers in Pakistan to locate students' zone of proximal development and plan their instruction accordingly. They need to have a clear understanding of the purpose behind students' grouping for language learning and practice.

### 3.9.3 Scaffolding:

Raymond (2000) argues that in a socio-cultural perspective, learning occurs when a learner interacts with a person who has greater knowledge of the skill being taught to the learner. This person offers 'scaffolds' or supporting structures of language or actions for the learner which he copies to achieve a subsequent level of learning (p. 176). Similarly, Stuyf (2002)

argues that a learner learns when he comes into contact with 'more knowledgeable others (MKO)'. The MKO is not necessarily a teacher, it may include parents and fellow students who may assist the learner to achieve what he is unable to achieve on his own. Thus, scaffolding is, as Mercer and Littleton (2007) conclude, the support that a teacher or a more capable peer offers to the learner in their progress, within his zone of proximal development (p.13). Stuyf (2002) adds that scaffolding may include model reading, cues, prompts, questions and partial solutions which push the learner to continue learning through the scaffolding provided by teacher, peer, or classmate (p.2). In the classroom context, a teacher, sometimes, presents a model behaviour and instructions for the child which the child understands and internalizes (Stuyf, 2002; Mercer and Littleton, 2007). To explain scaffolding, Mitchell & Myles (2004) argue that adults are mature and skilled individuals who may perform different tasks independently, however, young children are unskilled individuals and would need support from their teachers and peers. When the teacher offers his support to the learner through collaborative talk, to show how to do things, the learner eventually learns from his teacher. The process of supportive dialogue between a teacher and a learner is thus termed 'Scaffolding' (p.195). According to Vygotsky (1978), this type of social interaction involves co-operative or collaborative dialogue which promotes cognitive development. However, researchers (Stuyf, 2002; Mercer & Littleton, 2007) view scaffolding as a temporary phenomenon which lasts until a learner achieves a new level of understanding. As the learner is able to perform the task on his own, scaffolding is withdrawn. Thus, the purpose of scaffolding is to develop a learner as an independent and self-regulating performer in learning tasks (Stuyp, 2002, p.2). According to Wood et al. (1976 as cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004), scaffolding performs various functions while performing a task such as:

- It increases the level of interest among learners.
- It simplifies the task for the learner to understand.
- It controls the learner's frustration during the pursuit of learning goals (ibid, p. 197).

Thus, scaffolding is viewed as a crucial concept in socio-cultural theory which 'captures the forms of teacher's guidance to support learners in their progress' (Mercer & Littleton, 2007, p.13).

**3.10 Mercer's 'Thinking Together' Approach: Language as a tool for learning**

For the last couple of decades, Neil Mercer and colleagues have worked on a new approach to use language for development of thinking that they call *Thinking Together*. The idea of 'Thinking Together' is based on socio-cultural theory in which language is viewed as a 'prime cultural and psychological tool' (Mercer & Littleton, 2007, p. 61). Mercer & Littleton (2007) are interested to explore the dialogue that takes place in the classroom and its impact on students' learning because they consider that language is the teacher's main pedagogical tool and that the dialogue between students and teacher has a crucial role to play in students' second language learning. They argue that a large number of second language learners do not know how to use language in a collaborative setting because they have not been taught to do it, neither is the dialogic experience part of their learning experience (p. 3). The Thinking Together project was designed to assist teaching and learning of language (first or second language) in which students were taught to use language effectively while working in groups. In the 'thinking together' approach, the teacher is given a special place and viewed as 'a guide and model for language use who fosters an inclusive climate for discussions' (p.61). Teachers in this project, by initiating discussions, taught students how to use language and to involve students in language use (ibid). Findings of this project suggested, as Littleton et al. (2005) reported, that when teachers work to develop a student's ability to use language as a tool for reasoning in small groups, it may result in students' increased ability in problem solving and educational achievements (p.74-75). Thus, the 'thinking together' approach utilised language as a tool in the social context of a classroom where students worked with teachers in small groups and 'talked to learn and learned to talk' (Littleton et al., 2005). This study considers Pakistani teachers' perceptions of talk as a tool to learn and practice English. Teachers' perceptions of group work which makes use of talk to produce second language, was a central focus of the study.

Until now, the review of literature in this chapter offers various perspectives on important aspects of second language learning. However, any research or theory may not claim which way is most effectively applicable in the second language classroom where instructed language learning takes place (Ellis, 2005). Thus, it will be unwise to support a single perspective on language learning. However, Ellis (2005) considers that formulation of some generalized rules is necessary to provide guidance for teachers of second language

learning. The following section will discuss Ellis's principles of instructed language learning.

## 3.11 Rod Ellis's Principles of instructed language learning:

Rod Ellis is a renowned linguist who presented his ten principles of instructed language in 2005 in which we may find the essence of the main theoretical concepts which assist second language learning elaborated in this review of literature. According to these principles instruction needs to ensure;

- that the learner develops a range of formulaic expression and rule-based competence.

This principle suggests that teacher should provide knowledge of a second language in the form of formulaic expression as well as rule-based competence to attain proficiency in second language. The idea behind this principle, as Ellis (1984; 2002) suggests, is that just as native speakers use formulaic expressions, second language learners may also take the same route to acquire proficiency in second language. Similarly, the use of formulaic expression in grammar teaching, may also lead to rule-based competence.

- that the learner's main focus is on the meaning

According to Ellis (2005), there are two types of meaning, i.e. semantic and pragmatic. Semantic meaning refers to verbal understanding whereas pragmatic meaning is related with contextualized understanding of a term. Ellis considers that both kinds of meaning are necessary for the learner to acquire while learning a second language.

- that the learner also focuses on form.

This principle suggests that learner focus on form is highly important in second language acquisition, as Schmidt (1994 cited in Ellis, 2005) argues that a conscious attention to learning the structure of the language is essential for second language learning.

- that it (instruction) is directed at developing implicit knowledge of L2 while not neglecting explicit knowledge.

This principle suggests that one of the targets of second language instruction should be the provision of both, explicit and implicit knowledge of second language. Ellis considers that implicit knowledge is the underlying knowledge which causes fluent production of language. However, implicit knowledge arises from explicit knowledge. Thus, both kinds of knowledge are important for the learner in second language learning.

- that learner's built-in syllabus is not ignored

As described earlier in this chapter, innatists assume that learners possess a 'natural order' (see section in this chapter on Universal Grammar) of language acquisition. Ellis considers that teachers of second language need to make use of the learner's natural order for his second language learning.

Ellis considers that there are certain conditions which are crucial for a successful learning of second language. These conditions are summarized in the following section:

- an extensive L2 input

We have already discussed the role of comprehensible input in Krashen's Monitor model. Ellis (2005) considers input as an essential element in second language learning. This input may be in the form of extensive use of second language in classroom or in creating opportunities for second language use outside the classroom.

- opportunities for output

Along with extensive second language input, many researchers (Lantolf, 2000; Swain, 1995) consider that the learner's output also plays a crucial role in learning of second language. According to Swain (1995), at the time of production of second language, the teacher provides feedback and identifies the areas to focus his teaching. In the light of teacher's feedback, the learner has a chance to correct and produce language which is improved in structure.

- interaction as a central focus to develop L2 proficiency

Like interactionists, Ellis (2005) considers that interaction is an essential part of second language learning to achieve proficiency. As explained in the section on the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), interactionists believe that learning of second language occurs when learners are engaged in groups and negotiate to find an agreement on meaning.

However, Ellis also considers that interaction supports the learner to access new sources of second language opportunities.

- to take account of individual differences among learners

According to Ellis (2005), second language learning would be more successful when instruction matches with the student's aptitude and when they are motivated. This principle suggests that teachers should take into account individual differences of second language learners. However, in any classroom, learners have different aptitudes and different learning styles which implies that it is hard for the teacher to apply teaching strategies that may cater for all kinds of students. Ellis suggests that teacher may adopt 'a flexible teaching approach involving a variety of learning activity' (1995:220). Studies on students' motivation (see Gardner, 1985; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; Dörnyei, 2009) suggest that a flexible teaching approach maintains the motivation level of students in the classroom.

- to assess the learner's free as well as controlled production

Ellis (2005) argues that assessment tells the teacher how well a learner has learnt. So, he suggests that teachers should adopt a way of assessment which may bring into account all aspects of their learning. Thus, learners should be assessed in the classroom as well as outside the classroom.

Ellis (2005) admits that these principles may not be considered as a final set of general rules of learning instructed language, however, they provide guidelines for further development and refinement of principles that may articulate the relationship between language learning and acquisition. He suggests that these general principles guide language teachers to consider aspects that are theoretically important for instructed language teaching. Ellis's emphasis on the formulation of general rules is supported by Knight (2002) who says that theory and generalisation need to be considered significant because they guide the practice in the classroom (p. 230).

It appears that Ellis adopted a pragmatic approach in suggesting these principles which advocate that teachers need to adopt a way of teaching which occurs as a result of an inclusive professional model in which elements of teaching and learning such as a teacher's professional development, classroom context, curriculum development and evaluation work together (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2010). These principles also echo Stenhouse's (1975) model of professional development which, with a special focus on

curriculum development, discusses issues regarding the 'contextualised nature of teaching' (Forde, 2015 p.117).

Stenhouse (1975) asserts that when events, such as curriculum development, take place externally, they may create a mismatch between needs and provisions in the classroom (Knight, 2002 p. 230). Thus, the inclusion of opinions of teachers, students and parents during any process of curriculum change needs to be considered. A strong link may be established here with this study. Literature on primary education in Pakistan (Akhtar, 2013) suggests that primary teachers in Pakistan seem to work in isolation where they have no role in decision making such as curriculum development. I consider that lack of teachers' feedback in decision making may be considered a crucial factor which may have serious implications on teaching practices. In addition, Stenhouse (1975) views teachers' continuous professional development as a crucial factor to ensure effectiveness in any proposed educational change (p. 83). Knight (2002) argues that initial professional programs may not provide practical knowledge to novice teachers. In chapter 2, I discussed opinions of researchers (Westbrook et al., 2009) who believe that teacher training programs are predominantly theoretical with limited practical elements in them in Pakistan. The continuous professional development programs, however, may provide guidelines for teachers on real classroom problems which they face on daily basis. Thus, teachers' continuous professional programs need to continue for the pragmatic approach to teaching and learning proposed by Ellis (2005). Participants in this study and available literature (Westbrook et al., 2009) reiterated that teacher training programs in Pakistan offer little for the teachers to translate their training into their teaching practice.

A brief theoretical background has been presented that inspired me to conduct this research. My point of view is fundamentally inspired by Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory which promotes education through interaction in the classroom. I agree with Mercer & Littleton, (2007) who consider that education needs to be seen as a social phenomenon in which learners act as social actors (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). Moreover, I believe that the theories discussed above offer a lot that may be utilized by researchers to explore the field of second language learning, by teachers to make their teaching more effective and students' learning of English more productive. In the light of discussion presented above, I assume that the introduction of activity-based teaching methodologies such as collaborative group work may offer an inclusive way of teaching English in primary classrooms of Punjab, in which learners are exposed to a range of activities. This would be helpful for students to find more opportunities for practicing all four language skills, i.e.

reading, writing, listening and speaking, and would support them to attain better grades in primary schools. Thus, this study explores teachers' perceptions on the potential of group work as a way of teaching English in primary classrooms of Punjab. In the light of the review of the literature presented above, I consider that three contexts are crucial to understand further the nature of second language learning classrooms. I have used the division of classrooms on the basis of various contexts as described in Lightbown & Spada (2006).

### 3.12 Classroom contexts of second language learning:

Lightbown & Spada (2006) argue that conditions in the language classroom vary from one case to another. There are numerous variables at work in classrooms such as physical environment, amount of time allocated for the lesson, motivation of students and so on which may affect a learner's ability to learn a second language. One variable may essentially be the guiding principle that teachers take into account while deciding their language teaching methods (p.112). This study sought to explore which context could be most closely identifiable with the socio-cultural perspective. This section will summarize three main types of settings and their characteristics which may guide practitioners to adopt various teaching practices in English language classrooms.

### 3.12.1 Natural Acquisition Setting (NAS)

Natural acquisition settings may include different contexts such as 'at work' where the target language is frequently used, or in social interaction where the learner interacts with speakers of the target language, or in a classroom where most if not all speakers are native speakers of a target language. In these contexts, the learner acquires a second language through a spontaneous exposure of the same. In a natural setting of the classroom, it is important to understand that the agents of instruction are generally native-speaker students or teachers who use the target language for communication and create opportunities for second language learners to learn. The characteristics of Natural acquisition setting are discussed below:

- In a natural setting, the main source of second language learning is through interaction with native or proficient speakers of the second language. In this interaction, the conversation takes place in a natural way introducing vocabulary and structure at random. The learner does not intend to learn any rule in particular but continues to internalize according to his capacity and receptiveness. Similarly, the learner in the natural setting does not follow a sequence in his learning. Any simple or difficult concept may be learnt at a time when the learner internalizes it easily.

- While talking to a new learner of a second language in natural settings or in a real-life experience, the native or proficient speakers tend to be polite with the learner, ignore his errors and emphasise getting meanings clearly. It implies that the stress in natural acquisition settings is on meaning rather than on form. The learner tends to achieve fluency and spontaneity and his errors are rarely corrected.

- The learner's interaction with the proficient speakers lasts for many hours during a day. He has enough time to practice language and a lot of opportunities for using the target language. In this way, he receives continuous input for many hours in a single day. Consider a child among his native class fellows who interacts with them all day in school and listens and produces second language on several occasions.

- In natural acquisition, the learner comes to know different expressions in a second language. He understands different types of language functions such as greeting, exchange of information, asking questions and replying to them etc.

This study was taken in a classroom context in which a natural setting for a second language learning is missing, and where the learner is not exposed to frequent use of the second language. Both students and teachers in public primary schools are Urdu speaking and despite English being used as an official language throughout the country, students have little chance of interacting with native speakers of English.

### 3.12.2 Structured-Based Instructional Settings (SBIS)

Structured-based instruction settings are characterized by teachers' control over classroom activities. This could be considered more typical of the primary classrooms in this study and in Pakistani state primary schools in general. In this type of instructional setting, the following aspects are important:

- Language items in SBIS are presented one by one, generally, following a progression from a simple to a complex concept to learn for the learners.

- Learners' errors are frequently corrected by the teacher which implies that accuracy is the priority rather than meaning while producing second language in SBIS. Due to continuous supervision by the teacher, learners may feel stress while producing second language in oral or written expression.

- In SBIS, learners' exposure to second language is limited to a few hours a week. Thus, they have limited opportunities for second language learning.

- In the majority of cases in SBIS such as Foreign Language learning, the teacher is the only proficient speaker available for the learners. Thus, due to shortage of time and a greater number of learners, learners have a limited contact with the teacher in direct conversation in the second language.

- In SBIS, students experience a limited range of language discourses. According to Lightbown & Spada (2006) the most typical discourse the learner experiences in SBIS is the Initiation/Response/Evaluation (IRE) participation framework (Sinclair, & Coulthard, (1975) where the teacher initiates a discussion by putting questions to which he knows the answer, learners respond to answer teacher's question and in the end, the teacher evaluates the response. This type of interaction offers a limited range of discourse types for the learners.

- The use of learner's first language restricts production of second language in SBIS. Both teachers and learners have difficulty in conveying and understanding a clear message in the second language for managing events in classrooms. That is why, a teacher has to modify his input by using the native language to ensure that the learners understand the teacher's instructions.

### 3.12.3 Communicative Instructional Setting (CIS)

Lightbown & Spada (2006) argue that while keeping in mind the potential of the process of natural acquisition of first language, designers of communicative instructional programs have replaced some characteristics of structure-based instruction with those, generally associated with the natural acquisition context. For example, in a communicative instructional setting, there may be less emphasis on grammatical form. The assumption in a communicative instructional setting is to offer as much of the natural environment as possible so the learners may acquire the second language in a way similar to that in which

children acquire their first language. Communicative instructional settings have the following characteristics:

- In communicative instructional settings, the emphasis is on meaning rather than form through communication between teacher and students and among students in groups or pairs. However, grammatical forms are only used where needed to clarify meaning. During the communicative instructional process, the teacher does not focus on error correction, rather, the learner is encouraged to think and say something in a different way.

- Modified input is the defining characteristic of communicative instruction settings. In the case of second language, the teacher communicates with the students in a language that is comprehensible for them. To make language comprehensible he modifies his language to make it simpler so students may understand it. Similarly, to encourage students to produce second language, input is made comprehensible not through structured categorizing but by using prompts, and gestures and students help each other by providing simplified input which, sometimes, may be flawed.

Similar to instruction in structure-based settings, students have a limited time to produce second language in communicative instruction settings. Here, the chances of producing second language depends on the number of students in a classroom. Lightbown & Spada (2006) argue that during sixty minutes of classroom time, the teacher may be the only proficient speaker. In teacher-student communication, a teacher would speak most of the time and students would produce second language only in response to the teacher's question. In addition, during student-student communication, the errors made by speakers would go unnoticed because the interlocutors have a similar level of language competence. However, in contrast with structure-based instruction, communicative instruction provides more opportunities for the students to use target language under little or no pressure. For example, in communicative instruction, various methods and materials such as stories, group work, newspapers and television broadcasts may play an effective part in introducing various discourse types among students. Similarly, students learn a variety of socio-cultural functions in 'role play' by using second language. In the following section, I will discuss teacher's role while conducting group work.

**3.13 Teacher's role in conducting Group work effectively:**

Keeping in mind various settings discussed above, it is important to understand what role a teacher could play while conducting group work. Group work pedagogy promotes teacher as a facilitator who facilitates students' working in groups and extends his support where students need it. However, Qaisar (2011) lists a number of functions, which teachers may perform in order to conduct a productive group work in classroom. He argues that teacher's actions such as questioning, managing groups, assisting them where they need, and summarize for them at the end of group work may be helpful to conduct group work which is productive for students learning of English language. Researchers (Gillies, 2004; Dekker and Elshout-Mohr, 2004) argue that direct help of the teacher during group work may pose a negative impact on the process of group work. These researchers suggest that during a group work activity, teachers need to extend support for group work processes rather than for content-related solutions. It means that if students are not able to find a solution in the given task, teachers need to suggest alternative ways to think and find solution rather than telling them the straight answers. Johnson & Johnson (1991) describe the teacher in collaborative classroom as one who is more capable and who intervenes to guide students and ensure that students are on the right direction to achieve their lesson objectives. However, Harwood (1995) and Qaisar (2011) observed that the teacher's presence may not be ignored completely in the classroom. They indicate that the teacher's presence ensures effective working of groups because students respond more responsibly in teacher's presence, and they pay more attention to the task. Harwood (1995) also argues that students' discussion is more relevant to the task in the teacher's presence. On the other hand, students' responses, as Harwood (1995) observed, were found to be off-task and distracted in the teacher's absence.

After conducting this study, I feel that in addition to the functions stated above, teachers in primary schools of Pakistan would need to see themselves as learners because activity-based teaching methodology such as group work would be a new methodology for many of them. I believe that they need to come in classroom with a receptive mind to expect new situations and planning on daily basis while conducting group work. Thus, teachers would need to see themselves as learners.

The SPRinG project (Blatchford et al., 2003) signifies a crucial piece of research which involved successful implementation of group work as a way of teaching English Language, Mathematics, and Science. This project offers inspiration for other researchers to explore the potential of group work in contexts other than England and Scotland. While we may

not assume that a similar kind of intervention would work in Pakistani context, this project informs researchers of the necessary steps that would be essential to take to introduce group work elsewhere. An analytical review of SPRinG Project informs us that group work may be a challenging methodology without preparation (Blatchford et al., 2003). Keeping in mind the context in which this study was conducted, I consider that there is a need of cultural shift in primary schools to promote activity-based teaching such as group work which would require more dialogue and sharing in classrooms. In particular, teachers would need trainings which enable them to see classroom as a unit where students as well as teachers believe in sharing and dialogue to ensure effective learning.

### 3.14 Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter offered a review of the relevant literature in which I have elaborated group work, differentiating between collaborative and cooperative learning. I offered an example of the kind of lesson which might incorporate elements of group work in the English classroom and discussed the potential of different approaches to group work which might be successful in the context of the study. Then, I reviewed literature on Grammar Teaching Method (GTM), Krashen's Monitor Model, and Socio-cultural Theory of Language Learning. Various perspectives on second language acquisition and learning inform us that language learning is a complex phenomenon which needs to be seen from different perspectives. I have discussed approaches adopted by prominent researchers in the field of language learning such as Mercer's 'Thinking Together' approach and Ellis's ten principles of instructed languages. Ellis suggested that practitioners need to take all perspectives of second language learning into account to provide valuable input to the learners which is comprehensible for them. Nonetheless, group work may offer a radical shift for teachers and it is interesting to note that, for example, the SPRinG project, which was very successful, invested a great deal of time and effort working with the teachers before and during the intervention. It is clear that there is a need for a cultural shift which requires more dialogue and sharing in classrooms. It is also clear that teachers need time to reflect and discuss with their own peers to make sense of what is for them a radical shift to their previous practice. Time could be said to be the greatest resource necessary to allow teachers to meet and discuss their challenges and share their success stories. I conclude the chapter by reiterating that a socio-cultural perspective on second language learning offers a more practical explanation to view social interaction as a source of second language learning and that teachers have a different role to play.

**Chapter Four: Methodology**

**4.1 Introduction:**

This study aimed to investigate participants' perceptions of group work as a way of teaching English in selected public sector primary schools of Punjab. In this chapter, a description of the methodology will be presented along with justifications for the choices made throughout the research process. The introduction section in this chapter is followed by a description of the aims of the study, research questions and explanation of the research paradigm employed in this study. This chapter then moves on and outlines research methodology which explains the mixed method design chosen for the study and elaborates why mixed methods were applicable in this study and how the research tools, i.e. questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were developed and administered to collect data. After providing information on instrumentation, the study site and participants, this chapter explains how the questionnaires and interviews were conducted with the target participants and how difficulties and considerations related to the research procedures were addressed. Finally, this chapter explains the method of data analysis adopted in this study and discusses how ethical issues were addressed. I will also be explaining some of the choices that I made in the light of the data collected, which led me to change the focus of this study to what the teachers were telling me about their context, rather than the group work focus.

This study took a mixed method approach of data collection, using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as tools for data collection. The questionnaires comprised questions which assisted me to know participants' current classroom layout in which they teach and their current teaching practices. I wanted to know if the participants' considered whether the existing layout of their primary classrooms would be suitable to conduct group work. The questionnaires also assisted me to explore participants' perceptions on possible ways to change their existing classroom layout and teaching practice in order to facilitate activity-based teaching such as through group work. The last part of the questionnaire was designed to explore participants' understanding of group work. These questions explored various aspects of conducting group work in a primary classroom. In the light of the questionnaire responses, I understood that participants did not supply sufficient answers to reveal their understanding of group work. That is why, semi-structured interviews were

added to explore the questionnaire responses and to further investigate participants' perceptions of group work as a way of teaching English in primary schools of Punjab which, at that point, was the main focus of this study.

**4.2 Aims of the study:**

This study aimed to:

- investigate participants' perceptions of group work as a way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab.
- understand teachers' perceptions of physical conditions and teaching practice in public sector primary classrooms of Punjab.
- identify benefits and drawbacks of teaching English by using group work as perceived by the participants.
- identify challenges perceived by the participants that may impede the practice of group work for teaching English in primary schools of Punjab.

**4.3 Research questions:**

This study was conducted to find answers to the following questions:

1. How do participants perceive group work as a way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab?
2. What do participants see as the possible benefits and drawbacks of using group work as a way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab?
3. What are the challenges that impede the implementation of group work as a way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab?

As noted earlier, although the three questions above were the main focus of the research, during the analysis an important theme arose related to the teachers' self-perceptions of their professional roles. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

## 4.4 Qualitative research:

Although the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was dominated by quantitative research in natural and social sciences, more recently, qualitative methods have been widely used in the social sciences (Dörnyei, 2007: 36). The value of qualitative research was realised in the field of applied linguistics in the mid-1990s when researchers started to recognize that qualitative research may be a useful way of understanding the complex nature of language learning and acquisition. Major aspects of language learning and its uses are influenced by social and cultural factors which may only be explained by understanding the phenomenon deeply, and interpreting it beyond numbers (ibid: 36).

A high volume of research currently taking place in social science is qualitative (Dörnyei, 2007: 24). It is difficult to define precisely what qualitative research means because as Denzin & Lincoln (2002) concluded, qualitative research is not based on any theory or any paradigm of its own, nor does it consist of any distinct set of methods or practices. That is why qualitative research is different for different researchers (p. 6-10)

Similarly, Silverman (2000) concluded that 'there is no agreed doctrine underlying all qualitative social research' (p.14). Research students choose qualitative research methods because they find these 'appropriate' for their research. 'Qualitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended non-numerical data which is then analysed primarily by non-statistical methods. For example: interview research, with the transcribed recordings analysed by qualitative content analysis (Dörnyei, 2007: 24)'. Researchers who are interested in 'how' questions and not in 'how many' questions are most likely to use qualitative research methods because these questions would require deeper understanding of research issues (Silverman, 2000).

However, the above does not mean that qualitative research has no theoretical backing. Glaser and Strauss, (1967 as cited in Dörnyei, 2007: 36) state that early qualitative research was criticised as being 'non-systematic and non-rigorous' which consisted of 'lengthy and detailed descriptions', which may not be the case anymore as researchers in social sciences have used qualitative research in a systematic way. Glaser and Strauss (1967) were interested in 'systemization of the collection, coding and analysis of qualitative data for the generation of theory'. Thus, their book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for*

*Qualitative Research* provided explanation and theoretical backing for qualitative research (ibid: 36, 259).

From the available literature (Ahmed, 2012; Akhtar, 2013) and from my experience as a teacher-educator in a private sector educational institution in Pakistan, I have learnt that most research conducted in teacher education, particularly pedagogy and practice has been carried out using quantitative methods such as surveys and statistical analysis of quantitative data. Accordingly, use of the qualitative approaches such as interview, focus groups and observations are rarely found in the available literature in Pakistan. Therefore, this study contributes to research on pedagogy in Pakistan, because it has used the qualitative approaches (open questions in the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews) to explore the perceptions of teachers on group work methodology. I consider that a qualitative approach in this study is crucial, not only because it would be among the few qualitative studies on English teaching in Pakistan, it would also provide a more flexible way of interpreting primary teachers' responses to unfold various aspects linked with the main focus of this study. The next section will explain the instrumentation used in this study.

## 4.5 Questionnaires:

Brown (2001, p.6) defined a questionnaire as 'any written instrument that requires respondents to react to a series of questions or statements either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers'. Since scientific research tries to find answers to research questions in a systematic way (Dörnyei, 2003: p.3), questionnaires have become an 'an important instrument of research, a tool for data collection' in social sciences (Oppenheim, 1996). A questionnaire consists of a set of questions arranged in a certain order and constructed according to specially selected rules or 'questionnaire specifications'. Questionnaire specifications are formulated in line with the statement of the issue under investigation and from the research design that has been adopted (ibid: p.100).

Initially in this study, questionnaires were used to seek participants' views on;

1.  Layout of the primary classroom in Punjab and possible ways to change it.

2. Classroom practice regarding their current teaching of English and possible ways to change it.

3. Understanding of group work
   i. How participants consider various aspects regarding group work.
   ii. How participants consider group work as a way of teaching English

Different kinds of questionnaires are used in research. Researchers may select a pencil and paper questionnaire, a telephone interview, face to face, a postal questionnaire, or online and e-mail questionnaires (Cohen et al., 2011). Selection of the method of questionnaire depends on its feasibility for the study. The researcher prefers those methods which are feasible for the study in terms of time and cost and which are easy for the participants to understand and complete (Akhtar, 2013). In my study, the data had to be collected from Pakistan, and issues of time and budgeting were the main concerns of the researcher. Thus, the study used a pencil and paper questionnaire because pencil and paper questionnaires were economical and required less time to complete than other techniques of data collection. In addition, I assumed that respondents were used to filling in questionnaires as part of their routine work which includes students' attendance sheets and other forms used in teacher training courses.

I considered advantages of questionnaires in line with the explanation by Cohen et al. (2011) and Dörnyei (2003). For example, Dörnyei (2003) stated that questionnaires are popular among researchers due to their unmatched efficiency in terms of time, effort and financial resources. Similarly, the selection of a questionnaire proved beneficial in this study in line with Cohen et al.'s (2011) explanation in the following manner; (1) the same questionnaire was used for all participants, (2) it was easy to maintain anonymity of the participants during data collection and analysis, (3) administration of the questionnaires was easy and economical, (4) questions were refined repeatedly to obtain precise results, and (5) the questionnaire was purposefully selected after considering its adaptability and flexibility to analyse data (Cohen et al., 2011).

Questionnaires may give three types of data about respondents (Cohen et al., 2011; Dörnyei, 2003; Creswell, 2008; Akhtar, 2013), which are:

(1) Factual data: factual questions are used to find out about demographic characteristics in the research; for example, age and gender of participants, and their socioeconomic status,

level of education or any information relevant and useful to interpret the findings of the study.

(2) Behavioural data: behavioural questions are used to find out about respondents' practice at present and the past. These questions seek information on participants' actions, experiences, lifestyles, and habits.

(3) Attitudinal data: these questions are used to find out what people think. This is a broad category that concerns attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests and values. (Dörnyei, 2003 p.8).

The questionnaires used in this study exploited elements from all three categories mentioned above. For example, at the beginning of the questionnaires, the participants were asked about the level of class they taught and the number of students in their classes (Factual information). Then, participants were asked how they were teaching English, whether they had used group work and whether they might want to change their practice of teaching English. The questionnaires used in this study had thirteen questions in total which were focussed to investigate physical conditions in the current primary classroom, teaching practice and teachers' explanation of how they might change the way the settings and teaching practice were organised. These questions provided information about the existing conditions of the primary classroom and practice of group work in participants' classrooms. At the end, question fourteen asked the participants to comment on the perceived potential of group work as a way of teaching English in primary schools of Punjab.

In this study, I used semi-structured questionnaires in which both closed and open-ended questions were included. Closed questions propose the range of responses from which the respondent may choose. On the other hand, open-ended questions allow the respondent to expand their answer as much as they want (Cohen et al., 2011, p.382). There were six closed questions in which participants' restricted responses were required. The major advantage of closed questions is that their coding is straightforward and time saving in the analysis process (Cohen et al., 2011; Dörnyei, 2003). However, the questionnaires mainly included behavioural and attitudinal questions to explore participants' perception of group work. As questionnaires are known to be versatile because they may be used in a variety of situations (Dörnyei, 2003, p.10), this study explored perceptions of participants from eight public primary schools of District Jhang. The versatile nature of questions used in the

questionnaires helped me to explore participants' perceptions of group work on the following aspects.

- How they perceived working conditions in primary classrooms of Punjab.
- What resources and facilities their classrooms had.
- Whether participants might want their classroom layout to be changed.
- How participants were teaching English.
- Whether and how participants might want to change their methodology of teaching English.
- Whether they had used group work while teaching English.
- How they might form groups of students if group work was to be used in the primary English classroom.
- How they perceived group work as a way of teaching English.

The questionnaires provided a picture of existing classroom layout and English teaching practice in selected primary schools of Punjab. In addition, it also provided information on participants' understanding of group work. Since the participants completed the questionnaires in private, they were allowed to take as much time as they wanted. The absence of the researcher as Cohen et al. (2011) suggest, may help the participants to avoid any perceived potential threat of the researcher's presence which may affect participants' responses. However, in the researcher's absence, participants may provide insufficient or contradictory answers (ibid: p. 404). Thus, with all the virtues of questionnaires as a research tool, there are certain disadvantages of using this technique in any research project (Cohen et al. 2011; Dörnyei, 2003, p.10).

In this research study it became clear that the responses of the teachers to the questionnaires revealed an understanding of group work processes which was vague, undefined and in most cases, contradictory. Hopkins et al., (2002) pointed out that human mechanisms 'cushion failure, minimize faults and maximize virtues so that we maintain a sense of personal worth' (p.312). Since the questionnaire asked some questions which were related to their own practice, the chances of participants' bias may not be ignored. Moreover, the human tendency to overgeneralize may be evident in questionnaire responses. These disadvantages may result in unreliable data and discrepancies (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 13). I had anticipated similar difficulties as the responses of the questionnaires were found to be straightforward but insufficient to explore participants' perception on group work in any depth. The questionnaire data also showed discrepancies which gave

rise to further questions on participants' perceptions of group work. These discrepancies needed to be further explored and confirmed. In the light of responses received in the questionnaires, it was necessary to investigate more deeply participants' perceptions of group work. For this purpose, the semi-structured interviews were developed to provide a deeper insight into participants' understanding of group work as a way of teaching English in the primary classroom.

## 4.6 Interviews:

The purpose of using semi-structured interviews in this study was to follow up on questionnaire responses to further investigate teachers' perceptions on group work and to clarify some of the contradictions that had appeared in the questionnaire data. The interviews investigated participants' perceptions on the following aspects:

1. Group work as a possible way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab.
2. Benefits and/or drawbacks of group work while teaching English in primary schools.
3. Factors that may impede implementation of group work as a way of teaching English in primary schools.

Researchers (Taylor, 2005; Kallio et al., 2016) agree that interviews are the most commonly used research tool for data collection. Cohen et al. (2011) describe the interview as a form of conversation 'between two or among more than two people on a topic of mutual interest' which 'sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data' (p.408). Similarly, Dörnyei, (2007) describes the interview as a 'one-to-one' formal conversation that has a purpose 'to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomenon' (p.134). Researchers in social sciences investigate human experiences through interviews in which they try to understand the world from participants' points of view to unfold the meaning of their experiences. The interviews allow a close and personal interaction between the researcher and participants which enables participants to share their life situations in their own words with the interviewer. The interview technique is widely used in qualitative research and generates data through conversations among individuals. However, this type of conversation is purposefully

constructed and is often more question-based rather than a 'naturally occurring situation' that an ordinary conversation (Cohen et al., 2011). Data gathering, that is, knowledge production through human interaction is central to the interview conversation in which the role of the interviewer is crucial. The researcher drives the process of interviewing to achieve his goals and is able to prompt interviewees or stop them as he feels that the objective of the conversation has been achieved (ibid: 409). Thus, the process of data gathering through interviews revolves around the interviewer. Dörnyei (2007) considers that the use of semi-structured interviews may be more productive if the researcher is objective in his approach and has a good background knowledge of the domain in question (p. 135). Depending on the nature of question types used in them, interviews may be divided into structured, unstructured or semi-structured formats. In the following paragraph, I have elaborated differences among these types along with the reasons I decided to use semi-structured interviews in this study.

Dörnyei (2007) considers that semi-structured interviews are a 'compromise between two extremes structured and unstructured' (p. 136). Semi-structured interviews are considered as an easy way of data collection (Wengraf, 2001) and they are more flexible in their form than structured interviews and may be used to focus and elaborate key points of interest (Sachan et al., 2012). The interviewer provides guidance and direction before conducting interviews, however, the format of the interview is open-ended and the participant is asked to elaborate what he thinks. From my understanding of semi-structured interviews, I believed that they might offer a certain degree of freedom for both researcher and the respondent. As Sachan et al. (2012) suggest, this type allows the respondent to expand his response and the researcher to intervene and explore the given situation in depth. However, a good researcher who is conducting interviews would always focus on the purpose of the interviews.

In discussing interviews, Cohen et al. (2011) agree with Dörnyei (2007) that while conducting the interviews, the interviewer's role is central. He is responsible to understand the dynamics of the situation and maintain a comfortable rapport with the interviewee (p.422). In online Oxford dictionaries (en.oxforddictionaries.com, 2018), *rapport* is defined as 'a close and harmonious relationship in which the people or groups concerned understand each other's feelings or ideas and communicate well' (Retrieved from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rapport). Rapport is the means of establishing a safe and comfortable environment which involves trust and respect for the interviewee and the information he shares with the researcher. A good rapport enables the researcher to

explore the interviewee's personal experiences and attitudes as they actually occur, to understand the meaning of human experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Kvale (1996) suggests that the interview is not a reciprocal interaction between the researcher and the interviewee. It is researcher's responsibility to keep the interview moving forward. He is responsible to understand how to maintain and boost interviewee's motivation level to keep discussion going until he achieves his objectives from the discussion (p.126). In this study, my focus was on the possibility of conducting group work in the public sector primary classroom and I endeavoured during the interviews to keep the participants' focused on this area of practice. However, as explained in the reflective section at the beginning of this thesis, a strong theme of perceived teacher identity emerged which could not be ignored. The interview process therefore, while guided by the interviewer, also had to take into account what the teachers were telling me about their perceptions of their roles and autonomy.

## 4.7 Study site

This study was conducted in District Jhang of Punjab province. This district was selected for two reasons. Firstly, access to the participants is a key factor in research (Cohen et al, 2011: 152). District Jhang is my native city and access to public sector primary schools was therefore relatively easy for me for data collection. Secondly, District Jhang was selected for its suitability in this study. Andrabi et al. (2002; 2007) argue that the emergence of private schools in Pakistan is a significant phenomenon that is mainly evident in the urban areas of the country. Punjab province is mainly divided into central and southern Punjab. Central Punjab is a comparatively developed area including the industrial city of Faisalabad and the capital of the Punjab province, Lahore, where the literacy rate is relatively high due to the presence of private schools (Rehman et al., 2015). In relatively developed areas with a large number of students attending private sector primary schools, activity-based methodology of teaching English is part of teaching practice (Andrabi, 2002). However, southern Punjab, in which District Jhang is situated is mainly considered a backward area with limited facilities of schooling (Sathar & Kazi, 2000).

This study was conducted in District Jhang which is a mainly rural area and where educational progress has been judged very slow in reports on education in Punjab. This

district is ranked 23rd out of 34 districts of Punjab in terms of literacy rates (ASER Pakistan 2008). According to ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) 2008, 95% of school going children are enrolled in government schools, 3.3% in private schools and 1.7% are enrolled in Madaris (institutions with religious education only). These figures show that most of the children who manage to attend any school, go to government schools. However, the dropout rates in primary schools in Punjab is very high due to low quality education and lack of basic facilities in primary schools (Laghari et al, 2013). Keeping in mind the factor of low quality education in public sector primary schools, I wondered after I had read studies on group work that the quality of education in primary schools may be improved by increasing the quality of teaching. I chose to explore the potential of group work as a way of teaching English in primary schools of Punjab because activity-based teaching methodologies such as group work have been reported to enhance the quality of classroom teaching and consequently, learning (Qaisar, 2011; Blatchford et al., 2003; Bains et al., 2007). The subject of English was chosen because the government of Punjab converted all primary schools to English medium in 2010 (Butt, 2010), however, primary teachers may not be fully prepared to adopt English as a medium of instruction. Therefore, this study was conducted to know primary teachers' perceptions of activity-based methodologies of teaching such as group work and highlight any issues that may impede the implementation of group work in the primary English classroom.

## 4.8 Participants:

One of the most important factors in research is to define population and select the sample on which the proposed study will focus (Qaisar, 2011). Sampling is 'a crucial element of research' which, along with a sound methodology and appropriate instruments, defines the quality of a piece of research (Cohen et al., 2011:143). Dörnyei (2007) suggests that qualitative research is different from quantitative research in its approach to participant sampling. Unlike a quantitative approach which requires a large sample to be able to disregard idiosyncratic individual differences in the data, qualitative research focuses on 'describing, understanding and clarifying a human experience rather than determining the most likely or mean experience with a group' (p. 126). Therefore, in qualitative research, the sample is selected purposefully and consists of individuals who can provide rich details on the topic under investigation. The qualitative researchers achieve this goal by choosing individuals through 'purposeful' or 'purposive' sampling.

The sample used to collect data in this study was selected from public sector primary schools of District Jhang. The District Education Officer (DEO) was contacted and asked for permission to conduct this study. However, the DEO informed me that they already had divided schools into clusters for administrative purposes and each cluster is looked after by a Cluster in-Charge. 'Cluster in-Charge' is not an official job title, rather it is a complementary title given to one of the Head Masters who is well connected with schools in a cluster and plays his role to connect primary schools with the office of the DEO. The DEO informed me that I may only access schools from cluster A. So, I met with the Cluster in-Charge of cluster A and selected 8 schools at random from cluster A. During the process of official approval and data collection, two primary teachers who were previous colleagues, assisted me as contact persons in approaching schools and participants.

After the selection of schools, I hoped to ask 50 primary school teachers from these selected schools to complete the questionnaires and invite them to participate in this study. I went to 8 schools in total and met with 38 teachers. However, only 32 teachers gave positive responses and I delivered consent forms to them. My expectation was that I would be able to receive at least 30 consent forms back but only 26 teachers returned the consent forms. I explained the purpose of the study and asked them to fill in the questionnaires.

My plan was then to give questionnaires to the 26 teachers and conduct interviews with as many participants as agreed to participate in the follow up interviews, in order to gain as much insight into the teachers views as possible. The account of the way I collected data through questionnaires is detailed below.

**4.9 Procedure of Data collection:**

**4.9.1 Account of the administration of the questionnaires:**

This study used a pencil and paper questionnaire due to its feasibility for the study. I learnt from my experience as a teacher trainer and as a researcher that 'paper-pencil' method may be the most suitable method in the context of this study because the majority of research work in Pakistan used this type due to its appropriateness in the Pakistani context. In addition, 'paper-pencil' questionnaires are commonly used in teacher education courses in Pakistan (Akhtar, 2013). As questionnaires are known for their advantages in terms of time and money (Cohen et al., 2011, p.209), I also considered the time and money factors while

selecting 'paper-pencil' questionnaires. Thus, on the bases of contextual knowledge, I assumed that questionnaires were a more appropriate and useful option for data collection and that the participants in this study were more likely to be familiar with 'paper-pencil' questionnaires.

Official approval from the District Education Officer (DEO) was already obtained. District Jhang is not a big city, so I contacted the participants in the third week of August, 2012 by phone, met them in person and distributed questionnaires to them in the 4th week of August, 2012. Meeting the participants in person gave me a chance to answer their queries during the meetings. This was my third interaction with the participants and the first face to face meeting in which I reiterated the goals of the study, clarified the instructions to fill in the questionnaires and encouraged the participants to fill in the questionnaires and return them as quickly as possible. I asked them to fill in the questionnaires in 10 days. I contacted the participants by phone after 10 days and received as many as 12 questionnaires back. I collected these 12 questionnaires and reminded the rest of participants by phone. Researchers (Akhtar, 2013; Pathan, 2012) believed that contacting participants in person to distribute and collect questionnaires would increase the return rate of questionnaires. That is why I personally contacted participants to collect as many as possible number of questionnaires.

Meanwhile, I had contacted 9 more teachers who agreed to participate in this study and gave them questionnaires. I continued to contact participants by phone and meetings and managed to receive more completed questionnaires. By 15th of September, 2012, I had received 24 completed questionnaires and had conducted interviews with 10 participants. The return rate of the participants' questionnaires was found to be 61%. I started an initial reading of the completed questionnaires and prepared a list of participants who had agreed to participate in the follow up interviews responding to the last question of the questionnaire which asked the participants whether they would be willing to participate in the follow up interviews. Six participants agreed to participate in the follow up interviews. The account of interviews will be discussed in the next part of this chapter where I shall explain how I conducted interviews, my second instrument, to collect data in this study.

**4.9.2 The interviews:**

As stated above, the last question in the questionnaire asked the participants whether they would like to participate in the follow up interviews. 14 participants agreed to participate in the interview and provided their contact numbers at the end of the questionnaire. I contacted these participants by phone and negotiated with them a suitable date and time. Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that the researcher has to keep in mind that an interview is 'a social, interpersonal encounter, not merely a data collection exercise' (p.421). I was aware of the social aspects of the context and tried my best to interact with the participants accordingly. In the beginning of their contact, the participants' attitude was formal, however, I arranged meetings with them to develop a good rapport. I treated them with respect and listened to their problems with empathy. Gradually I developed a good relationship with them and they appeared to be comfortable talking with me. I managed to conduct interviews with 10 out of the 14 participants who had agreed to be interviewed because I had to return to Glasgow.

The following table provides information about the participants who participated in the interviews. The participants' names have been replaced with Teacher numbers such as T1, T2 and so on to ensure anonymity. This profile table also provides information on participants' age, their qualification, level of class they teach, years of experience, subject(s) they teach and the last column indicates if the participants have or have not received in-service training. Table 4.1 shows that all participants were experienced primary teachers, teaching $4^{th}$ and $5^{th}$ grades which are the final two years of primary school education, when children are 9-11 years old. 6 teachers had attended additional in-service teacher training, while in post while all ten teachers had received their professional degrees in teaching. It is noticeable that the majority of participants were teaching all subjects to their classes. The information in table 4.1 is helpful to understand that the majority of participants were experienced teachers whose understanding of their context may be regarded as authentic.

| Coded Names | Teachers' Age | Teacher Qualification | Class(es) Taught | No. of students in each class | Years of Experience | Subjects Taught | In-service Training |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T 1 | 33 | BA, B.Ed, M.Ed | 4th, 5th | 28, 34 | 16 | English, Mathematics | Yes |
| T 2 | 37 | MA, B.Ed, M.Ed | 5th | 39 | 12 | All | Yes |
| T 3 | 27 | BA, B.Ed, M.Ed | 4th | 24 | 6 | All | No |
| T 4 | 34 | MA, B.Ed, | 4th, 5th | 41, 29 | 10 | English, Mathematics, science | Yes |
| T 5 | 28 | MA, B.Ed, | 4th | 32 | 7 | All | No |
| T 6 | 31 | MA Education | 5th | 28 | 8 | All | No |
| T 7 | 31 | MA Education | 5th | 26 | 8 | All | No |
| T 8 | 64 | Intermediate, PTC | 4th | 31 | 41 | All | Yes |
| T 9 | 39 | MA, B.Ed, | 4th | 32 | 16 | All | Yes |
| T 10 | 44 | MA, B.Ed, | 5th | 27 | 20 | All | Yes |

**Table 4.1: Profiles of participants of interviews**

Conducting interviews with the participants was not an easy task because participants were primary school teachers with a heavy workload. Some of them told me that they were also doing part-time jobs. Head teachers in three primary schools refused to spare participants for the interviews during school hours. Thus, I managed to conduct interviews with 6 participants during their lunch time, while 4 participants agreed to take part in the interviews after school time.

The school heads cooperated with me as much as they could. The interviews with 6 participants were conducted in an office space at the respective primary schools. These 6 participants participated in the interviews in the formal environment of schools. There was no preparation in particular. The head teachers in schools had managed to provide a table and two chairs in that room. I arranged some mineral water bottles and 'Samosas' from the school canteen for the participants to make them feel comfortable during the interviews. The process of conducting interviews remained similar with all interviewees. Pathan (2012) argues that during the interview, the interviewer needs to create a friendly and comfortable atmosphere at the interview site. I managed to create a friendly relationship during the interviews by polite language and gestures. In particular, I sat at a 90 degree angle with each participant to avoid confrontational position in face-to-face position (p. 93).

However, with 4 participants, who agreed to participate after school, I arranged meetings in an office space in a private school at a convenient place in the city area. The office was air-conditioned and I had kept mineral water bottles and 'Samosas' for the interviewees so that they could feel relaxed after coming all the way from their schools or homes in the hot days of summer. The air-conditioner was helpful to tackle weather factors and I ensured that participants felt comfortable before the interviews started. There were sofas in the room where the interviews took place. The participants appeared relaxed and comfortable during the interviews.

I received each participant with a welcoming smile on my face and by saying 'Assalam-o Alaikum', a common Islamic way of greeting in Pakistan. After offering them a glass of water, I enquired about their journey towards the interview place. Then, I asked the participants if they were ready for the interview. I reiterated the purpose of the study and informed the participants about their rights to privacy and confidentiality. Although it was already explained in the consent form, I reminded them again that the interview would be tape-recorded.

During the interview, I paid full attention to what each interviewee said by giving gestures such as 'nodding, attentive lean, eye- brow flash' (Crabtree and Miller, 1999: 98) and a 'sympathetic smile' (Dörnyei, 2007: 142). I also kept providing reinforcement feedback to the interviewees to confirm that the interviewees were 'on the right track' (Patton, 2015:469) and that their answers were worth recording. However, there were times when I had to give a polite negative reinforcement to the interviewees as I felt the interview was

'going off at a tangent' by saying 'Let me stop you here for a moment and go back to what you said earlier to make sure that I understood you well' (ibid). I also encouraged elaborations by giving 'silent probes', by remaining quiet and giving 'echo prompts' by repeating the last word spoken by the interviewee (Dörnyei, 2007:143). I stopped the interviewee politely, to move on to the next question by saying, for example, 'ok, can I ask you about any drawback of group work in the primary classroom?' (ibid). At the end of each interview, I asked the interviewee, 'is there anything else you want to add about group work? I ended each interview with a smile on my face and words of appreciation. The interviewees were escorted to the exit door.

## 4.10 Stages in the Data Analysis:

After collecting data from questionnaires and interviews, I came back to Glasgow on 20th September 2012. It is obligatory for the researchers who are working in the United Kingdom to comply with legal requirements in relation to the storage and use of personal data as set down by the Data Protection Act, 1998 (http://www.legislation.gov.uk/aboutus; accessed on: 17th February, 2017). I had planned to secure my research data accordingly. In this regard, the document 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research' developed and updated by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) proved helpful as a guiding document (https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-2011.pdf; accessed on: 17th February, 2017). A complete account of ethical considerations will be elaborated in the next section of this same chapter. The original data comprised completed questionnaires and audio-taped interviews. The questionnaires were kept in paper files and audio-taped interviews were stored in a USB stick and on a compact disc. The data was in Urdu. First, I replaced participants' names with numbers on the questionnaires to hide participants' identities. I used T1, T2 and so on for participants and then I started translating questionnaires and transcribing audio-taped interviews. To ensure authenticity of translations, I had already contacted one of my colleagues for assistance, who was a language teacher in a public sector high school in District Jhang. I chose him for two reasons. Firstly, he was familiar with the context in which data was collected. He understood the general attitude of teachers and assisted me in translating participants' responses to their closest possible meanings in English. Secondly, he was familiar with teaching of English in Punjab and knew the requirements of a reliable translation process. Thus, I translated all the completed questionnaires and transcribed all the interviews.

**4.11 Ethical Considerations**

Pathan (2012) argues that in many countries, it is a legal and institutional requirement to observe ethical principles while conducting research (p. 98). In the UK, the 'Data Protection Act' (1998) regulates the need to ensure participants' consent for collecting data. However, Silverman (2000) also presents moral and pragmatic reasons for ethical consideration. He opines that while doing qualitative research, the researcher interferes with participants' personal life. The researcher, in fact, enters participants' personal domains of values and beliefs which may raise certain ethical issues (Silverman, 2000, p.201). Silverman (2000) reminds researchers that since the participants allow them to interfere with their personal life, it is responsibility of the researcher to respect the rights, values and expectations of participants (Silverman, 2000; Creswell, 2003). Cohen et al. (2011) emphasise that the researcher needs to negotiate with the participants and inform them that their privacy and confidentiality would not be compromised before, during and after the study. Thomas (2010) argues that a researcher's cultural sensitivity may play a supporting role to understand participants' needs while conducting qualitative research. Thus, it is crucial for the researcher to know the research context and educate participants in every aspect of the study in which he is going to participate. In this study, the researcher's cultural sensitivity played a crucial role in addressing ethical issues.

In the light of the BERA guidelines and available literature on research ethics (Silverman, 2000; Creswell, 2003; Thomas, 2010), appropriate steps were taken to follow ethical guidelines in order to ensure participants' privacy confidentiality, dignity and anonymity. In the light of the arguments presented above, the following section describes the steps which were taken to address ethical issues in this study:

**4.11.1 Seeking permissions:**

I sought permissions from the concerned District Education Officer (DEO) and Head Teachers of the schools in which the study was conducted. This was done by submitting a formal application to the DEO office and selected primary schools in the District Jhang. I arranged meetings with the DEO and Headmasters of selected primary schools, explained my research plan to them and requested formal permission to conduct this research.

### 4.11.2 Informed consent:

I sought participants' consent to participate in this study by following the principle of informed consent. For that purpose, I arranged meetings with the participants and explained to them the purpose, nature of the research and the data collection methods used in this study. I also explained to them their role and it was assured that participation in this study would not affect them in any way. As the current study was supervised by the School of Education, University of Glasgow, a consent form was developed in the light of instructions provided by ethics committee of the University of Glasgow. I distributed the consent form to the participants and obtained their consent in writing.

### 4.11.3 Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity

As the study included in depth, face-to-face interviews, complete anonymity of participants was not possible. However, I explained to the participants that their participation in this study would remain confidential and anonymous. I also explained that real names of the participants would be replaced by numbers to mask their identity. Participants' privacy and confidentiality was given appropriate attention in this study and real names were replaced with numbers such as T1, T2 and T3 and so on. The body of data obtained in this study was based on completed questionnaires and audio-recorded interviews. I assured the participants that no one would be able to access the audio recordings other than myself. Therefore, they had no objection in this respect. I took on the responsibility of confidentiality of the participants, so the real names were never shared with any one during the whole process of data collection and transcription of data. As mentioned earlier, I had sought assistance of a colleague to translate questionnaires and interviews, but real names of the participants were never exposed. The participants were informed that the data (filled questionnaires and audio recordings) would be kept in safe custody during this study and would be destroyed after the completion of the study in accordance with the ethics committee requirements of University of Glasgow (visit: http://www.gla.ac.uk/research/aims/ourpolicies/committeestructure/ ).

**4.11.4 Harm and risk:**

The participants in this study were primary school teachers. They had certain official obligations which I respected during my interaction with the participants. I assured them that they would not be put in a situation where they might feel insecure physically or psychologically. I managed the research activities in such a way that participants' time was not wasted and Head teachers had no complaints. Therefore, meetings and interviews with the participants were conducted during lunch breaks or after school time. The participants were never asked to fill in the questionnaires during school time and never asked for interview during their teaching time. Another aspect regarding harm and risk was related to cultural sensitivity. I am a native of same area in which the research was conducted and my cultural sensitivity gave me confidence to decide what was most suited with the psychology of participants. I took special care during my interaction with the participants to exhibit an appropriate level of courtesy and politeness. I also avoided discussions on religious topics as the context was known to be sensitive about religion.

**4.11.5 Voluntary participation:**

I informed the participants that the purpose of the study was completely academic. Although I took all precautionary measures to maintain the participants' confidentiality and anonymity, it was made clear during meetings with the participants and stated in the consent form that their participation was absolutely voluntary and that they could withdraw themselves from the study whenever they wanted.

**4.12 Validity and reliability:**

Cohen et al. (2011) explain that validity of a research tool demonstrates that the research tool measures what it was meant to measure (p: 179). This is a widely accepted definition of the term 'validity', particularly, in quantitative research (Coe, 2012). However, Coe (2012) claims that validity is one of the most 'fundamental, yet the most often confused' terms used in research (p.41). He adds that the term 'validity' is tainted with the legacy of positivistic thinking which fails to suit qualitative research. For example, Cohen et al. (2011) argue,

*'Qualitative research possesses a measure of standard error which is in-built and which has to be acknowledged. In qualitative data, the subjectivity of respondents, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives together contribute to a degree of bias'* (Cohen et al., 2011, p.179).

Alternatively, to minimize the degree of individual biases, writers in a qualitative study (e.g. Lincoln and Guba, 1985 as cited in Coe, 2012) use words such as 'credibility, transferability or authenticity' which appear to be more relevant while interpreting qualitative data (p.42). The central idea behind using different expressions to denote validity in qualitative research is to justify that the instruments used were helpful to collect 'credible and authentic data' which offer justifiable interpretations (ibid, p.42).

Best and Kahn (2016) define reliability as 'the degree of consistency that a tool or data collection procedure demonstrates' (p.17). Cohen et al. (2011) use reliability as 'a synonym for dependability, consistency and replicability' (p. 199). To offer clearer differences between the two terms in different research paradigms, LeCompte & Preissle (1993, cited in Cohen et al. 2011) compare qualitative research with quantitative and argue that quantitative research requires a certain degree of control of phenomenon under investigation and assumes that if the same research methods are used with the same sample, the results would be the same. However, in qualitative research, the researcher has no control over naturally occurring phenomena and the study may not be replicated (p.202). Cohen et al. (2011) argue that it is a strength rather than a weakness of qualitative research that two researchers who are working in a single setting may come up with different but still reliable findings. From the discussion presented above, it is clear that validity and reliability have different meanings in qualitative research.

In this study, I tried my best to gather 'credible and authentic' information through questionnaires and interviews. In the light of the available literature (see Best and Kahn, 1998; Cohen et al. 2011; Arthur et al., 2012) I took necessary steps in the development and administration of research tools, and while analysing the data. For example, during interviews, I presented myself to the interviewees as a positive and friendly person. In this way, I developed a good rapport and mutual confidence with the interviewees. Moreover, I continually confirmed that the participants understood questions in the questionnaire and interviews. I discussed their issues and showed that I understood their problems. From their gestures and interactions, I assumed that the participants were comfortable talking with me regarding the interview questions. During completion of the questionnaires, I

continued contacting participants by phone and persuaded them to answer all questions in the questionnaires, so that the data would be as rich and meaningful as possible. Moreover, Cohen et al. (2011) suggested that validity in qualitative research has several principles. This study followed most of these principles. For example,

1. The natural setting was the principal source of data.
2. Most of participants provided thick descriptions of situations.
3. Data was socially situated.
4. I was familiar with the research context.
5. The study highlighted different aspects of primary education in Punjab.
6. I played the key role in conducting this research.
7. The focus of the research was on describing processes rather than the outcome.
8. Data was analysed inductively.
9. Dara was presented in terms of the respondents.
10. The interpretations were based on participants' responses.

The confirmation of validity and reliability was further strengthened by triangulation. It is important to remind the reader here that data in this study was collected from questionnaires and interviews. While analysing questionnaire responses, I realised that the majority of the respondents offered comprehensive answers to the questions in the questionnaire. I had assumed that the participants would provide straight forward answers, however, surprisingly, participants' responses exhibited a variety of trends which highlighted many important aspects of primary education in Punjab such as primary school settings, state of teacher training, supply of resources and layout of the primary classroom. For example, in response to the first question in the questionnaire, the participants were asked to offer their views on group work as a way of teaching English. In responding to this question, the majority of participants highlighted issues with primary classroom settings and claimed that group work was an effective way of teaching English but not workable in the existing primary school conditions. Similarly, the questionnaire data highlighted many contradictions which could raise questions on the validity of this study. To address the issue of validity, therefore, I conducted interviews in which these contradictions were further explored, and in which I cross-checked if the answers were valid. I verified participants' responses by contrasting and comparing the responses from questionnaires and interviews to confirm that the descriptions provided by the participants were trustworthy. When interview responses were compared with questionnaire responses, it was seen that the participants verified their point of views presented in the questionnaire

responses. This posed questions regarding a number of issues which will be discussed in the findings chapters.

**4.13 Analysis Techniques:**

This study adopted overall a qualitative approach, using thematic analysis for the final analysis of research data. Because of the data which resulted from the closed questions in the questionnaire a hybrid inductive/deductive approach could be considered applicable. However, the data which has informed the findings of this thesis were analysed using a thematic approach in order to make sense of what the data appeared to be saying, which was not what I expected. Before I move further to narrate my story of data handling, I will discuss the process of thematic analysis which was adopted in this study.

**4.13.1 Thematic Analysis:**

The analysis adopted in this study was thematic analysis in which six phases were adopted from Clark et al., (2015). These phases will be explained at the end of this section. In this section, I shall describe thematic analysis, its process and its six phases, before describing how I actually used the six phases.

Clark et al., (2015) claim that thematic analysis (TA) appeared some forty years ago. Since its appearance as an aid to analysis in psychological studies, TA has been used by different writers in different areas of study, with nuances of meaning. For example, Holton (1973) referred to TA as 'a method analysing the concepts underpinning the production of scientific knowledge' (p.222). According to Woodrum in1984 TA was often used interchangeably with terms such as content analysis to represent everything from methods that allow for the quantification of qualitative data, to more interpretive forms of analysis based on the identification of recurrent themes or patterns in data (Baxter, 1991; Dapkus, 1985 cited in Smith, 2006). The historical narrative on TA provides an imprecise explanation of what TA is. However, for the last decade or so, TA has emerged as a widely used and recognized method of data analysis in psychology, social and health sciences (Clark et al., 2015) which is often associated with an 'accessible, systematic and rigorous approach to coding and theme development' (p.223).

Alhojailan, (2012) explains that thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis in which the researchers analyse classifications to generate themes from the data. TA is used to study the research data in detail and to explore a wide range of subjects through interpretations of data content. It is considered the most appropriate method for studies which use interpretations to produce final results. TA provides a systematic element to data analysis which allows the researcher to associate a single theme with the whole content on the basis of its frequency in the data. It enhances whole meaning of data by conferring accuracy and intricacy (Alhojailan, 2012). Alhojailan (2012) and Marks & Yardley (2004) consider TA most suitable for analysis during a qualitative study because qualitative research, as they consider, requires explanation of data in detail for a deeper understanding of the issue under investigation. Similarly, Namey et al. (2008) state that thematic analysis moves beyond explicit words and phrases to describe both explicit and implicit meanings of data. They add that the codes developed as a result of initial thematic analysis may be linked to raw data to summarize the data for later analysis. The summary markers may include comparing the relative frequencies of themes within a data set, looking for co-occurrence, or graphically displaying code relationship. Alhojailan (2012) further believes that thematic analysis offers opportunities for the researcher to determine precisely the relationship between various codes and relate them with the data. In addition, TA allows the researcher to compare the opinions of the respondents which were obtained by using different methods of data collection such as interviews and questionnaires. I realized that thematic analysis would be appropriate in this study that would help me to compare interview responses with the questionnaire responses.

Braun & Clark (2006) describe thematic analysis as a method of identifying and analysing patterns of meaning in a dataset. TA helps to demonstrate important themes in the description of the phenomenon under investigation. Thematic analysis highlights most important constellations of meanings present in the data which may include 'affective, cognitive and symbolic dimensions' (Joffe, 2012 p.210). In my study there were a number of areas where the data seemed to indicate affective issues arising from the participants' responses which it seemed important to follow up, even though they might not be considered relevant to the research questions. Thus, I used a thematic analysis technique which I thought, would unfold the most obvious as well as the hidden reasons behind the phenomenon investigated (Joffe, 2012). Developing a theme means that a specific pattern is present in the data. Sometimes this pattern is directly observable such as participants' mentioning of lack of teaching resources as a reason for teachers not conducting group

work in their English language classrooms. Or, sometimes, the pattern suggests something which is not directly observable yet present in the background and which plays its role in the phenomenon under investigation. For example, the theme of professional identity (PI) was not the main focus in this study yet the pattern in the research data suggested that PI was an important factor which could not be ignored. Thus, thematic analysis tends to draw out both explicit and implicit patterns in data. A researcher may identify manifest themes and highlight their importance with the help of their frequencies. However, manifest themes may also point to a more latent meaning which requires interpretations (Joffe, 2012).

A further discussion on theme generation requires the researcher to highlight whether the theme is drawn from a *theoretical* idea (deductive) or whether it emerged from the *raw* data itself (inductive). Both deductive and inductive themes are considered crucial for deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Boyatzis (1998) argues that theoretically drawn themes allow the researcher to replicate, extend or challenge an existing field of study but the naturalistically occurring themes emerging from data allow the researcher to explore the phenomenon in a different direction. Thus, while conducting thematic analysis, researchers not only explore data with some preconceived ideas, they are also interested to study ideas which are naturalistically emerging from the data. Thus, a dual deductive/inductive or manifest/latent set of themes are considered crucial to a high-quality qualitative work. In this section, I have explained the process of thematic analysis. The following section will illustrate different types of thematic analysis. It is pertinent to explain various types of TA to clarify differences among these types. In the following section, I will also explain which type of TA were used in this study.

### 4.13.2 Types of Thematic Analysis

There are different types of thematic analysis. Clark et al., (2015) have stated six types of thematic analysis. I found these types overlapping with one another. I can say that I have used each type of analysis in my final data analysis. I shall describe these types for readers' understanding of this method and indicate which type(s) were deemed important for the analysis of the data in this research.

*Inductive TA* refers to an analysis that is grounded in the data. Although researchers generally use some theoretical assumptions based on their experience, research training

and their prior research experience in conducting a study, however, sometimes, the meaning pours out from the data which the researcher considers crucial to record. Thus, Inductive TA tends to unfold the latent meaning from the data. This study used Inductive TA at the later stages of analysis. After studying interviews and questionnaire responses, I realized that the research data tended to raise an important theme of professional identity which, I felt, was interesting to explore why teachers seemed reluctant to implement group work in English classroom.

*Deductive TA* refers to the analysis guided by some theory. In this type the researcher goes through the process of coding and theme development in the light of existing concepts. Deductive TA moves away from the latent meaning. This was what I was using for my analysis regarding looking for themes relating to the teachers' perceptions of the possibility of using group work. The overwhelming information appeared very negative and led me to look inductively at what the teachers were saying, which revealed some areas of real interest, such as teacher identity, agency and self-esteem. As a result of the inductive process, I then read around the literature on teacher identity and agency, which I was able to refer to in order to make sense of what was coming out of the data inductively.

*Semantic TA,* as obvious from the name, rests on the surface meaning of the data. The researcher seeks to remain close to participants' meaning. However, it is crucial for the researcher to maintain an awareness that participants' meaning would always represent an individual point of view which would need to link with whole data to highlight its relationship with the whole data. Thus, semantic thematic analysis brings into account the explicitly stated opinions (Smith et al., 2009). I started to look at the data semantically in the beginning. However, as I proceeded in analysing my data, it became clear to me that the latent meaning coming out of participants' responses could not be ignored. That is why, I moved beyond the semantic analysis.

*Latent TA* analyses the meaning under the data surface. Latent meanings are those that participants do not explicitly communicate but they become apparent from the researcher's point of view. Latent meanings are unfolded by the researcher who considers that the hidden meaning of the data would be interesting in the study. I used this type in my analysis in this study. This type suggests conducting an analysis which views data beyond its apparent meaning. I explored participants' responses deeply to find interesting theme of professional identity.

*Descriptive TA* refers to analysis that aims primarily to summarize and describe patterned meaning in the data. Initially, I used this type of TA to summarize and describe my data.

*Interpretive TA* goes beyond description, to decipher the deeper meaning in the data and interpret their importance. I used interpretive thematic analysis to unfold the hidden meaning of data.

### 4.13.3 Processes of Thematic Analysis:

To make thematic analysis more systematic, it necessarily follows some steps. Researchers (Gale et al., 2013; Braun & Clark, 2006) categorized TA process into different phases. Gale et al. (2013) presented seven phases of thematic analysis while Braun and Clark (2006) divided thematic analysis into six phases. I used Braun & Clark's (2006) phases because they were easy to understand and that was exactly what I followed in my analysis. In this section, I shall explain how I used these phases.

*Familiarization:* While conducting thematic analysis, it is crucial for the researcher to get familiar with the data collected. The reading and rereading of transcripts, listening to audio-recordings and making notes of any initial analytic observation assisted me in gaining an in-depth knowledge of data so that I was able to move beyond a focus on the obvious meaning of the data. I worked on the questionnaire and interview responses by reading and re-reading them to get a whole picture of data and individual aspects of emerging patterns. My familiarity with the data assisted me to formulate initial descriptive as well as latent analytical hypotheses.

*Coding:* Coding is a systematic way of identifying and labelling relevant features of the data with regard to the research questions. Coding is the beginning of identifying patterns in the data in which similar data segments are grouped together. Initially I got help from NVivo 10 to create codes from the data, however, through my interrogation of the data, I also identified implicit codes arising from the participants' responses.

*Searching for themes:* Themes are not readily present in the data to be picked up by the researcher. Rather, the researcher links similar codes together to create a plausible pattern in the data. This is what I did with my codes to develop themes. I linked similar codes in the interview and questionnaire data and recorded the emerging themes. I found that there

were some manifest themes emerging from the data. In addition, I found that the data revealed some interesting factors underlying the apparent meanings of participants' responses which were found appropriate to highlight as separate themes.

*Reviewing themes:* Reviewing is a necessary process in thematic analysis to ensure that the candidate themes are suitable for the coded data and with the entire dataset. Reviewing may lead to certain changes in the theme development. It may or may not require reworking of the candidate themes and repetition of the process of theme development. I continuously reviewed my themes and made sure that all the relevant themes were in place and all the important patterns have been addressed.

*Defining and naming themes:* Writing theme definitions (effectively a brief summary of each theme) and selecting a theme name ensure the conceptual clarity of each theme and provide a road map for the final write-up. After reviewing the themes methodically, I carefully completed the process of defining and naming themes.

*Writing the report:* The researcher weaves together the analytic narrative and vivid, compelling data extracts. Themes provide the organizing framework for the analysis, but analytic conclusions are drawn across themes (Braun and Clark, 2006. p.230).

## 4.14 Summary of chapter 4

In this chapter, I have presented the rationale and procedures of the methodology employed in this study. This chapter began with the introductory section to the chapter followed by the aims of the study and the research questions. After presenting the research paradigm which outlined the mixed method design, I explained why it was applicable in this study and how the research tools, i.e. questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were developed and administered to collect data. I then explained how the ethical issues were addressed. Then, this chapter explained the procedure of data collection in which I have explained the main purpose of the questionnaires and interviews. After a brief discussion on consideration of other research tools, this chapter explained the method of data analysis adopted in this study.

In next Chapter 5, I will present findings obtained from this study.

**Chapter Five: Findings from questionnaires and interviews**

**5.1 Introduction:**

This chapter presents the findings obtained in this study from the questionnaires and interviews. In this introductory section, the process of obtaining findings from questionnaires and interviews will be explained. As stated in Chapter 4, which details the methodology used to conduct this study, twenty participants of this study were selected from eight primary schools of District Jhang in Punjab. Questionnaires and interviews were selected as tools for data collection for a number of reasons which have been stated in Chapter 4. Initially, a questionnaire for the participants was developed to know the current condition of the physical layout of English classrooms and to investigate their understanding of group work as a way of teaching English Language. The questionnaires were followed by semi-structured interviews. Data from both questionnaires and interviews were valuable in different ways. The responses to the questionnaires provided background knowledge and a baseline for deciding where to probe participants' perceptions of group work more deeply. Thus, the responses from the interviews provided a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions of group work.

As noted in Chapter 1, although the focus was on the teachers' perceptions of groupwork, during the data analysis, it was observed that participants, through their responses, tended to blame factors such as lack of various teaching resources and insufficient teaching time for being responsible for them not being able to implement group work in their classrooms. They almost never tended to say that it might be because of their unwillingness to engage with groupwork that they had never tried group work, or that they lacked understanding of how to go about it. While responding to questionnaires and interviews, I noted that participants indirectly conveyed their ideas of self perceptions. For me, a most interesting aspect of the data was that it appeared that the participants assumed that they had no freedom to innovate by trying out a different approach to teaching English by introducing group work, for example. They continuously ignored themselves as the most important resource to change teaching methodology in their classrooms. This observation arose inductively as an emerging theme of professional identity of teachers which became an important part of my findings, despite it not being part of the initial research focus. In this chapter, I shall explore this finding to highlight its relation to participants' responses. As a

result, while presenting thematic analysis relating to their perceptions of the possibility of groupwork as a way of teaching English, I also explore the participants' perceptions of self image, autonomy and agency.

During the data collection, it was ensured that the language of the questionnaires and interviews was simple and clear so that the participants might not feel threatened or wary of answering them (Malhotra, 2006) and also so that they would be able to understand the questions asked and answer clearly. The questionnaire was developed to gather information on:

4. Layout of primary classroom in Punjab and possible ways to change it.
5. Classroom practice regarding current teaching of English and possible ways to change it.
6. Participants' understanding of group work
   iii. How participants consider various aspects regarding group work.
   iv. How participants consider group work as a way of teaching English.

Participants' responses to the questionnaires provided information about existing conditions of the primary classroom and teachers' teaching practice, however, the questionnaire data did not provide sufficient answers to the questions regarding teachers' understanding of group work. That is why, interview questions were developed to gain a deeper insight into participants' understanding of group work as a way of teaching English in the primary classroom. The interview questions were therefore focused to explore how participants perceived group work as a way of teaching, and to know possible benefits and drawbacks of using group work in the primary classroom while teaching English, as perceived by them. A final question was asked to explore participants' perception of the potential of group work as a way of teaching English in the primary classroom of Punjab. Responses were analysed to identify emerging themes and subthemes. As noted above, participants' questionnaire responses showed that they showed no awareness of the role of teachers in effecting any change when discussing current classroom layout and teaching practice.

Responses to questionnaires and in interviews highlighted a number of issues which may be linked with the school culture and social norms in Pakistan. Moreover, several contradictions rose in the responses to questionnaires and interview questions which highlighted the complex nature of the primary school setting and the difficult role a teacher

has to play in primary schools of Punjab. These contradictions in participants' responses were considered valuable for this study because they helped me to understand the issues in the primary school setting and may be the basis for further research in classroom contexts in Pakistan. The analysis of the findings in this chapter also highlights similarities and differences from both questionnaires and interviews. References from the available literature have been consulted to develop and support the findings.

**Part A: Findings from the Questionnaires:**

Twenty-seven completed questionnaires were received and twenty questionnaires were selected for the final analysis. These questionnaires were selected because most of the questions in these questionnaires were answered. Seven questionnaires were rejected because a large number of the questions had been left unanswered by the participants. In hindsight, and with the knowledge of the participants' poor understanding of groupwork and perhaps low self-esteem, it is not surprising that those questionnaires were incomplete. The questionnaires highlighted a number of issues. In the light of these issues three themes emerged which will be discussed below.

**5.2 Theme 1: Physical picture of primary classroom:**

In the questionnaire, (see Appendix A) questions 1 to 4 were developed to have a picture of the English classroom at work in Punjab primary schools so that the reader would have a clear idea about available resources and the layout of the classroom where the study explored the chances of implementation of group work. Responses of participants to questions 1-4 indicated that 14 classrooms in the selected primary schools had what could be described as a typical and traditional setting as shown in figure 5.1. Two teachers reported having a 'U' shape seating arrangement because of a smaller number of students in their classrooms. Four participants reported having no desks in their classrooms, that is, the children sat on the floor of the classroom.
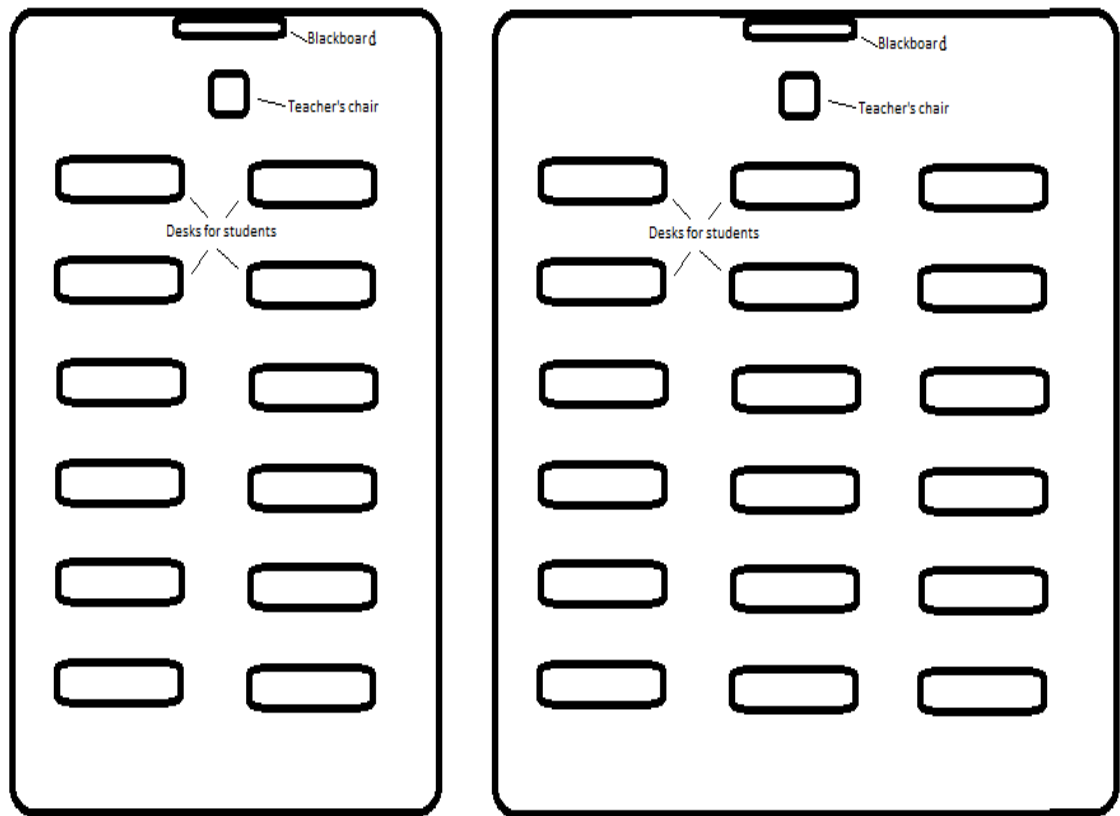
**Figure. 5.1. Primary Classroom Layout**



**Figure. 5.2. Classroom at work**

**Figure. 5.3. Classroom at work**

Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 show the seating arrangement in primary classrooms in Punjab, which might be viewed as typical. The classroom is arranged according to the number of students. If the number of students is between 25-30, they have to sit generally in two rows of desks as the classrooms tend to be small, however, if the number of students is between 35-50 (Figure 5.2 and 5.3), they are accommodated in bigger rooms with three rows of desks. Moreover, the teachers stated that the seating arrangements for a large number of students makes it difficult for the teacher to change the seating arrangements in every lesson. Responses to question 1 in the questionnaires, which asked about the classroom layout, may be understood by the following Table 5.1.

| Main responses | | Number of responses |
|---|---|---|
| **Q. 1. Describe the layout of your classroom.** | | |
| Arrangements of desks | in rows | 14 |
| | 'U' shape | 2 |
| | No desks | 4 |
| Charts as classroom décor | | 15 |
| More students and insufficient space | | 12 |

**Table 5.1. Responses to question 1**

According to Blatchford et al. (2003) the seating arrangement in classrooms has a significant impact on teaching. They argue that a flexible seating arrangement is essential to suit the teaching task. For example, as Blatchford et al. (2003) suggest, desks arranged in rows may be useful for teacher presentations, however, this seating arrangement may not be used effectively to conduct group work in classrooms (p. 164). Participants' responses to question 1 suggest that the majority of participants' classrooms had desks in rows, which may not be suitable for conducting group work. However, 4 participants reported having no desks. Having no desks in classrooms suggests that these teachers may have an opportunity to divide students into small groups, especially as there was no furniture to move for conducting group work. From the participants'' responses regarding seating arrangements, it was clear that participants considered that group work would require a different type of seating arrangement in which students have space to move and conduct collaborative tasks and activities and that the current classroom layout would not support group work because of heavy furniture which was difficult to move and lack of space in classroom. The responses which clearly indicate lack of space in primary classrooms in the selected schools will be quoted in the relevant section in this chapter.

The study also found that participants of this study felt that primary teachers had only a limited supply of educational resources with which to teach their students. Textbooks and the blackboard were claimed to be the major resources for the teacher to deliver English lessons to students. However, the teacher as a resource was ignored in most responses. Limited resources may be considered one factor along with many others which may impede implementation of group work (Gillies, 2003). Although 15 out of the 20 questionnaires mentioned that there were charts on the walls of their classrooms, most teachers reported that charts were mainly used for classroom décor. They said that charts were selected on the basis of the syllabus but were rarely used for teaching purposes. A limited supply of resources was further supported by interview responses which will be discussed in the second part of this chapter. Studies on group work (Blatchford et al., 2003; Bains et al., 2016) suggest specific teaching material for group work which suits the group task.

Participants also highlighted that the number of students per class was high and classrooms did not have sufficient and appropriate space to accommodate a large number of students for a smooth delivery of lessons by using group work. As well as the four participants who reported that students in their classes sit on the ground, from figures 1, 2 and 3, and the responses of teachers, participants it could be seen that there was a lack of space in the

primary classroom. However, research into groupwork in the English language classroom, suggests that teachers may use a variety of situations to bring students together and engage them in group work which may not essentially need specific teaching resources and space (Gillies, 2003). In the language classroom, students need to practise spoken language and teachers, for example, may give them a discussion task or reciprocal teaching task in which students' talk would be a source of practice of language. Thus, it appeared that teachers in this study, while giving reasons for not implementing group work in their classrooms, did not see themselves as creating opportunities for group work after careful thinking about how to facilitate language learning for students while working in groups, even in somewhat constrained conditions.

Question 2 of the questionnaire was asked in order to know how participants might want to change their classroom layout. Interestingly, most of them seemed satisfied with their existing classroom layout. Fifteen participants were of the opinion that they did not want to change seating arrangements in their classrooms, mainly because they claimed it was not easy to move the desks more frequently. However, three participants wanted to have a 'U' shape seating arrangement in their classroom. These three participants wanted to change their seating arrangement, however, they also considered that they could not move furniture easily and that it would be difficult to arrange and rearrange desks in every period. Responses to question 2 also showed that the majority of participants did not want to change the existing layout of their classrooms. Again, participants' responses showed participants' state of mind which suggested that they were not consciously unprofessional rather, they seemed to be unaware of themselves as active agents who could bring change in their existing working conditions. Participants' responses showed a clear indication of their resistance to any change in the layout of classrooms. It seemed that they did not want to change anything, nor did they feel any responsibility to change their current layout. Researchers (Zimmerman, 2006; Tagg, 2012) argue that people in any institution would show resistance to any change in their existing settings or practices. I considered that participants might be showing the same resistance because asking them to change their current settings might pose certain kinds of threat for the teachers as Zimmerman (2006) describes. Zimmerman (2006) highlighted a number of possible reasons for teachers' resistance to change in their practices which may include the following:

- *Failure to recognize need for change:* Teachers do not adopt new styles of practice because they do not realize that the proposed change is needed. This implies that practising teachers may feel that their method of teaching is sufficiently serving the

purpose of teaching and there is no need to teach the content by using a different method. Thus, they do not feel the need to try various methods in their classroom.

- *Habit:* It is hard for the teachers to adopt new styles because they have developed certain habits. It is easier for them to continue teaching in the same way rather than utilize their efforts on developing new skills.

- *Unsuccessful experience:* Teachers avoid adopting certain teaching styles which have been reported to be unsuccessful. For example, in this study, many participants claimed in their interview responses that they had tried to use group work while teaching English. However, they reported that group work was a time consuming methodology which might not work in the current conditions of primary classrooms.

- *Fear of the unknown:* For teachers who reported to having never used group work, it might be seen as something which might or might not help teachers to teach their lessons effectively. Responses of this type indicated that they were unaware of the possible results of using group work for teaching. While considering a style of teaching which has never been used successfully by other teachers in the same context, it may be quite logical that teachers would feel reluctant to try a new methodology because they are not sure about the implications of using it.

- *Threat:* There may be certain threats associated with change. The teacher may consider that the new methodology of teaching may result in the failure of students in the exams which would impact on their relationship with the school head. That is why, they would not try a new methodology of teaching.

Although no research evidence from the data directly confirms any of the above reasons for reluctance to change for primary teachers in Punjab, it appeared that participants had their reasons for not trying group work in classrooms, which might be interpreted as fitting with some or all Zimmerman's five reasons above When describing their classrooms, they indicated that they did not want to change the seating arrangement in their classroom because the desks were heavy and it was not easy to change seating arrangements. Participants' unwillingness to change, which was not the initial focus of this study, needed to be further researched. Nonetheless, their unwillingness to change seating arrangements suggested that they did not seem to realize that they might want to adopt a different seating plan, probably because the school management did not require any change from them. Moreover, it may be said that they had developed a habit of arranging students' desks in rows and would not want to try any other seating arrangement. Thus, from participants'

responses to question 1 of the questionnaire, it was learned that participants thought that primary schools' typical classroom layout allows almost no space for any group work activities. While responding to question 2, the majority of participants seemed to show no interest in changing the layout of their classrooms. They said that they might not change the current seating arrangement because it was not easy to move heavy furniture, but also implied that teachers in primary schools did not seem to have authority to change anything, even if they wanted to. In the next section, I shall discuss the second emerging theme from questionnaire responses.

## 5.3 Theme 2: Teaching of English

In order to explore participants' current teaching practices when teaching English and any proposed changes the participants would want to bring into their teaching practices, participants were questioned about how they started their lesson; how they introduced the topic of lesson, and how they linked their lesson with the previous lesson. The purpose of asking question 3 was to know the nature of activity the participants performed to teach English lessons. In the light of participants' responses, it was found that teachers predominantly used a traditional way of teaching their lessons as described in chapter 3 of literature review, in which the lecture-method and teacher talk was frequently used. For example, the responses of fourteen participants suggested that they start their lesson by saying 'Assalam o alaikum' (an Islamic expression to say 'hello') and students reply by saying 'Wa alaikum assalam'. Then, twelve participants, as they reported, straight away introduced the topic by providing a simple description of the topic. Four participants reported that they write the topic on the blackboard and the rest reported that they introduced the topic by real life examples. Their responses suggested that the teacher linked the topic with previous lesson by telling students about the previous and then the current lesson. From participants' responses to question 3, I noted that participants reported to perform all three parts of lessons using teacher talk. They stated that they were not asking students to do any activity during their lesson. Thus, the responses indicated that most of participants completed their lesson in such a way that they utilised most of the lesson time in teacher talk.

Question 3 was followed by question 4 which was asked to see if they had any ideas how they might teach the same lesson by using a different method.

Responses to Question 4 of the questionnaire suggested that participants had no idea how to teach a lesson on the same topic by using a different approach. For example, ten participants insisted that their method of teaching a lesson was suitable for students and they did not need to change their teaching methodology. They insisted that their teaching methodology was most suitable for students who came from poor and uneducated backgrounds. Seven teachers, while answering question 4, repeated what they had answered for question 3. This seeming lack of awareness of other pedagogical strategies was further explored during interviews with the participants. The interview data confirmed participants' inability to suggest different methods of teaching. It may be that a lack of appropriate teacher training can be considered a major reason for teachers' inability to suggest a different way of teaching their English lessons. The participants' responses to question 3 and 4 suggested that the majority of them used a traditional way of teaching and they would like to continue their current teaching method. However, this may have been a face-saving strategy to avoid exposing their lack of understanding of pedagogy. Responses to question 4 were found to be similar to that of question 2 which indicated that participants were reluctant to change the layout of their classrooms as well as their teaching practices. Keeping in mind the responses to questions 3 and 4, I regarded it as a distinct possibility that teachers might have had a limited control over the teaching process and that they seemed to be unaware of innovative or modern practice in teaching and learning. I was in a state of surprise during the initial stages of data analysis because all the participants were qualified teachers but they did not seem to 'own' their teaching responsibilities. It was only in the later stages of data analysis that I recognised a new pattern which demanded that I explore teachers' professional identity as a separate theme. This theme will be discussed in detail at the end of this chapter. In the following section I shall discuss theme 3 arising from the questionnaire.


**5.4 Theme 3: Teachers' understanding of group work**

Questions 5 to 11 were developed in order to explore participants' understanding of group work. These questions assisted me to probe participants' perceptions of various aspects of group work. This section will discuss responses to these questions in detail. In this section, I shall discuss participants' responses question-by-question to illustrate their perceptions of the processes of group work

Question 5, in the questionnaire, was asked to assess participants' knowledge of group work. This question was divided into four sub-questions. Table 2 shows the details of responses to four parts of question 5.

| Questions No. | Question | Responses | % | No. of responses |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q. 5. | Circle 'Yes' or 'No' for the following. | | | |
| a. | Have you read about group work? | Yes | 90% | 18 |
| | | No | 10% | 2 |
| b. | Have you discussed with your colleagues about group work? | Yes | 70% | 14 |
| | | No | 30% | 6 |
| c. | Have you observed any colleague using group work? | Yes | 30% | 6 |
| | | No | 70% | 14 |
| d. | Have you used group work when teaching English? | Yes | 30% | 6 |
| | | No | 70% | 14 |

**Table 5.2: Responses to question 5**

Table 2 shows that Question 5 was divided into four parts to know if participants had read, discussed, observed and/or used group work in their teaching practice. 18 teachers claimed that they had read about group work and 14 teachers claimed that they had discussed group work with their colleagues. However, because of the closed nature of the questions, it was not possible to explore the content of their discussions or their reading. Responses to part (c) and (d) of question 5 indicated that a large number of participants had not observed or used group work in their classroom. Responses to part (c) and (d) of question 5 revealed that seventy percent of participants claimed not to have observed and used group work in their classes. The dichotomous or close ended questions in the questionnaire appeared to highlight contradictory results which were expected to appear as a part of research findings in this study. I was expecting this because I had already noticed contradictions in participants' responses when conducting the interviews. To confirm participants' point of views on their use of group work, Question 6 of the questionnaire was asked to know what actually participants did while conducting group work in their classrooms, if they claimed to do so, and how students responded.

Responding to question 6, 14 participants described that they had used group work for students to learn spellings of difficult words by repetition, reading of text and working on exercise questions which were given at the end of each unit and in which students participated actively. The unit exercises of the textbook play an important role in preparing students for the final exams (Akhtar, 2013). Akhtar (2013) claimed that the primary and secondary education system in primary schools is seen as examination oriented in which the majority of questions in the final examination are included from unit exercises. Responses to question 6 suggested that participants used group work to spend more time on exercise questions to prepare students for the final exams. These responses also suggested that their understanding of group work seemed to be flawed and they knew little about using group work as a potentially effective learning tool. The participants confirmed that they used group work for a limited number of activities as reported above in preparation for summative assessment. Six participants who responded to question 7 indicated that they had not used group work while teaching English to their students because they had a limited number of hours to complete teaching the syllabus of English, which they argued, might not allow them to conduct group work in their English class. They indicated that they considered group work to be a time-consuming activity and that they were afraid that they might lose control of the teaching process in trying to conduct group work in their class, stating that conducting group work might raise issues of discipline in class.

Responses to question 6 and 7 indicated that participants' understanding of group work seemed to be insecure and they did not know how to use group work effectively for teaching English. From the discussion presented above, it may be said that the majority of participants stated that they were using group work but they were not practising group work as a methodology of teaching English, rather they used group work as a supporting teaching technique when and where teachers felt that a particular task would be better done in groups for exam or test preparation. Table 2 shows the responses to questions 6 and 7 which been discussed.

| Questions No. | Questions | No. of responses |
|---|---|---|
| Q 6 | If you have used group work while teaching English, please describe what you did and how your students responded. | 14 teachers responded |
| Q 7 | If you have not used group work while teaching English, please explain why. | 6 teachers responded |

**Table 5.3: Responses to questions 6 and 7**

In Question 8 of the questionnaire, participants were asked to express their views on group work as a way for students to learn English. Responses to question 8 were found similar to those of question 11 which offered some space for the participants to write their responses if they wanted to say anything in addition regarding group work. I have combined responses to these two questions because they were found similar. Therefore, responses to question 8 and 11 will be discussed later. In the next section, I shall discuss question 9 and 10.

Responses to questions 9 and 10 (Table 5.4) further strengthened the idea that participants might have a flawed understanding of group work. Question 9 was developed to record teachers' understanding of group work in the classroom context and was split into three parts. Responding to part (a), 12 participants responded that they would form groups based on students' abilities. Their responses suggested that mixed ability groups might result in the wastage of time, creating boredom for the high achievers. For example, responding to part (a) of question 9, one of the participants said that he used two groups to assign teaching tasks to high and low achievers separately. This participant was among 12 participants who divided their students based on their abilities. For him, high achievers took less time to perform a task and needed to be assigned a challenging task while low achievers needed more time to do the same task. To cope with this situation and to deliver his lesson in time, he would divide his class into two groups i.e. Group A, that consisted of high achievers and Group B, of low achievers. He reported that he would assign different tasks to both groups where Group A would perform on a challenging task and Group B would work on a relatively easy task. 12 participants divided their students to form two groups in their classrooms as described above. However, 8 participants claimed that they used mixed ability groups in their classrooms. These participants said that they understood that mixing all types of students would provide equal opportunities of learning for all students in a group. Part (b) of question 9 received the same responses where 12

participants insisted that students would be divided into two ability groups no matter how many students per group. However, 8 participants said that they would use mixed ability groups in their classrooms. They stated that in mixed ability groups, there would be fewer chances of division among students and all students would have an equal chance of learning English, showing perhaps intuitively, an understanding of the role that social interaction provides in language learning.

Responding to part (c) of question 9, all 20 participants responded that group work might be used to perform small tasks such as memorizing spellings, reading of text and finding answers to exercise questions etc. Responses to question 9 highlighted teachers' lack of understanding of how useful group work might be and how to utilize group work in their teaching practice. Responses to part (c) of question 9 suggested that teachers used group work for a limited number of tasks because they viewed it as an effective method to perform certain tasks over which they held control. For example, all participants mentioned that they would use group work for reading tasks, writing tasks, learning spelling, and/or doing exercise questions. Teachers mentioned no particular activities other than those stated above. In the light of research on group work (Blatchford et al., 2003; Bains et al., 2007) as cited in chapter 3 in the literature review, group work may be used to engage students in dialogues which would give them opportunity to practise language through interaction, but participants in this study did not seem to use group work as a tool for engaging students in dialogue to practise four language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking; rather, they asked pupils to work in groups to perform decontextualized grammar-translation types of exercises, rather than those where they would communicate meaningfully with each other, practising language that was relevant to their needs.

Responses to Question 10 were recorded and it was found that 8 teachers considered that group work might utilize 50% of lesson time. There were 5 teachers each for the options of 25% and 75%. However, 2 teachers considered that teachers should use 100% of lesson time to conduct group work. These responses again highlighted teachers' lack of understanding how to embed group work in their teaching practice appropriately. From the literature cited above, I assumed that a successful lesson would be delivered when group work is appropriately combined with other teaching techniques such as teacher talk and students' presentations at the end of a lesson. However, participants in this study did not seem to know how to plan a well-balanced lesson in which all of a variety of activities were included in a useful combination to ensure that their pupils would have opportunities

to use the language meaningfully. Table 3 shows the responses to questions 9 and 10 which been discussed in this section.

| Questions No. | Questions | No. of responses |
|---|---|---|
| Q 9 | If you were to use group work to teach English in your class, <br> Please, give a reason for your answer. | |
| | a) how would you select the children to make up a group? <br>      On the basis of students' ability (Group A&B) <br>      Mixed ability | 12 <br> 8 |
| | b) How many students would be in a group? <br>      Whole class into two groups <br>      Mixed ability groups of 4-7 students | 12 <br> 8 |
| | c) What kind of activities would you do in groups? <br>      Reading <br>      Exercise work <br>      Spelling learning | 20 |
| Q 10 | If you were to use group work in your English class, then <br>    A. What percentage of lesson time would you use for doing group work <br>      a. 25%           *5 teachers opted* <br>      b. 50%           *8 teachers opted* <br>      c. 75%           *5 teachers opted* <br>      d. 100%         *2 teachers opted* <br>    B. At what stage of lesson would you do group work? <br>      a. Start of the lesson     *2 teachers opted* <br>      b. Middle of the lesson    *12 teachers opted* <br>      c. End of the lesson      *6 teachers opted* | |

**Table 5.4: Responses to questions 9 and 10**

The contents of table 5.4 have been discussed above. Responses to questions 9 and 10 suggested that participants seemed to lack a complete understanding of group work. Those who said they were conducting group work used it as a teacher supporting method rather than as a methodology of teaching English. On the other hand, those who were not

conducting group work believed that group work would be a time-consuming activity which would not work in their primary classrooms, although no reason was given for this belief.

As stated earlier, responses to question 11 were found similar to those of question 8 of the questionnaire. Participants were asked to comment on group work as a way of teaching English in the primary classroom. Their responses may precisely be put into three categories for convenience of the reader to understand the pattern of responses. 4 teachers stated that group work might not be an effective way of teaching English because they believed that conducting group work in classrooms might waste time and create discipline issues. However, 4 teachers considered that group work might be used as an effective way of teaching English for students in primary schools. These teachers considered that group work provides opportunities for students to participate actively in the classroom and practise their language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. The third category of responses came from 12 teachers who considered that group work might not be applicable in current primary school settings. They argued that group work might work as an effective way of teaching English if teachers received subject specific teacher training and if school management made arrangements for an active teacher support system in primary schools. It is pertinent to mention here that although I did not realize it initially, during the data analysis, this was the first indication that informed me that participants in this study felt unsupported to develop new teaching strategies and to be more creative in the classroom. It was evident for the first time that they were willing to change but wanted and needed support to do so. The issue of lack of teacher support will be discussed in detail later in this chapter under findings from interviews because this issue appeared in interview responses more frequently.

Thus, the questionnaire responses unfolded aspects of primary school settings with reference to physical layout of and teaching practices in the primary classrooms of the selected primary schools. In the light of the questionnaire responses, it was found that participants believed themselves to be working with limited teaching resources and insufficient teacher support. Their responses suggested that they had not been trained on how to embed activity-based teaching into their classroom teaching. Participants' responses suggested that, in the state sector of Pakistan teachers' understanding of pedagogy needs to be further investigated. The questionnaire data left many aspects of participants' perceptions unexplored. Therefore, the questionnaire responses also suggested to me that participants be interviewed to assess face-to-face their perception of group work

and to record their responses to assess their perception of themselves as willing or able to undertake activity-based learning such as group work. In the light of analysis of the questionnaire data, it was found necessary to further investigate teachers' understanding of group work and dig more deeply to clearly analyse their thinking on classroom practices of teaching. Part A of this chapter concludes here with a clear picture of primary school settings, as perceived by the participants, with reference to the selected primary schools of Punjab and participants' flawed perception of group work which needed to be further explored. Part A also demonstrates participants' apparent inability to value their role as teachers to try innovation and to feel ownership regarding their classrooms and teaching activities. These themes have been further linked and explained in findings from interviews. Part B of this chapter will discuss findings from interviews which were conducted based on the findings from the questionnaire data.

## Part B: Findings from the interviews

Part B of this chapter discusses three main themes emerging from the interview data. The interviews were conducted with 10 participants who gave their consent to be interviewed in their questionnaires. In this study, semi-structured interviews were designed to further explore participants' understanding of group work as a way of teaching English in selected primary schools of Punjab (see Appendix-B and Appendix-C). In the light of participants' responses, the interview data was analysed on the basis of two elements that provide a framework for the final analysis. Question 1, 2 and 3 of the interview focused to look at participants' knowledge of group work. Responses to these three questions reported their perceptions of group work as a way of teaching English and possible benefits and/or drawback of group work in primary classroom. These questions provided further details of participants' understanding of group work and confirmed, or otherwise, findings of the questionnaire data on participants' understanding of group work. However, Q 4 was asked to know the factors, based on participants' perceptions, which might impede implementation of group work in the classrooms of primary schools in Punjab.

Participants' views offered a number of contradictory responses regarding their perceptions about the potential for GW as a way of teaching English in the primary classrooms. The interview data also displayed participants' perceptions of practical issues which, they felt might hinder the implementation of group work as a way of teaching English in primary

schools of Punjab. Interestingly, the most important aspect of thematic analysis used in this study appeared when I found an interesting pattern in the data which unfolded during face-to-face interviews with the participants. I realised that participants in this study never really seemed to take responsibility for the teaching and learning process in classrooms, other than completing the syllabus using materials provided by the school, usually in the form of a textbook. In fact, they seemed to completely ignore their professional role as teachers as providing contextualised and meaningful learning opportunities for their pupils and failed to recognise themselves as a powerful resource for students' learning. Therefore, I found a strong emerging theme of professional identity of the teachers which I found very important to recognise the state of mind behind participants' apparently indifferent attitude towards the classroom and students. During my interaction with participants, I realised that participants did not seem to recognise their responsibilities as teachers, rather, their responses suggested that they were in a state of denial that they might play any role to enhance students' academic achievements through introducing innovation in primary classroom. In the following section, I shall discuss the major themes and subthemes emerging from the interview data.

## 5.5 Theme 1: Primary School setting in Punjab (School culture)

As also found from the questionnaire data, the interview data reflected that participants reported a number of issues in the existing settings of primary schools of Punjab. These settings were considered unfavourable for implementation of group work as a way of teaching English in primary schools. The emerging pattern suggested that participants shared a feeling that they were expected to perform extra-ordinary tasks within unfavourable school settings. As T9 concluded,

*Existing settings of primary school classroom do not support group work. (T9)*

While talking about the potential of group work as a way of teaching English in primary classroom, T9 considered that unfavourable conditions may include poorly managed teacher training and lack of teaching resources. Similar responses had been recorded in questionnaire data. The claim of unfavourable school settings all over Pakistan has been reported in a number of studies (Westbrook, 2009; Lynd, 2007; Warwick, 1991). Both questionnaires and interview data provided a deep insight into existing primary school settings in Punjab. From participants' responses, it was evident that they did not consider

conditions in primary schools favourable for teachers to exercise activity-based teaching including group work in their classrooms.  As the quality of education in Pakistan's schools is directly linked with the quality of teaching in policy documents, (Government of Pakistan, 2005), the interview data depicted a number of issues in primary school settings which might have a negative impact on teachers' performance. These centred round issues relating to resources, the classroom environment, the impact of society and lack of teacher support. These issues, in the light of interview data, have been discussed below under the headings of subthemes as shown in Figure. 5.4.
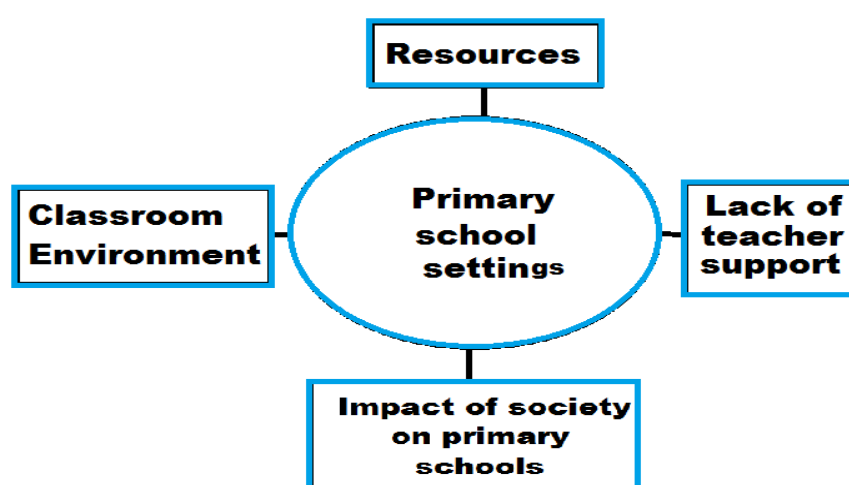


**Figure. 5.4.  Theme 1 with subthemes emerging from interview responses**

**5.5.1 Teaching Resources:**

As also claimed by participants in their questionnaire responses which were discussed earlier in Part A of this chapter, the majority of participants considered that in primary schools of Punjab, teaching resources, which they described as relevant charts and models, were either not available or not accessible by the teachers. Participants considered that group work might not be implemented with the poor or total lack of supply of resources and in the limited time allocated to teaching English language in the classroom. That is why, when they were asked about implementing group work in their English classrooms, nine participants reported that the implementation of group work was conditional with the provision of teaching resources and time. These interviewees highlighted three important aspects in terms of resources, i.e. teaching material, teaching time and sufficient space to

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conduct group work where students might move freely to accomplish an activity. Participants highlighted that group work was a 'time consuming methodology' (T10) teachers would need to have more time to complete their syllabus if they were to teach their students by using group work. However, 2 participants also mentioned that lack of space would not allow them to implement group work in their classrooms. T1 highlighted the need for both time and resources, for successful implementation of group work. He asserted that time management might be a major challenge for teachers while conducting group work. As T1 said,

> *I think we don't have enough time and resources for group work in our classrooms.... Biggest flaw of this (group work) methodology is time based (because) teachers have to cover lengthy and difficult syllabus in less time. (T1)*

Similarly, T2 opined,

> *In my opinion, group work requires more time than teachers have. Children waste a lot of time when they sit together.... Teachers have a prime responsibility to complete their syllabus. The syllabus (might) run slow (with group work) but teacher does not have much time because he has to consume equal time for other subjects. (T2)*

The above quotes from the interviews imply that participants feel insecure about the impact of group work on their teaching and considered it as a threat to complete their syllabus in time. As noted above, the imperative to complete the syllabus appeared to be at the forefront of their concerns, rather than potentially effective methodologies for teaching and learning. T2 seemed to believe that students in groups would come together to waste time. From this response, I assumed that T2 had not understood the ways that time limits could enhance the management of group work. Research on group work (Blatchford et al., 2014) confirms that group work may resolve issues of time management because students feel more responsible to complete group task in time. T5, further explained the issue of time management for primary teachers. He argued,

> *Normally, primary school teachers have to teach all the subjects to one class. They cannot allow extra time to any 'one subject' in particular. If teachers try to conduct group work, they require more time, which makes it impossible for them to complete their syllabus. (T5)*

The comment by T5 in the above quotation suggests that primary teachers who teach all subjects to a class feel that they may not be able to allocate equal time for all subjects if they teach English language by using what they see as a time-consuming activity such as group work. Again, the need to complete the syllabus seemed to take priority over considerations of pedagogy. T7 and T6 highlighted lack of space and teaching resources for conducting group work. While talking about the chances of implementation of group work, T7 commented,

> *Group work requires space and resources which is lacking in primary schools of Punjab. (T7)*

Similarly, the response by T6 supported the comment made by T7 about fewer facilities in Punjabi primary schools than in other parts of Pakistan. He also suggested that provision of space in the classrooms might make it easy for teachers to conduct group work effectively. T6 commented,

> *There are not enough resources available in schools to conduct group work. Classrooms are not big enough to support a seating plan that is appropriate for group work...Group work has the potential to be implemented as an effective way of teaching English in primary schools if... enough space is available for students to participate in activities such as group work. (T6)*

These responses may be linked back with the questionnaire findings where the layout of a typical classroom (Figure 5.1) suggested that the classrooms in Punjab were overcrowded and that there was not enough space available in classrooms where learning activities such as group work might be conducted. It was clear from questionnaire and interview responses that the participants felt that primary classrooms lacked resources including teaching material, teaching time and space for any group activity to take place.

Thus, the interview responses confirmed findings from the questionnaires regarding limited supply of teaching resources. Literature on primary schools (Westbrook, 2009; Lynd, 2007; Warwick, 1991) in Pakistan supports these findings and highlights that primary schools are poorly financed and insufficiently resourced all over Pakistan. From participants' responses, it seemed clear that they understood that group work might only be conducted with a supply of specific teaching material. However, they hardly mentioned any specific material during their interviews which they considered essential for conducting group work. This implied that they had limited information about how to use

group work as a methodology of teaching English in their context. In their interview responses, despite my attempt to highlight the teachers' role, participants did not consider that teachers might see themselves as a powerful resource which might work effectively despite an apparent lack of teaching material. Participants asserted that primary teachers had no role in decision making regarding their classrooms, implying that primary teachers seemed to have a fixed perception of their professional responsibilities, which did not include taking the initiative regarding trying out new approaches in the classroom. However, another pattern in the interview responses suggested that the lack of a favourable classroom environment might be another factor which could prevent activity-based teaching from taking place in the primary schools of Punjab. I shall discuss the subtheme of classroom environment in the following section.

### 5.5.2 Classroom environment:

Questionnaire data mainly highlighted the physical conditions of primary classrooms in selected primary schools of Punjab which was further confirmed and elaborated by interview data. The interview data demonstrated that participants seemed to be critical not just of the physical classroom environment in their schools, but also the overall ethos. A total of 9 participants directly or indirectly mentioned the overall classroom environment which they considered unsupportive for conducting group work. T1 described his classroom environment which he considered was not suitable for group work because students would not feel comfortable to actively participate in classroom activities. He argued,

> *Our classroom environment is not supportive for group work...Classroom conditions in our schools do not support such methodology (as Group work) to work... In our primary schools, children face a lot of hesitation while talking to their teachers and among themselves. (T1)*

The response by T1 suggested that children in primary classrooms were not confident to raise questions. However, T1 seemed to ignore the teacher's role in enhancing students' confidence so they might participate actively in classroom activities. Comment by T10 further confirmed that the primary classroom in Punjab was dominated by teacher-led activities. T10 argued that students in primary classrooms had limited freedom to speak

and raise questions because teachers teach them by using teacher talk, a traditional style of teaching in which students' input is minimum. T10 argued,

*In our primary school classrooms, teachers use traditional lecture-based methods while teaching English in which students have limited freedom of raising questions during the lesson. (T10)*

The idea of a classroom atmosphere which was not conducive for students' learning was further supported by T2 who described that students were under stress in the primary classroom. He described students in the primary classroom as being 'scared of the teacher' and 'confused'. The response by T2, again, implied that students' participation in class was low because the classroom environment may not be conducive for learning. T2 argued,

*From my teaching experience, I have seen that students in our primary school classrooms have many issues regarding their participation in class. I found them confused and scared of speaking in front of the teacher. Only a few students have their say openly in classroom. Generally, the confidence level of students is low. (T2)*

The above quote describes the primary classroom as perceived by T2 which confirms low participation of students described by the other participants. In the light of the literature review stated in chapter 3, it seems clear that group work may only be possible in a classroom where students' relationship with their teacher is based on confidence. In such a classroom, students feel no hesitation to ask questions from the teacher or offer responses. However, T2 suggests that it is more normal in Punjab that there is low students' participation and low confidence levels.

After conducting this study and from my knowledge of the field, I understand that participants believed that primary teachers want to complete their teaching tasks uninterrupted and that they do not encourage students to give their input during lessons. T6 and other participants described the primary classroom as being 'teacher–led where students are passive' which supported my assumption presented in the previous sentence. T6 commented,

*Realistically speaking, the primary classroom is teacher-led in primary schools where the teacher speaks most of the time and students remain passive. This style of*

*teaching does not support the development of four language skills in English classrooms. (T6)*

T9 also agreed on the nature of classroom environment as being teacher-centred where students have a low level of participation. T9 opined,

> *English class is boring for students because the teacher speaks all the time, the majority of students do not understand the lesson, and they are silent listeners during most of the lesson time. Students have fewer opportunities to speak and raise questions on their lesson. For me, a teacher centred class is not good for learning English. (T9)*

Responses by T6 and T9 raised serious questions on teacher's role in teaching English in the primary classroom and confirmed that activities in the primary classroom seemed to be under the teachers' control, so that teachers use most of the teaching time to transmit information and students' participation is limited. Interestingly there seemed to be no questioning of the status quo, regarding the teacher-centredness that the participants described. Even when appearing critical of the situation, the teachers did not offer any potential solutions or question the role they played.

At this point, the response by T8 may be considered to conclude comments on the classroom environment. He suggested that there was hardly any element in the current primary classroom setting that might support implementation of group work. T8 responded,

> *There are three important factors in the school setting, i.e. School environment, teachers and students. Unfortunately, none of these factors support group work. Group work requires material such as charts and models etc. Schools have no environment for group work because they do not provide the required material to conduct group work. (T8)*

The analysis of responses presented above informs that participants of this study considered the primary classroom environment unsupportive for implementation of group work as a way of teaching English. They did not consider that group work might be used to transform an unsupportive primary classroom to a conducive classroom where students would have more opportunity to participate in classroom activities and learn in an effective way. From the analysis of these responses, it is noticeable that participants tended to ignore

the teachers' role in resolving issues such as students' low participation and their passiveness in classroom. Despite the fact that I tried to raise questions during interviews about their role, they continued to blame school conditions and the classroom environment for their apparent inability to change their teaching practices. During interviews with them, it was very clear that they did not seem to realise that they could be real agents of change in the classroom environment. The participants also seemed to be unaware about any literature on group work which suggested that it might be used to change the classroom environment by providing opportunities for students to interact with each other and change the classroom into a place where teachers and students could possibly learn together. In the light of findings from the SPRinG project (Bains et al., 2007), we may assume that group work could be used to increase chances of students' participation which would ultimately change the classroom environment. However, the participants in this study appeared to be unaware of the role played by activity-based teaching methodologies such as group work.

Participants, in their interview responses insisted that teachers needed support to address their day to day issues but also emphasised that the current primary school setting has no system of teacher support. In the following section, I shall discuss the sub-theme of a teacher support system which was reported absent in the selected primary schools.

### 5.5.3 Teacher Support System:

Interview data revealed that participants clearly felt the need of a support system in the primary schools which, according to them, was missing in current primary school settings in Punjab. Participants' responses suggested that primary schools needed to develop a support system which might provide necessary training to teachers and assist them with their academic issues as well as the schools' daily matters. Participants placed a special emphasis on the need for appropriate teacher training to assist teachers find solutions to their daily problems in schools. Teacher training, being one of major themes, will be discussed later in this chapter because issues with teacher training were highlighted by all interview participants. In the light of my experience as a teacher educator, I believed that teacher training might be considered basic in the teacher support system, however, it was clear that there did not appear to any provision for the participants.

As T2 mentioned in his response to question 4 of the interview, primary schools have limited facilities and resources in terms of teacher training and teaching material. The

emerging pattern from the interviews suggested that participants considered effective teacher training, teacher autonomy and provision of resources as the most important elements of the desired teacher support system. T2 commented,

> *Primary Schools have limited facilities of resources in term of training and material. Teachers should be provided with resources and freedom to access those resources, which may facilitate group work in classrooms. (T2)*

The comment by T2 suggested that teachers in primary schools have a limited supply of teaching resources. In addition, he hinted that teachers might not be able to access available material. T2 also expressed his regret that primary teachers had no representative to inform school heads about their issues. In this situation, the introduction of a teacher support system would allow teachers to communicate their concerns to school heads. In chapter 3 in the literature review, I have already discussed that many primary teachers in public sector primary schools generally have an unfriendly relationship with school heads. The schools are very hierarchical, and heads are often seen as remote from their staff. Primary teachers tend to maintain a distance from school heads, who are seen as all powerful. It could be that a teacher support system would fill this gap between teachers and school heads as well as guide primary teachers how to conduct activity-based teaching methodologies including group work in the primary classroom. Moreover, teachers would have a platform in the form of a teacher support system, to share their teaching experiences and discuss their problems with colleagues. The interview data also highlighted that teachers perceived the provision of academic support for teachers might solve teachers' issues while attempting group work in classrooms, but also regarding a number of areas of support. As T9 anticipated that teachers would face issues while trying group work for teaching English, they would need a support system in which guidance would be provided on how best to conduct group work. Within a teacher support system, as proposed by 6 participants, primary teachers would be able to discuss their questions with their colleagues and their understanding of group work could be addressed on a daily basis. T9 argued,

> *Teachers do not have a system of academic support in primary schools which will result in the wastage of teachers' time again because teachers need support to understand how they might manage group work in the existing conditions. (T9)*

Similarly, T5 also considered that teachers should have a support system which may provide essential support for the teachers to help them adopt new methodologies. T5 commented,

> *At present, schools do not have a supporting environment that may help teachers adopt methodologies like group work on daily basis. (T5)*

T6 seemed to agree that group work might be used as an effective way of teaching English provided teachers have a support system in schools because they might face difficulty in planning and implementing activity-based teaching methodologies such as group work. He commented,

> *Group work has the potential to be implemented as an effective way of teaching English in primary schools if teachers are trained and supported to implement it in their English class. A teacher must understand how to implement this way of teaching in their English class. (T6)*

Almost all the teachers indicated that they would be interested in trying group work methods but were realistic about the possibility of managing to do so successfully without some kind of support and training.

The interview responses highlighted participants' sense of isolation with regard to teacher support. They reported that they received limited support in the current primary school settings, which might be a reason for teachers' presumed inability and reluctance to conduct group work in primary classrooms. In the light of participants' interview responses regarding the need for a sustained teacher support system, primary teachers seemed to indicate that they were working in difficult conditions. The most important factor which arose from the interview data, however, was participants' sense of isolation. They seemed to have been left to struggle with their duties which not only included teaching but also a variety of other extra-curricular tasks, which will be discussed in the next section, with limited or no teacher support. That is why participants' responses led me to believe that primary teachers might not be feeling confident to try activity-based teaching methodologies. In this situation, a teacher support system could enhance primary teachers' teaching skills and their confidence to try different methodologies of activity-based teaching such as group work in the primary classroom. The pattern in the interview responses also suggested that primary schools might be under the impact of societal demands which might be affecting teachers' performance. In the following section, I shall

discuss participants' responses on the sub-theme of role of societal influence on the current primary school setting.

**5.5.4 Impact of society on primary schools:**

Societal impact on primary schools is considered very strong in Punjab schools. Studies (Memon, 2007; Akhtar, 2013) indicate that the impact of society is evident in the form of political influence on the education department as a whole which includes appointment of local candidates for teaching posts on political grounds (Memon, 2007; Akhtar, 2013). Local and federal governments engage teachers from primary and secondary schools for conducting different social activities such as polio campaigns and election duties for a small amount of extra daily wages. Participants called these activities social activities, however, I have used 'teachers' official obligations' to convey the urgency and obligation of these activities, as there seems to be little choice as to whether the teachers can refuse to do these tasks. 8 participants out of the 10 interviewed highlighted primary teachers' workload in terms of the lengthy syllabus they have to complete and 'official' activities they have to perform along with teaching. However, 2 respondents in particular claimed that official activities such as polio campaigns and election duties waste a lot of teachers' time and focus. Responses by these 2 respondents were considered relevant because they highlighted participants' perception of primary teachers' thinking about themselves. These responses reinforced my interpretation of the analysis of interview data. The interview responses highlighted that teachers face a challenging role because they have to perform so many tasks along with teaching. T2 claimed that primary teachers perform numerous tasks for society with little extra payment. T2 depicted the teachers' role in the following comments.

> *In our primary schools, teachers are over-burdened with responsibilities like Polio-day duties, election duties, census duties etc. These activities are managed in such a way that it keeps them busy and they are unable to focus on their prime duty of teaching. The government needs to manage these activities in such a way that they have enough time to pay due attention on their teaching. (T2)*

The comment by T2 highlights the impact of teachers' involvement in official obligatory activities which seems to increase their stress level causing lack of motivation among primary teachers. The above comment provides a clear indication that participants consider

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that these activities disturb primary teachers' routine work meaning that teachers are unable to focus on teaching. T3 expressed a similar point of view in his comment. He reported,

> *Teachers lack motivation because they feel they have no time to apply different methods in their classrooms. I see that teachers' attention is divided due to their activities other than teaching. They are engaged in social activities which keep them occupied and they are unable to pay attention to teaching. Group work can only work if issues regarding school environment and teachers' motivation and skills are addressed in an effective way. (T3)*

The comment by T3 as quoted above, clearly indicates his belief that teachers' engagement in other official obligations may have a negative impact on teachers' performance in the classroom.

This section has provided discussion of participants' understanding of how they think primary teachers' engagement in other official obligatory activities restricts them from focusing on their teaching. Thus, the interview data suggests that teachers have a strong feeling that as well as a lack of resources and support structures, teachers' engagement in official obligations related to social activities make it difficult for teachers to focus on what is considered good practice in teaching and learning. The interview data revealed a picture of primary school settings in Punjab which put teachers under pressure due to various issues discussed above. It could be argued that the primary school system, like any other system of human endeavour, may not be expected to run smoothly until all the elements in a system work simultaneously. The responses of the teachers highlighted some major flaws in the primary school settings in Punjab which include societal influence and expectations on teachers and the teaching profession. Central to these issues is a desire of teachers for a teacher support system in which teachers may get effective teacher training, which will be discussed as second main theme emerging from the interview data.

## 5.6 Theme 2: Teacher Training

Teacher training occupies an undeniable role in the formation of a teacher's professional skill development. The recurrent indication of the need for teacher training during interviews raised it as one of the main themes emerging from the interview data. As stated

in chapter 3 in the literature review, primary school teachers receive two types of teacher training in Punjab, i.e. pre-service training, a mandatory professional qualification to apply for the post of teaching, and in-service training which teachers attend during their professional tenure after every 3-5 years (Saeed, 2007). Saeed (2007) argues that while pre-service and in-service training programs may emphasise the use of activity-based teaching, teachers in Pakistan are reported to predominantly use traditional (lecture-led) methodologies in their classrooms (Ali, 2000; Mohammad, 2006; Mohammad and Harlech-Jones, 2008). This was borne out by the current study. Westbrook et al. (2009) argue that teachers' use of the lecture method in classrooms raises questions on the quality and influence of teacher training for classroom practices. Participants of this study repeatedly raised the issue of teacher training during their interviews.

In the light of emerging themes from the interview responses, it was found that participants seemed concerned about teacher training in terms of quality and quantity. All 10 participants mentioned training in response to Question 4 of the interviews. Question 4 was devised to understand the teachers' perception of the potential of group work as a way of teaching English in the primary schools of Punjab. Based on the pattern that emerged from the interview data, the responses of teachers may be divided into two categories. Firstly, there were responses from four teachers who claimed that primary teachers were given a low-quality initial teacher training which might not develop sufficient teaching skills among primary teachers. Secondly, and linked to the first category, there were responses from three participants who considered that during their service, in-service teacher training was a matter of chance for a large number of primary teachers in Punjab.

Analysis of the first category of responses by 4 participants suggested that they were not satisfied with their teacher training. For example, these participants considered that the quality of teacher training for primary school teachers did not seem to help primary teachers. Teacher training did not equip teachers with the required teaching skills which might suit their existing classroom conditions. As T1 reported,

> *Teachers receive trainings in which group work and other (activity based) activities are emphasised but classroom conditions in our schools do not support such methodology to work. (T1)*

T1 identified a gap between teacher training and teaching practice. The above response also suggests that teacher training in Punjab may not link theory to practice. It implies that

training sessions do not focus on training teachers in accordance with primary school conditions, which should be well known by the trainers. Unfortunately, there is a little literature available on links and disparities between the theory and practice gap in Pakistani schools. A few studies, however, highlighted issues with teacher training in Pakistan. Rugh et al. (1991) described the curriculum of training programs in Pakistan as predominantly theoretical which do not bring ground realities of classroom into consideration. Westbrook et al, (2009) further explain:

> *While teacher-training programmes might emphasise the importance of group work, cooperative learning, whole class and group discussion and presentations, the trainees are not exposed to such learning themselves. So, for example, while trainers might give lectures on the importance of using teaching aids, they rarely demonstrate this in their own teaching. Trainers often use traditional teacher-led methods of lecturing and dictating notes which tend to silence the trainee voice, and discourage them from asking questions or seeking further clarification or illustrations, or engaging in debates. (p.438)*

The quote stated above clearly indicates a missing link between theory and practice in teacher training programs. Similarly, Ashraf et al (2005) argued that the curriculum of teacher training programs in Pakistan is based on 'ill-defined theories' and 'imported ideas' which provide little chance for the trainees to translate them into their classroom practice (p. 276). This theory and practice gap was repeatedly mentioned by the respondents in the interviews. T3 provided a clear picture of the type of training teachers receive. He commented that teacher training is general in nature,

> *I think teachers are given a very general type of training whereas group work teaching requires special training for both students and teachers. (T3)*

The response by T3 suggests that group work might be a challenging way of teaching English for primary teachers, which requires specific training but the nature of training in the existing setting of primary schools is general. The nature of training was further described by T8 who claimed that teacher training was mainly based on bookish knowledge which supports claim made by Rugh et al. (1991). This response again highlights the gap between theory and practice in primary schools. T8 responded,

> *Teacher training is mostly based on bookish knowledge which does not inform teachers how they can implement group work in their existing conditions. (T8)*

The responses quoted above indicate quite clearly that teacher training for primary school teachers may not be considered adequate to prepare them for the realities of the classroom. As participants' responses suggest, the curriculum of teacher training programs seems to be theoretical and teacher-centred which may not provide enough chances for the teachers to acquire teaching skills to help them implement activity-based learning such as group work as a way of teaching English in primary schools.

The second category of responses suggests that there are not enough in-service training facilities for the primary school teachers. It is important to mention here that there appeared two strands of meaning from the responses of five participants whose responses have been included in this part of analysis. Based on the limited nature of responses by the participants, it was not clear if they were claiming that there is not adequate training at all for primary school teachers or that teacher training pertaining to group work was missing. A deeper probe into the interview data suggests that the majority of participants were of the view that teacher training on the use of group work was considered essential before they could contemplate the implementation of group work. Two participants claimed to have received no in-service training at all over their careers. As stated earlier, literature on teacher training in Pakistan (Saeed, 2007; Lynd, 2007) suggests that primary school teachers attend one-year pre-service training and in-service refreshers after every 3-5 years which confirms not only that primary teachers receive a general type of teacher training, but it is also infrequent. Thus, the interview responses highlighted a need for specific teacher training that would assist them to implement activity-based teaching such as group work in primary classroom. For example, T2 responded that,

> *Teaching English by using group work is not impossible though it is important to train teachers on how they conduct it (GW). (T2)*

The response quoted above clearly suggests a need for teacher training on group work. T2 considers the lack of training as an impediment to the introduction of any activity-based learning including group work in his classroom. Similarly, T5 pointed out that teachers need specific training on how to implement group work in classroom. T5 responded,

> *To promote and implement group work as a methodology, it is important to train them (Teachers) on how, when, and how often they should use group work while teaching English. (T5)*

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Similarly, T9 highlighted the need for training which specifically targets the development of skills necessary for the implementation of group work.

> *There needs to be a series of systematic training which would enable teachers to understand how, when and how much group work should be done in the English classroom. (T9)*

Recent research on group work supports that there is a clear need for training before any intervention of group work is made in the classroom. For example, the SPRinG Project (Bains et al., 2007) is one successful example which gives us insight into the procedures that may lead to the successful implementation of group work in the primary English classroom. The aims of the SPRinG Project were to: 'work with teachers to develop strategies which would enhance the quality of group work and evaluate whether these strategies would result in an improvement in pupils' attainment and learning, behaviour and attitudes to school' (Bains et al., 2007, p.95). Findings of the SPRinG project suggest that strategies developed by researchers and teachers working together were found effective to achieve the aims of the project. The project involved a complete range of trainings for teachers and students over a long period of time. Moreover, teachers were provided with a handbook as an extra resource for support. In short, the strategies used in the SPRinG project were a good combination of theory and practice along with good teacher support. Keeping in mind the good example of the SPRinG project, it may be concluded that the responses of teachers in the interview data highlighted that teachers would necessarily need a specific training and teacher support for the implementation of group work as a way of teaching English.

On the other hand, T6 considered that training is not the only aspect which needs to be addressed for the implementation of group work in the primary English class to have a chance of success. His response suggested that teachers lacked a support system in schools which may provide teachers with the necessary assistance to implement what they learn from teacher training. This response suggests that mere training may not be considered sufficient to implement group work in the primary English classroom. Findings from the SPRinG project confirm that provision of a support system for the teachers is needed to successfully implement group work as a way of teaching English and attain better results. Such a support system has been reported as absent from primary education in Punjab (Ashraf et al, 2005; Westbrook et al., 2009). The need for a teacher support system has already been discussed earlier in this chapter. However, it is pertinent to highlight here that

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T6 considers a specialised teacher support system is essential for implementation of group work. The second part of this response suggests that teachers' understanding of group work is incomplete and that they are aware that it needs to be developed. T6 responded,

*Group work has the potential to be implemented as an effective way of teaching English in primary schools if teachers are trained and supported to implement it (GW) in their English class. A teacher must understand how to implement this way of teaching in their English class. (T6)*

Similarly, the response by T10 further explained how group work may be implemented effectively in the primary classroom. He suggested that teachers need to develop a good deal of understanding of group work and its implementation in existing primary school settings. T10 suggested a threefold process for implementing group work. He emphasised the need for a comprehensive training program on group work to develop a better understanding on how to implement it in the classroom, which needs to be followed by planning. In his response, T10 agrees that teachers are less familiar with activity-based teaching and thus it is also necessary for them to spend more time on discussions and planning of group work with colleagues. In this way, they might develop a better understanding of how to implement group work successfully in their classrooms. T10 responded,

*After attending effective trainings, if teachers spend time on planning and understand how to implement group work in their English class effectively, I am sure it will be an effective way of teaching English. (T10)*

The above quoted responses suggest that teacher training for primary school teachers needs to be focused on group work to develop a clear understanding of its aims and potential for improved attainment of students and that primary teachers' sustainable development of teaching skills may be ensured by a teacher support system which is consistently at work in primary schools. In addition, opportunities to discuss with colleagues is seen as vital to ensure comprehensive understanding.

The response by T7 highlighted an interesting aspect of teacher training. The interview data suggests that teachers show lack of motivation when it comes to implementation of group work in the English classroom. T7 linked teacher motivation with training. T7

considered that intensive teacher training might enhance teachers' teaching skills. In addition, it might also be regarded as a source of motivation among teachers. T7 responded,

*To implement it (GW) as a methodology of teaching English, we have to motivate teachers through intensive teacher training. (T7)*

The responses quoted above suggest that primary school teachers lack a complete understanding of group work and therefore motivation to try group work. The response above also suggests that teacher training may be used to enhance the motivation level of primary teachers which participants reported as lacking among primary teachers in Punjab. All the participants mentioned training and it may be that meaningful training sessions and the opportunity to discuss their work with other teachers would provide a boost in terms of motivation to try 'new' methods of teaching.

Available research on teacher education in Pakistan suggests that while planning and conducting teacher training programs at present, more focus is laid on theory and the context seems to be ignored by the teacher educators. In the light of the discussion presented above, it seems clear that current teacher training may not be sufficiently preparing primary teachers for teaching. The interview data reflected participants' feelings of frustration with duties they had to perform along with teaching their students and their desire for meaningful training which would motivate them to try to improve their practice. Their responses raised questions on their perceptions of themselves as teaching professionals.

From the beginning of this chapter, I have reported my findings in the light of the research questions. The contradictions in participants' responses kept me busy thinking about their perceptions of themselves. What struck me was that participants seemed to have a weak concept of their professional self. I learned from their questionnaire and interview responses that they tended to put the blame for their inability to implement activity-based teaching on every factor which they thought was linked with the classroom teaching except themselves, the teachers. I was convinced after analysing their responses that participants seemed unaware of the most important factor, the teacher, which I consider, may be the most crucial agent of change to the present setting of the Punjab primary classroom. In the light of my analysis, I concluded that restricting my focus to group work methodologies

would not be sufficient to explore how participants think about group work. Rather, it would be essential to further analyse their perceptions of themselves.

The following section will discuss the third major theme that emerged from interview data under the rubric of Teachers' professional identity.

## 5.7 Theme 3: Professional identity of primary school teachers

The third emerging theme from the interview responses was professional identity. The data suggested that participants showed a variety of understanding of their professional selves. In addition to what might be termed their 'normal' teaching duties, they considered that primary teachers were obliged to complete a number of other tasks which they perceived as a major cause of demotivation among teachers. Figure 5.5 describes theme 3 and its subthemes.
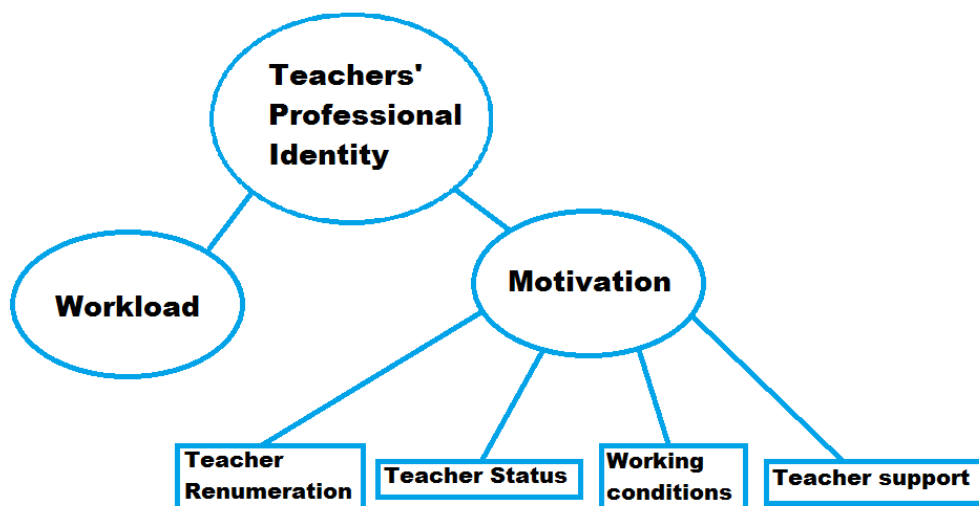


**Figure. 5.5. Theme 3 and subthemes emerging from interview data**

Before I start discussion on theme 3 in the light of the interview data, I shall explain what professional identity means with reference to the available literature. Slay & Smith (2011) describe professional identity as 'one's professional self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences' (p. 86). Personal identity is defined by Gecas and Burke (1995) as 'the various meanings attached to oneself by self and others' (p.42). They believe that personal identity plays a vital role in fixing an individual's place in society. Other researchers (Arthur et al., 1999; Hall et al., 2002) believe that professional identity is

shaped by professional success. Professional identity cannot be taken as a stable entity (Coldron & Smith, 1999) because it keeps on changing its shape under the influence of experience, success and failure. Volkmann & Anderson (1998) consider that it is a process in which professional self-image is balanced with a variety of roles teachers feel that they have to play. The consensus seems to be that professional identity relates to teachers' concept of themselves which keeps on changing as a result of good or bad experiences. In shaping professional identities, teachers' beliefs about themselves and about their responsibilities play a crucial role. As James-Wilson suggests,

> *The ways in which teachers form their professional identities are influenced by ... how they feel about themselves ... This professional identity helps them to position or situate themselves in relation to their students and to make appropriate and effective adjustments in their practice and beliefs.*
>
> *(James-Wilson, 2001, p. 29)*

Professional identity is closely associated with personal identity (Slay & Smith, 2011). Slay & Smith (2011) argue that professional identity may be shaped in three primary ways. First, professional identity may be the result of the socialization process where one receives information associated with a profession (Fine, 1996; Hall, 1987 as cited in Slay and Smith, 2011). It may be similar to a situation when a newly inducted teacher comes in contact with other teachers in school; he observes teachers already working in school and identifies some duties he will be performing as a teacher (as others are doing). Secondly, individuals adjust and adapt their professional identity during periods of career transition (Ibarra, 1999; Nicholson, 1984). For example, a newly inducted teacher was previously working as an accountant where he had a different job description. When he starts as a teacher, he will have a completely different set of duties. Thus, he will adjust himself and adopt a change in his concept of himself in the field of teaching. Finally, Schein (1978) suggests that in the light of life experience, one gradually clarifies priorities and self-understanding which ultimately shapes professional identity. In the light of the literature quoted above, it can be assumed that a teacher's professional identity is his understanding of himself as a teacher. It is an understanding of how to behave with colleagues and school heads, and how to perform as a teacher. It also provides an understanding of the teachers' duties they are expected to perform in the premises of school and outside it.

The interview data reflects participants' dissatisfaction with their jobs which suggests that they are unsure of their role as teachers. All participants in the interviews showed their concerns regarding their workload in the primary school setting which, according to them, required them to work more in difficult conditions (Mirza, 2003). The literature suggests that government primary schools in Pakistan are characterized by 'a large number of under-educated, under-trained, underpaid and, most important of all, undervalued government primary school teachers' (Hoodbhoy, 1998 p. 2), which does not portray an encouraging picture of public sector primary schools. Interview responses and relevant literature (Mirza, 2003) suggest that primary teachers in Pakistan are working in challenging conditions and their circumstances have shaped their professional identity in such a way that they feel confused and overburdened professionally. However, participants' responses tend to suggest that they felt that their professional duties should focus on teaching only. During my interviews with them, I found teachers not comfortable while talking about their problems. Participants reported that primary teachers felt themselves under stress and they struggled to adjust to the demanding conditions in their profession. The scenario they described has been categorised into the main theme of professional identity which has been divided into two subthemes as shown in figure 5.5. I shall discuss workload as a subtheme of theme 3 in the following section.

**5.7.1 The nature of teachers' workload:**

In their interviews, 5 participants reported that primary school teachers have to perform numerous tasks, other than teaching, inside and outside of school premises. For example, they highlighted that primary teachers were busy performing office work and certain official obligations related to community tasks. Teachers responded that in school premises, along with teaching, they have to maintain records on students' progress and follow ups on students' attendance. In this way, primary teachers play their role as teachers, school clerks, and record keepers in the school premises. On the other hand, they perform other tasks outside school such as polio workers and census officials which they considered were non-academic tasks. From the interview responses, it is clearly mentioned that they felt that the education department needed to exclude these non-academic tasks from their job responsibilities. For example, T2 argued,

*In our primary schools, teachers are over-burdened with responsibilities such as*

*polio-day, election day and census duties...the government needs to manage these*
*activities in such a way that teachers have adequate time to pay due attention on*
*their teaching. (T2)*

The above quote suggests that that when primary teachers are engaged in non-academic activities which take place outside primary schools, they are unable to focus on teaching. From the above quote, it may be assumed that there may be a lack of planning on the part of government which affects teachers' performance.

However, the response by T1 highlighted how extra work might impact normal working in schools where the number of teachers is already less than the ideal for the number of classes. He explained,

*Teachers are busy in fulfilling their official matters rather than teaching students.*
*For example, in my school there are three primary teachers (for 5 classes). One is*
*always busy in the office work preparing daily reports and sending them to Distt.*
*Education Office. two of us have the responsibility of teaching 5 classes. Teachers*
*are doing clerk jobs. These barriers push teachers away from teaching. (T1)*

The above quote provides a description of T1's understanding of primary school settings. He explained that his school had three primary teachers to teach five classes, and one teacher out of three was always busy in official matters. It seems logical that if primary schools already have an inadequate number of teachers, any extra assignment for teachers would create management issues and reduce the amount of face to face contact between staff and students. T1's statement is supported by the UNESCO report on Primary Education in Pakistan in which Mirza (2003) found that teachers in primary schools of Pakistan have to teach in difficult conditions. She particularly pointed out that conditions in primary schools are not encouraging for the teachers where, for example, one teacher had to teach three to six classes.

*A teacher ... has to teach almost three to six grades simultaneously in a difficult*
*context, an environment of least (limited) facilities and support. (Mirza, 2003, p.15)*

The issue of pupil-teacher ratio has been reported in World Bank (2015) data which indicates that the teacher-pupil ratio in Pakistani primary schools has gone higher from 1: 40 in 2010 to 1: 43 in 2013. World Bank (2015) data on pupil-teacher ratios also suggests that teachers in primary schools have a high workload in the form of a greater number of

students per teacher to teach. The issue of a high pupil-teacher ratio has its implications for the performance of teachers in a number of ways. For example, as Fan (2012) argues, the pupil-teacher ratio affects the performance of both teachers and students. Fan (2012) argued that a low pupil-teacher ratio has a positive impact on both teachers' and students' performance whereas a high pupil-teacher ratio causes inadequate teacher support, wastes a lot of teachers' time and creates difficulties for the teachers to plan their lessons well and implement them with success in their classrooms. Although Fan's study was conducted in China, Pakistan can be considered no different as far as the issue of pupil-teacher ratio is concerned. Most primary schools in Pakistan have high pupil-teacher ratios which makes it challenging for the teachers to perform their duty of teaching in a satisfactory way. In the light of participants' responses and the review of literature cited earlier in this paragraph, I inferred that the nature and amount of workload on teachers put them in a compromising situation. They seemed to have a confused concept of what they should do in the teaching profession. It is probable that such a confused state of mind of teachers would affect their performance negatively.

The other aspect in T1's response is related to the nature of work a teacher has to do in the school premises. T1 responded that teachers have to do clerks' jobs in schools. For example, as quoted above, T1 reported that out of three teachers in his school, one performs the responsibilities of preparation of reports for Distt. Education Officer (DEO). He also mentioned that teachers are not supposed to perform duties in the school's office, rather they needed to focus on teaching. This extra work, as T1 reported, increases workload on the other primary teachers which most of the time results in frustration and dissatisfaction with their jobs, leaving teachers with low motivation and little time for planning their lessons and implementing them effectively in the primary classrooms.

However, research (Mooij, 2008; Easthope & Easthope, 2000) indicates that teachers all over the world have to perform many tasks as part of their professional duties other than teaching. Research on teachers' workload and stress (Mooij, 2008; Easthope & Easthope, 2000; Smith & Bourke, 1992; Kyriacou, 1987) suggests that teachers complain about their extended workload all over the world. They often have to work longer hours to perform administrative duties in schools. In the light of literature on teachers' workload, it is clear that teaching is a demanding profession but the participants' views in the interviews appeared to suggest that extra teaching engagements made it even more difficult for teachers to carry out their responsibilities. When teachers started working in this profession, they found that they had to perform numerous tasks which they had not

considered before.

Mooij (2008) argues that not only in Pakistan but in the neighbouring countries of South Asia, primary teachers carry out most of the official obligations in the form of social activities such as Polio campaigns, census and elections. He suggests that the issue of increased workload is not particular to the Pakistani context because similar findings were reported from India where primary teachers showed similar dissatisfaction that had nothing to do with teaching *per se*. The government requires educated individuals to carry out these activities and it hires individuals, with no other choice, it would appear, from the education department (Mooij, 2008). The interview data, as discussed earlier, suggests that teachers are not happy in their work because they think that non-academic, official obligations related to social activities should not be included in their job responsibilities, however, they feel obligated to perform them. Although, the government would pay them extra for their services, they believe that these activities waste a lot of their time because these are ongoing activities throughout the year. They consider that their prime duty of teaching is compromised with their engagement in what they call social activities which results in an increase of workload for them and causes stress on teachers.

Similarly, T3 and T5 reported that engaging teachers in social obligations pushes teachers away from focusing on their primary duty of teaching:

> *I see that teachers' attention is divided due to their activities other than teaching. They are engaged in social activities which keep them occupied and they are unable to pay attention to teaching. (T3)*

> *Teachers remain busy in ensuring attendance of students, accomplishments of social activities like polio vaccination, census, and election duties etc. This overburden gives them little chance to pay attention towards their primary duty of teaching. (T5)*

In the light of teachers' interview responses and evidence from available research, it can be concluded that conditions in terms of workload in the primary school setting are not encouraging for the teachers (Mirza, 2003). As schools lack a system of necessary support for the teachers (Mirza, 2003), teachers feel confused about understanding their role amid these challenges. Personal lives of teachers seem to be affected negatively by the workload which may have been a result of their flawed professional identities as teachers. Researchers (Nias, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Sumsion, 2002) believe that the personal lives

of teachers along with technical aspects of teaching, play a pivotal role in the construction of teachers' identity, implying that teachers require a supporting system in schools which can play its part to support teachers construct their professional identities and develop their understanding of their professional self in the light of their experiences and conditions in which they work. James-Wilson's (2001) remarks in this matter are explicit where he states that teachers' clear understanding of their professional self is necessary to help them find their niche in their profession.

The interview data depicts an overall picture of primary schools where teachers work in challenging conditions. There is no doubt that they have to handle large class sizes, complete their syllabus and perform other duties. It is also clear that they have little support. From my understanding of the Pakistani context, I conclude that in a country like Pakistan, being a teacher means that one has to keep in mind what the system expects from him/her as a teacher. Teachers need to shape their professional identities by keeping in mind expectations of the system along with a self-image as a teacher. In other words, to find a better self-image as a teacher, one has to recognise the challenges that face the teaching profession in Pakistan. To prepare primary school teachers to meet the challenges, there is an obvious need to motivate them. From the analysis of the data it seems clear that the role of teacher motivation is a crucial factor in shaping the professional identity of teachers. In the following section, I shall discuss teacher motivation as a subtheme of professional identity.

### 5.7.2 Teacher Motivation

Figure 5.6 shows subtheme of Teacher Motivation and its subthemes.
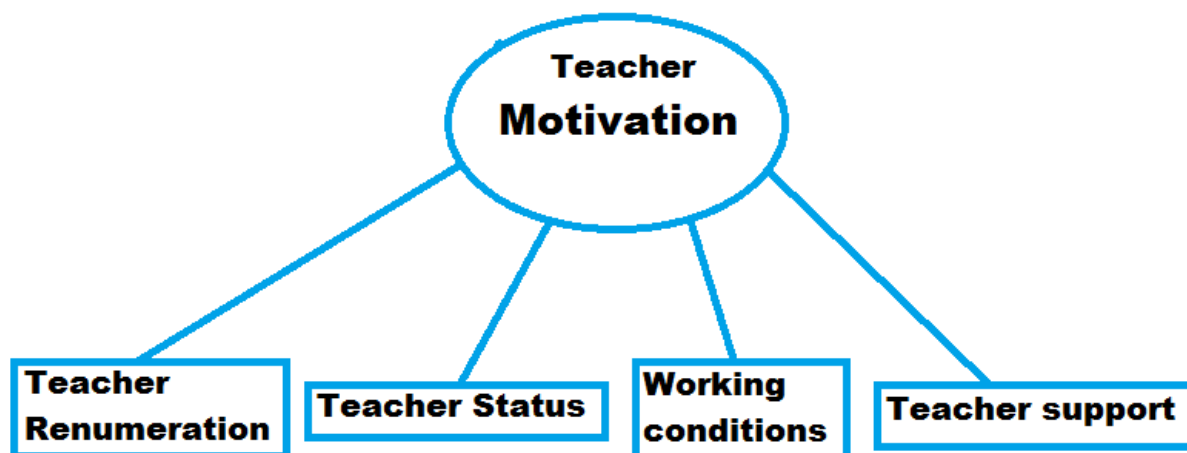


**Figure 5.6. Factors Affecting Teacher Motivation**

Bennel & Akyeampong termed poor teacher motivation as 'a colossal problem in Pakistan (p. 8). They (2007) defined teacher motivation as 'all the psychological processes' that shape teachers' behaviour towards the accomplishment of educational goals. However, it is difficult to identify these psychological processes because of the different contexts in which teachers work. During their interviews, responses of participants suggested that they possessed low levels of motivation. The literature on professional identity formation (Schieb & Karabenick, 2011) argues that there are a number of factors which shape teachers' professional identity and teacher motivation may be one of the most powerful. Studies on teacher motivation (Salifu & Agbenyega, 2016; Nias, 1996) consider that teachers play a crucial part in the success of any educational intervention, yet in most parts of the world they are poorly motivated. Pathan (2012) suggests that individuals adopt a profession due to two kinds of motivations, i.e. extrinsic motivation which is caused by external factors such as salary and working environment etc.; and intrinsic motivation which results from inner satisfaction related to the profession. However, Claeys (2011) identifies a third factor and calls it altruistic motivation. She defines the altruistic factor as 'a love for and desire to work with children and/or young persons, and an inclination to serve society' (p.4). In the light of the interview responses, it could be considered that all three types of motivation mentioned above play some role for primary teachers in adopting teaching as a profession. It is evident from the participants' responses, however, that they considered that the level of teacher motivation among primary teachers was generally low.

In the following section, I shall discuss teacher motivation in the light of the available literature and identify links with participants' responses. I shall also discuss some elements of teacher motivation which, participants considered may play a significant part in increasing or otherwise the motivation level among the primary school teachers of Punjab.

Teacher motivation has been defined by different researchers in different ways. However, within the teaching context, Snowman et al. (2008), offer a convincing explanation of teacher motivation. They term motivation as a 'complex construct' which may be easy to define but difficult to understand. They add that motivation may not be observed directly rather we may only understand a teachers' motivation level from his actions; from the way he talks and the way he selects tasks and activities for his students (p. 569). Thus, teacher motivation for Snowman et al. (2008) tells us why teachers behave the way they behave by examining words and actions.

From participants' interview responses, I found them complaining about almost every aspect of primary schools in Punjab. The majority of them seemed concerned while talking about their profession and claimed that majority of primary teachers in Punjab had low motivation levels in the primary education system.

Participants' responses during interviews suggested that that primary teachers in Punjab lacked motivation in general which might be leading to issues regarding their professional identities. Although there was no direct question asked regarding teacher motivation, responses of participants created an interesting pattern that lead me to the discussion about motivation in the development of professional identity. Two teachers directly mentioned the motivation factor in their responses. T3 commented that teachers in primary schools feel demotivated which is why they would not use a variety of teaching methodologies to teach English. According to him, these methodologies require more time but teachers have limited time to complete teaching their syllabus. As T3 responded,

> *Teachers lack motivation because they feel they have no time to apply different methods in their classrooms. (T3)*

The response quoted above echoes previous comments that primary teachers have concerns about limited time to complete their syllabus which causes low motivation due to a feeling of burden among primary teachers. However, T7 felt that providing quality teacher training could make a difference to enhance motivation level among teachers. According to T7, meaningful teacher training may be an effective way to increase their motivation level to

assist teachers to implement new methodologies such as group work despite the availability of limited resources. He responded,

> *To implement group work as a way of teaching English, we have to motivate teachers through intensive training because I believe that group work can be implemented even with limited resources available. It depends mostly on the teacher whether or not he wants to teach his students by using group work. (T7)*

The quote above demonstrates that T7 feels that teachers' motivation may be enhanced through teacher training. By highlighting the need for intensive training, he also implies that primary teachers' perceived lack of understanding when trying activity-based teaching methodologies may be a cause of demotivation. He suggested that provision of training on group work may increase their confidence and motivation to try group work as a way of teaching English. As noted above, the real need for a meaningful training programme was stressed by teachers who saw it, not only as a support for them professionally, but also as a way of increasing motivation to try different approaches to teaching and learning, thus enhancing their self-esteem and professional identity. Literature on motivation has identified factors that may affect motivation levels of primary teachers (Salifu & Agbenyego, 2013). These factors will be discussed in the following section.

### 5.7.2.1 Teacher Remuneration:

The lack of motivation mentioned directly and indirectly by the teachers is further confirmed by research literature (Bennel & Akyeampong, 2007). In a comparison between teachers in developed and low-income countries, Bennel & Akyeampong (2007) identified different motivational factors in action. Bennel & Akyeampong (2007) invite readers to view motivation in the perspective of Maslow's hierarchical needs order (Maslow, 1943). They argue that Maslow's hierarchical needs framework suggests that the factors affecting motivational levels would be different for teachers in different contexts. They argue that pay incentives may be less effective in increasing teacher motivation in developed countries, but they occupy a crucial place in teacher motivation in low-income countries such as Pakistan. Since Pakistan is included in the low-income countries, the element of pay for teacher motivation may not be ignored in the Pakistani context. However, Bennel & Akyeampong (2007) argue that discussion on access and quality in the Pakistani education system often ignores the pay factor as a means to enhance teacher motivation.

The participants of this study confirmed the low-pay factor to be a serious cause of primary teachers' low motivation levels. From participants' responses, it appears that a large number of primary teachers are extrinsically motivated for teaching, as teaching is considered a profession with job security and better chances of secondary employment (Bennel & Akyeampong, 2007; Khan, 2012). The interview data also revealed that primary school teachers had concerns about their low salary packages. Literature also supports this finding as Pakistan is reported to stand among countries which spend the lowest percentage of its GDP on education systems (Komatsu, 2009). As T1 reported,

> *Low salaries in the education department make teaching a less attractive profession. (T1)*

Similarly, T8 reported that the low salary of teachers causes demotivation among primary teachers because they have little money to spend on preparing material for teaching English.

> *Teachers are from a poor background and their salary is low; that is why they cannot spend money on the material required for conducting group work effectively. (T8)*

The comment by T8 suggests that primary teachers are not in a position to spend from their own pockets to purchase teaching materials or to pay a heavy fee to attend teacher training programs in private institutions for their professional development. This is because their low salaries put them into a difficult situation. The comment quoted above also indicates that primary schools have limited or no money to spend on teaching materials for individual classes and if teachers want to try some methodology that requires resourcing, they have to manage it from their own pockets which would probably be not possible for them. This comment also shows participants' possibly flawed understanding of group work. It seems that T8 believes that teachers have to have resourcing to be able to conduct group work, which may reflect the narrow view of participants about group work. From this discussion, I consider that an attractive pay scale may be taken as a key factor to improve primary teachers' motivation levels in Punjab, as well as providing enhanced self-esteem.

**5.7.2.2 Teachers' Status:**

The interview data suggest that participants in this study perceived that primary teachers do not enjoy a respected status in the society due to their humble positions. The issue of primary teachers' low status has also been reported by Bennel & Akyeampong (2007) and Khan (2012). Pathan (2013) argues that competent candidates generally would not opt for the teaching profession because they have opportunities in other professions. However, less competent candidates have fewer opportunities in other professions and so would join teaching. The literature supports findings from the interview data in this study which reveals that participants perceive that primary teachers are poorly paid and therefore are seen to have relatively lower status as compared to other uniformed professionals. Two teachers mentioned that teachers come from poor backgrounds. The response by T4 suggests that a poor background and the low salary of primary teachers has very little to motivate them to try something different in their classrooms for teaching English, as they may not have experienced different approaches in their own education. Similarly, T8 also mentioned teachers' poor backgrounds and low salary as contributing to a poor self-image. The responses by T4 and T8 suggest that participants considered the financial aspect of their low salaried jobs related to their low level of motivation and their view of themselves as professionals. The low status of teachers in Punjab has been highlighted by Khan (2012). She noted that 'the status of teachers in Pakistan is on the declining trend' (p. 10). Her findings suggest that respect for teachers and the teaching profession has declined over last the couple of decades. She argues that the poor status accorded to teachers is due to political interference in the education system. In addition, as Khan concludes, primary teachers are not included in the decision making at school level, nor they are awarded any recognition at national or provincial level (ibid: p. 11). That is why they have a feeling of isolation. The issues raised by Khan (2012) and echoed by the teachers in this study may be seen as significant factors causing demotivation among teachers. Bennel & Akyeampong (2007) support Khan's findings that the low status factor has a crucial role in creating demotivation among primary teachers. In the following section, I shall discuss role of working conditions in enhancing or otherwise teachers' motivation level as perceived by the participants of this study.

**5.7.2.3 Working conditions:**

A good source of motivation for the teachers is the atmosphere in which they are teaching (Salifu & Agbenyega, 2013). For effective teaching, it is important to provide teachers with an atmosphere which has a good impact on them. Salifu & Agbenyega (2013) suggest that good working conditions for teachers include spacious classrooms, favourable furniture, a reasonable number of students and sufficient teaching material for conducting teaching-learning activities. They have further included factors such as incentives, pay increments and participation in decision making which may be important to enhance teachers' motivation level and sense of self-worth. However, the interview data suggests that that teachers in the selected primary schools have little or no access to teaching materials, their classrooms are not spacious nor have particularly favourable furniture, if any, and they generally complained of high numbers in their classrooms. It is also interesting to report that not a single participant in the interview indicated that they had any role in decision making in their schools. Responses by 2 participants highlighted the need to give primary teachers more control over use of teaching material. Their responses suggested that they had a 'boss-employee' relationship with their school heads (Khan, 2012) with a large power differential. T2 rather complained of not having any liberty to use available resources in schools:

> *Teachers should be provided with resources and freedom to access these resources which may facilitate group work in classroom. (T2)*

The comment by T2 indicated that schools have a limited supply of resources but also that primary teachers have limited liberty to use the available teaching material. Moreover, this comment reiterates participants' understanding of group work which they consider may only be implemented with certain resources. Similarly, T5 reported,

> *Teachers should be given liberty to use material because they are conducting group work in classroom when they feel that group work will be helpful to teach certain lessons of English. (T5)*

Comment by T5 supports T2 in this regard and indicates that primary teachers have limited liberty to use available teaching material.

Thus, in the light of participants' responses, I assume that working conditions in primary schools may not be suitable for primary teachers so that they may feel motivated to try

different methodologies of teaching in their English classes. In the following section, I shall discuss the support factor for primary teachers to enhance their motivation level.

**5.7.2.4 Teacher support:**

One way of enhancing the motivation level of an individual is to make him believe that he is not alone and that there is always someone to assist him in difficulties (Khan, 2012). Khan (2012) noted that primary teachers in Punjab feel isolated because there is no teacher support system which may extend any support required by teachers. The interview responses repeatedly confirmed that participants highlighted a clear need of a teacher support system in primary schools. The subtheme of a teacher support system has already been discussed. However, this section will discuss how teacher support may enhance teachers' motivation level. Westbrook et al. (2009) argues that primary teachers in Punjab are given textbooks and they are considered ready to impart knowledge to their students. Provision of a support system is therefore not only necessary for enhancing teachers' professional skills but it is also essential to motivate them to introduce any suggested innovation in their classrooms such as group work for teaching English. However, the responses of 4 participants clearly indicated that the primary school environment might not be supportive for teachers to try group work as a way of teaching English due to lack of a teacher support system.  Similarly, the response by T9 (quoted earlier) suggested that if primary teachers tried group work on their own, they might face difficulties in planning and implementation of group work methodology. In that case, they would not find any support from other colleagues because no such system of teacher support exists in the current primary school settings. Thus, in trying activity-based methodologies, primary teachers would waste time. Bennel & Akyeampong (2007) argue that the absence of a teacher support system may have serious implications for teachers' 'sense of professional responsibility and commitment' (p. 10). They further confirm that most teachers in rural primary schools of India and Pakistan lack a teacher support system. Thus, the discussion presented above highlights, as participants perceived, a need for a teacher support system in current primary school settings as essential for teacher motivation.

I consider that in under developed countries such as Pakistan, renumeration may be considered one of the most crucial factors behind people applying for any job. Along with the salaries primary teachers would wish to have a supportive working environment. These

factors would assist them to feel motivated to efficiently perform their duties. However, as stated earlier, primary teachers in Punjab work in challenging conditions which give them little chances of feeling motivated. That is why, I feel that the factors discussed above contribute to a low sense of self-esteem and flawed professional identity among teachers.

## 5.8 Summary of Chapter Five

This chapter presented findings from questionnaires and interviews conducted with participants of the study. I have presented the findings of this study in two parts. Part A reported findings from questionnaires and part B reported findings from interviews. Findings from questionnaires discussed three major themes emerging from questionnaire responses. In theme 1, I analysed participants' knowledge about their current classroom layout and their perception on how they could change it. Theme 2 in part A of this chapter analysed participants' responses to describe current teaching practices and their perceptions on how they would teach their lessons by using any other method or methodology. The third theme emerging from questionnaires analysed their responses to see how they perceived group work as a way of teaching English in primary schools of Punjab. In the light of participants' responses, it was found that an overall picture of participants' perception of current primary school settings is one which is characterised by lack of teaching resources and teaching support. Participants showed a flawed understanding of the principles and practice of group work. They perceived that it was difficult for the primary teacher to replace their current lecture based traditional way of teaching with activity-based teaching methodologies such as group work due to lack of resources such as teaching material, teaching time and space in classrooms.

Part B of this chapter further confirmed findings from questionnaires in which participants extended their responses in interviews to explain what they had not explained in their questionnaire responses. The themes emerging from the interview data presented a clearer picture of participants' understanding of group work and challenges that may impede implementation of group work as a way of teaching English in primary schools of Punjab. Theme 1 presented an elaborated picture of current settings in primary school and reiterated findings from the questionnaires giving an extended description and analysis of issues highlighted by participants. Theme 2 presented issues with relation to teacher training which participants perceived to have played a crucial role in primary teachers'

inability and unwillingness to try various activity-based teaching methodologies such as group work. Theme 3 presented participants' perception of their understanding of primary teachers' professional identity. It is pertinent to remind the reader that theme 3, professional identity was not the focus of this study, though it was later found that the research data highlighted a specific pattern which could not be ignored. It was a compelling aspect of this research which highlighted that participants tend to ignore themselves as powerful resources and blamed other factors affecting their ability to carry out 'new' teaching practices such as activity-based learning or group work, citing a lack of resources, support and training. This theme was further elaborated with reference to teachers' workload and teacher motivation which are important factors which shape teachers' professional identity. Pertinent references from available literature were provided to support the findings from questionnaires and responses.

In the next chapter, I shall discuss the findings which are reported in this chapter in order to clarify the multiple influences on Punjab teachers' perceptions of the possibility of introducing activity-based learning such as group work.

# Chapter Six: Summary and Ways Forward

## 6.1 Introduction:

This chapter summarises the findings of this study, which focused on the perceptions of teachers on the use of group work as a way of teaching English at primary classroom level in public schools of Punjab and looks for ways forward. This study found direct answers to the main research questions as well as some indirect answers which were not the primary focus of this study but were found relevant to understand the context to further explore issues with current school settings and teaching practices in public sector primary schools of Punjab. The findings from the data, reported in the previous chapter, exposed several important points for discussion. This chapter returns to the main research questions to guide the discussion in finding answers to the questions on which the study was focussed. The perceptions of participants regarding their self perception have also been discussed in the light of its relation to the research questions. This chapter will provide a brief summary of the results that will link to the main research questions, which will be followed by interpretations and clarifications of these results, with reference to the literature review. In the following section, I shall summarise the findings of this study.

## 6.2 Summary of the findings:

This study was conducted to find out participants' perceptions of the potential of group work as a way of teaching English in primary schools of Punjab. Participants realised that group work was being used in private schools as a way of teaching English which appeared to be effective, however, they felt that it might not work in public primary schools of Punjab for a variety of reasons. The study further investigated the perceptions of participants on the benefits and drawbacks of implementing group work in the English classroom and found out that the majority of participants believed that group work might be an effective way of achieving better results in primary classrooms of Punjab, which were known to have low learning achievements due to low participation of students and traditional lecture-based teaching methodologies used by primary teachers. The present study also investigated the factors as perceived by the participants that might impede group work as a way of teaching English in primary schools of Punjab. The study found that

participants considered that current primary school settings might not be supportive for implementing any activity-based methodology, including the teaching of English. The results of this study showed that the impact of lack of resources and lack of a teacher support system were evident in the primary school settings which might be considered main causes of the prevailing traditional classroom set up and traditional teaching practices in primary schools of Punjab. This study also found that participants believed that the quality and impact of primary teachers was not satisfactory. Participants reported that primary teachers had a low level of professional skills and low self-esteem due to their challenging working conditions. They appeared to have little understanding of how they might adopt different methodologies to teach English more effectively in their English classrooms. Participants considered that primary teachers in Punjab had to work in difficult conditions which did not make it easy for them to try to use a variety of methodologies such as group work to teach English in their classrooms.

The study also investigated participants' perceptions of factors that might play an effective role in creating professionally effective teachers and found that participants perceived various issues with teacher training and the teacher support system in primary schools which did not seem to support teachers to adopt 'new' methodologies such as group work in the primary classroom. Pre-service and in-service training, as participants perceived, seemed to have little impact on primary teachers' professional skills because the predominantly theoretical training courses provided little practical knowledge to teachers that they could apply during their teaching practices. The study found that participants believed that teacher training in Punjab was done in isolation, with no opportunities to relate their learning to the practicalities of the classroom. They further stated that primary teachers were generally left on their own after the initial training, and there was little follow up support that might have ensured that teachers were enabled to apply what they had learned in their training to classroom teaching.

Participants appeared to claim that any intervention such as teaching through group work would not work because of an unfavourable school culture in primary schools, however, they appeared completely unaware of the role which might be played by primary teachers to assist implementation of activity-based teaching methodology. The research and theoretical literature (Baines et al., 2003; Qaisar, 2013;) makes it clear that teachers have a crucial role in implementing any intervention which aims to change classroom practices because only with the assistance of teachers may we expect to change anything in classrooms such as teaching practices. However, if teachers, for any reason, think that any

suggested intervention such as group work would not be viable or practical due to their classrooms' conditions, it would be extremely hard to change anything. So, after conducting this study, I believe that teachers' beliefs and their self perception would play an undeniable role to implement group work as a teaching methodology successfully and that teachers need to be enabled to realize that they should aim to 'own' their classrooms to take initiatives proactively to ensure that learning takes place in the most appropriate way.

This concludes the summary of findings of this study. These findings will be discussed in the light of the research questions on which this study was focussed.

## 6.3 RQ1: How do participants perceive group work as a way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab?

The study found that in the light of their experiences and teacher training, participants perceived that group work might be an effective way of teaching English in primary classrooms provided some major changes in existing primary school settings were made. The participants' contradictory stance on group work suggested that they had an unclear understanding of group work. They seemed to believe that group work might only be possible if teachers had a sufficient supply of teaching resources such as audio-visual aids, space in classrooms for students' activities and sufficient teaching time. However, they seemed to ignore teachers' roles while conducting group work. This finding leads the discussion in two different directions: first, participants' perceptions of GW and second, their practical understanding of the same. It was interesting to record that participants, through their responses, appreciated group work as a potentially effective way of teaching English yet they felt that the idea of implementation group work as a methodology of teaching English would not work in primary schools of Punjab.

The majority of participants perceived that activity-based teaching methodologies such as group work might create opportunities for the students to process language which would play a crucial role for students when learning English. They also perceived that group work might be useful in enhancing students' learning in multi-dimensions, including their language learning, by providing more opportunities for practising English language in interaction. Thus, they seemed to believe that group work might be supportive for students to achieve better academic results as well as to enhance their interpersonal skills. However, at the same time, they appeared to believe that activity-based teaching might not be

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possible in the current primary school settings in which there was a lack of teaching resources and teacher support. In addition, a small number of participants completely rejected the idea of implementing group work in primary classroom by arguing that group work would be a futile and time wasting activity in the English classroom which might pose serious risks to classroom discipline and completion of the syllabus. They claimed that introducing group work would create issues of classroom discipline by allowing students to engage in off-task talk. They also claimed that teachers would not be able to complete their syllabus if they taught students by using group work. However, participants seemed to be unaware that teachers might play a crucial part in trying group work. Thus, participants expressed mixed responses in which the majority of them considered GW as possibly an effective methodology provided certain changes were made in the current primary school settings while a small number of participants completely rejected group work as a potential methodology of teaching English.

The explanation of the teachers' positive and negative perception of group work may be seen in the light of the educational context in Pakistan which would clarify why participants responded the way they did. Qaisar (2011) showed that students in private schools in Punjab showed progress in their learning and interactions with other students and teachers as a result of group work intervention. However, Qaisar (2011) also considered the teacher's role as a necessary factor which would play a central role in the successful implementation of group work and emphasised the need for teacher training and teacher support to make group work a successful methodology. Qaisar's (2011) findings may be linked with research by Blatchford and colleagues. Blatchford et al. (2003) and Bains et al. (2003, 2007) presented a convincing argument for a teacher training plan before implementation of group work. A large volume of research (Akyeampong, 2003; Akyeampong and Lewin, 2002; Lewin and Stuart, 2003; Little, 2006) argues that teachers and teacher training are the most influential factors, along with context, regarding implementation of any intervention in primary classrooms such as group work (Wilson, 2015). The research undertaken in these studies suggests that before any attempt is made to implement group work as a way of teaching English, it is important to train teachers and students on how to contextualise activity-based teaching such as group work in primary schools of Punjab.

To understand the Pakistani context and teachers' behaviour in general in Pakistan, it is pertinent to mention here that issues of access and quality in education have been at the centre of educational discussions in Pakistan. Recently, the government of Pakistan has

taken education more seriously in general with a special focus on access and quality enhancement at all levels of schooling (Ministry of Education, 2009). In particular, the issues relating to quality have been addressed by the provincial government of Punjab for the last decade or so. It is for the first time in the history that educational policy has addressed the issues of classroom practices closely along with issues of access to education and literacy rate in the country. The latest policy document (Ministry of Education, 2009) realises a need for activity-based teaching at all levels of schooling, including primary schools, to increase the quality of education and clearly states that activity–based learning would be the objective of any educational reform in Pakistan. The education policy of Pakistan has set targets for making the education system more activity-based and child centred. The Directorate of Staff Development (DSD), since its creation in 1959, has been tasked with enhancing teachers' professional skills. However, since the 2000s the DSD has been working on professional development of teachers much more rigorously than previously and the process of teacher training and professional development has been strengthened. As a result, it may be that teachers will be more involved in training in order to increase their understanding of classroom practices, although this did not come across from the data. Participants in this study reported that only a small number of teachers conduct group work in their classes while teaching subjects of Science and Mathematics and for specific areas of the curriculum.

Under the impact of policy emphasis to increase quality in the in-service training for teacher development, teacher training focuses on the factors of activity-based teaching and primary teachers have started taking interest in a variety of methodologies (Ali, 1998). However, this study found that the policy emphasis and steps taken by the DSD seemed to have little impact on teachers' classroom practices and their self perceptions, perhaps because the training sessions did not appear to be universal and those that the teachers had attended had been very theoretical. They still seemed to use traditional teaching methodologies and appeared to lack the self-belief which would enable them to believe that they could actually make activity-based teaching possible in primary classrooms (Westbrook et al., 2009). As stated earlier, from the responses of participants, it became clear that some primary teachers used group work while teaching the subjects of Science and Mathematics and they claimed that generally students performed better in these subjects. However, the majority of primary teachers still use methodologies which are teacher-centred and lecture-based. Their responses suggested that teachers might not use activity-based learning on a daily basis. The study found that a small number of teachers,

mostly younger ones with less teaching experience, reported having conducted group work or having observed their colleagues conducting group work in their classrooms and perceived group work as an effective way of teaching subjects of Science and Mathematics. On the other hand, older participants with more teaching experience considered that group work might not be an effective way of teaching English.

Participants who said that they appreciated group work, believed that students showed good results in science and mathematics part of which were taught by using group work. However, their responses suggested that the English language was for them a completely different subject in which group tasks might not be appropriate to teach English lessons. During the collection of data in this study, participants were asked to explain how they might want to change the current physical layout of their classroom and teaching practices. Interestingly, they seemed to be happy with the current classroom layout and teaching practices. A small number of them said that they wanted to change their seating arrangement and use different methodologies to teach but the majority of them seemed content to continue their current teaching practices, implying that under the reported circumstances, participants rejected the idea of changing their classroom layout or teaching practices, which might enable learners to work in groups more easily. Thus, they looked reluctant to change the way they were teaching English to the students.

Unfortunately, there has been little research evidence to explain primary teachers' negative attitude towards change in Pakistan. Zimmerman's (2006) study may be helpful because it considers certain factors stated below which may explain teachers' resistant attitude towards change in the schools. Although her study was undertaken in the USA, it is worth examining to evaluate whether the factors mentioned by Zimmerman might be relevant in Pakistan. Zimmerman (2006) talked about a number of reasons for resistance among teachers in general, which may be linked here to explain participants' reluctance reported by participants in this study. For example, Zimmerman (2006) argued that teachers might resist any proposed change in their practices because

- they might not recognise the need for change.
- the proposed change was not in accordance with their habits which were hard to change.
- they might have previously an unsuccessful example of such intervention.
- they did not know the results of the proposed change (fear of the unknown).

- they perceived that the proposed change would pose certain threats to their expertise, their power relationships and resource allocation

Zimmerman's (2006) stated factors may partly be linked with the findings of this study as no study could be found that would explain primary teachers' reluctance to change in Pakistan. Participants' interview responses clearly suggest that they did not recognise the need for a change in their teaching practices as they seemed to be happy with their teaching practices and did not want to change the existing layout of classroom or teaching practices. Similarly, participants' responses suggested that they had developed a habit of using traditional ways of teaching which would be difficult to change. In addition, participants in this study exposed their fear linked with conducting group work. They clearly responded that group work might pose certain threats for the teachers such as wastage of teaching time and delay in the completion of syllabus. More research work would be needed to explore barriers to change in teachers' attitude in Pakistan.

As stated earlier, due to current flawed teacher training, as perceived by participants and suggested by available literature (Westbrook et al., 2009) and unsupportive primary school settings, which may be instrumental in not actively promoting group work as pedagogy in the primary classroom, participants seemed to have developed beliefs that might hinder them from realising the need for any change in the methodology of teaching English. This resistance may also be explained in another way. As evident from the data, participants seemed comfortable with their lecture method, a so-called traditional way of teaching, and did not seem willing to change their current teaching practices to move out of their 'comfort zone'. That may be a reason why they seem reluctant to adopt GW. Resistance to change in primary schools of Pakistan needs to be further researched. However, this study found two aspects regarding teachers' resistance. The first may be linked with teachers' belief that conditions in primary school would not support GW as a way of teaching English and the second aspect may be linked with the unsupportive school culture in primary schools of Pakistan. Activity-based teaching is one of the most recent areas of interest for primary teachers in Punjab due to widespread awareness promoted by teacher training conducted under the Directorate of Staff Development (DSD) programs. The findings suggest that participants perceived that despite potential benefits associated with group work, it would not be a practical idea to implement group work in primary schools of Punjab.

**6.4 RQ 2: What are teachers' perceptions on possible benefits and drawbacks of group work in primary English class in Punjab?**

Research question 2 was developed to investigate participants' perceptions of possible benefits and/or drawbacks of group work in the primary classroom while teaching English. This study investigated participants' perceptions of the potential of group work for teaching English language in primary classrooms in Punjab. The majority of participants perceived group work as a potential way of teaching English in primary schools which may enhance students' academic achievements and interpersonal skills. However, a small number of participants also considered group work as a time wasting and impractical methodology in primary classroom of Punjab. They believed that there might be various benefits of group work if implemented after introducing changes in current primary school settings and teacher training programs. However, the study also found that participants seemed to believe that group work might have some drawbacks if primary teachers attempted to implement it in the current primary school settings. Some participants viewed group work as a threat to classroom discipline and as a time consuming methodology which, according to their responses, might result in the uncompleted syllabus by the end of the academic year. It is important to reiterate an important observation that participants responded as if primary teachers had no role in implementation of group work. They seemed to believe that primary teachers would not be able to try group work in their classrooms. Thus, they failed to see primary teachers as potential resources for introducing elements of group work in primary classrooms to bring quality and innovation into students' learning. Before I discuss primary teachers' perceptions of themselves, I shall discuss some of the benefits of group work as perceived by participants in this study.

**6.4.1 Group work as a source of transition of traditional classroom into an active learning unit:**

The study found that participants of this study believed that group work might enhance the confidence level among students which might give them courage to speak and raise questions in the primary classroom. Most participants reported that students in primary schools showed a low level of confidence and they showed fear of the teacher's presence in the classroom. In the light of participants' responses, I assumed that primary teachers

had an unfriendly relationship with students in primary schools. If this assumption is true, it implies that teachers maintain a distance from students which might be a reason for students' low motivation to talk and discuss their learning issues with teachers. However, I believe that if students were encouraged by teachers to work in groups which would be possible through a less formal teacher-student relationship, and share their thinking with other students and teachers, it would give them confidence to diminish the feeling of fear and they would start to feel comfortable in classrooms and therefore more inclined to advance opinions and offer explanations for their thinking.

The study also found that participants believed that the English classrooms in primary schools of Punjab were considered boring because students had low chances of participation in classroom activities. Participants' responses suggested that they understood that group work might assist teachers to create more opportunities for students to interact with other students and practise English sentences to ensure greater participation. However, participants did not say what part the teacher would play to ensure use of English language during group work interactions. I realised only after the interviews when scrutinising the data that the participants had appeared vague on details of how they might enable pupils to participate more fully. This lead me to infer that the participants were possibly repeating what they had been told in training sessions, but had not really understood how pupil participation might be achieved. This underlines the need for focused training and support for teachers. Despite this ambiguity, the study found that some of the participants suggested that group work might be used to transform primary English classroom into an active learning classroom because it would give students opportunities to be involved in activities in groups and pairs such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. Participants reiterated that benefits of group work would only be expected after provision of purposeful teacher training, teacher support and teaching materials. Participants did seem to be unaware of how teachers could play a supportive role to consolidate the benefits and minimize the drawbacks which might appear while planning and conducting group work. Thus, the provision of training and support would enable the participants to consider the teacher's role and responsibilities in providing an active learning environment.

The study found that participants perceived that, conditional with relevant teacher training, teacher support and provision of teaching materials, group work might be used as a useful methodology to enhance language skills among students. Research on learning achievements in Punjab schools (Andrabi et al., 2007) found that students in primary

schools of Punjab performed at a low level in their ability to read texts and write a few sentences correctly in English. Listening and speaking skills were found to be even poorer because learners were hardly exposed to such an active environment in classrooms that was supportive for the development of language skills among students (p.23). I consider that participants in this study believed that this low performance of students in learning language skills was partly a result of the teacher-led lecture-based teaching methodology which teachers use while teaching English, however, they seemed unable to identify how they might be instrumental in changing the prevalent teaching environment. In the light of literature such as Krashen's (1978) Input Hypotheses (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.4.4), it seems clear that language teaching requires a classroom in which students have plenty and a variety of input in the form of language practice opportunities. Such language practice provides opportunities for students to process language in the form of discussions and reinforcement on a given topic through question and answer exercises. These practices may enable students to repeat sentences and correct their mistakes. As mentioned above, participants believed that the primary classroom in Punjab might not offer opportunities for students to actively participate in discussions and practise English language. Participants seemed to acknowledge that conducting activities such as group work may provide students with more opportunity to practice language and would involve all students in participation sharing their answers with fellow students. In this way, they perceived that group work could create more opportunities in classrooms to enhance students' language skills. However, the underlying message was that they were unaware of a teacher's role in creating this kind of conducive classroom environment. In literature on group work (Baines et al., 2003; Qaisar, 2011), a teacher's role is considered central in creating an environment which ensures students' participation and provides them with opportunities to practise English language in the form of extended discussions and interactive question and answer sessions during classroom teaching.

## 6.4.2 Group work as a way of enhancing primary students' interpersonal skills

As stated in the previous section, the participants of this study perceived that students in primary schools of Punjab are passive. Participants believed that they lacked the skills to interact with other students and teachers in the classroom. From the findings of this study it may be said that the classroom environment in primary schools of Punjab at present may not be suitable for students to develop interpersonal skills. Research (Blatchford et al.,

2003; Baines et al., 2007) confirms that a classroom in which activity-based teaching such as group work takes place is a centre of learning where students not only learn academic lessons but it also plays a pivotal role in developing a sense of how to interact with fellow students. However, this study found that participants perceived that students in the primary classrooms of Punjab spent their learning time in a relatively fearful and restricted environment where they did not learn how to interact with each other as part of the learning process. It appeared that they rarely had a chance to learn by sharing, arguing and discussing with fellow students. They seemed to be restricted to following teachers' directions. Participants reported that they insisted on creating 'pin-drop' silence in the classrooms to maintain classroom discipline. In particular, they mentioned that during their classroom visits, Headteachers checked how well teachers controlled the noise level in classroom. That is why teachers felt very constrained to maintain a low noise level. By maintaining silence in the classroom, teachers therefore limited opportunities for students to participate in classroom activities.

Therefore, according to participants, students lacked a sense of freedom because they lacked a favourable classroom environment and because they seemed to lack interactional or interpersonal skills due to teachers' insistence on silent working. They seemed to be describing a situation which could be described as a vicious circle. The teachers' and Headteachers' insistence on silent working and teacher-led learning seemed to produce children with a passive attitude to learning who had little inclination to speak out, as they might be disciplined. Qaisar (2011), in his study of group work in private sector primary schools of Punjab recorded improvement in students' interpersonal skills which may be linked here as an example of how group work might be helpful to enhance students' interpersonal skills. However, the teachers and pupils in this study, which took place in public sector schools did not seem to be in a position to break out from the traditional teacher-led, rote learning environment.

**6.4.3 Group work for quality of teaching in primary schools:**

Participants believed that by using activity-based teaching methodologies such as group work primary teachers would be able to use various activities in classrooms which would benefit students' learning as they would enhance the quality of teaching in the primary classroom. As reported above, participants thought that the primary English classroom in

Punjab was teacher-dominated by practitioners who lacked adequate training. Westbrook et al., 2009 confirm that teachers use a lecture-based traditional method of teaching English due to which the classroom is viewed as boring for both students and teachers (p. 438). Thus, participants in this study considered that conducting group work might be a way of making their classrooms interesting for students and bring quality to the teaching and learning process but they did not know how to do it. Thus, this finding confirms Westbrook et al.'s findings. Even almost 10 years later, although in principle, the teachers agreed that group work might enhance the quality of teaching and learning they did not know how to conduct it. That is the big issue that underlines need for further appropriate training to give the teachers confidence to try group work.

### 6.4.4 Teachers' perceptions on possible drawbacks of conducting group work in primary English class:

The study found that all participants in this study expressed their concerns regarding time management if they were to conduct group work as they viewed group work as a time consuming activity which might pose challenges for primary teachers to complete the English syllabus. While finding answers to research question 2, it was noted that participants seemed to be unwilling to invest extra time to plan and conduct group work in primary classroom, although from their other responses, it became clear that the reluctance to devote extra time for planning was because they did not really understand the processes of group work and how to plan effectively for it in the classroom. Their biggest pressure seemed to be the completion of the syllabus.

From my understanding of participants' responses and background knowledge of primary school settings in Punjab, completion of syllabus is probably the single most crucial factor which is monitored by school heads. From the findings of this study, it was evident that there were hardly any factors other than completion of syllabus and maintaining silence in the classroom about which teachers seemed accountable to school heads. Responses suggested that primary teachers felt a great pressure from their Headteachers to complete their syllabus and that the quality of teaching was a secondary aspect for them, as long as the classroom was well managed, that is, quiet. Thus, teachers, in trying to complete their syllabus, tended to teach English by using a teaching methodology which was convenient for them to carry out. In the light of their responses, it was clear that primary teachers used

traditional ways of teaching such as lecturing to complete their syllabus. Participants believed that implementing group work might cause a delay in completing their syllabus which might affect their relationship with Headteachers badly and that it would also increase their workload causing more stress to them.

From the literature review it is evident that group work requires learners to spend more time on language practice through activities such as question/answers, discussions, dialogues and role play etc. which would require teachers to spend more time on planning to include group work activities in their lesson plans. As can be seen from the participants' profile (see table 4.1) the majority of teachers in primary schools of Punjab teach as class teachers. This means that they have to teach all subjects (English language, Mathematics, Social Studies etc.) to their assigned classes. It is one of the important responsibilities of teachers to allocate due time to each subject. However, besides the issue of time management in enabling pupils to undertake active learning in groups, this study also found that participants believed that group work would demand extra planning and effort from teachers. Similarly, they believed that while conducting group work, teachers would have to monitor all groups and ensure that students were working on tasks assigned to them. This finding is supported by research on group work (Baines et al., 2003, 2007; Blatchford et al., 2003; Qaisar, 2011) which suggests that teachers have a different yet more responsible role to play while conducting group work. However, as Blatchford et al. (2003) suggest and participants of this study also expressed, a large number of primary teachers are unprepared for implementing group work in their classrooms. The responses by participants in this study implied that primary teachers in Punjab might not be ready to accept the challenge of implementing group work in English classroom in current settings in which there is little teacher support or training. They reiterated that in the current settings, implementation of group work would result in more drawbacks than benefits. Thus, participants viewed group work as a huge challenge for primary teachers in the current primary school settings.

## 6.5 RQ3. What are participants' perceptions on challenges that impede the implementation of group work as a way of teaching English in primary schools of Punjab?

This study found that participants believed that teaching by using group work would be a challenging task which might not be implemented successfully in primary schools without a great deal of teachers' preparation. They considered that primary teachers in Punjab might not be ready to implement group work. They highlighted a number of issues which they perceived, needed to be resolved before any attempt could be made to introduce group work as a teaching methodology to teach English language in primary classrooms. The factors that might impede implementation of group work, as perceived by the participants of this study, have been reported in the findings chapter, however, there were a number of issues which were raised by participants through their interview responses. It is important to remind the reader here that these concerns were not the main focus of this study yet were found relevant in shining light on different factors such as unsupportive settings in primary schools which might be crucial when considering any intervention in the current context of primary classroom practices. During the data analysis, I realised that the issues raised by participants were linked with teachers' self-perception and motivation. From the data analysis, it became clear that in the participants' view, unsupportive school settings were the main cause of the increase in teachers' workload and stress causing demotivation among teachers to try various teaching methodologies. Research (Bernaus et al., 2009) confirms that teachers emphasise the value of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors and that lack of these factors might negatively impact teachers' performance. Participants' responses in this study also suggested that primary teachers had an unclear understanding of their professional responsibilities. In the following section I shall discuss the factors which would, as participants perceived, resist implementation of group work.

### 6.5.1 Primary school settings

This study found that participants believed that current primary school settings may not support implementation of group work. This study found that participants described most of classrooms in primary schools as having a typical and traditional setting as described in chapter 5 (see tables 5.1-5.3). Their concerns seemed to be focused on the physical layout

and furniture of the classroom, for example, participants reported that most classrooms in primary schools lacked a cabinet where teaching material might be stored safely. Most classrooms had desks, a blackboard and a chair for the teacher. The only teaching resource used by teachers was textbooks. This finding of the study on primary school setting in Punjab is supported by available literature. For example, Mahmood et al. (2003) highlighted a difference in a comparative study between education systems of UK and Pakistan, where they reported that a vast majority of primary schools all over the Pakistan lacked teaching and physical resources. Participants' claim of lack of resources in primary schools is supported by the available literature. The issue of lack of resources may therefore have affected the ways teachers perform in the classroom. It is evident from analysis of participants' responses that primary teachers work in difficult conditions with low motivation levels, both on the part of the teacher and the learners, and that they tend to feel pressure to complete their syllabus ignoring quality enhancing factors while teaching English. Kuzu (2007) argues that unsupportive conditions have a negative impact on teachers' performance. Due to these conditions, the classroom becomes traditional or teacher-oriented where the teacher believes his/her role is merely to transmit knowledge to the students (Kuzu, 2007; Brown, 2003) while students remain passive. The learning process in a traditional classroom can be understood by the simile of 'jug and mug' (Scrivener, 2011). This simile explains that learning in a traditional classroom is a process of pouring knowledge from one receptacle (teacher) into an empty one (the student). I find this explanation useful to understand the traditional nature of primary classroom in Punjab as reported in the findings chapter. Researchers (Andrabi et al. 2007; Mirza, 2003; Westbrook et al, 2009) have used similar description to report the nature of primary classrooms in primary schools of Punjab.

Findings of this study which demonstrate the poor conditions in primary schools which further support by Mirza's study (2003) which reported the overall condition of primary schools in Pakistan. She argued that primary education throughout Pakistan is considered to be of low quality due to an insufficient educational budget, difficult working conditions for the teachers, lack of teacher support and low quality of teacher training. Mirza (2003) concluded that inputs in public sector primary schools have been poor with a large number of schools being shelter-less or having as few classrooms as two and insufficient teaching staff. She also reported that a large number of schools are never provided with a copy of the curriculum or resource material. Due to unavailability of resources, including lack of adequate space and teaching materials, the physical conditions in the primary schools may

not be considered encouraging for teachers to bring creativity and innovation in their teaching styles so that students may learn English and other subjects more effectively in an active learning environment. Participants in this study also confirmed that the conditions in primary school settings had a direct impact on their attitude as there was little motivation to try various methodologies of teaching in their classrooms. However, participants' responses also implied that possibly, some primary teachers had taken these difficulties as an excuse not to engage rather than as a challenge to be overcome. At the later stages of data analysis, I realised that participants failed to suggest that primary teachers might overcome these issues by doing something as simple as sitting with other colleagues to discuss practice to find a solution to their problems with a view to developing different perspectives on teaching and learning.

**6.5.2 School culture in primary schools of Punjab may not support implementation of group work:**

The study found that participants perceived their classroom environment as being unsupportive for group work to take place. As mentioned above, primary classrooms of Punjab exhibit dominant characteristics of a traditional and teacher-oriented classroom. The participants of the study termed this classroom as boring and difficult for both teachers and students also because for both parties, English was not their first language. As participants' responses suggested, primary teachers do not offer sufficient opportunities for the students to practice English language in the English classroom because most of teaching time is allocated to teacher talk, predominantly in Urdu, copying the answers from the blackboard and rote-learning of the lesson. Participants' responses suggested that primary teachers could not conduct group work because the classroom environment was not supportive. However, literature on teacher motivation (Bernaus, et al., 2009) argues that conducting teaching strategies such as group work and others which promote students' participation are powerful agents to motivate students to create a conducive classroom environment. The lack of understanding that the teachers demonstrated about how to go about implementing even a simple form of paired speaking, for example, could be said to continue to contribute to the lack of learner motivation and engagement and thus to teacher motivation.

All the factors mentioned above play a role in making the classroom environment unsupportive for implementing group work. On this point, it is important to note this study highlighted some cultural issues in the working atmosphere in the primary school settings, particularly regarding the relationships between the teachers and their Headteachers. Although I did not find any direct evidence to argue on impact of cultural factors in primary schools, Akhtar (2013) found that school environments were not supportive to promote problem-based teaching and learning. Akhtar (2013) argues that it is generally seen in the teacher-student relationship in Pakistani culture that the element of respect is dominant. In Pakistani culture, children are taught to respect their elders, not to argue with them and the teacher is presented as a spiritual father of students. In addition, a teacher has a dominant role in the classroom where he, with his limited teaching skills, controls and decides how to teach English to his students (Akhtar, 2013 p.110). The culture of respect extended to the teacher/Headteacher relationship, as it was clear from the data that teachers felt obliged to concur with direction from the Headteacher, particularly with regard to keeping a quiet class and completing the syllabus. As alluded to earlier, the respect shown by the pupils to the teacher and the teachers to their Headteacher, could almost be described as fearful, due to the power that each level of the hierarchy was perceived to have over the lower echelon. From my experience as a student in the similar public sector primary school, I remember that the Head teachers had a dominant role in primary schools who had an authoritarian relationship with teachers. It appears in the intervening period, nothing has changed. In the same way as the students had been reported as having fear of teachers in classroom, it was clear from their responses that teachers had a similar fear of the Headteachers. As teachers were accountable to their heads, the majority of participants considered that group work might create perceived discipline problems in the form of increased noise level. However, research on discipline in the classroom (Marlowe & Page, 2005) suggests that it is important to understand the nature of noise in classroom. The concept of noise is related with interference during teaching and learning process. For Marlowe & Page, interference may commonly be seen in the traditional classroom where teachers try to control all variables except the teaching and learning process in the classroom. They argue that teachers utilise their energy on controlling students and maintaining classroom discipline. On the contrary, when the teacher has a good control of the teaching and learning process in classroom, the noise is a constructive one. The explanation given by Marlowe & Page (2005) implies that noise is not always an indication of lack of discipline rather it may also be a sign of constructive activities going on in the classroom. It also means that communication between the teacher and students may create

a certain level of noise but it should be considered a constructive one which school heads need to identify while assessing discipline in classroom. The discussion on the classroom environment highlights that school heads need to differentiate between constructive and destructive noise and support teachers by tolerating constructive noise in classrooms, which may be a difficult task for them, as they have come through the same traditional system. The role of school heads can be considered central in creating a conducive environment in classrooms as well as in schools. The study found that participants' responses suggested that it was not just the students who felt fearful in school atmosphere but teachers possessed a sense of anxiety too when asked to consider activities such as group work which might result in increased noise levels. Their apprehension of a Headteacher and reprimand from the Headteacher for a noisy and undisciplined classroom was very significant.

From their responses, it became clear that primary teachers in Punjab work in difficult conditions with little support from Headteachers and colleagues, which raises the question as to whether the Headteachers had been adequately trained to support their staff. Particularly, as far as the teaching support is concerned, participants confirmed that current primary school settings provided no system of teacher support. School heads did not provide them any platform in schools where they could have a chance to share their experiences with other colleagues to find shared solutions to issues arising in the classroom. In addition, participants perceived that the support of Headteachers would be crucial to provide motivation for primary teachers to try activity-based teaching activities such as group work in classrooms Thus, there were many interlinked factors that were perceived by participants which might impede implementation of group work according to participants' responses, most of which centred around support and training.

### 6.5.3 Teachers' reluctance to adopt group work as a way of teaching English:

Participants perceived that primary teachers had no authority to implement group work on their own in classrooms. They also considered that primary teachers were not capable of adopting group work as a teaching methodology because, apart from the training issues, they lacked the authority to do so. There are two interlinked aspects of participants' perceptions of primary teachers' capacity issues which will be discussed in this section.

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First was the perception by participants that teachers lacked autonomy. Their scope for taking decisions was seen as negligible because their role was to carry out the instructions of the authoritative Headteacher, not to make suggestions about policy or strategy. The second factor was the poor level of teachers' professional skills and their lack of confidence in trying different methodologies of teaching English. It seems obvious that skilful teachers rather than unskilled would have more confidence to try a variety of methodologies in classroom teaching to improve quality in students learning. According to the implications of their responses, primary teachers did not feel very professionally skilled, and, I argue that that is why, they had a limited or flawed understanding of teaching methodologies, apart from transmission. Primary teachers' poor performance raises questions about the process of teachers' preparation. The following section will discuss initial and in-service teacher training which are essentially responsible for teachers' preparation for teaching.

### 6.5.4 Teacher training and teacher support system in primary schools of Punjab:

Teacher training for primary teachers in Punjab was a matter of concern for the participants as all of them mentioned issues regarding pre-service and in-service teacher training. Participants perceived that the poor quality of pre-service and in-service teacher training might not develop adequate professional skills among teachers. Teacher training has an undeniable role to play in the professional development of teachers. Such training is conducted to enhance teachers' teaching skills so they can fulfil their teaching responsibilities in accordance with the objectives set by the educational policy of the country, as well as creating a positive learning environment in the classroom where learners can fulfil their potential. The majority of participants asserted that current teacher training, both pre-service and in-service, were inadequate to prepare professional teachers.

The respondents highlighted the need for appropriate teacher training which would prepare primary teachers to conduct activity-based teaching such as group work in their classrooms. Participants' emphasis on the need for teacher training highlights that primary teachers were not getting the training that would enhance their teaching skills and give them confidence. In addition, their responses suggested that the available opportunities for pre-service and in-service teacher training (as explained in chapter 2) could have a limited impact on their teaching practices because of its low quality. This finding is supported by

the available literature on group work (Spring, 1998; Baines et al., 2003, 2007; Blatchford et al., 2003) which suggests that any suggested intervention in the classroom would require that teachers and students prepare for it. In the light of research on group work (Baines et al., 2003, 2007; Blatchford et al., 2003) and responses of participants in this study it is considered essential that teacher training occupies a pivotal role in the professional development of teachers. The SPRinG project (Blatchford et al., 2003) was an example of a productive project which recorded students' academic achievements and improved interpersonal skills as a result of implementing group work (Bains et al., 2003). This project included a special focus on teachers' skills development through training, discussion and the production of a teachers' handbook. The findings from the SPRinG project confirms that the implementation of group work may only be possible after intensive training of teachers in which they are able to understand the purpose and procedures of group work for teaching purposes. After attending teacher training and gaining teacher support, teachers may be expected to implement group work in their classroom teaching. Especially, in the case of any intervention in the classroom such as group work, it is important that teachers are not left isolated while attempting to implement group work as a methodology of teaching English because while trying a methodology which is new for them, they are likely to face certain challenges and teacher support should be available when they require it. In this way, teachers could feel motivated to try various approaches in classrooms.

The analysis of data also highlighted issues of teacher motivation and their understanding of professional identity to be among their concerns. They reported factors such as low salary, difficult conditions and little support which left them in a situation where they were not motivated and unable or unwilling to recognise their professional responsibilities. From participants' responses, I learnt that they were not motivated or able to recognise the flaws in their understanding of themselves as teachers. As stated in the findings chapter, teaching is undoubtedly a challenging task which requires teachers to have necessary teaching skills as well as a high level of self esteem or motivation. Teacher stress is well documented in all areas of the world (Collie et al., 2015; Sandilos et al., 2018; Friedman-Krauss et al., 2014), but in the Pakistani context, the variety of demands put on the teachers and the perceived pressures from Headteachers meant that the participants appeared to have lost their self-esteem and belief of themselves as skilled professionals (Smith and Burke, 1992).

The final stages of data analysis unfolded many secrets regarding teachers' professional selves in Punjab which were not a direct focus of this study yet they were considered an

important part of findings of this study. I consider that the real contribution of this study lies not in the answers of the research questions but rather in the crucial findings of this study that until teachers feel motivated and are willing to take ownership of teaching and learning, no group work or any other perceived change activity may be expected to be successful.

## 6.6 Summary of Chapter Six

This chapter discussed the findings of this study, which has focused on the perceptions of participants on the use of group work as a way of teaching English at primary classroom level in public sector primary schools of Punjab. This study found direct answers to the main research questions as well as highlighting various aspects which though not the main focus of this study had a strong link with contextualising participants' perceptions of group work as a way of teaching English in the Pakistani context. This chapter discussed the main findings in the light of the main research questions making explicit references to the available literature. The chapter presented a discussion on participants' perceptions of group work, possible benefits and drawback of group work as perceived by the participants and aspects that participants thought might impede the implementation of group work in public sector primary schools of Punjab. The chapter concluded with a discussion of participants' perceptions of their professional identity.

**Chapter Seven: Conclusion**

**7.1 Introduction:**

This study has focused on three main research questions in order to explore the participants' perceptions of group work as a way of teaching English in primary schools of Punjab. In this chapter, I have synthesised my findings and related them to my research questions. This chapter also considers the implications of the findings from this study. After that, I have assessed my work to highlight some limitations of the study and suggest some areas for future research.

The research questions explored participants' perceptions on group work as a way of teaching English, their perceptions on possible benefits and drawbacks of group work, and factors perceived by participants that may impede the implementation of group work. The data was collected for analysis by conducting questionnaires and interviews with the participants with the aim of finding answers to the research questions. The study looked at the evidence collected and analysed the responses to perceive participants' understanding of group work and aspects of teaching English in selected primary schools. In addition, this study also uncovered important issues related to aspects of teacher motivation, teacher agency and teachers' professional identity. These aspects were not the focus of research questions; they emerged from the data as interesting factors linked with the participants' understanding of themselves as teachers and show that change is not only about language learning, it is about changing the teachers' perceptions of themselves as being capable of changing their practice regarding classroom pedagogy. The final analysis of data revealed that these factors, as perceived by participants, might be responsible for teachers' low self-esteem which according to participants, prevented primary teachers being innovative in their classrooms.

There was a great deal of overlap in participants' responses from questionnaires and interviews which reiterated participants' point of view on the topic. At the same time, many contradictions appeared in the data. These differences of opinions were thoroughly explored and explained in the discussion chapter. Certain threads were found running through questionnaires and interview responses which were found helpful to highlight important aspects linked directly or indirectly with the topic of this study. For example, participants highlighted the impact of low quality teacher training which seemed to be

directly linked with teachers' teaching practices and with the teaching and learning process in the English classroom. Similarly, they talked about teachers' professional identity which may be linked with teachers' performance in primary classroom. These aspects further allowed me to explore the topic and offered a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions of themselves and their views on group work as a way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab, and also their views of the possibility of using more learner-centred methodology.

I, being a researcher, recognise that the study has focussed on participants' opinions and care has been taken to depict a clear picture of their perceptions of group work while conducting this research and reporting the findings obtained from it. However, I feel that there is room for further research to investigate and explore various aspects regarding teaching of English by using group work in public sector primary schools of Punjab.

## 7.2 In relation to research question one (RQ1): How do teachers perceive group work as a way of teaching English?

Participants' responses suggested that they had a flawed understanding of group work. which has been reported in the previous chapter in detail. In this section, I shall elaborate why participants thought the way they thought about group work. In addition, I shall give my recommendations in the light of participants' responses.

a) First of all, participants' responses suggested that there is lack of sufficient funding for education, which is impacting primary teachers' performance and their self-esteem. In order to see an improvement in teaching and learning it would appear that the government needs to increase funding to provide teaching resources and good salaries of teachers. I consider that provision of funding may improve teaching practices and teaching resources which would therefore improve the quality of teaching and learning.

B) Secondly, participants' responses suggested an urgent need for relevant initial and in-service teacher training and teacher education. Findings of this study inform us that participants believed that teacher training programs rarely include practical factors which might inform teachers how to implement various teaching methodologies. In the light of participants' responses, it seems clear that the Directorate of Staff Development (DSD) should ensure use of modules for both, initial and in-service teacher training courses which

assist teachers in enhancing their practical knowledge of teaching methodologies and teaching skills. Teachers could then learn in their ZPD themselves and benefit from having seen group work operating successfully first hand.

c) It is also clear that headteachers need to provide support to primary teachers to assist them in using variety of teaching methodologies in classroom. A teacher support system under headteachers' supervision may include monthly discussion sessions in which teachers are allowed to discuss their issues with colleagues and find agreed solutions to them.  In the light of participants' responses, considerate seemed obvious that primary teachers have limited opportunities to enhance their knowledge regarding teaching practices. They seemed to have limited vision and knew little about teaching practices in the world. Opportunities such as group discussions could encourage them to know how teachers across the globe cope with issues during teaching practices.

Participants expressed their views on group work which were surely an expression of their beliefs about this methodology. No doubt, there would be some sources from which they had developed these beliefs. I consider that three aspects may have contributed to the participants' understanding of group work as a methodology of teaching English in primary classrooms. First, I consider the education policy of the country as a powerful influence on participants which may have increased participants' interest in activity-based teaching. The Education Policy (2009) emphasises an introduction of activity-based teaching in the primary schools. For that purpose, the Ministry of Education in Pakistan set certain targets to ensure use of activity-based teaching and learning methodologies in primary schools and some changes were made in the curriculum accordingly. For example, various teaching activities were introduced to teach subjects including English language which confirm that that implementation of activity-based teaching and learning has become one of main targets of primary education system. However, as may be seen from the findings of this study, participants' responses indicate a gap between government's aspirations and policies regarding activity-based teaching methodologies and what is actually happening in classrooms. In addition, the data also reflected the pressure felt by the participants to change their practice when there is no meaningful support either locally in primary schools or nationally and the impact that this has on their self esteem and agency should also be noted.

The second aspect which might have influenced understanding of teachers regarding group work may be teacher training. The content of teacher training, in line with the education

policy, sermonizes the use of activity-based teaching. The word 'sermonize' has been used intentionally here to show that these training sessions are based on a theoretical framework and that there are hardly any practical lessons for the participants. In short, teacher training is mainly done by lecture type transmission of 'ill-defined' theories (Westbrook et al. 2009; Ashraf et al. 2005). The participants' responses suggested that teachers might have received information about group work in these training sessions but their practical knowledge about activity-based teaching methodologies remained flawed (Westbrook et al., 2009, p. 438). As stated in the earlier part of this section, the DSD is in a position to inform teachers by actively involving them in training sessions where they can ask questions, discuss with others and try out some of the methodologies. The DSD may seek assistance from private sector training institutions. However, while designing the training modules with the private sector teacher educators, the difference between private and public sector settings must be taken into account. As we know from this study, private sector schools have a better supply of teaching resources and a different ethos. Thus, training has to take into account the context within which the teachers are working and appreciate that teachers cannot make the giant leap from traditional to more active learning practices in one step, but can make incremental changes which in time will promote confidence to become more adventurous regarding activity based learning.

Thirdly, for the last couple of decades, a large number of private schools have started operating throughout the country (Andrabi et al., 2002). These primary schools are not only providing education to a large number of students, they are known to provide quality education to students in primary and higher levels of schooling. These schools are appreciated by society and the media due to provision of skilled teaching staff, a better supply of teaching facilities such as appropriate buildings and classrooms with more appropriate furniture, and use of activity-based teaching methodologies. This means that the idea of activity-based teaching is no longer unfamiliar for the public and teachers in public sector primary schools. From the questionnaires' responses, the majority of participants claimed that they had discussed group work with their colleagues and had seen it taking place around them, however, as is evident from their interview responses, participants might have developed a theoretical understanding of group work, but their practical understanding of group work remained flawed.

It appears that we find success stories of group work through literature which comprise foreign studies. Knowledge of these success stories inform us that group work is effective in some parts of the world, however, it does not inform us how well it would work in

different context. Similarly, although participants in this study might have a good opinion of group work, they did not know how in implement it in their context. That is why I consider that they felt that despite its possible benefits, group work might not be workable in public sector primary schools in Punjab. Galton & Hargreaves (2009) indicate a gap between theory and practice. Galton & Hargreaves (2009) assert that a high volume of research confirms that group work may be used to improve students' participation and their academic achievements. However, despite its documented effectiveness, this methodology is infrequently used in classrooms. Similarly, in my findings stated in the chapter on discussion, I have shown that the participants of this study perceived that group work might be an effective way of teaching English in primary classroom. However, they thought that group work would not work in primary classrooms of Punjab because the existing primary school settings would not allow a smooth functioning of group work in the primary classroom. It was a noticeable contradiction which appeared in this study which highlighted a gap between theory as expressed in policy and practice perceived by participants regarding teaching practices in primary school of Punjab. I found out later, when teachers' reluctance to try out new methods was articulated in the interviews, that they did not fully understand how to conduct group work in their classrooms. This reluctance was expressed through their complaints about workload and overloaded curriculum, however, it became clear that the real issue was the teachers' self-identity which could not envisage a scenario where they could relinquish control. As they themselves may not have felt trusted (or did not trust themselves) to be innovative, they could not trust their pupils to learn through more pupil-centred approaches. This study highlights a need for more discussion among teachers about ways in which more learner-centred classrooms may be established and also how local government can enable this to happen.

Researchers (Hascher et al., 2004; Cheng et al., 2010) agree that novice teachers develop a conception of teaching on the basis of pre-training experiences such as schooling and teacher education programs. It means that before entering the practical context of teaching, they construct their personal, theoretical concepts of the teaching profession as a result of their past experiences and teacher education programs. However, when they start teaching as a profession, they find their own classroom different from what they had expected from their experiences and teacher education programs. Responses of participants in this study highlighted a similar theory and practice gap as mentioned above. In the questionnaire responses, a large majority of participants stated that they had read about group work and

had discussed this methodology with other colleagues during teacher training programs. Participants seemed to appreciate group work as a way of teaching English, but at the same time, they suggested that it would not be workable in real classroom settings of primary schools in Punjab, because they thought that teacher training programs provided little knowledge on how to conduct it. The participants' responses raised questions on the quality and frequency of teacher training for primary school teachers and suggested that either primary teachers were not getting adequate training or the quality of teacher training was poor. Participants' responses suggested that due to the highly theoretical content of teacher training programmes, teachers might not be able to translate their training into classroom practices. During these training sessions, as participants' responses suggested, the trainers preached the use of activity based teaching, such as group work. However, they hardly demonstrated in their training sessions how such activity would be integrated into classroom teaching and learning. Westbrook et al. (2009) confirm that teacher training for primary teachers in Pakistan includes only a four-week teaching practice which covers only twenty percent of final exams. In this way, as Westbrook et al (2009) conclude, a large part of teacher training focuses on theoretical knowledge which trainees reproduce in the final exams. The theory and practice gap seems to have a strong link with participants' perceptions as they repeatedly highlighted the need for teacher training for the specific purpose of how to conduct group work or other activity-based teaching methodologies in the primary classroom. Thus, the participants highlighted the need for them to be learners in meaningful systematic training on active learning approaches, which is not a 'one off' session, but a series of sessions over a term or a year so that teachers can try out different activities and then come back and discuss how to improve. The solution to close the gap between what the teachers are getting told in these infrequent trainings and their understanding of how group work might operate in their classroom, has to be sustained and sustainable training in which the teachers themselves experience what it is like to be a learner in a collaborative environment. Contradictions such as the one discussed above repeatedly appeared in participants' responses in the questionnaire and interview data which were highlighted and interpreted in the chapters on findings and discussion respectively.

The majority of participants asserted that if the proposed changes such as supply of teaching resources and relevant teacher training existed in current school settings, group work might be used an effective way of teaching English in a number of ways. They perceived that group work might be useful in enhancing students' learning in multi-

dimensions such as development of language skills, enhanced classroom participation and confidence among students. Particularly, they believed that group work might play an important role to teach English in a way in which students would actively participate in the classroom. The participants of this study considered that students in primary schools had low participation in class and achieved poor academic results due to the traditional methods of teaching such as lecture method and translation method being used by the teachers. Their responses suggested that group work might be used as a remedy for a large number of teachers' and students' issues related to learning. For example, the responses of the majority of participants suggested that group work might be supportive for students to achieve better academic results and to enhance students' interpersonal skills, giving more opportunities for students to practice English language in the classroom.

A small number of participants considered group work as a futile and a time wasting activity in the English classroom which might pose serious questions regarding classroom discipline and completion of the syllabus. They believed that group work might be a challenging methodology to adopt for primary school teachers. They considered that primary school teachers had a difficult and lengthy syllabus to cover. Using group work might waste their time and they would not be able to complete their syllabus in time. However, these participants concurred with the majority regarding training, as they also believed that primary teachers were not receiving effective training which might enable them to implement group work in primary classroom. They also talked about primary school settings where primary schools were lacking a teacher support system. They opined that teachers would not have any support in case they have problems in conducting group work in their classrooms. Researchers (see, for example, Fullan, 2002) argue that in order for any change to teaching practices to work, there has to be sustained and sustainable support so that teachers can get help and discuss issues in adopting new practices.

The study found that participants showed a mixed perception of group work as a way of teaching English. It seems evident that they had a flawed understanding of how to conduct group work in the primary classroom which raised questions about their conception of teaching. As mentioned earlier, Cheng et al., (2010) proposed a model of teacher beliefs in which student-teachers develop their conception of teaching methodology from three sources; pre-training experiences, teacher education programmes, and teaching context. Similar sources of teachers' personal practical theories (PPTs) were shared by Levin & He (2008). Cheng et al. (2010) proposed that pre-training experiences may be described as the way they were taught (92-93). In pre-training experiences, the student-teachers remember

the actions of their teachers in their classroom during their student life. These experiences play an important role in developing their understanding of how to teach. In the next phase, student-teachers are trained how to teach in the classroom where they are introduced to different methodologies of teaching. In the end, they are exposed to the teaching context where they apply their knowledge into practice which is based on pre-training experiences and teacher education programmes (Cheng et al., 2009; Levin & He, 2008). In the teaching context, novice teachers translate their knowledge into practice and amend their teaching styles which undergo many changes and adjustments to adopt a method which is more convenient for them according to their teaching context. At this point, the student-teachers try to match their (practitioner's) conceptions with theories and any mismatch at this point may widen the gap between their personal theory and practice. This study has found that participants' responses suggested that a similar mismatch as described above existed in primary school settings where primary teachers were unable to translate their training into practice. It seemed that participants' conception of teaching was more influenced by their experience of being students and existing classroom practices. They seem to have retained the concept of teaching which they had developed by observing their teachers and, later on, by observing their colleagues in schools. Lortie (1975 cited in Levin & He, 2008) termed this as 'apprenticeship of observation' in which novice teachers develop their conception of teaching as a result of being students and being observers of colleagues. Similarly, in this study it was clear from participants' responses that their conception of teaching methodology was mismatched with their training. The responses of the participants in this study, suggested that the primary school teaching context in Punjab had many issues, such as lack of teaching facilities and resources. It is more likely that, in the light of their conception of teaching under the circumstances stated above, they had adopted the most convenient methodologies to teach their students: lecture based and traditional in nature. The issues of teacher training and lack of teacher support seemed to further add to teachers' problems. Thus, these circumstances might not motivate teachers, as participants' responses suggested, to try implementation of group work in primary schools of Punjab.

The perceived expectations of headteachers were also very influential in forming the teachers' beliefs about effective teaching. For example, headteachers do not want to hear noise coming from a classroom and may censure the teacher. The participants' responses highlighted the very hierarchical nature of the education system in Pakistan, where teachers feel constrained to finish the curriculum by whatever means possible, the 'taught'

curriculum, rather than the 'learned' or 'understood' curriculum. If they do not fulfil this obligation, they will possibly be disciplined or criticised by headteachers.

In the light of participants' responses to answer RQ1, it appears that participants of this study had an insecure understanding of group work as well as a flawed understanding of teachers' responsibilities. Theoretically, they believed that group work might be used as an effective way of teaching English in primary classrooms for which they had heard of examples of private schools in Punjab, but they were doubtful about practical implications of group work for their classrooms due to their perceived issues of school settings and teacher training. However, they failed to realise that teachers might work effectively to minimise the impact of existing school conditions and that use of various teaching activities might work to solve their issues if teachers felt enabled to take initiatives. At the same time, participants' responses suggested that they received insufficient and inappropriate teacher trainings which offered little for them to translate their initial training into teaching practice. Answers to RQ1 convinced me to conclude that participants of this study believed that primary school teachers were not yet professionally prepared to use activity-based teaching methodologies such as group work and that they seemed to have a flawed understanding of their professional identity. The present study investigated their perceptions on implementation of group work and indirectly found that participants' responses suggested that primary teachers lacked motivation to try various teaching methodologies due to workload.

**7.3 In relation to research question 2: what are the possible benefits and drawbacks of group work?**

Research question two (RQ2) explored teachers' perceptions of possible benefits and/or drawbacks of group work in primary classroom while teaching English. Participants in this study highlighted their perceived benefits and drawbacks of group work as a way of teaching English. The majority of participants indirectly answered RQ 2 when they answered RQ 1. As reported in the chapter on findings and discussed in the chapter on discussion, the participants' responses suggested that the majority of them perceived numerous benefits of group work such as students' increased participation, better opportunities of developing language skills among students and their enhanced confidence in the primary classroom, possibly because this was what they had been told in their

training sessions. However, they perceived that implementing group work in their current primary school settings would raise serious issues for primary teachers and school management. For example, participants in this study perceived that group work might cause issues for primary teachers such as delayed syllabus completion, students' disruptive behaviours, issues of classroom discipline and teachers' lack of control. The most important drawback they perceived was that existing primary school settings in Punjab might not support implementation of group work as a methodology of teaching English because there were numerous issues which might negatively impact the results of implementing group work in the primary classroom.

Participants' responses suggested that primary school settings would require some major reforms such as provision of resources, teacher support and teachers' professional development through a teacher support system if group work were to be introduced. They perceived that if group work were implemented after introducing these reforms, it might be seen as possibly a useful methodology of teaching English. However, the participants claimed that implementation of group work without major reforms mentioned above, would result in failure of this methodology.

The majority of participants viewed group work as a possible agent of change to transform the current context of primary classroom in Punjab. The participants in this study were teachers from selected primary schools of District Jhang in Punjab province. All of them had a good deal of professional experience and admitted that primary classrooms in Punjab were 'traditional' with numerous issues including poor academic results and low participation of students in classroom activities. Participants perceived that a typical English classroom in Punjab was characterised by an active teacher who would use most of teaching time in teacher talk and passive students who would listen and follow their teacher as silent listeners. There was not much for the students to do in this classroom except copying and rote learning the answers provided by the teacher. The participants believed that group work (if implemented after introducing reforms in primary school settings) might enhance the confidence level among students and give them courage to speak and raise questions in the primary classroom where teacher-fear was perceived by the participants to be a dominant factor in the classroom preventing pupils from contributing in class.

Participants also believed that the English classroom in primary schools of Punjab was boring for students because teachers used a limited number of activities to teach and

practice English in lessons. Such a state of teaching and learning in primary classroom might be a reason for the participants to describe their classrooms as a traditional and boring classroom (Bernaus, et al., 2009). They considered that group work might change the current traditional, teacher-centred classroom into an activity-based student-centred place for learning English. Participants' perception about the positive impact of group work is supported by experimental research (see Blatchford et al., 2003; Baines et al., 2007; Baines et al., 2016) on group work which confirms group work's positive impact on pupil achievement, better attitudes and an improved social climate within classrooms (Baines et al., 2007 p.157). However, they did not seem to recognise that they could make even small changes to the way in which they taught, incrementally, so that some of the benefits of activity learning could be developed. They blamed circumstances beyond their control without realising that they could change small aspects of their practice which might result in learners becoming less bored and more motivated. Teachers would then also be more motivated. It is important to highlight here that I do not think that they were at fault to think the way they thought. it merely seemed that they were just conditioned to believe that there were too many barriers to implementing group work, or indeed any innovative approach to teaching and learning. However, they did not recognise that it did not need a 100% change overnight; perhaps a gradual introduction of learner-centred activities and then reflection on how to increase them, perhaps in discussion with colleagues would be a starting point to a new journey of exploration of teaching methodologies.

Participants' responses also suggested that students in the primary schools of Punjab showed poor results in language skills (reading writing, listening, speaking) because there were few opportunities for the students to practise English language skills in the primary classroom. One of the benefits of group work they perceived was that group work might work as a useful teaching methodology to enhance students' language skills because, as they perceived, it would provide more opportunities for the students to practice language skills due to increased opportunities of interaction and participation for students while working in groups. Research on group work (Galton & Hargreaves, 2009) supports the perceptions of participants in this study. Galton & Hargreaves (2009) confirmed that high levels of interaction took place in group work. Similar findings were reported in the SPRinG project (Blatchford et al., 2003). Thus, the majority of participants, as their responses suggested, believed that group work, due to its interactive nature, might be helpful to transform the primary English classroom into an active learning classroom where students would actively participate in classroom learning and where they would

practise using the English language more. They seemed to believe that introducing group work might be among the first steps to change the current primary classrooms into a place where students would achieve better academic results and enhance interpersonal skills. However, they did not know how to do it in their context, which provides little teacher support.

Participants' perceived benefits and drawbacks of group work may be seen from two aspects. A large part of their perceived benefits and drawbacks may be regarded as based on their theoretical understanding of group work because the majority of participants informed in their questionnaires and interview responses that they had not used group work to teach English in their classrooms. Their responses implied that they had little or flawed practical understanding of group work. However, a small number of participants responded in their questionnaires and interview responses that they had used group work to perform a limited number of tasks such as textbook reading, rote learning of spelling etc. However, their responses suggested that they only used group work when they thought that it was convenient and appropriate for teachers to use and that they did so infrequently. They did not use group work as a teaching methodology on a daily basis and that there was a clear lack of strategic planning which might enable regular group work.

Answers to RQ2 convinced me that participants' understanding of group work was indeed incomplete or flawed and that they failed to recognise that primary teachers might play a positive role to take the initiative of trying activity-based teaching methodologies which could result in enhanced participation of students across the globe as reported in previous chapters. However, the majority of participants believed that only after ensuring major modifications in primary school settings, any benefits of group work might be achieved and drawbacks be avoided. They seemed to believe that group work might work under ideal conditions only where all the factors which have been identified as supporting group work would be included to allow this approach to take place. These findings suggested that a group work-specific teacher training program would help primary teachers to understand that group work might not be confined to dividing students into small groups. Rather, it needs to be seen as students working together as a team (Blatchford et al., 2003) where the students, not the teachers, control learning activities with a sense of responsibility. Such a state of confidence among students may adopt different shapes depending upon different classroom conditions but the central focus of grouping remains on working together as a team (ibid: 155). However, to achieve benefits of group work, the teachers' role is central which was not realised by the participants in this study. In addition, to gain benefits of

group work, careful planning would be crucial. I believe that changing all factors including teacher training, teacher support system and primary school settings would be an ideal situation. Primary teachers cannot expect these factors to change and even if they did, it is unlikely that they would achieve benefits of group work overnight. However, what they can do is to introduce small changes to their teaching practice and evaluate them in discussions with colleagues.

## 7.4 In relation to research question 3: What are the challenges that impede the implementation of group work as a way of teaching English?

This study found that participants considered teaching by using group work was a challenging task which might not be implemented successfully in primary schools without a great deal of teacher preparation and adaptation in the existing primary school settings. The data obtained from questionnaires and interview responses revealed that participants of this study believed that primary school settings in Punjab had numerous issues that might impede the implementation of group work. However, teachers' flawed beliefs about their professional conception appeared to be the most important factor behind their unwillingness to implement group work in their classrooms which was illuminated from their responses. Participants' responses suggested that they failed to realise themselves as teachers as a crucial factor for successful intervention of activity-based teaching methodologies including group work. Research question 3 in this study was focused to find out participants' perceived factors impeding the implementation of group work in public sector primary schools of Punjab. Indirectly, it became clear that they were stressed, they knew that there were other, possibly better ways to teach subject knowledge, but because of a perceived lack of support and understanding of how to implement even small changes in their practice, their self-esteem was bruised, and they highlighted all the issues that were uppermost to them in their working lives. They have to work under incredibly difficult conditions and asking them to do something that they do not quite understand is a huge challenge and may make them feel inadequate and failing as a teacher. As stated earlier, the traditional classroom ethos in schools and possible poor performance of their learners cannot be wholly considered their fault. They made it clear that they felt caught in a system that makes so many demands on them, without practical help, that they have no time or energy to think of being innovative. Although, question 4 in the interviews asked this

question from the participants, the participants highlighted many of these factors while responding to all 4 questions of the interviews. These factors will be discussed below.

*Need for a change in primary school settings*: Participants believed that the current primary school settings might be considered a big hurdle for the implementation of group work which might impact negatively on the outcomes of groupwork and active-learning methodology in primary classrooms of Punjab. Research on primary classroom practices (Wilson, 2015) argues that the national culture and education systems may have an unpredictable impact on the philosophy of teaching and learning in the primary classroom. Wilson (2015) argues that the chances of success for an imported idea of teaching practice would be unlikely due to the difference of cultures and education system which follow a philosophy different from that of the origin of the new ideas. For example, the relationship between teachers and students in the UK is different from the one in the Asian region. Thus, due to different school cultures, different methodologies would work differently for different contexts (p.116). Participants in this study seemed to highlight the difference of cultures where primary school settings may not support group work. Their responses suggested that they consider that group work would only work in a classroom culture where teachers have a friendly relationship with students and have in-school support from colleagues and school management. This finding was also supported by findings from RQ2 where participants asserted that group work might work if current primary school settings, which are highly influenced by society, would change.

The primary school teachers in this study said that most of the classrooms in primary schools had conventional settings and that the school culture put teachers under stress. The participants associated primary classrooms with a rigid seating arrangement and absence of teaching material to support teaching and learning in the classroom in any subject. Participants described furniture in primary classrooms which was difficult to move, hardly offering any space for the teachers to conduct group work. They believed that classrooms had to have some extra space for group work to take place. These conditions were deemed to be challenging and caused demotivation among teachers if they wished for a smooth delivery of teaching activities. Here again, it appears that participants showed a limited understanding of themselves as professionals with a choice as to how they might approach teaching.

Teachers across the globe have to work long hours to minimise the impact of external factors such as workload, school settings and culture. However, primary teachers in

Punjab, as suggested by the participants' responses, have so many other tasks which they are obliged to undertake and expectations placed upon them by parents and Headteachers that they have no time to think about ways of enhancing their teaching and the pupils' learning. The participants' responses seemed to lack motivation to perform their duties more effectively to introduce teaching methodologies which are considered as contributing positively in students' learning. Teachers stated that they may involve students in activities such as discussions while they are sitting in pairs or threes to engage them into group discussions. This is possible due to the seating arrangements which often mean that children sit in twos or threes in a row. From my understanding of group work after conducting this study and reviewing literature on group work, I consider that primary teachers need to be helped to reflect on ways of implementation of group work in their context, so that they could consider possibilities of how they would be able to form groups in their current classrooms. For example, if they want students to work in groups, they may simply ask students to turn around to work in collaboration with students sitting on the next desk and there may be numerous possibilities which may be utilised to engage students in conversation regarding English lessons. However, participants seemed to have rarely considered these possibilities of group work in their primary classroom, perhaps because of lack of knowledge, or perhaps because of their multiple commitments, they found it more efficient to teach their pupils in rows than to try something new. It is necessary to remind the reader that this study does not advocate the implementation of group work as an imported methodology of teaching English in primary classrooms of Punjab, rather, given the success of active learning activities in the private sector schools in Pakistan, the purpose of this study was to find out participants' perceptions of group work as a way of teaching English and highlight the perceived challenges that may impede the implementation of this methodology in the state funded primary classrooms of Punjab.

Responses of participants also revealed that they considered that the limited supply of resources was another challenge that would impede the implementation of group work. The majority of participants reported that most classrooms had desks for the students, a blackboard and a chair for the teacher but lacked a cabinet where teaching material might be stored. The only resources used by teachers were textbooks and blackboard. However, it is possible that lack of material may also be overcome by teachers' planning. Teachers may invite students to raise questions and give their opinions using short sentences in English. Similarly, numerous activities may be conducted during lessons without the need for specialised materials which would provide students opportunities to speak English in

classrooms. The participants in this study, however, did not comment on teachers' roles in conducting activity-based methodologies such as group work. Thus, participants' responses suggested their flawed understanding of the teacher's supportive role when learners are working in groups.

*Teachers' inability to adopt various teaching methodologies:* The participants considered that primary teachers were not capable of adopting group work as an effective teaching methodology because they were neither professionally trained nor would they feel confident to adopt group work as a methodology of teaching English. I have already established in my findings that participants' responses showed that primary teachers were seen by participants as not prepared for the teaching profession due to their limited knowledge of their profession and inadequate teacher training. Participants' responses also highlighted primary teachers' low esteem and poor self-image which appeared to have played a crucial role in their under-performance as compared to primary teachers in the private sector and which appeared to discourage primary teachers in public sector schools to bring innovation in their teaching styles because of lack of support from headteachers but also from local government.

*Need for a teacher support system:* The majority of participants asserted that primary schools lacked a working teacher support system. Although they might be helpful, they believed that providing teachers with textbooks and handbooks would not be sufficient to implement group work as a way of teaching English. Rather, a teacher support system would support teachers to adopt various activity-based methodologies and help them to resolve their day to day problems while teaching. Participants also perceived that such a support system could also motivate teachers and elevate their self esteem. It was clear from the participants' responses that primary teachers in Punjab have to work in difficult conditions in which they did not feel motivated to adopt new approaches to teaching and learning such as group work as a methodology of teaching English. They considered that adopting any new methodology, would increase their workload. They also believed that any intervention such as group work would require a system of teacher support which would allow them to discuss their daily issues while conducting group work and find shared solutions to their problems and gain reassurance regarding the decisions they took and ways forward. Participants' perceptions suggest that lack of a teacher support system was one of the main causes of low motivation among primary teachers. Consequently, they had flawed understanding of their professional selves and their potential. This finding is further supported by Fullan & Hargreaves (2013) who argue that a teacher development

program needs 'to satisfy the teacher's purpose of teaching, recognise him as a person, consider the context in which he works and consider the culture of teaching' (p.5).

The participants believed that primary teachers would benefit from a teacher support system which might assist them to adopt various activity-based teaching methodologies. In this regard, school heads may play an important role in developing an efficient support system for teachers in schools. They are the ones perceived to have control and who may play a constructive role in promoting activity-based teaching methodologies in their schools (Zimmerman, 2006 p. 240) by engaging teachers in informal gatherings to discuss their daily issues particularly regarding their classroom practices. However, participants did not report that school heads took any initiative for teacher support for their professional development. Indeed, some implied that the headteachers' preferences were for silent classwork, rather than discussion and questioning.

*Need for relevant teacher training:* Issues of teacher training for primary teachers may be one of the main challenges perceived by the participants that might impede implementation of new approaches in primary classrooms. Participants in this study reiterated several times their views on the effective role of teacher training for successful implementation of group work. They perceived that primary teachers had few opportunities of in-service teacher training. Participants' responses suggested that either primary teachers were not able to avail enough training opportunities or the quality of training was so poor that they could hardly relate this training to classroom practices. Participants' responses were supported by the available literature (See Warwick & Reimer, 1991, 1995; Westbrook et al, 2009; Ashraf et al, 2005) on teacher training in Punjab, which suggests that teacher training remains a matter of chance for a large number of teachers in Punjab and the quality of teacher training remains low. After attending these training sessions, there is hardly any change in the way teachers teach. Westbrook et al., (2009) argues that during training sessions, trainers deliver lectures on the effectiveness of group work and other activity-based methodologies but they rarely offer any practical demonstration of activity based teaching. Thus, implementation of group work would require specific training targeting improvement of such skills that are needed for effective use of group work in primary classroom.

*Need to enhance teachers' morale:* The study found that participants had a poor self-image. The majority of participants showed low self-esteem due to a number of reasons such as low salary, high workload, low teacher status, lack of teacher autonomy, perceived

lack of appreciation and reward, and absence of a teacher support system. They reported receiving modest salaries and felt that they were considered low status-wise in society. Some of participants claimed that they had to do part time jobs to earn extra money to meet their daily expenses. The participants' responses suggested that they had a very low morale as teachers. It is pertinent to mention that in Punjab, government servants receive an annual increase in their salaries and so it is for primary teachers. All teachers receive the same annual increase in their salaries irrespective of whether they are seen as a hard working teacher or otherwise. It might be argued that this kind of overall annual increment in salary might discourage the efficient teachers who generally put more efforts than the average teachers for effective learning of students. Thus, participants perceived that there was hardly any additional appreciation for effective teachers from the government. Participants believed that hard working primary teachers in Punjab are working in difficult conditions and are poorly rewarded. Thus, it could be suggested that the remuneration does not contribute to the motivation of primary teachers to try group work as a way of teaching English in the primary classroom.

*Need for teacher autonomy:* From the responses of participants, it was clear that they perceived primary teachers as having very limited autonomy in decision making in primary schools. They viewed the issue of teacher autonomy as a crucial impediment in implementation of group work. The participants, in their responses, expressed their resentment about Headteachers being in control of activities and available teaching material. Research on group work (Qaisar, 2011; Bains et al., 2003; Blatchford et al., 2003; Thoonen et al., 2011) informs that teachers have a crucial role to implement any intervention in classrooms and that it is crucial for them to have access to teaching material and decision-making power in the classroom. However, this study found that participants believed that primary teachers in the public sector primary school had very limited control over matters involving teaching and learning. For example, their responses suggested that they had to depend on permissions from school heads to use any available teaching material or to conduct activities such as group work/pair discussions which may create some noise. In addition, they asserted that the perceived pressure from head teachers led to a lack of motivation among primary teachers to own their classrooms and make autonomous decisions. Participants in this study tended to attribute their unwillingness to take initiatives to try various classroom layouts and different teaching methodologies to a large number of factors discussed above.

From the analysis of answers to RQ3, it also appears that primary schools had insufficient funding from the government to spend on teaching resources and teacher support. From the analysis of participants' responses, it was also clear that unfavourable conditions in primary schools, as perceived by the participants in this study, make it difficult for the teachers to adopt activity-based methodologies for teaching English such as group work. Moreover, lack of teacher support system in primary school settings in Punjab may be a big challenge to the implementation of group work in primary classroom. These issues lead to a lack of teachers' morale which further inhibits any attempts to bring innovation in teaching methodology.

This section concludes here in which I have synthesised my findings to the research questions. In the following section I shall consider some limitations of this study.

## 7.5 Limitations of the study:

During the analysis, I realised some limitation of my studies. These limitations are stated in the following:

- This study was conducted in eight schools of District Jhnag in the Punjab province. The number of participants was relatively low due to limited time and resources for a PhD study. That is why I am not in a position to generalise findings from this study. This study provides perceptions of a small group of working teachers about current school settings, teachers' perceptions of their professional identity and the possibility of implementing group work as a way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab. Thus, I realise the narrow scope of this study, however, it is necessary to acknowledge that the current literature into teaching in Pakistan would appear to confirm what the teachers claimed.
- The study was conducted in male primary schools and data was collected through questionnaires and interviews with male teachers only. I realise that inclusion of female teachers might have given a deeper understanding of a wider range of teachers' perceptions and working conditions in both male and female primary schools. In addition, data from female teacher would also have highlighted possible differences of perceptions of professional identity among female teachers.
- The data was translated from Urdu to English for the analysis. This may be considered a noticeable limitation of this study because some verbal and non-

verbal responses could not be translated. However, the most relevant of these verbal and non-verbal responses were noted and linked with the analysis. All other research episodes undertaken to complete this study were accomplished in English.

o Questionnaire data do not supply a detailed description of attitudes of the participants because the researcher was not with the participants when they filled in the questionnaires. However, the mood and attitude of the interviewee was noted and linked with analysis of their responses.

## 7.6 Further research

To the best of my knowledge, this study was the first attempt to explore teacher perceptions of the teaching of English by using group work in selected public sector primary schools of Punjab and provides new opportunities for researchers to further probe group work in the public sector primary schools. In particular, the real contribution of this study is that it has qualitatively analysed perceptions of working teachers. In particular, as issues arose which revealed the teachers' lack of a positive professional identity and how they struggled to meet the demands placed on them both inside and outside the classroom, research into teacher agency in the Pakistani context would seem a logical next step. I consider that this recent research will provide initial qualitative data on which future research may be conducted. In the light of findings from this study, the following further research would be appropriate for investigation.

o A primary teachers' needs analysis:

A high volume of quantitative research in Pakistan informs us about the low quality of teaching and teacher training in Punjab. However, I recommend that a qualitative study may be appropriate to conduct on the basis of findings from this study. I propose that based on the perceptions of public sector primary teachers, a qualitative study may be conducted in more primary schools to assess teachers' needs and their issues in the current settings. I also consider that rather than starting new projects such as Danish Schools in Punjab which cost millions of rupees, the government might consider taking steps to improve the quality of education in the existing primary schools. An analysis of teachers' needs would be among the first steps to improve quality. The proposed research would inform the Punjab government which areas could be

improved in public sector primary schools which are still the major provider of primary education to students in Punjab.

- o A proposed model for teachers' professional development and supervision in primary schools of Punjab.

Findings of this study imply that different elements in the primary education system in Punjab are running in isolation. For example, teacher training, as reported in this study has no apparent relevance with the teaching practices in the primary classroom. Similarly, the formulation of education policy does not seem to take into account real classroom conditions and teachers' circumstances. Similarly, participants' responses indicated that primary teachers are accountable to their Headteachers, yet they reported to have little teacher support from head teachers. Keeping in mind this state of primary school affairs, I propose that qualitative research on the introduction of a coherent supervision model could be conducted to explore how different elements of collaboration may be put together to work efficiently. As a result, it may be possible to propose a model in which all relevant factors such as teachers' professional development, teaching practices and teachers' supervision are connected to work coherently and none of these factors is isolated.

## 7.7 Concluding remarks

This study investigated the perceptions of teachers on the implementation of group work as a way of teaching English in public sector primary schools of Punjab. In other words, this study was conducted to know teachers' perceptions of potential of group work as a way to change teaching practice and introducing interaction and dialogue in primary schools of Punjab. The study shows that in the current situation, implementation of activity-based teaching such as group work was not seen by the participants as workable methodology in the current primary school conditions. Participants reported that primary teachers acknowledge the effectiveness of activity-based teaching methodologies such as group work, however, they considered that such activity-based teaching may not work in public primary schools due to a variety of reasons. Participants added that there are a large number of issues which need to be addressed before any implementation of group work is made. This study concludes that primary teachers are, if not enthusiastic, at least willing to

try group work while teaching English. Ideally speaking, for implementing group work, certain conditions would need to be in place in current primary school settings.

As stated in the section 1.7 chapter 1, where I presented my reflection on research process to explain how the focus of this study changed in the later stage of data analysis, I realise that primary school teachers in Punjab work in challenging conditions, however, with support they may be helped to change their practice to incorporate elements of activity-based learning, including group work. The analysis of participants' responses highlighted issues with teachers' self-image. Their responses clearly suggested that they were not ready to own their classrooms due to their poor self-image. They perceived that they could not conduct group work because of difficult conditions, however, it was clear that they also felt unsupported and unable to tackle such a radical change to their normal working practices without some help. This study has revealed the poor professional self-image of the teachers and their perceptions of how they may play a constructive role to bring innovation in their teaching styles and other aspects of classroom layout. With targeted support teachers could be enabled to see themselves as real heroes who despite lack of material resources, may be themselves the most effective resource for students' learning.

While participants seemed unwilling to take initiatives to change their teaching styles I did not sense a lack of commitment from their responses. It is evident that, they work in difficult conditions but they still had commitment to continue as teachers and continue teaching to the best of their abilities. From my acquaintance of the context, I confirm that teachers in Pakistan show a high level of commitment as they take teaching seriously as a profession. For example, the commitment of teachers was apparent from teachers of earthquake hit Muzaffar Abad in 2005 when they started teaching their students on debris (Hussain et al., 2006). From their responses it seemed clear that teachers in primary schools of Punjab also have a sense of commitment towards students which may be used as a driving force and starting point for their professional development. No doubt, teachers would need intensive training on group work and a coherent system of teacher support would be needed to address teachers' problems and difficulties. This system would provide the necessary training and support to teachers and invite them to share their experiences and problems with other teachers. In this way, understanding of group work will develop among teachers. In addition, teachers could be helped to recognise the importance of their role in the classroom with the resultant raising of self-esteem. It may be possible for primary teachers to reflect on their teaching styles in informal meetings with their colleagues. In informal fora, they might share and discuss ways in which they could create

more opportunities for students' increased participation in classroom activities and interaction with teachers and among themselves. Thus, after conducting this research, I consider that this study goes beyond its fundamental focus on group work as a way of teaching English. It realises group work as an opportunity for a cultural shift for teachers to focus their teaching practices on interaction and dialogue among students and with the teachers which would not be limited to English language classroom. Rather, it would ensure quality in teaching/learning of other subjects as well.

To attain quality in teaching through introduction of activity-based methodologies, school heads are in a strong position to facilitate teachers' sharing of teaching experiences and find shared solutions to their day to day problems to facilitate their professional development. The participants indicated that school heads were hierarchical, and often seen as remote from their staff. Primary teachers, therefore, tend to maintain a distance from school heads, who are seen as all powerful for decision making in schools. As a way forward, school heads might be encouraged and supported to establish teacher support systems under their supervision to provide support to their teachers. It could be that a teacher support system would fill the gap between teachers and school heads as well as guiding primary teachers as to how to vary their teaching methodologies, including group work, to teach English in the primary classroom. In this way, by developing a teacher support system, we may hope that the primary school settings would change gradually. In addition, a suitable collaboration with local educational colleges and universities would further strengthen teachers' beliefs on their profession and their motivation for professional development.

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**Appendix- A**

<u>**Questionnaire for Teacher**</u>

**Class:...................**                    **No. of students:..................**

Please answer the questions given below, providing as much detail as you can. If you need more space to write, you can use back of this questionnaire.

**Q. 1. Describe the layout of your classroom. How does the seating arrangement look like? What is there on the walls? etc.**

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**Q. 2. If you could change things about your classroom, what would you do? How would it look?**

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**Q.3. Please describe how you do the following while teaching English.**

| a. How do you start your lesson? |
| --- |
| ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------ |
| ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------ |
| ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------ |
| ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------ |
| ----------------------------------------------------- |
| **b. How do you introduce your lesson and its contents?** |
| ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------ |
| ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------ |
| ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------ |
| ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------ |
| ----------------------------------------------------- |
| **c. How do you link your lesson with previous lessons?** |
| ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------ |
| ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------ |
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**Q. 4. If you could change anything when teaching your English class, how would you do the following?**

> **a. Start of the lesson:**
>
> ---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
> ---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
> ---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
> ---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
> ---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
> ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
>
> **b. Introduction of lesson and its contents**
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> ---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
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> **c. Link the lesson with previous lessons**
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**Q. 5. Please circle 'Yes' or 'No' for the following.**

**A. Have you read about group work?**

   a. Yes    b. No

**B. Have you discussed with your colleagues about group work?**

   a. Yes    b. No

**C. Have you observed any colleague using group work?**

   a. Yes    b. No

**D. Have you used group work with your class when teaching English?**

   a. Yes    b. No

**Q. 6. If you have used group work when teaching English, please describe what you did and how your students responded.**

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**Q. 7. If you have not used group work when teaching English, please explain why.**

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**Q. 8. What is your opinion of group work as a way for children to learn English?**

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**Q. 9. If you were to use group work to teach English in your classroom,**

**a. How would you select the children to make up a group? Please, give a reason for your answer.**

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**b. How many students would be in a group? Please give a reason for your answer.**

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**c. What kind of activities would you do in groups? Please give a reason for your answer.**

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**Q. 10. If you were to conduct group work in your English class, then**

**A. What percentage of lesson time would you use for doing group work?**

    a. **25%**

    b. **50%**

    c. **75%**

    d. **100%**

**B. At what stage of lesson would you do group work?**

    a.  At the start of lesson

    b.  Middle of lesson

    c.  At the end of lesson

**Q. 11. Please comment about group work when teaching English in the primary school classroom.**

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**Would you be willing to participate in an interview about group work in English classroom at primary school? If you are willing, please also provide your contact details.**

    a.  Yes,       Contact details:

    b.  No

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.**

**Appendix-B**

**Interview Questions**

Q. No. 1. What is your opinion about group work as a way for children to learn English?

Q. No. 2. What do you think can be the positive effects of group work in English class?

Q. No. 3. What do you think can be the negative effects of group work in English class?

Q. No. 4. What is your opinion about the potential for the implementation of group work in English classes in Primary schools of Punjab?

**Appendix-C**

**Interview Transcripts**

*Q. No. 1. What is your opinion about group work as a way for children to learn English?*

*T1: Without doubt, group work is an effective way of teaching English in primary classrooms. But I have concerns if you want me to implement it in my classroom. I think we don't have enough time and resources for group work in our classrooms. Our classroom environment is also not supportive for group work. If teachers are provided resources including essential training, then group work will be very productive in the process of learning English.*

*T2: In my opinion, teaching English by using group work is useful but considering use of group work in my classroom, I see some drawbacks of this methodology. As there are positive and negative aspects of everything, I still believe that there are many benefits of using group work while teaching English. If you divide your students into groups while teaching English, this is going to help students more.*

*T3: I consider group work as one of the most effective ways of teaching English in primary classroom. It is a healthy activity which targets all four language skills i.e. reading, during process of English language learning among students at primary level of schooling because this methodology creates opportunities for students to participate actively in classroom activities. I recommend that this activity should be implemented in our primary schools and Education department must take steps to introduce and implement activities like group work in primary schools.*

*T4: As far as I know about group work, I think it is an effective methodology of teaching English. This is what I have read in books and learned in my training sessions that group work plays a vital role to enhance language skills among students. From my understanding of group work, I think there are many aspects that need to change in our primary school setting. I personally think that it is not possible to teach English effectively by using group work in primary schools of Punjab. It can serve as a good methodology of teaching English only if we conduct it with all its requirements.*

*T5: In my opinion using group work while teaching English is a very useful idea. Particularly for teaching English it is a healthy activity because language teaching*

*requires children to spend more time on discussions and other activities which give them more chances to practice their lesson. The more they spend time on English language content, more they will get awareness of that language. It is generally found that children show poor results in English subject. One of the reasons of poor results in English is that teachers don't engage children in discussions and they (children) spend less time on English lessons that's why they remain weak in learning English and showing good results in this subject. I feel that teaching English by using group work activities will be a useful for children to show good results.*

*T6: Group work can be used as an effective way of teaching English. Traditionally speaking primary classroom is teacher lead in primary schools where teacher speaks most of the time and students remain passive. This style of teaching does not support development of four language skills in English classrooms. On the other hand if students are divided into small groups and learning task are given to groups, it will offer more opportunities for the students to practice all four language skills, i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking.*

*T7: I think group work is very good for teaching English at primary school because weak students are helped. All types of students are involved in group work. Most teachers in primary schools teach English by textbook reading. Group work offers a better way of learning English which creates opportunities for an active participation of all students.*

*T8: In my opinion, idea of group work as a way of teaching English is not workable. It can be used to teach subjects of Science, Social Science and Mathematics but not for teaching English. English lessons do not require students to work in groups rather it requires students to listen to the instructions of teacher and follow them. In Science and Mathematics, teachers use group work and it is very useful. Teachers make groups of students and assign them to solve exercises in groups. But I do not think that same can go for teaching of English. English is a very difficult subject and students have to rely on their teachers all the time. If we want to put students into groups, teacher cannot pay attention to all groups.*

*T9: I consider that group work is a very effective way of teaching English. Primary school teachers attend refreshers (trainings for in-service teachers) and lots of emphasis is laid on the importance of using group work in teaching practice of English and teachers are asked to introduce this methodology in their English classrooms. We teachers use group work as a way of teaching English there are good academic as well as behavioural results.*

*Group work is a way of teaching English in which students are divided into groups and they work on a task as a team. Generally speaking this methodology is not practised in primary schools of Punjab but teachers with good repute use it where they find it supportive for students to learn any subject. In fact majority of teachers do not understand how to conduct group work in class. Especially when it comes to teach subject of English, it is really difficult for the teachers to use group work effectively.*

*T10: In primary schools of Punjab subject o English is considered a difficult subject for both teachers and students because it is not our first language. Our students face lots of difficulties while learning English language because methods used to teach English does not provide opportunities to practice this language which results in poor retention and use of language. I think group work is a methodology which creates opportunities for children to practice English language and enhances reading, writing, listening and speaking. In our primary school classrooms, teachers use traditional lecture-based methods while teaching English in which students have limited freedom of raising questions during the lesson. Where as in group work, I think, there are more opportunities for students to offer their individual input and discuss issues related with lesson teaching.*

**Q. No. 2. What do you think can be the positive effects of group work in English class?**

*T1: Children's talk with the teacher is different from their talk among themselves. In our primary schools children face lots of hesitation while talking to their teachers. On the contrary, they talk freely with their classmates. Group work gives us opportunity to exploit this quality of children. Children raise more questions and try to answer questions when they are sitting together in groups. Children develop self confidence in group work. In group work children have a chance to provide more than a single answer to same question. I believe that group work improves quality of education due to its effectiveness as a methodology of teaching English.*

*T2: From my teaching experience, I have seen that students in our primary school classrooms have many issues regarding their participation in class. I found them confused and scared of speaking in front of teacher. Only a few students have their say openly in classroom. Generally, confidence level of students is low. In such a classroom when children sit in groups, their confidence level increases and they have a chance to speak and discuss their problems in group. It may not be possible to implement group work frequently but there are some tasks which can be best done in groups i.e. word meaning, spelling exercise etc. In groups students show mutual understanding while doing a task.*

*They participate as a group and learn English as a team and put more efforts to produce good results. While working as a group, high achievers tend to help low achievers. There are more opportunities for all types of children to learn and there is a healthy competition among groups and group members.*

*T3: Group work impacts a number of factors positively. For example, it enhances students' speaking skills. In classroom students' speaking is related with students' ability to raise questions and answer teacher's questions. While working in groups students gain more and more confidence day by day to speak, discuss, question and answer teachers' questions. These aspects give students more freedom to speak which is generally a missing factor in our classrooms. Second is confidence factor. Working in groups gives students more confidence than they generally have. Students learn to develop mutual understanding on subject matter. It is easier for them to agree or disagree when they are working in groups. When they are in front of a teacher their ability to disagree is depressed. I think group work also enhances students' interest in class. It develops a sense of responsibility, mutual cooperation and confidence among students.*

*T4: It enhances reading, writing, listening and speaking because students have opportunities to practice all these skills while working in groups. Students also develop confidence to speak and raise questions through group work. Teacher in our primary education set up provide little chances to students to speak because they think that question/answer above a certain point waste time of students. They consider that their traditional way of teaching English is the most suitable method of teaching.*

*T5: There are many benefits of conducting group work while teaching English. First of all I think group work will provide children with more opportunities to discuss their lesson in a friendly environment. There are teacher related barriers in classrooms which makes it difficult for the students to discuss their issues with liberty. Students are less confident to discuss their issues in front of teacher. In group work they interact with their class mates which provide them more confidence to discuss. Particularly, weak students will benefit more. Group work is also very effective in creating more interest among students to participate in classroom activities. They gain confident to speak and complete lesson related tasks.*

*T6: By teaching English using group work,*

1. *provides a way of teaching English in which students have more active role to play.*
2. *ensures high level of students' interest in learning English.*

3. *creates learning opportunities for all types of students.*

4. *creates a sense of discipline and management.*

5. *Enhances cooperation among students.*

6. *Enables students to utilise and share resources with other students.*

7. *Provides opportunities for students to accomplish their tasks by discussions, suggestions and mutual agreement.*

8. *Enables students to develop mutual respect and tolerance.*

*T7: I think, using group work while teaching English is helpful because;*

1. *Students gain confidence in classroom*

2. *They perform better and attain better grades*

3. *They take interest in English class which otherwise is a boring subject*

4. *They start using English in their practical life*

5. *They are able to learn language skill (reading, writing, listening and speaking) in a better way.*

*T8: In my opinion, group work has more drawbacks than any benefits for teaching of English. This is helpful where you assign students small tasks like solving exercises and doing small experiments. It is also helpful in developing good manners among students but again I would say that it is waste of time for students when they are learning English in primary classroom.*

*T9: There are many positive effects of group work in English class. Group work is a methodology which transfer classroom from teacher-centred to students-centred. Generally English class is boring for students because teacher speaks all the time and majority of students do not understand the lesson and they are silent listeners most of time. Students have fewer opportunities to speak and raise questions on their lesson. For me teacher centred class is not good for learning English. On the other hand group work allows students to take active part in teaching/learning activities in classroom. It also allows students to speak and raise questions among group members. It creates opportunities for students to learn all four language skills (Reading, writing, listening and speaking). In my opinion, group work is an effective way of teaching English.*

*T10: I think, using group work while teaching English is helpful from many aspects.*

1. *Group work ensures mutual understanding among students.*

2. *Weak students perform better in English class.*

3. *Group work motivates students for raising questions and participating in discussions in classrooms.*

4. *students feel valued when they work in groups.*

**Q. No. 3. *What do you think can be the negative effects of group work in English class?***

*T1: Biggest flaw of this methodology is time based. Teachers have to cover lengthy and difficult syllabus. Group work consumes most of the time available for the teacher because he has to teach other subjects also. Making groups and managing them need more time. High achievers require less time but forcing them in group work results in waste of time. Weak students require more time to understand lesson content. As a result high achievers feel boredom and lots of their time is wasted. Working in group requires necessary skills which is lacking not only among students but also in teachers. Teachers receive trainings in which group work and other collaborative activities are emphasised but classrooms conditions in our schools do not support such methodology to work.*

*T2: There are certain drawbacks of conducting group work in English classroom. In my opinion, group work requires more time than teachers have. Children waste a lot of time when they sit together. It is always challenging to keep them on task. In groups, they start chatting off task that wastes their time. Teachers have a prime responsibility to complete their syllabus. The syllabus runs slowly but teacher do not have much time because he has to consume equal time for other subjects. It is also very difficult for the teachers to keep an eye on working of every group. In classroom where group work is going on, if teacher merely tries to control noise level then it is difficult to ensure that group work is effectively working.*

*T3: Despite effectiveness of group work, I think it cannot be adopted as a sole methodology of teaching English in primary classroom. I believe if I try to teach my whole syllabus of English by using group work, I would not be able to complete it within allocated time. The Government of Punjab has brought about main changes in syllabus which have made our syllabus lengthy and difficult. If we adopt methodologies like group work in our English classroom, that will waste our time and we the teachers, would not be able to complete our syllabus. Secondly I think teachers are given very general type of training whereas group work teaching requires special training for both students and teachers.*

*T4: There are many drawbacks in conducting group work to teach English at primary level. It will not incline the students towards learning language rather it will motivate them*

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*to get themselves engaged in gossip and small games causing wastage of time because we cannot expect young students sit together and work wholeheartedly on the lesson tasks.*

*T5: There are always negative and positive aspects of everything. Same is the case with conducting group work in English classroom. Time allocated to each subject is an important part of English language teaching. Group work requires certain time and planning by the teacher. Normally primary school teachers have to teach all the subjects to one class. They cannot allow giving more time to any one subject in particular. If teachers try to conduct group work, they require more time which make it impossible for them to complete their syllabus. Secondly, group work is a demanding activity to be managed in classroom. I feel children are not trained to work in groups nor are the teachers trained to conduct this methodology in such a way that it can work as a useful teaching methodology.*

*T6: There are certain drawbacks of group work if it is not monitored well by the teacher. Teachers must not allow students to talk in their mother tongue but it is not easy to monitor all groups at the same time on what language they are using. Good students in groups take most of the time and weak students are ignored. There are not enough resources available in schools to conduct group work. Classrooms are not big enough to support seating plan that is appropriate for group work. if the group work task does not require participation of all students then group work is futile. Teachers form groups on the basis of performance level in our schools which results in division of students on the basis of intelligence which makes group work less successful. Students use wrong English in groups and teachers can monitor this all the time.*

*T7: I think following are the negative effects of group work in English classroom. Teachers cannot manage group work properly and as a result there will be difficulties for teachers to manage their time to complete syllabus. Children are immature at primary level who cannot understand how to work in a group. Group work requires space and resources which is lacking in primary schools of Punjab.*

*T8: There are many drawbacks of group work in English class. Students make a lot of noise and a teacher cannot control all the groups at the same time. Teacher will spend most of their time in maintaining class discipline because students are not trained to work in groups. Our teachers are not capable to conduct group work in class because they come from very poor academic background. If teachers have to experiment of group work they will waste time and their syllabus will not be completed.*

*T9: Despite its positive effects on students' learning English, group work has some negative effects too. Existing setting of primary school classroom does not support group work. Group work requires a lot of time but teachers have to complete their syllabus. If they conduct group work in their classrooms, I think it will waste their time. If a teacher will take more time teaching English how is he going to teach other subjects. Secondly, in our school setting, teachers are not able to manage group work in class effectively and there are chances that classroom discipline will be at stake. Teachers do not have a system of academic support in primary schools which will result in the wastage of teachers' time again because teachers need support to understand how they might manage group work in the existing conditions.*

*T10: I think there are two drawbacks of group work.*

1. *Group work is a time consuming methodology.*
2. *It is difficult to manage group work with primary school students.*

*Teacher use group work but they cannot attain maximum benefit from it because it is not easy to conduct group work in every class. If teachers spend time on planning and understand how to implement group work in their English class effectively, I am sure it will be an effective way of teaching English.*

### Q. No. 4. What is your opinion about the potential for the implementation of group work in English classes in Primary schools of Punjab?

*T1: In my opinion, possibility of implementation of group work as a way of teaching English in our primary school is not encouraging. I consider teacher is the most important factor in this regard. Low salary in education department makes teaching less attractive profession. Moreover, our teachers are busy in fulfilling their official matters than teaching. For example, in my school there are three primary teachers. One is always busy in the office work preparing daily reports and sending them to Distt. Education office. Two of us have the responsibility of teaching 5 classes. Teachers are doing clerk jobs.*

*T2: Teaching English by using group work is not impossible though, it is important to train teachers how they conduct it. There are factors other than teacher training which makes it a challenging task for the teachers to adopt group work as a way of teaching English in primary schools of Punjab. In our primary schools teachers are over-burdened with responsibilities like Polio-Day duties, election duties, census duties etc. These activities are managed in such a way that it keeps them busy and they are unable to fulfil*

*their prime duty of teaching. The government needs to manage these activities in such a way that they have enough time to pay due attention on their teaching. Moreover, schools have limited facilities of resources in term of training and material. Teachers should be provided with resources and freedom to access those resources which may facilitate group work in classrooms.*

*T3: I see group work as having good potential if we want to adopt it as a methodology of teaching English at primary school. At the same time I feel that implementation of group work depends on motivation and skills of teachers as well as on school environment. Teachers lack motivation because they feel they have no time to apply different methods in their classrooms. I see that teachers' attention is divided due to their activities other than teaching. They are engaged in social activities which keep them occupied and they are unable to pay attention to teaching. Group work can only work if issues regarding school environment and teachers' motivation and skills are addressed in an effective way.*

*T4: I do not think using group work at primary level of schooling is a good idea. There are many reasons for this argument. I consider students at primary level are not mature enough to participate effectively in a group as they need to possess certain skills to perform in a group. I don't think our students at primary school can perform in groups because neither conditions at primary schools nor teacher and students can coup with the demands of conducting successful group work. Teachers and students are from poor and illiterate background. I believe they have never seen anything like group work in practical context. So I do not consider that group work can be used as an effective methodology of teaching English at primary schools of Punjab.*

*T5: As far as potential of group work for Pakistani English classroom is concerned, there is no doubt about it can be implemented as an effective methodology provided some changes are made. First of all teacher training is made effective in such a way that it really helps teachers to implement group work in classroom while teaching English. Secondly, it is also important to provide resources that are needed for conducting group work. Teacher should be given liberty to use material because teachers conduct group work in classrooms when they feel that group work will be helpful to teach certain lessons of English. To promote and implement group work as a methodology, it is important to train them on how, when, and how often they should use group work while teaching English. Same kind of understanding is needed to be developed among students. Teachers also face difficulties in adopting methodologies that are demanding in their implementation. Group work is very difficult to manage for our teachers who are already under great stress due to their*

*responsibilities other than teaching. At present schools do not have supporting environment that may help teachers adopt methodologies like group work on daily basis. Teacher remain busy in ensuring attendance of students, accomplishments of social activities like polio vaccine, census, and election duties etc. This overburden gives them little chance to pay attention towards their primary duty of teaching.*

*T6: group work has the potential to be implemented as an effective way of teaching English in primary schools if,*

1. *Teachers are trained and supported to implement it in their English class. A teacher must understand how to implement this way of teaching in their English class.*
2. *Teachers have facilities to request material they need to conduct group work. Teaching resources such as charts, cards, and other material must be provided in schools.*
3. *There are female teachers to teach at primary level because male teachers do not teach students with care and they are not ready to implement any methodology which require more efforts.*
4. *Enough space is available for students to participate in activities like group work.*

*T7: I think group work has a good potential to be implemented in primary schools of Punjab. To implement it as a way of teaching methodology we have to motivate teachers through intensive teacher training. Because I believe that group work can be implemented in the presence of very limited resources. It depends mostly on teacher whether or not he wants to teach his students by using group work.*

*T8: I am doubtful about potential of group work as an effective way of teaching English for many reasons. There are three important factors in school setting, i.e. School environment, teachers and students. Unfortunately, all these factors do not support group work. Group work requires material like charts and models etc. Schools have no environment for group work because they do not provide material to conduct group work. Teachers are from poor background and their salary is low that is why they cannot spend money on the material required for conducting group work effectively. Teacher training is mostly based on bookish knowledge which does not inform teachers how they can implement group work in their existing conditions. These are the reasons why I think group work is not a workable idea for teaching English in primary school of Punjab.*

*T9: In my opinion, group work can only be implemented in primary schools of Punjab if education department ensures some changing in the existing primary school setting. For example; teacher training must focus on how group work can be implemented in our*

*existing settings. Resources to conduct group work be provided and teachers are given liberty to use these resources because it is generally seen that head of schools receive resources but he does not provide it to the teachers. There need to be a series of training which enable teachers to understand how, when and how much group work should be done in English classroom. Students also need to be trained because both teachers and students are from poor and illiterate background. They need intensive training.*

*T10: I use group work for small tasks like reading text, answering questions of exercises given at the end of each lesson and I find it very helpful in developing students learning in English language. I also have seen many of my colleagues using group work in their English classes. But I feel that teachers can conduct group work in a far better way than it is being used at the present by considering some aspects. As I mentioned in my previous question that successful group work requires teachers to plan their lessons in such a way that group work is imbedded purposefully. It depends upon teacher that he monitors working of students on the given task and minimise chances of wastage of time while conducting group work. Time factor is important which should also be kept in mind if teachers want to impellent group work in English class. Group work has good potential if we consider these factors while conducting it in our English classrooms.*