Shiraz Thobani

Islam in the School Curriculum

Symbolic Pedagogy and
Cultural Claims

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Abbreviations

A-Level	Advanced Level
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
O-Level	Ordinary Level
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RE	Religious Education
SACRE	Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
SCAA	School Curriculum and Assessment Authority

Acknowledgements

Introduction

School-Based Islam and the Contemporary Predicament

It is uncommon in the history of modern education for a school subject to take on geopolitical significance in the way that Islam as a pedagogic manifestation has done in recent years. Controversies on school knowledge are usually confined to national and local contexts, where it is normal for debates and disputes to occur on what is taught in schools. At most, disagreements over educational content might become a source of friction in bilateral relations between countries, particularly on nationalistic representations of the past in history textbooks.[1] In contrast, the attention that the teaching of Islam in madrasas and other educational institutions has drawn after 11 September 2001 has been of an international nature, being of concern to numerous countries across the globe. As a direct consequence of jihadist militancy, no subject has raised more questions than Islam in the past decade, provoking suspicions, controversies and polarized debates across a range of contexts.

Surveying the issues connected with Islam in educational settings, we find that they have surfaced in contrasting national arenas, in the West as well as in Muslim regions. These concerns are linked to diverse educational institutions – whether designated as traditional or modern, public or private. They reveal the involvement of a variety of state agencies, non-governmental organizations, community-based lobbies, special interest groups, political activists, religious movements and other social fractions, the actors in question reflecting a spectrum of positions – from the liberal left to the radical right, from modernist and conservative outlooks to revivalist and fundamentalist tendencies. And they ensue from the teaching of Islam in various forms – as represented in government policies, school subjects, textbook contents, madrasa curricula, denominational instruction, pedagogic approaches and symbolic displays of religious beliefs. What has become increasingly apparent is the web of complexities – political, social, cultural

and religious – within which anxieties and controversies over school-based Islam are embedded.

Following the attacks of September 11, one of the first aspects that came under intense scrutiny, arising from the imperative to trace the root causes of the perpetration, was the nature of the linkage between the militants and extremist madrasas located in the 'medieval outposts' of Afghanistan, Pakistan and other fundamentalist states. This initial association between jihadist terrorism and madrasas inciting acts of violence soon led to the urgency for identifying the extent to which Muslim education in general was involved in promoting intolerance.[2] It was not only government policies and institutional structures which became subject to interrogation in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, but also what was taught in madrasas, colleges and schools in Muslim regions around the globe. In particular, Islam as a core component in the curricula of Muslim majority states, and indeed forming the inspirational base of Muslim education itself, came to be perceived as a subject warranting greater investigation.[3]

Since then, Islam as a curricular and pedagogic category has been forced to the forefront of the policy agenda of international agencies, while also coming under review in national contexts. The demand has been voiced, both from within and outside Muslim contexts, for a tighter regulation of madrasas, including the reforming of their curricula through the inclusion of subjects normally taught in secular schools. In addition, questions have been raised on the contents of instructional textbooks in some Muslim states which have been found promoting a discourse of intolerance towards Jews, Christians, Hindus and other faith communities, including Muslim traditions whose interpretations of Islam differ from what dominating forces impose as the 'orthodox' stand.[4] Recent enquiries have also investigated the 'Islamizing' of the state curriculum in fundamentalist contexts where Islam is deployed as a political ideology for the furtherance of nationalistic interests.[5]

The enquiries and proposals so far have been directed predominantly at education in Muslim majority countries, perceived as perpetuating substandard, authoritarian and outdated schooling.[6] How best to 'modernize' educational systems in conservative Muslim contexts has, however, not been an easy proposition, having prompted counter-reactions from staunch Islamists and traditionalists who, accusing policymakers of attempting to 'Westernize' and 'secularize' Muslim education, have obstinately resisted changes to existing institutions, curricula and modes of instruction. This opposition is at its fiercest when any proposal on reforming the teaching of Islam is put up for discussion.

Recently, there has also been growing attention directed at the treatment of Islam in educational institutions in the West. Public debates and policy considerations concerning what is taught in madrasas and other communal centres of Islamic education have been extended to include the state sector. The proposal by the British government to reform Islamic studies in institutions of higher education, controversies in the United States surrounding the content on Islam incorporated in textbooks for use in public schools, and the legislative measures banning Muslim girls from wearing the hijab in France's lay schools indicate some of the issues and measures linked to Islam and Muslims which have begun to emerge in educational systems in the West.

In Britain, the formal policy interventions made in the educational field by the government in response to the militant extremist threat have been limited. Following the July 7 bombings in London, there has been to date only one major official review on how schools are dealing with cultural identities and social relations, directed at the issue of diversity and citizenship in the National Curriculum.[7] The mandatory subject of religious education in state maintained schools, in particular, has not undergone any significant reform in recent years, with the exception of the introduction of a non-statutory national framework in 2004.[8] As part of religious education, Islam is taught in state schools alongside other faiths as one of the 'principal religions' of Britain. The representation of Islam in religious education and the National Curriculum as a whole has been one of the major issues highlighted by Muslim organizations and other concerned agencies in the post-July 7 period, who have drawn attention to the relation between the school curriculum and concepts such as cultural identity, national belongingness, communal self-esteem and interfaith understanding.[9] In the current climate, these aspects raise important questions on Islam as school knowledge in terms of the bearing it has on the outlook and understanding of emerging generations, both Muslim and non-Muslim alike. While Muslim education and the teaching of Islam have assumed geopolitical significance, with much of the attention being directed at madrasas, Islam as it is conveyed at the school level in the West has so far largely remained a blind spot. Little has been studied on how it is taught in state and private schools, the underlying factors, influences and constraints that shape it, and the socio-political implications raised by its various pedagogic representations.

To address the lack of research in this area, this work presents a sociological analysis of Islam as school knowledge in the educational system of England. Since few studies exist on the teaching of school-level Islam in the West, the investigation undertaken here aims to shed light on a matter of

global concern, seeking to understand the role played by national and local policies and educational practices in the production of pedagogic Islam in a liberal, plural setting. While by no means representative of the very diverse situations in which Islam is taught in European and North American contexts, England has been selected as a case study for its contentious mix of legal, communal and educational factors which have a bearing on religious education.

In more specific terms, the enquiry seeks to gain insight into the conceptualizing of school-based Islam at two levels. At the policy level, it presents a socio-historical analysis of the reconstruction of Islam as a pedagogic category over successive policy phases, from its introduction in religious education syllabuses in the interwar period to its present status as a school topic. From the perspective of practice, the investigation incorporates a local community study to trace the translation of Islam from national policy directives to its pedagogic realization in state and Muslim schools in a selected borough of England. The work draws in part on the doctoral research undertaken by the author at the University of Cambridge School of Education between 1998–2001. The findings are based on documentary analyses of key policy texts, archival records and local syllabuses, and complemented by oral history and semi-structured interviews with religious education specialists, Muslim community representatives, and practitioners in state and Muslim schools. The study also examines school-based Islam in England in the post-September 11 period, including a chapter that discusses its status in the secular frameworks of the United States and France, on the one hand, and the confessional contexts of Turkey and Pakistan, on the other, to furnish a broader picture of issues which have recently emerged in contrasting policy fields.

The Cultural Recontextualizing of Pedagogic Islam

Located within the sociology of the curriculum, the investigation employs Bernstein's and Bourdieu's theories to examine the relations between educational governance, social interests and cultural recontextualization as they pertain to school subjects in the curriculum.[10] While the focus of the enquiry is on Islam as school knowledge, the study has the wider aim of investigating the largely ignored area of the construction of symbolic categories in the curriculum.[11] The conceptualizing of school-based Islam in liberal, plural contexts provides a potent means of shedding light on the relation between regulative, social and epistemic factors that underpin the

defining of school knowledge. While admittedly other religious and cultural categories could equally serve as revealing windows into this relationship, the present situation of Islam and Muslims brings into sharper relief the dynamics of social representation in education as argued below.

Contemporary Western European societies, from the perspective of their social composition, coherence and identity, are characterized in recent frameworks by some political theorists as having two poles: the post-colonial nation-state as a distinct socio-political unity at one end, and the fragmentary, diasporic immigrant communities at the other.[12] Both these contemporary manifestations are outcomes of histories that have intersected in the past and become conjoined in the present, the nation-state with its colonial legacy and the diasporic community as a displacement ensuing from the political and economic reconfigurations initiated by the colonial enterprise. Embedded within these histories, and to some extent constitutive of them, is the role that education has played as a controlling medium for the filtering of ideas and the crystallizing of identities. If the nation-state and the transnational community have become symbolic fronts in the debate between social coherence and plurality in modern Europe, it is education, perhaps more so than any other institution, which has been turned into both a contested arena and a mediating ground for the negotiation of beliefs, values and allegiances.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Western Europe has become the centre stage for the re-enactment of past colonial encounters through the settlement of immigrants and asylum seekers from former colonies who have sought sanctuary from devastating wars, been forced into exile due to political persecution, or emigrated for economic reasons. The single largest group of immigrants is composed of Muslims whose population in Western Europe in 2001 was estimated to be about 14.5 million.[13] The major groups of immigrants consist of North African and Sub-Saharan Muslims in France, Turkish Muslims in Germany, and South Asian and New Commonwealth Muslims in Britain.[14] Muslim migration into Western Europe has been perceived as having significant implications for the political, economic and social accommodation of new populations by the host countries, as reflected in the frequency and intensity of policy debates on immigration, race relations, human rights, equal opportunities and civic participation (Vertovec and Peach, 1997).

At the same time in this diasporic phase, Muslims in different regions of the world have found themselves at the epicentre of major political conflicts, with Islam as a politicized discourse featuring prominently in regional and international crises. Islam's persisting significance and centrality in

modern times can be attributed, in part, to the long historical engagement of Muslims, spanning some 14 centuries, with civilizations, cultures and societies across the globe. Islam is presented as the second largest religion after Christianity and is claimed to be the world's fastest spreading faith. It is upheld by almost a quarter of the world's population, defining the religious identities of over 1.5 billion people who reflect collectively a wide diversity of nationalities, ethnicities, linguistic groups and cultures.

Over the past three decades, educational issues pertaining to Islam and Muslims in Western Europe have increasingly come to represent the politicized edge of the predicaments raised by the education of immigrant groups. The case of Muslims in Britain, in particular, furnishes an instructive example where the themes of post-colonial nationalism, transnationality and education, at the points where they have meshed, have received one of their sharpest expressions. Since their settlement in Britain, Muslims, like other faith minorities, have had to negotiate the question of how best to educate their young in what they perceive to be a predominantly secular and liberal environment, leading them to actively engage with national and local educational policies (Nielsen, 1990; Vertovec, 1997). During this period, perhaps the most significant shift in official education policy of direct bearing to the new communities has been the distancing of the state from multicultural approaches in education in favour of centralist control over cultural content in the school curriculum.[15]

In exploring the relation between state policy and cultural representation, the case of Islam in England provides a revealing example of the dilemmas raised for education by the repositioning of the nation-state and the needs of incoming cultures for social and self-affirmation. Anderson's (1991) theory of nations as 'imagined communities' brings into relief the central role played by modern education, in consort with other agencies, in the creation of 'horizontal solidarities' as a basis of social cohesion. The relation between the formation and maintenance of modern states and the reproduction of cultural identities through the educational system has also been foregrounded by Gellner (1983). The present study, with its focal interest in the relations between a post-colonial nation-state and transnational communities, discloses important perspectives on the role of education in constructing and reproducing notions of nationhood, history, tradition and culture.

In this perspective, how immigrant communities are symbolically defined, represented and positioned in the school curriculum, whether as racial, ethnic or religious minorities, opens up for scrutiny the inscribing of social identities through pedagogic discourses. Over the past two decades,

increasing attention has been directed at the relation between state policies and the social exclusion or inclusion of minority groups within the public domain of education (Ball, 1990; 1994). One of the areas which has not received sufficient attention in policy sociology is the question of the inequalities created by educational policies through state regulation of the school curriculum, leading to questions of 'curricular justice' and 'equal entitlement' for marginalized groups (Troyna, 1994; King and Mitchell, 1995). The underlying factors behind these imbalances, rooted in the interplay between the political order, social interests and symbolic representation, cannot be adequately understood without taking into account processes of social classification by which minority communities come to be positioned.

Since the 1950s, immigrant groups have come to be labelled through the successive frames of assimilation, integration, multiculturalism and pluralism. The tendency on the part of policymakers has been to portray cultural groups through generalized national, racial or ethnic categories, without engaging fully with the implications of the diversified, intersecting and transformational nature of social identities (Hall and du Gay, 1996). One aspect, in particular, which has received relatively scant attention until recently is religion as a signifier of identity. Minority communities, understood as *religious* groups, have been largely neglected in multicultural and race relation studies, overlooking the significant role of religious communities in the wider society (Jackson, 1997). The implications of ignoring religion as a socio-political force became glaringly evident in the post-September 11 phase, creating a new urgency in investigating the subject. The present study, in being centred on Islam and Muslim communities in Britain, hopes to make a contribution in this area by shedding light on the undertheorized relations between notions of community, faith and identity.[16] In particular, it seeks to draw attention to the dynamics by which social identities of religious groups are constructed in the context of the school curriculum, and the criteria by which communities become positioned in terms of both their external relations to other groups and their own internal divisions.

The engagement with educational governance and social interests in this study is intended to disclose the processes by which symbolic categories in the curriculum come to be formulated. A central part of the analysis is therefore directed at understanding these aspects as they interact with the intellectual field, and factors that lead to generating the epistemic criteria by which religions become defined as school knowledge. How Islam as an area of academic study has been conceptualized in specialized disciplines

such as theological and religious studies, the changing relations between these disciplines, and their influence on religious education at the school level are important points of enquiry in the study.[17] The case of Islam as school knowledge is particularly useful for exploring how forms of knowledge generated from the lived beliefs, experiences and expressions of diverse societies, communities and cultures across the globe are repackaged into 'multicultural' content in liberal, plural schooling. Islam, in particular, is eminently suited for revealing the tensions, contradictions and conflicts embedded in cultural discourses enacted in the academic field (Said, 1978; 1993). Manifesting itself at the global, national and local levels, Islam offers an interesting example for shedding light on the political and cultural struggles centred on the generalized and specific representations of social identity.

Finally, the research on Islam as a curriculum topic located within religious education exposes for examination a school subject which has been intensely contested by various fractions in the past, and continues to be a source of ongoing controversy today. Religious education is a discipline which has a long established presence in the English school curriculum.[18] It is also one of the most heavily regulated of school subjects, being the only compulsory component in the state school curriculum between 1944 and 1988, with further statutory controls incorporated into the 1988 Education Reform Act and subsequent policy enactments. Due to its social significance, it has been subjected to close political scrutiny at critical junctures of legislative reform, being specially vulnerable at these times to pressure group lobbying and interventions from other stakeholders. As a result of political, intellectual and cultural transformations, the subject has undergone fundamental changes since the 1960s in terms of its aims, content and approach, one of the most radical of these transformations entailing the incorporation of Islam and other non-Christian faiths into its fold (Cox, 1966; Bates, 1994; Copley, 1997). By tracing the introduction and development of Islam as a curricular innovation in what was formerly a subject based on Christian confessional instruction, the research helps to build an understanding of how pedagogic discourses are affected and structured by changing socio-political circumstances. It is important to stress here that although the focus in this study is on Islam, the theoretical and methodological frameworks deployed, including some of the major findings and implications identified, are also applicable to other world faiths which have been subjected to similar processes of recontextualization in religious education.

Overview of the Contents

Based on the key aims of the enquiry, the book is divided broadly into four parts. The first part is introductory, providing contextual information of relevance to the study. Chapter 1 acquaints readers with examples of diverse concerns that have emerged recently on school-based Islam in various countries, in the West as well as in Muslim majority states. The analysis of four educational situations, in the United States, France, Turkey and Pakistan, serves to highlight contrasting policy stances on the status of religion in education which have a bearing on how Islam is approached as school knowledge in these countries. Chapter 2 identifies the religious education policy context specific to England, and within it, the question of school-based Islam as it has developed for Muslim communities since their settlement in Britain. This background information leads into discussing the theoretical and methodological perspectives applied in framing the study.

The second part is based on a socio-historical analysis of key policies at the national and local levels which facilitated the introduction and development of Islam as a topic in English religious education in the twentieth century. How Islam became incorporated between the 1920s and the 1960s as an innovative category in religious instruction devoted to confessional Christianity forms the core of Chapter 3, based on an analysis of the roles played by policy legislation, intellectual influences and status groups with a stake in the subject. Also considered here is the denominational Islam which materialized in England with the settlement of Muslim immigrant communities from the 1960s onward, establishing the communal field as an alternative reference point to the pedagogic space regulated by the state. Chapter 4 attends to the liberal period in the 1960s and 1970s which saw religious education change from a Christian confessional to a multi-faith approach, with Islam and the other faiths assigned curricular parity alongside Christianity in reformative syllabuses. The politically charged phase of neo-conservatism in the 1980s and the early 1990s provides the background against which Islam as school knowledge is discussed in Chapter 5. Examined here are the discursive manoeuvrings, political strategies and ensuing tensions between Christian Right fractions, Muslim conservatives and liberal professionals which both preceded and followed the legislation of the revised religious education statute in the 1988 Education Reform Act.

The next part of the book considers the reconstruction of Islam at the local educational level in England through a field-based case study of a selected English borough, referred to in this work by the pseudonym of

'Crossford'.[19] This borough with politically active Muslim groups presents an interesting example where the formulation of Islam in the local policy was shaped by the local education authority (LEA) undergoing a major policy shift from its Radical Left stance in the 1970s to a conservative position demanded by a New Right government in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The case investigation begins in Chapter 6 with a demographic and contextual overview of Crossford, together with a discussion of the micro-politics that shaped the local policies on religious education in the immigration phase. Moving on to the school level, Chapter 7 examines the approaches of religious education departmental heads to the teaching of Islam in Crossford's state secondary schools. The enquiry analyses notions of authority and identity in the context of the relationship between the practitioners and Muslim students, the positioning of Islam in the school curriculum, and the pedagogic strategies employed in the classroom. Chapter 8 discusses a parallel investigation undertaken in Muslim schools of this locality, probing into the reconstitution of pedagogic Islam in the communal context. Using the same analytical framework as in state schools, the chapter maps out contrasting perspectives of Muslim headteachers, imams and Islamic studies instructors on authority and identity, as well as on curriculum and pedagogy, in relation to the teaching of Islam.

In the final part of the book, the development of school-based Islam is considered in the context of the new phase that has emerged in Britain as a result of militant extremism, leading to a wider reflection on the relation between symbolic pedagogy and social outcomes. Chapter 9 assesses the changed conditions in which British Muslims have found themselves repositioned after the July 7 and September 11 terrorist attacks, and the state-initiated interventions in this phase which have bearing for Muslim education and Islam in the school curriculum. The final chapter concludes with a discussion of the educational implications arising from the main findings of the study. The chapter highlights insights from the enquiry on the relation between the governance of symbolic categories in the curriculum, the epistemic construction of these subjects in the academic arena, and the attempts by status groups to exert a controlling influence on the representation of their identities in the pedagogic domain.

A Concluding Note

Islam has been perceived by the popular *imaginaire* in the West as representing subversive knowledge (anti-Christian, non-European, fundamentalist) (Said, 1993), and by Eurocentric advocates as espousing forms of education

which are antithetical to the liberal, democratic tradition.[20] Islam fits awkwardly into any simple category, posing instead as a complex of life-orienting beliefs, ethics and culture in which the boundaries between religion and politics have been a source of recurrent political and theological dispute, both historically and in modern times. The manner in which Islam has been cast as a pedagogic subject has varied institutionally across historical periods, Muslim traditions and cultural contexts, its expression in the schools of the West being the latest manifestation in this diversity.

The research in this work, in paying close attention to how Islam as a symbolic category has been appropriated and reconceptualized in the school curriculum in England in different policy periods, offers a valuable vantage point on how cultural complexes undergo transformations in pedagogic discourses as a result of changing configurations between power and knowledge. The study reveals how forms of knowledge become labelled as tradition or innovation, totalizing or relativizing, and domesticated or dangerous, through the articulation of political discourses with pedagogic practices. Of contemporary significance is the question raised by the adequacy of classroom constructions of culture in preparing the young to negotiate the complexities of a pluralistic world, and the types of images of the 'other' which they take away with them once they leave the sheltered confines of the classroom. In dealing with these and other related issues, it is hoped that this study will be of value to educators, policymakers and specialists concerned with pedagogic formulations of symbolic categories, but also to the general readership interested in Islam and Muslims in relation to education.

Notes

[1] China and South Korea's sharp criticism of Japan glossing over its wartime atrocities in its history textbooks is a recent example of this kind of dispute over school knowledge (see Cooley, 2003).

[2] See, for example, Coulson (2004) and USAID (2003).

[3] A number of post-September 11 studies have been published on educational issues and challenges centred on Islam. Special editions of journals devoted to this theme include *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 2004, 7 (1); *Comparative Education Review*, 2006, 50 (3); and *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 2007, 27 (1).

[4] See Doumato and Starrett (2007) for a recent study on the representation of Islam in textbooks in the Middle East.

[5] Nayyar and Salim's (2002) analysis of the Pakistan school curriculum is an example of one such study. Another revealing exposure is presented by Godazger (2001) who brings to light the role of Islamic ideology in the post-revolutionary educational system of Iran.

⁶ See, for instance, the findings reported on education in the Muslim world by USAID (2003).

⁷ In May 2006, the government commissioned Sir Keith Ajegbo to investigate this particular aspect in the National Curriculum. The findings of this enquiry are discussed in Chapter 9.

⁸ See Chapter 9 on the implications of this framework for the treatment of Islam in religious education.

⁹ Examples of these curricular concerns can be found in Open Society Institute (2005), Coles (2008) and Muslim Council of Britain (2007).

¹⁰ The theoretical and methodological frameworks used in the study are summarized in Chapter 2.

¹¹ Chapter 2 provides an explanation of the term 'symbolic knowledge' as used in this work.

¹² The case studies in Modood and Werbner (1997), for example, explore the interface between the emerging European Community and multiculturalism, while Berting (1995) highlights patterns of social exclusion and inclusion, on the basis of class, nationality, ethnicity and gender, in European self-transformation. Also of relevance here is Brah's (1996) enquiry into the diasporic community and the politics of location engendered by late twentieth-century capitalism.

¹³ Based on 2001 statistics, Muslims constituted 4 per cent of the total population of Western Europe and almost 20 per cent of the whole European population (including Turkey). Muslims residing in Europe consist of four major demographic groups: societies belonging to the European region of the former USSR, those in Turkey and in countries formerly part of the Ottoman Turkish empire in Eastern Europe, the recent immigrant groups in Western Europe from former colonized and New Commonwealth areas, and asylum seekers from war-torn regions around the world (Office for National Statistics).

¹⁴ In 2001, the largest Muslim populations in Western Europe were estimated to be 4 to 5 million in France, 3 million in Germany and 1.6 million in Britain (Office for National Statistics).

¹⁵ The Education Reform Act of 1988 represents the high point of this policy shift. Its implications for ethnic minorities and multiculturalism in schools are discussed by King and Mitchell (1995). The impact of the Act on multicultural approaches to specific subjects is explored in King and Reiss (1993). Ball (1990; 1994) draws attention to how multiculturalism as a whole suffered from 'discourses of derision' adopted by the New Right and was ultimately excluded as a guiding principle from the National Curriculum.

¹⁶ Bauman's (1996) ethnographic case study of London's Southall Asian communities draws attention to the dominant discourses of wider society which reduce 'ethnic minorities' to the category of a local 'community' associated with a reified culture. The marginalized discourses of these groups themselves, on the other hand, reveal a relational, contending and constructed nature of 'community' and 'culture' in a post-immigration environment.

¹⁷ See, for example, Leirvik (1999). Knott (1992) looks at the more specific issue of the role of religious studies in understanding 'ethnic' experience.

¹⁸ See Chapter 2 for an overview of religious education in England.

[19] The pseudonym has been used to maintain confidentiality. A fuller explanation on the selection of Crossford as a site for the study is described in Chapter 2.

[20] See, for example, Hurst (1985) and Meijer (1999), who find a fundamental dissonance between Islamic thought (classical and modern) and Western liberal education.

Chapter 1

Policy Contexts and Disputed Knowledge

Policies on Religious Education

Islam as school knowledge finds representation in the educational systems of countries around the globe. It features in Muslim and non-Muslim states, in secular and religious contexts. Institutionally, it is given programmatic expression in both public and private educational institutions, characterized by modern or traditional profiles. In terms of its orientation, it may feature confessionally in a demarcated subject of religious instruction or non-confessionally in religious education.[1] It may be devoted to a single, dominant interpretation, embrace two or more denominational traditions, or be part of a multi-faith framework.[2] Alternatively or additionally, it may be covered under other disciplines in the school curriculum. In these various contexts, it faces a range of issues, some which are common to the teaching of all religions and others which are distinctive to it.

Within this complexity of configurations, the policy fields in which Islam as a pedagogic subject is regulated assume paramount importance in determining its status and approach. As a norm, we find most countries adopting a defined policy stance on religion in education. Of all the subjects in national curricula, religion is perhaps the most closely governed for historical, political and legal reasons, the nature and degree of the control exercised by a state varying considerably, depending on the constitutional make-up of each country (Glendenning, 2008).[3] We can identify three major policy contexts to serve as a broad framework here.[4]

In the first category are countries which have opted for a secular policy on religion in education, enforced by constitutional statutes or legislated restrictions that prohibit the teaching of religion as a distinct and separate subject in the curricula of public schools. However, these states may allow for the non-confessional teaching of religion through other disciplines in the curriculum, such as history, civics, philosophy and literature. Confessional religious instruction, on the other hand, is confined to what is

designated as the private sector where religious communities and denominations are free to teach their beliefs and practices to their young. The general policy of the secular state is to be impartial towards all religious groups in state education through the exclusion of religion in the public sphere, while allowing for the freedom of religious expression in the private domain.[5]

A second category consists of countries which observe a pluralist or semi-pluralist approach to teaching about religion in state schools. Religious education in these countries is a distinct though compulsory subject in the curriculum, presented from a non-confessional, multi-faith perspective. In some cases, the faith of the majority may receive more emphasis in coverage than other religions. Parents whose needs are not met by this arrangement have the option of turning to religious instruction in faith or denominational schools, some or all of which may receive state funding. As in the secular states, a policy of neutrality is observed in public schools towards all belief systems, but in this case through inclusive as against excluding stances on religious education.

Finally, a third category of countries adopt a confessional mode of religious instruction, with state policies sanctioning the proselytizing of religion in public schools. This instruction may be centred on the dominant faith tradition of the country, or be divided along denominational lines into two or more major traditions. In addition, denominational teaching may be permitted in private or independent schools. In some cases where a close linkage is established between state ideology and the dominant religious tradition of the country, religion may pervade a large portion of the curriculum.

Policy reforms on religious education undertaken by individual states are increasingly making reference to international charters on human rights to define the relationship between religion and education. Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts the individual's right to 'freedom of thought, conscience and religion'. Member states are also called upon to respect the liberty of parents to provide religious and moral education to their children which is in conformity with their convictions.[6] These principles have been interpreted and applied in varied ways across the globe. Some countries have legal provisions for parents to exercise their right of conscience and freedom of religious belief by including opt-out measures in state legislated religious education. In addition, they recognize the rights of communities to set up their own private schools, and in some cases, furnish public funding for these schools.[7] At the other extreme in the case of totalitarian states, on the other hand, parents have little say on the religious education of their young.

In these varied contexts, the teaching of religion in general is confronted with a range of issues – political, cultural and educational. In recent years, it is the treatment of Islam in different institutional frameworks, more so than the other faiths, that has raised political and legal concerns. In all the three policy categories identified above, we find questions that have emerged which are being addressed through both existing and new legislative measures. Although these responses and interventions have been justified on constitutional and legal grounds, they have not been without controversy and debate. To gain an in-depth understanding of the diverse approaches to pedagogic Islam in these settings requires detailed and comparative studies of a range of countries, an exercise which lies well beyond the scope of this book. Nevertheless, it is important to have some sense of the problems linked to school-based Islam in different policy arenas which can serve as a broader canvas to the specific study undertaken in England in this work.

For this purpose, four countries have been selected in this chapter to illustrate recent issues on school-based Islam, whether linked to its presentation as curriculum content or its symbolic expression as religious belief. The cases examined are drawn from the United States, France, Turkey and Pakistan. To consider contrasting perspectives, two of these cases pertain to countries in the West where Muslims form a prominent minority, while the other two refer to Muslim majority states. Examined below are some legal challenges on the teaching of Islam that have surfaced in these contexts and the socio-political implications ensuing from the adoption of particular policy stances.

Pedagogic Enactments and Constitutional Rights

In September 2001, a middle school of the Byron Union School District in California introduced to its seventh grade students a unit on Islamic history, culture and religion as part of its world history course. In the unit, students were taught about the five pillars of Islam by being asked to role-play activities analogous to each pillar. They informally recited lines of an Islamic prayer, gave up something for a day to simulate fasting during the month of Ramadan, performed community service to gain insight into the concept of charity in Islam, and played a board game to learn about the pilgrimage to Mecca. Students were also encouraged to select Muslim names and dress up in Arab costumes to further their educational experience. The role-playing itself was only one of the activities introduced by the teachers among a

range of other exercises which included assigned readings from a state approved textbook, classroom discussions, and the use of handouts and geographic materials.[8]

In 2002, the parents of two students who took part in these lessons filed a lawsuit against the school district, claiming that the role-playing on Islam violated their children's constitutional rights. The parents contended that the role-playing activities, as a whole, constituted the practice of Islam, and the school's use of this simulation in the classroom represented an impermissible endorsement of the Islamic faith. In effect, the teaching of Islam in this manner, from their perspective, amounted to the establishment of religion by the state and therefore violated the First Amendment to the US Constitution.

Having considered the plaintiff's arguments, the district court ruled in favour of the school district on the grounds that the mere fact of role-playing activities approximating Islamic rites was not sufficient to create an endorsement of the Islamic faith. Moreover, the teacher's explanation to the students about the educational intent of the role-play ensured that they understood the difference between the simulated actions and their actual religious faith. The court found that the defendants had been motivated by the 'purely secular purpose' of instructing students about Islamic culture and history, and not with the purpose of indoctrinating them into the Islamic faith.[9] This decision was also upheld by the federal court of appeals for the 9th Circuit which ruled in favour of the school district. The judges pronounced that since the instructional activities undertaken in the unit on Islam were not 'overt religious exercises', they did not violate the constitutional rights of the parents.[10] In 2006, the US Supreme Court declined to review the case.

This case of role-playing a faith tradition being perceived as indoctrination is not the first of its kind. In a previous case involving religious simulation activities, the court stated that acting out a ceremonial American Indian dance or re-enacting the Last Supper did not contravene the First Amendment, despite their religious nature.[11] For the court, the context, intent and motive behind disputed instructional activities were of primary significance in the legal analysis of the case. In the court's consideration, if it could be established that such activities had secular and academic intent, then teaching about religion in this manner was acceptable in public schools. Based on this reasoning, the role-playing of Islamic practices could not be considered indoctrinatory since its purpose was not to convert the students into Muslims but to educate them about the Muslim observance of Islam. The difference between the devotional and the educational in public

schools, however, is highly contested in the United States, leading concerned bodies to produce guidelines for teachers on what is legally permissible and prohibited in teaching about religions in their classrooms (Haynes and Thomas, 1994).

From the American constitutional perspective, public schools are not prohibited from teaching about Islam or the other religions in their curriculum, as long as it is done so educationally and not with the intent of inculcating religious beliefs in the students. The First Amendment to the US Constitution states that 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . .' Based on the first part of this statement, known as the 'Establishment Clause', the constitutional law prohibits government endorsement of religion in public schools and its proselytizing by teachers in classrooms. However, this prohibition does not imply that students should not be exposed to any content whatsoever that deals with religions. All it mandates is for the government to be neutral on religious matters, and if religion is presented in public schools, that it be done so in an academic and impartial way (Glendenning, 2008). In other words, teaching religion is not acceptable, but teaching *about* religion is.

Within this secular constitutional framework, religious education does not exist as a separate subject in the curriculum, as it does in some countries. The teaching of world faiths like Islam is incorporated into social studies under courses on world history, geography and culture. In the absence of a centralized, federal curriculum, how much attention is given to teaching about religions varies on the commitment of individual states and school districts to global history and cultures. In the case of Islam and Muslim history, an average student is claimed to spend only a few weeks in 12 years of schooling learning about these specific subjects in courses on world history, geography or culture, and based on state approved textbooks which determine the aims, content and pedagogy of the units selected (Douglass and Dunn, 2002). Without a statutory national framework, the textbook effectively becomes the curriculum in the history lessons, significantly determining the scope and sequence of what is taught on a daily basis. Given that the textbook market is dominated by a few major publishers whose books are used in the vast majority of schools across the country, the publishers are critical players in what becomes defined as school knowledge. Although the texts are procedurally reviewed by academic specialists, and in the case of world religions, also by educators and scholars acquainted with or representing the faith communities, the determining factor for the publishers, however, is what will be acceptable to state textbook adoption

boards. As many of these state boards uphold policies that are viewed as politically and religiously conservative, their reluctance to embrace a global paradigm of world history limits the publishers from introducing innovative reforms in their instructional materials (ibid.).

Based on a survey of the major world history textbooks used in American public schools, Douglass and Dunn (2002) reveal a number of important features about Islam as represented in these texts.[12] They claim that while units on Islam have continued to improve since the 1990s, the textbook adoption committees at the state level exercise a determinative say on the Islamic content deemed to be acceptable for public schools. Typically, Islam is characterized, like other world religions, in terms of a founder figure, an origins story, a scriptural text, a set of doctrines and practices, and association with a particular historical period and cultural tradition, leading to a homogeneous, essentialized and ahistorical formulation of the subject matter. Moreover, the textbooks fail to do justice to Islam within the framework of the Abrahamic traditions, establishing rigid boundaries among the beliefs, practices and values shared in common by the three faiths. Some of the texts overtly or implicitly suggest a simplistic or reductionist explanation of Islam as an imitation or derivation of the Judaeo-Christian tradition (ibid.).

The treatment of Muslim history as a whole is also found wanting by Douglass and Dunn, who draw attention to selected episodes and empires featuring discontinuously and incoherently across several chapters in the textbooks. The coverage of this history between 1000 and 1500 CE is minimal, with little attention paid to the development of Muslim civilizations across the Afro-Eurasian region and the historical transformations which ensued. In the twentieth century, Islam comes to be presented as medieval, anti-Western and extremist through a preoccupation in the texts with the Ottoman decline, oil politics, the Arab-Israeli conflict and Islamic resurgence. Douglass and Dunn note that the dominating coverage of and association between the Middle East conflict and Islam come to symbolize the entire region. Moore (2006b), too, discovers that the teaching on Islam to American students is heavily coloured by the Arab-Israeli conflict, the colonial legacy, competitive constructions of Islam, and American policies in the Muslim world. In his consideration, school-based Islam in the United States has been characterized by numerous stereotypes, distortions, omissions and textbook inaccuracies.[13]

Responding to the growing criticism of the inaccurate, distorted and at times slanted portrayal of Islam and Muslims in school texts, the commercial publishers have attempted to bring about a greater involvement of

Muslim organizations, academics and consultants to help correct the coverage of Islam. This, in turn, has generated counter-criticism from organizations such as the American Textbook Council who accuse some of the publishers of presenting a biased and glossed version of Islam rather than what answers to academic criteria. Sewell (2008) claims that 'Islamic activists' are using multiculturalism to advance and justify the makeover of textbook content on Islam, and misrepresenting 'its foundations and challenges to international security'. It is not so much the factual errors on Islam in these texts which he sees as the main problem, but the conveying of disputed definitions and claims as established facts. Sewell takes exception to the ways in which terms such as jihad and shari'a are defined, how the role of Muslim women is portrayed, and the particular descriptions and explanations given for the September 11 attacks. In general, he arrives at the conclusion that these changes seek to repackage Islam as a tolerant faith instead of one which, in his view, ought to be scrutinized more critically.[14]

An interesting dynamic materializes in the American situation on who ultimately defines the aims and approach to teaching about world religions in public schools. The state plays a defining role in broadly demarcating the permissible from the prohibited, but in refraining from establishing or endorsing religion in public education, and with the exception of sanctioning broad judicial pronouncements on treatments of religion in education, effectively assumes the position of an arbitrator. While the state recognizes the value of teaching about religions, it cannot intervene directly or proactively to influence educational policy on this subject at the school level. This vacuum leaves the door open for commercial textbook publishers and state-level textbook adoption boards to have a large say on defining Islam as school knowledge in the classrooms. In turn, this condition has led to the textbooks becoming a ground of contestation through the lobbying of Muslim organizations and the critique levelled by neo-conservative activists who read Islam and Muslims predominantly in the frame of American security.

The secular stance adopted in the United States creates a unique situation for the teaching of Islam at the school level. To a large extent, American foreign policy and military interventions in Muslim majority countries, coupled with the violent acts of jihadist fundamentalists, heavily condition the discourse on Islam and Muslims in the public domain. The primary conduit of information for the American public on the Muslim world is the mass media which exerts a significant influence on how parents, teachers and students perceive Muslims and arrive at their understanding of Islam. Douglass and Dunn (2002) comment that teachers may be ill equipped to

critically examine the assumptions, misperceptions and stereotypes that pervade the media coverage of Islam. Following the events of September 11, the presence of Muslims in public and private schools, and the teaching of Islam in the school curriculum, has come under increasing scrutiny and become particularly vulnerable to suspicions and charges of indoctrination in state schools. The fact that the role-playing litigation originated in the very semester when the September 11 crimes were perpetrated was perhaps not a co-incidence. While the courts defended the teaching of Islam in public schools on this occasion, the educational relevance and worthwhile-ness of informing students about Islam as one of the major world religions may have been generally compromised by this lawsuit, with schools wary of potential opposition from parents. To say the least, the presentation of Islam in American public schools in the post-September 11 period faces the seemingly insurmountable task of overcoming old and new prejudices. How the secular American state will seek to address the necessity of educating its public about societies with whose destiny it has become inex-tricably linked has now become a standing challenge.

The Laic State and Religious Fact

While the role-playing lawsuit in the United States may not have received widespread media coverage and drawn international attention, the hijab case in France certainly did. This episode provides an important portal into understanding how religious education is conceived in France's secular framework through the distinction made between 'religious expression' and 'religious fact' in the context of public schooling.

The controversy on the wearing of headscarves in French public schools began in 1989 when a secondary school headmaster in a town near Paris decided to expel three Muslim girls for refusing to remove their head-scarves when attending classes. To resolve the conflict, Lionel Jospin, the Education Minister at the time, sought a legal advisory opinion on the issue from the Conseil d'Etat, the highest administrative court in France. Its response reaffirmed the secular status of France, stressing the two princi-ples of neutrality on religion in public services and non-discrimination in state schools. On the basis of these principles, students had a right to reli-gious self-expression so long as it did not affect their peers' right to free-dom from religion. On the wearing of headscarves, the Conseil was of the opinion that 'ostentatious religious signs' were not necessarily incompati-ble with the principle of *laïcité* as long as they did not constitute 'an act of

pressure, provocation, proselytism, or propaganda' that compromised the dignity or freedom of other pupils. Thus the ruling did not assume France's protection of the freedom of religion and conscience to be at odds with its principle of secularity (Ziegler, 2007).

In 1994, the controversy erupted once more when the new Education Minister, François Bayrou, issued a decree directing schools to ban the display of all ostentatious religious symbols by students. As with the Conseil's earlier ruling, school heads were left with resolving each conflict on a case-by-case basis, leading to legal ambiguities of distinguishing the 'ostentatious' from the inconspicuous.[15] In 2003, President Chirac reignited the debate when the Stasi Committee appointed by him to examine the 'issue of secularity' recommended that the wearing of all ostentatious signs of religious affiliation, including crosses, skullcaps, turbans and head-scarves, be prohibited in public schools.[16] In early 2004, this recommendation was passed as a bill by the French lower house of Parliament and approved by the French Senate, receiving strong endorsement at both levels (ibid.).

It has been noted that while the Conseil d'Etat embraced a broader notion of secularity by balancing state neutrality in the public sphere with the individual's right to freedom of religion, the new legislation subscribed to a restrictive secularity by requiring religion to be wholly excluded from the public domain. This less tolerant position has been attributed to the rising anxiety in France that religious expression on the part of the new Muslim immigrant communities threatens to compromise the neutral status of lay schools. France's assertive secularity expressed through the ban of religious symbols has drawn strong criticism from a wide range of quarters, being perceived as an ideological stand inscribed with a number of overlapping discourses based on gender, race, class and religion. These discourses include the myth of the French Republic founded on an inflexible and universal *laïcité*,[17] the emancipation of Muslim women from patriarchal oppression, the assimilation of an alien immigrant presence into French national culture, and the containment of fundamentalist tendencies of a resurgent Islam (Windle, 2004; Judge, 2004). The simplistic ascription of the headscarf as a 'religious' or 'Islamic' symbol has also come under heavy criticism, the legislative measure turning a blind eye to the complex meanings it holds for French Muslim female adolescents whose motives subvert both secular and religious typecasting of cultural identities (Scott, 2005).

With the public spotlight on the hijab controversy, what has been largely obscured is a parallel and connected debate by French policymakers and educators in this period on teaching about religion in public schools.

Like the United States, France upholds a secular policy on religious education in state schools. Arising from the laicization of education in 1882, and the separation between church and state in 1905, religious instruction was prohibited in public education and confined to the private sphere. Teachers were expected to be neutral on matters to do with religion, in their professional capacities as well as in the content of teaching they imparted, by refraining from either proselytizing or criticizing religions so as to respect their students' freedom of conscience. The formulation of this laic policy on education was not intended to be anti-religious, and in fact did not prohibit the examination of religious issues in the curriculum. Indeed, it was recognized that it would be impossible for students to comprehend the history of societies and civilizations without some reference to the role of religions. Of equal importance was the necessity of promoting understanding and tolerance towards people of different beliefs through this exposure (Estivalèzes, 2006).

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, France is said to have experienced a crisis in the teaching of the humanities that impacted on young people's knowledge about religion, a situation compounded by their disengagement from religious culture due to a decline in religious practice socially and the transmission of religion within the family. In the 1980s, teachers began voicing a growing concern at this trend, finding it difficult to explain topics on literature, art, philosophy and history because their students did not possess the requisite religious and cultural references. In effect, significant aspects of the Western canon lay beyond the students' comprehension without a familiarity of the Judaeo-Christian tradition (ibid.). By extension, an appreciation of Indian, Chinese, Arab, Persian and other civilizations required students to have some basic acquaintance with Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic traditions.

Through the late 1980s and 1990s, at the same time as the hijab affair was underway, a series of official enquiries, academic conferences and opinion polls argued for greater attention to be paid to the history of religions in the subjects of history, geography and literature. Following the events of September 11, the necessity of a better understanding of religions became heightened, with teachers overwhelmed by questions on religious issues and fundamentalism. In order to address this situation, the philosopher Régis Debray was called upon by the Minister of National Education to investigate the teaching of religion in lay schools. Noting that the majority of the French public wished to see the study of religions strengthened in state education, his recommendations included the consolidation of the subject across disciplines such as history and philosophy, and the insertion

of compulsory modules in teacher training on 'the philosophy of laicity and the history of religions' (Debray, 2002).[18]

Debray argues that France needs to move from a 'laicity of incompetence', in which religion is looked upon as being of no concern to society, to a 'laicity of intelligence' based on the necessity of understanding religion. Appealing to the tradition of objectivity, reason and tolerance which defines *laïcité*, he does not view the study of religion in education as threatening this principle but rather enhancing it. Debray questions the assumptions that religion cannot participate in the 'rationally controlled, public transmission of knowledge', that faith and knowledge are antithetical, and that belief lacks critical rigour and intellectual engagement. Within the framework of republican ideals, he calls for democratizing and modernizing the concept of *laïcité* by changing the intolerant and discriminatory stance towards religion. In his consideration, the liberty which forms the bedrock of the laic, republican state has the educational responsibility to safeguard emerging generations from religious illiteracy (Debray, 2002; McCaffrey, 2005).

In adopting this position, Debray is not suggesting a confessional teaching of religion in schools, but rather arguing for a non-theological presentation in which the religious phenomenon is historically contextualized. Following his report, French educators have come to identify several essential aims for reinforcing the study of religions in public schools: the imparting of a better understanding of religions as a key to helping young people gain access to their cultural heritage, the promotion of intercultural understanding and tolerance among them, and the development of an informed grasp of the contemporary world through insight into the relation between religions and global events (Estivalèzes, 2006). The latter two aims, in particular, are closely linked to the Muslim immigrant presence in France and the geopolitical issues on Islam that have materialized in the post-September 11 period.

In this context, the banning of ostentatious religious symbols in public schools, on the one hand, and the growing urgency to help students understand religions, on the other, have a particular bearing on Islam as school knowledge in French education. The laic state is finding it increasingly difficult to accommodate itself to the political and social reality of Muslims as a presence in France, now numbering between 4 and 5 million, and constituting the second largest religious group after Catholicism. Most of the Muslims are from North Africa and former French colonies, and belong to a disenfranchised underclass suffering from severe unemployment, poor housing and other debilitating social welfare problems. Under the French

system, in the absence of public funding, few mosques or private Muslim schools exist in France.[19] In response to the rising influence of fundamentalist Islam, the government has elected to establish a central Muslim body to oversee Muslim affairs,[20] instituted measures for the training of imams in France, and increasingly moved towards its aspiration of nurturing a 'French Islam' that fits into the secular and national culture of France (Limage, 2000).

Against this background, the hijab issue can be viewed as an assimilationist response to deal with the large Muslim student population in French public schools. Critics have argued that while the banning of the headscarf has been directed at an external symbol, it masks the deeper issue of the laic state's anxiety to regulate a new manifestation of religious presence in its educational system. Muslim students, like those of other persuasions, are expected to step out of their religious identities and refrain from expressing their religious beliefs when entering the public school. Once inside, they are required to act as individual French citizens, and in keeping with the republican tradition, granted in principle a status of equality in relation to their peers. The fact of religious conscience, belief and expression, as an integral part of the identity of these students, is not accorded any significance in laic education, the assumption being that the division between the secular and religious can be neatly effected through the prohibition of external symbols. Also denied within school walls is the reality of Muslim students as social beings embodying lived relationships and attachments to their religious communities. Rather, it is the individual's solitary relation as citizen to the 'one and indivisible' republican state that becomes paramount, all notions of *communautarisme* and multiculturalism being viewed as a threat to national unity (Judge, 2004).

At the same time, the laic state aspires to educate students to understand the significance that Islam and other religions have for individuals, communities and global societies.[21] In the case of Islam, this objective becomes difficult to realize without an engagement with the fact that Muslims embody and express Islam in their everyday lives, in both the public and private spheres. The tendency in France to reduce religion to the status of private, individual opinion overlooks the reality of religions as living phenomena manifested in the daily lives of individuals and given collective expression by communities, organizations, institutions and states (Willaime, 2007). On this basis, how the French state can reconcile the radical 'secularizing' of Muslims in public schools with equipping students to understand Islam as both a personal and social faith, perceived as impacting on all aspects of a Muslim's life, raises serious questions which have yet to be

addressed. At a fundamental level, is the premise of a laic education about religion without recognition of the religious identity of students in the classroom tenable? It is to be expected that the state's desire for students to develop a greater understanding of the social and global issues raised by religious beliefs will inevitably prompt them to air their own religious convictions and views in the classroom. The expression of personal beliefs and values, the discussion of communal experiences, and debates on critical points of conflict between alternative life stances will necessarily have to be countenanced if a genuine education about religions is to be developed. In this light, the boundaries between what can be permitted and excluded in the public school as 'religious fact' and 'religious expression' become diffused when students are invited to consider the role of religion in the lives of individuals, communities and societies at large.

Debray and other reformists suggest that France needs to move from a model of exclusionary laicism to one which is more tolerant towards religions, from militant laicity of negative neutrality to one which embraces benevolent or positive neutrality of religions in a pluralist framework. These proposals have not been without critique from committed *laïcs* who are wary of the return of religious instruction to state schools. On the other hand, some specialists and educators fear that reducing religions to a positivist treatment in a historicized framework will not do justice to faiths as living realities inspiring large masses of people to particular ways of life. New debates emerging in France are seeking for approaches to the study of religion that avoid the extremes of both indoctrination and reductionism (Willaime, 2007). Such forms of teaching may lead to a better understanding of Muslims and Islam in French public schools, but they will only emerge through a prior questioning of and engagement between conceptions of *laïcité* and understandings of religion.

Religious Culture and Minority Rights

In the case of both the United States and France, issues on the approach to school-based Islam in public education are closely linked to secular policies of the state. Like these two countries, Turkey too upholds a secular constitution but departs from them in incorporating a separate subject on religious instruction in its educational system. How Islam is presented in this framework has recently surfaced as a major political issue, providing insight into a policy context where Muslims form the majority of the population.

For a quarter of a century following the founding of Turkey as a republic in 1923, the educational system operated on a secular basis, with schools at all levels prohibited from delivering religious instruction. The introduction of a multi-party system after the Second World War and open criticism of restrictions imposed by the government on religious teaching paved the way for the introduction of religious education in state schools on an optional basis from 1949 to 1982. The change was in part an attempt to address a perceived corrosion of the moral basis of society and to bring about greater social cohesion. It was also motivated in large measure by the recognition of political parties of the potency of Islam in eliciting popular support. Following the military coup in 1980, religious education was made into a compulsory subject designated as 'Religious Culture and Ethics', its aims being to impart knowledge on religion in general, as well as on Islam and ethics.[22] From a political perspective, these aims were justified as being compatible with secularist principles, and explained as reinforcing Kemalism, national unity and humanitarianism. Only pupils of non-Islamic religions, namely the Christians and the Jews, were granted exemption from the subject; otherwise it was compulsory for all students (Kaymakcan, 2006).

With further reforms in 2000, the guidelines approved by the Ministry of National Education required religious education to cover the historical development and doctrines of Jewish, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist traditions, including the position of Islam in relation to Judaism and Christianity. The guidelines also stated that these classes should respect secularism, avoid infringing on the freedom of religion, and emphasize the value of differences in religious understanding and practice (Kaya, 2009). In 2005, a review of the curriculum signalled a more inclusive treatment of various faiths and the adoption of a constructivist pedagogy to teaching about religions. However, despite these reforms, it is claimed that the approach to 'religious culture and ethics' on the whole is not educational but confessional in nature, being imparted predominantly from a Sunni Hanafi perspective of Islam, the religious tradition of the majority of Turkish Muslims. There appears to be a general disregard for presenting alternative interpretations of Islam, such as those of the Shi'as, Sufis and Alevis (Kaya, 2009; Kaymakcan, 2002).

Confronted with this situation, a Turkish father of Alevi persuasion decided to apply to the local authorities to exempt his daughter from religious lessons at school. Having failed to convince them, Hasan Zengin took his case to the Provincial Directorate of National Education in Istanbul in February 2001, arguing that, under international human rights treaties, he had the right to choose the type of education offered to his children. Upon

receiving a response of rejection, and having exhausted all the legal options in Turkey, Mr Zengin turned to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). In its judgement arrived at on 9 October 2007, the Court found the father's rights violated on the grounds that the compulsory religious culture and ethics class did not fulfil the criteria of objectivity and pluralism, and did not respect the religious and philosophical convictions of Mr Zengin. The ECtHR ruled that Turkey was in breach of its obligation to respect the right of parents to ensure education in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.[23] Following this decision, the highest administrative judicial body of Turkey endorsed the ECtHR ruling, stating that the mandatory class of religious culture and ethics was in the form of 'teaching a religion' and therefore ought not to be compulsory for all students (Kaya, 2009).

This particular case is of special significance in bringing to light the issue of religious minorities, including Muslim denominations with differing interpretations of Islam, in Muslim majority states. In Turkey, the majority of Muslims belong to the Sunni branch of Islam and follow the Hanafi legal code, while the Alevis, estimated to represent between a tenth and a third of the population, are members of a religious tradition whose beliefs and practices are said to be derived from Sufism and Shi'a Islam, including aspects from their ancestral past (Kaya, 2009). The parents of this community have been directly affected by the religious culture and ethic classes as their children, until the ECtHR ruling, were not exempt from the subject. Alevis are perceived as falling within the Islamic fold by the Turkish authorities, but their particular understanding and practice of Islam is not taken into account, even though it differs significantly from that of Hanafi Sunnism.[24] Having experienced persecution under the Ottomans, the Alevis embraced Kemal Atatürk's secular republic with its policies of keeping Islam strictly out of the public domain. However, with the policy on religion having shifted in the postwar period, they have been increasingly concerned by the Turkish state's use of Sunni Islam as an instrument of social control.

Hasan Zengin's objections to his daughter attending the classes on religious culture and ethics were assessed in the light of the contents reflected in textbooks prescribed for the subject.[25] These texts were found to refer to religions other than Islam in a limited way, with minimal mention of Islamic traditions such as Alevism. The topics covered were presented in a confessional manner, based explicitly on Sunni beliefs and practices. Alevi organizations claim that the religious classes are imparted by teachers who have usually studied at Imam Hatip schools (vocational

religious high schools) and faculties of theology, and who adopt a proselytizing approach to Islam. Students are required to memorize parts of the Qur'an, and in some classes, may be asked by teachers to partake in prayer, practise rituals and attend the mosque (Kaya, 2009). This approach essentially indoctrinates Alevi children into the Sunni observance of Islam without respecting their right to religious freedom and conscience. The Alevis are not the only minority affected by Turkey's educational policies – other groups include Kurds, Roma, Assyrians and other Caucasian minorities (ibid.).

The way in which Islam has been framed in the religious culture and ethics subject by the secular state is particularly revealing. It is claimed that the religious education curriculum deliberately restricts itself to those aspects of Islam directly concerning the individual, and endeavours to exclude topics of social and political relevance (Kaymakcan, 2006; Shively, 2008). The national policy of keeping Islam firmly under the control of the Kemalist state bears down heavily on the selection of the content for religious education. The state restricts the teaching of Islam to its doctrinal and ritual aspects, linked to the personal expression of faith, that do not interfere with its secular governing policies. Its wider policy of drawing a sharp line between the public and private observance of Islam have been carried over into the religious education curriculum by separating the social aspects of Muslims' lives (mu'amalat or civil relations) from both faith and ritual. Religious instruction is therefore directed at informing students of the individual practice of the Islamic faith, and refrains from introducing them to concepts of the shari'a and contemporary socio-political issues pertaining to Muslims. On the whole, controversial issues on religion and denominational disagreements are avoided, as are attempts at analysing contemporary concerns on Islam (Kaymakcan, 2006).

The approach to religious education and religious minorities brings into question the nature of Turkish secularism or laicism. Unlike the United States, and to some degree France, both of which endeavour to observe a complete separation between church and state, the Turkish state opts to bring religion under its direct control by selectively upholding a form of Islam specially crafted to reinforce its secular purpose. Its attempts at creating religious neutrality in the public sphere are attained through the bifurcation of Islam into individually held religious beliefs and the social and political applications of these convictions. Sensitive to the impact of political Islam in various parts of the Muslim world, the state imposes tight restrictions on what is permissible in terms of the expression of religious symbols and practices in the public domain, such as proscribing the wearing of headscarves by women in public institutions and services, praying in

unauthorized places and participation in unofficial religious education (Shively, 2008). The state's particular formulation of Islam, which reduces it to private belief and practice underpinned by Hanafi Sunnism, is viewed as yielding a single, essentialized and apolitical Islam that it enforces through its policies. The expression of other interpretations of Islam in the public space is therefore considered to be in violation of the secular status quo. In the case of Turkey, the realm of the 'secular' is not deemed to be neutral by virtue of excluding groups whose interpretations differ from the state's 'official' Islam (ibid.).

Kaplan (2002) highlights another issue associated with the 'secularized' Islam promoted by the Turkish state, namely that of nationalism. He argues that while the military continues to oppose the overtly religious parties as part of its Kemalist secular ideology, it has seen it to its advantage to reintegrate Islamic instruction into the educational system. The motive arises from the fear of exposing the masses to the growing resurgence of political Islam and ultimately losing influence over the governance of the country. To perpetuate its influence, the military is claimed to have deployed the strategy of co-opting the former Ottoman dyad of *din-u devlet* ('religion and state') into the curriculum, through which every citizen-child learns to identify himself or herself as the defender of the faith. Kaplan finds current textbooks glorifying the alliance between the military and the religious, and implanting the ideal of the Muslim warrior in the moral consciousness of the modern Turkish child. Pre-republican notions of holy warfare are reintroduced in the curriculum, and adherence to the military heritage is portrayed as a religious obligation extending into the present age. In the civic lessons, students are taught that national identity presupposes identification with Islam, and that the state is an institution sanctioned by religion. The particular religious rendering of nationalism is aimed at strengthening Turkish identity by portraying Turkey as the foremost defender of Islam.

In the pluralist and globalizing circumstances of the early twenty-first century, the upholding of a form of religious instruction based on essentialist and nationalistic readings of Islam jars sharply with Turkey's secular and democratic aspirations. As it gradually moves closer to its goal of becoming a full member of the European Union, the pressure is also mounting on it to reform its educational system to reflect a more pluralist and democratic framework. In this regard, the ECtHR ruling on religious education in favour of the Alevi case was a major milestone, forcing the Turkish state to confront the supposed impartiality and plurality of its constitutionally legislated subject of religious culture and ethics. The special significance of this

case is that it has forced a Muslim majority state to review its policy on the confessional teaching of a particular interpretation of Islam to its students on the basis of their human rights. Turkey is now required to move forward towards a model of religious education that is genuinely inclusive and which can legally accommodate the rights of diverse communities and cultures that compose its society.

Madrasa Regulation and Islamization

If the rift on religious education in Turkey has manifested itself in the state sector, in Pakistan the divide that has proved intractable to resolve has been between the public sphere of state-regulated schools and the sectarian domain of the madrasas. In this last case study, Pakistan offers a contrasting take on school-based Islam in a policy context shaped by volatile political circumstances since the founding of the state in 1947. Unlike Turkey, Pakistan is a self-proclaimed 'Islamic Republic' whose constitution stipulates that 'Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah.'[26] This resolution is qualified with the condition that 'adequate provision shall be made for the minorities freely to profess and practise their religions and develop their cultures.'[27] The constitution thus legitimizes the state to pursue as its civic duty the promotion of a particular religion as an encompassing orientation among its majority population, while making allowance for the freedom of religious belief and conscience for its minorities. In the context of the alleged linkages made between jihadist militancy and Pakistan madrasas, the question arises as to the nature of pedagogic Islam in the public and denominational educational systems of Pakistan, and the role of the state in its formulation and regulation.

Following the September 11 attacks, the Pakistani government came under intense pressure from the United States, Britain and other Western countries to reform and regulate its madrasas, whose numbers are believed to have expanded from less than 150 at the time when Pakistan was founded to around 10,000 at the turn of the century (ICG, 2002). Over this period, the ulama (the class of religious scholars) in charge of the madrasas managed to carve out an independent educational space for themselves, becoming organized into five boards defined by their sectarian affiliation.[28] Although free of state control, the madrasa sector has periodically faced attempts to modernize it by both military and civilian governments, one of

the interventions by the state being just a month before 11 September 2001 when an ordinance was issued to create the Pakistan Madrassah Education Board charged with the responsibility of setting up new, exemplary madrasas, and overseeing those which chose to affiliate with the Board.[29]

In January 2002, General Musharraf announced his resolve to rein in the madrasas by making it mandatory for them to be registered with the government, and to henceforth base their instruction on a new state-formulated syllabus which would incorporate the subjects of Pakistani studies, mathematics, science and English alongside a reviewed component of Islamic education.[30] The bill drafted in June 2002, however, turned out to be a watered-down framework, requiring madrasas to *voluntarily* register with the government.[31] They were expected to make regular financial disclosures, and in return, became eligible to receive funding from the government. This attempt by the state to exert some degree of controlling influence over the madrasas largely failed in its intent, not having anticipated the reaction it would provoke from the ulama. Tactically, it overlooked the fact that they were self-sufficient in their funding through local patronage and community support, and that any external financial leverage was unlikely to be effective (Bano, 2007). Instead, the ordinance spurred strong resistance from the federated association of madrasa boards, a coalition formed by the ulama in 2000 to resist government attempts to curb their autonomy.[32] The relinquishing of control to the state was a concession which the ulama were not willing to countenance (Candland, 2005). In 2005, the government passed yet another ordinance requiring the mandatory registration of all madrasas, but this regulation too had to be amended after more resistance from the ulama, leading to the incorporation of key concessions that diluted the state's overall control.[33] One of these compromises repermitted the madrasas to publish literature on 'the comparative study of various religions or schools of thought', an activity which was prohibited in the earlier ordinance on the grounds that it would promote militancy or spread polemical sectarianism and religious hatred.[34]

Underlying the struggle for the administrative control of the madrasas is the more substantial problem of the curriculum. Many of the ulama view the ordinances as a bid on the part of the Pakistani state to 'secularize' their institutions as a result of American pressure and the 'Western agenda'. According to the ulama, the primary aim of the madrasas, unlike the state schools, is the specialized training of religious scholars steeped in Islam and the shari'a. The ulama are not prepared to see this aim being compromised, although in the past some of them have not been averse to incorporating 'modern subjects' into their curriculum. Given that the madrasas are

aligned along denominational lines and promote a sectarian understanding of Islam, the communitarian-minded clerics have always been wary of state interference in their institutions (Candland, 2005; Bano, 2007).

The state's attempt to integrate subjects from the national curriculum with madrasa teaching is aimed at modernizing the madrasas and providing vocational opportunities to the students. Above all, it hopes to move them away from sectarianism to a broader understanding of the world and a civic outlook underpinned by the principles of tolerance and respect for people of different faiths, nationalities and cultures. This aspiration, however, is based on the assumption that the subjects taught in the state curriculum are fit for producing civic, social and religious tolerance. In 2002, an independent study carried out by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute raised serious concerns about the nature of the teaching imparted on these subjects in government schools (Nayyar and Salim, 2002). Based on an analysis of textbooks produced by the Curriculum Wing of the Ministry of Education, the investigation found that the material presented in civics, social studies, English and Urdu directly contradicted the promotion of a progressive, moderate and democratic society. Among the problems identified were a distorted presentation of national history, insensitivity to the existing religious diversity in Pakistan, views encouraging prejudice, bigotry and discrimination towards fellow citizens, women, religious minorities and other nations, and a glorification of war as well as incitement to militancy and violence (ibid.).

Various studies reveal that these biases and prejudices also feature explicitly and implicitly in Islamiyat or Islamic studies (Leirvik, 2008; Panjwani, 2004). This subject is compulsory from Class I up to the BA level, effectively constituting 14 years of study.[35] Although students of other faiths are not legally required to study Islam, they are not usually provided with alternative studies in their own faiths. In some schools, non-Muslim students study akhlaqiyat (ethics), but in general, they are induced to take Islamiyat through the incentive of added credits (Leirvik, 2008). Overall, the approach to Islam is confessional in nature, and while presented ecumenically as appropriate to all Muslims, in reality leans towards the majoritarian Sunni tradition presented from a normative perspective. Denominational differences are only observed for the higher classes when the Islamiyat syllabus becomes separated for Sunnis and Shi'as. In general, the formulation of Islam as school knowledge in the Pakistan state curriculum is claimed to be characterized by several distinctive features: it is doctrinal, canonical and literalistic in its reading of the Qur'an and prophetic traditions; it is ahistorical in ignoring the development of Islamic beliefs, practices and values

over the course of time; it is homogenizing in overlooking the diversity of interpretations that exist in Muslim societies and cultures, both historically and today; and it is prescriptive in not allowing students to engage critically and educationally with religious concepts and experiences (Leirvik, 2008; Panjwani, 2004).

The construction of Islam that is upheld in the curriculum, it appears, is to a large degree an outcome of Pakistan's appropriation of Islam as a state ideology in the public domain. Since the founding of the nation, the leaders of successive regimes have grappled with the thorny issue of what place to accord to Islam as a guiding principle in the political framework of Pakistan, from the founding figure of Mohammad Ali Jinnah who favoured a clear separation between state and religion to General Zia ul-Haq who leaned preferentially towards the notion of theocracy. Given Pakistan's particular demographic complexion, which is characterized by a high degree of sectarian, ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity, Islam has become a ready and convenient means for the state by which to forge national unity among the different groups. Under these circumstances, the power of the ulama has also grown, becoming an important factor in the political calculations of each regime. Over the past six decades, the ulama have increasingly demanded that the governance of the Islamic Republic be premised on the shari'a, leading politicians to make varying concessions to this demand since Zia ul-Haq. One of the areas which has become particularly susceptible to this pressure is national education, which has experienced what some have viewed as the 'Islamization' of the curriculum (Nayyar and Salim, 2002).

In Zia ul-Haq's time, the teaching of Islamiyat became more pronounced and was made compulsory up to the BA level, as was Arabic for Classes VI to VIII to help students better comprehend Qur'anic teachings. In the late 1990s, the study of the Qur'an was enforced in both public and private schools (ibid.). Islam as an ideological framework is said to have been extended to all the key subjects in the curriculum, so that historical, ethical, civic and even scientific content is imbued with Islamic precepts. In addition, this presentation of Islam is found to be associated closely with the promotion of national identity, reinforced by either a sharp contrast with or exclusion of the religious, cultural and national 'other' (ibid.). The findings of several studies conclude that Pakistan is portrayed exclusively as a Muslim country and for Muslims alone, Islam is insinuated into all the major subjects, the 'Ideology of Pakistan' is made into the cornerstone of education, and students are led to adopt patriotic attitudes with overt hostility and antagonism towards some non-Muslim states and societies.[36]

In sum, the overall educational orientation in the Pakistani context appears to have been heavily conditioned by the dual tendencies of the nationalizing of religious education, and the Islamizing of the national curriculum.

Pakistan represents an interesting case of a state which has deliberately chosen to adopt a religion as its ideological basis. In doing so, it has invited the potential and actual application of religion in the regulation of its political, legal and social structures. Unlike Turkey, which has sought to control the influence of Islam through its secularist stance, Pakistan has co-opted Islam into its constitutional framework. In doing so, it has created conditions where the clerical class has assumed increasing influence over social institutions such as education in the denominational context. The deep divisions that exist in Pakistan's educational system between government schools, private schools and denominational madrasas disclose the ethnic, class and sectarian interests at work in the educational arena. Attempts at reform are caught in a polarized conflict between the secularists who view the ulama to be antiquated remnants in a modern, democratic society, and the ulama who consider the secularists as stooges of the West and pandering to American demands for secularizing the country. In this scenario, it is not only the institutional demarcations which are of consequence, but also what is presented within these institutions.

Following September 11, the tensions between these antagonistic groups have heightened considerably. The bulk of this attention has been directed at the madrasas, with the approach to Islam in the state system largely subdued. Proposals calling for the insertion of subjects from the national curriculum into the madrasas have not adequately taken into account the deficiencies that exist in state education (Candland, 2005). Reformative ventures in this direction will need to ensure in the first instance that the contents of the state curriculum are significantly revised to promote civic understanding and social tolerance before introducing these subjects in the madrasas. In particular, special attention needs to be paid to Islam as school knowledge in both settings, forming as it does the core orienting framework in the educational system of Pakistan.

Contested Knowledge and the Typology of Policy Contexts

The cases examined in this chapter reveal four contrasting ways in which Islam as school knowledge is formulated in the school curricula of different countries. These cases also indicate policy issues associated with representations of Islam as a pedagogical subject, arising from conflicting political

and social interests. The teaching of Islam at the school level is significantly impacted by these interests, whether it takes place in Muslim or non-Muslim contexts. While some of these issues pertain equally to all faith traditions, Islam in particular has come under greater global and national surveillance as a religious educational category with the rise of extremist fundamentalism. This, in turn, has raised concerns which are specific to it.

The foremost factor which the analysis of the four examples reveals is the determinative role of the state in establishing what constitutes legitimate school knowledge in the public domain. The policies exercised on religious education by the four countries examined above can be broadly divided into secular and confessional approaches. The United States, France and Turkey are all constitutionally secular, but secularity is interpreted and applied differently in each state, as is evident in the particular manner in which the teaching of religion is handled in each educational system. The United States is said to observe a passive form of secularity, while both France and Turkey have adopted an assertive laicism (Kuru, 2005). Pakistan stands at the other extreme of this political spectrum in embracing a religious platform in its constitution. However, these broad demarcations by themselves are not enough to determine the specific policies instituted on religious education. In both the United States and France, Islam and the other religions are presented non-confessionally from historical, philosophical and social scientific perspectives. Turkey and Pakistan, on the other hand, have adopted a confessional approach to the teaching of Islam, underpinned by nationalist ideologies.

In these varied contexts, the state's relation to different social interests have significant bearing on religious education. In the United States, the passive secularity of the state leaves the onus on individual citizens to hold the state accountable for any infringements of their constitutional rights. Controversial subjects such as Islam become a ready target for litigation by right-wing organizations and Christian conservatives who do not want to expose their children to any teaching whatsoever about Islam. In France, it is the state which feels obliged to actively safeguard the neutrality of public institutions through interventionist policies. The emergence of Muslims as a new religious presence in France has been perceived by the state as a threat to its laicity, provoking it to regulate the symbolic expression of Islam in state schools. In Turkey, the milestone ruling by the ECtHR on religious instruction has forced the state to re-examine its policies on the rights of religious minorities, exposing the denominational bias as well as the nationalistic discourse embedded in the representation of pedagogic Islam. Finally, Pakistan reveals the situation of a state struggling to confront the

political and civic fallout from the ideological and sectarian approaches to Islam in both the state school and madrasa systems. In all these cases, we find policymakers seeking to address or control social concerns linked to the teaching of religion through recourse to constitutional and legal mechanisms.

The cases examined in this chapter are by no means representative of the diverse contexts across the globe in which Islam and other religions are presented as school knowledge. Nevertheless, they provide useful insight into policy approaches that are broadly distinguished into the secular and the confessional. Between these two extremes lies a third option: the pluralist approach where multi-faith religious education is taught by law as a separate subject in the public school curriculum. States that observe this policy on teaching about religions seek to uphold the principle of impartiality, like the secular states, towards people of all religious beliefs and none. However, they differ on the policy of how religions can be presented non-confessionally in the school curriculum. While the secular states take the stand that this can only be done by a study of religion through the framework of the humanities and social sciences, pluralist policies do not see a conflict between a subject specially devoted to teaching about religion and doing so in a non-confessional and academic manner.

England presents an interesting example of a country that has adopted the pluralist model of religious education. However, England also recognizes the Anglican Church as the established religion of the state, and places emphasis on the teaching of Christianity in its religious education curriculum, although the approach adopted is broadly of a multi-faith character. All the religions, including Christianity, are presented on a non-confessional and non-sectarian basis. The adoption of a pluralist model by a state with an established church offers an engaging context for analysis, particularly in terms of the treatment of Islam as a pedagogic category in a Western liberal environment. As the four case studies here have revealed, any understanding of Islam as school knowledge in a particular policy context requires a grasp of the role of the state and the influence of social interests in relation to religious education. The next chapter frames in greater detail the study of Islam in the English educational system.

Notes

[1] The use of the terms 'religious education' and 'religious instruction' in this and other chapters observes the conventional distinction between the former as being non-confessional and the latter as confessional.

[2] In Muslim educational systems, Islam is taught under a variety of headings such as al-tarbiya al-islamiya (Islamic education), Islamiyat, Islamic studies and talimat-e dini (religious instruction).

[3] The relation between state and religion may fall into one of the following categories: theocracy, erastianism (a state having supreme authority over the church), separationism (the secular state), establishment (a state religion), pluralism and other neutrality models (Glendenning, 2008).

[4] This is one possible scheme of classification, among others. A key distinction made in some of these schemes is between confessional (or denominational) and non-confessional contexts. See, for example, Kodelja and Bassler, 2004.

[5] The distinction between 'public' and 'private' is a subject of philosophical and political debate, and the boundaries between the two vary from one state to another.

[6] Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

[7] State funding for denominational schools is an issue which has not been free of opposition from groups who wish to see religion wholly confined to the private sphere.

[8] *Eklund v. Byron Union School District*, No. C 02-3004 PJH (US District Court, 2003).

[9] Ibid.

[10] *Eklund v. Byron Union School District*, No. 04-15032 (9th Cir. 2005).

[11] *Brown v. Woodland Joint Unified School District*, 27 F.3d 1373, 1379 (9th Cir. 1994).

[12] See also Douglass's (2009) recent article on the efforts to improve the representation of Islam in courses on world religions as well as world history and geography in the United States.

[13] See also Moore (2006a) for a discussion of Islam in social studies education.

[14] The textbook controversy on Islam can be traced back to an earlier report produced by Sewell (2003), which prompted a rebuttal from Douglass (2003).

[15] Bayrou made a distinction between 'ostentatious' religious symbols which he banned, and 'discreet' or inconspicuous signs indicating students' personal religious convictions which they were permitted to wear (Scott, 2005).

[16] These legal and legislative posturings in 1989, 1994 and 2003 provided the established political parties with a convenient symbolic means by which they could be viewed as dealing with the immigrant issue, faced with the growing popularity and electoral gains of Jean-Marie Le Pen's far-Right National Front at these particular points in time (Scott, 2005).

[17] Judge (2004) and Scott (2005) draw attention to the inconsistent application of the French principle of laicity by highlighting exceptions made in the state funding of Catholic schools, the allowance of religious instruction in the three departments of Alsace-Moselle, and special 'arrangements of convenience' observed in the colonies.

[18] Debray also suggested the establishment of a national institute of 'sciences of religion' where, among other programmes, teachers could receive specialized training in the history of religions. This institution was established in Paris in 2002 as the European Institute of Religious Sciences.

19 The reluctance of the French education authorities to provide state funding for Muslim schools stands out starkly against the concessions made by the state to fund large numbers of Catholic schools.

20 The Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM) was established by Nicolas Sarkozy in 2003 to act as an official intermediary between Muslims and the state.

21 Islam appears to be covered only marginally in the secondary-level curriculum, based on short lessons on the 'Muslim world' such as those in the *cinquième* History and Geography classes (Soper and Fetzer, 2007).

22 This decision was endorsed in the 1982 Constitution under Article 24, making it compulsory for all students from the fourth grade until high school graduation (Kaymakcan, 2006). This reform by the military was motivated, once again, by the perceived need to enforce greater social unity and a single national identity among the growing contending forces in Turkish society (Kaplan, 2002).

23 *Hasan and Eylem Zengin v. Turkey*, No. 1448/04 (ECtHR, 9 October 2007).

24 In the Zengin case, the court took note of the applicant's claim that Alevism differed from Sunni schools of law in its doctrine and practice, as reflected in matters such as prayer, fasting and pilgrimage (ibid.).

25 Ibid.

26 The Objectives Resolution, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (as modified up to 27 October 2002). Islamabad: Ministry of Law, Justice, Human Rights and Parliamentary Affairs.

27 Ibid.

28 The following figures give a rough estimate of the distribution of registered madrasas across the five boards: Deobandi (70%), Barelvi (16%), Jamaat-i Islami (5%), Ahl-i Hadith (4%) and Shi'a (3%) (Candland, 2005).

29 The Pakistan Madrasah Education (Establishment and Affiliation of Model Deeni Madaris) Board Ordinance, August 2001. Islamabad: Ministry of Law, Justice, Human Rights and Parliamentary Affairs.

30 General Pervez Musharraf's address to the nation, Islamabad, 12 January 2002.

31 The Deeni Madaris (Voluntary Registration and Regulation) Ordinance, June 2002.

32 The Ittehad-e Tanzimat-ul Madaris-e-Deenia (Religious Madrasas Organization Alliance) was formed to protest against and oppose what were perceived as coercive measures by the government.

33 Ordinance No. XII of 2005 (18 August 2005) and Ordinance No. XIX of 2005 – Societies Registration (Second Amendment) Ordinance (1 December 2005). Islamabad: Ministry of Law, Justice, Human Rights and Parliamentary Affairs.

34 Ibid.

35 Article 31(2) of the Pakistan Constitution asserts that '[t]he State shall endeavour, as respects the Muslims of Pakistan, to make the teaching of the Holy Quran and Islamiat compulsory, to encourage and facilitate the learning of Arabic language . . .'

36 See Nayyar and Salim (2002) as well as other studies cited by Leirvik (2008).

Chapter 2

Researching School-Based Islam

Religious Education in the English Policy Context

In contrast to the United States and France, the United Kingdom is not a secular state and its unwritten constitution does not require the separation of religion and state in the educational domain. Within the United Kingdom, England has its own legal system and recognizes the Church of England (the Anglican Church) as its established church.[1] The concept of establishment in England is not a constitutional or legal principle, unlike the status given to it in the First Amendment to the United State's constitution, but a broad notion referring to the state's special and historic relationship to the Church of England. While there is no principle of religious neutrality in England, most of the articles of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) have been incorporated by the Human Rights Act 1998[2] (Glendenning, 2008).

Since England is not a secular state, religion is not legally excluded from public education. When the state formally assumed responsibility for establishing primary education in 1870, the institutions of church and state were not separated in education, as in the United States and France. Existing church or denominational schools were allowed to continue operating alongside state maintained schools, and became eligible to receive part of their funding from the state. This dual system of education continues to operate in England today, organized into four categories of schools: community, foundation, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled. Community schools are non-denominational, but the other three may be designated by the Secretary of State as being schools with a 'religious character'. These four types of schools are distinguished by varying forms of governance and funding, and the type of religious education they can provide.[3]

The present legal framework for the provision of religious education and collective worship in the non-denominational state maintained schools is based on the Education Reform Act of 1988, and the currently applicable

provisions are now to be found mainly in the Education Act 1996, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the Education Act 2002 (Meredith, 2006). Religious education is a statutory requirement for all pupils in state maintained schools. It does not form part of the National Curriculum, but falls within what is designated as the 'Basic Curriculum' to allow for local input which would be difficult to incorporate if regulated by a national statutory framework as applied to the other subjects. The aims, content and approach of religious education are determined by 'agreed syllabuses' of LEAs, subject to the condition set by the 1988 Act that these syllabuses shall 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.'[4] The religious education imparted is to be non-denominational and prohibits any catechetical or indoctrinatory approach to the teaching of religion. Moreover, since the National Curriculum in general is required to promote 'the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school',[5] religious education in the context of the curriculum as a whole is intended to be 'balanced and broadly based'. The 1988 Act also requires mandatory collective worship in state maintained non-denominational schools which is 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character', reflecting 'the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination'.[6]

Built in within these legal requirements is a degree of flexibility in the formulation of the agreed syllabuses and in the contents of the acts of worship. The agreed syllabuses are drafted at a local level by a conference that includes four committees: the Church of England, other denominations and religions, local politicians, and representatives of teachers. This arrangement is intended to ensure that the denominational and ethnic demography of the locality in which the children receive their schooling is reflected in their religious education. Furthermore, schools are required to take into account the family backgrounds of pupils when making provision for appropriate collective worship. Schools may also apply for a formal determination that exempts them from observing collective worship of a 'broadly Christian character' if warranted by the religious composition of their pupils. Finally, a conscience clause allows parents the right to withdraw their children from religious education and collective worship.[7]

Legislated measures for the provision of religious education and collective worship in state and denominational schools have been a source of recurrent dispute in England since the nineteenth century, with renewed controversy arising from the 1960s onward. Over the past 50 years, the

United Kingdom has become one of the most plural societies in Europe, as reflected in its religious, cultural and ethnic diversity. Based on the 2001 census figures, approximately 72 per cent (42 million) of the population identified themselves as being Christians, 9 million were of no faith, with the remainder divided into Muslims (1.6 million), Hindus (559,000), Sikhs (336,000), Jews (267,000) and other faiths (331,000).[8] This rich diversity in the religious and ethnic backgrounds of communities poses a significant challenge to the legal provisions on religious education to ensure that schools are enabled by the state to promote tolerance, social harmony and respect. However, it has been questioned whether the current legislation provides an adequate framework for a multi-faith Britain, given the special status accorded to Christianity above the other religions (Meredith, 2006). The existing arrangement for religious education in England is in large part a compromise agreed during the passage of the 1988 Education Reform Act, arising from a conflict between the Christian Right who wished to see the centrality of Christianity reinstated in the subject, and the professional specialists and practitioners who favoured a multi-faith approach without the privileging of any one religion.[9]

Within this policy framework, Islam is taught as one of the major world religions in religious education. Islam first featured in the English school curriculum in the interwar and postwar periods as a 'comparative religion' topic in a limited number of local agreed syllabuses of religious education. Along with other non-Christian faiths, it was confined mostly to the sixth form and presented within a Christian evangelical framework (Bates, 1994). As a result of changes in the aims of religious education in the 1960s, world religions began to be taught to junior levels in this period, being first formally introduced to all age-groups in the 1975 Birmingham agreed syllabus and soon becoming integral to the multi-faith agreed syllabuses that followed. In the mid-1980s, Islam was offered as part of the O-level paper on religious studies, gaining recognition within this subject as a GCSE examination topic option in the 1990s. With the milestone 1988 Education Reform Act, Islam along with other major faiths gained a statutory position as a curriculum topic in the local agreed syllabuses by virtue of being one of the 'principal religions' of England, a status that has remained unchanged in the opening decade of the twenty-first century.

This broad outline of the policy context for religious education in England provides the necessary background for the study on school-based Islam in this work. As the enquiry also deals integrally with Muslim communities in Britain, an overview of the communal context is presented below.

Muslims, Islam and Educational Issues

There are currently estimated to be about 1.7 million Muslims in Britain, the majority being of South Asian background, with the rest originating from regions such as the Middle East, West and East Africa, South-East Asia and Eastern Europe.[10] A wide-ranging diversity characterizes British Muslims, as reflected in their ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, denominational affiliations, political orientations and socio-economic status. Both political and economic conditions have been responsible for the migration of Muslims from regions which were formerly under British colonial rule or influence. While initially the labour shortage faced by Britain in the post-war period as a result of industrial expansion was a major factor for immigration, increasingly it has been political upheavals, ethnic and sectarian violence, abuses of civil rights, and regional warfare which have forced vulnerable groups in these areas to seek asylum in the British Isles. Migrant Muslims from Pakistan and Bangladesh were the first to settle permanently in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, followed by East African Asians in the 1960s and 1970s, and other groups of asylum seekers from the 1980s onward. The Muslims arriving in Britain made their homes largely in the urban conurbations of the West Midlands, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Central Clydeside and Greater London, leading to a growing Muslim presence in cities such as Bradford, Birmingham, Manchester, London, Leicester and Leeds (Anwar, 1995; Lewis, 1994).

In Britain, conservative and fundamentalist fractions among Muslim communities with their reactive posturings became the subject of intense media attention after the Rushdie affair in the late 1980s, an event which spurred heated debates in public and academic circles on the relation between liberal and religious values (Ruthven, 1990), with further controversy sparked off by the activities of radical student groups (Vertovec, 1997). On the educational front, the issues raised by the Honeyford affair, the Burnage enquiry and the Dewsbury case, three highly charged and politicized situations involving Muslim communities and organizations, gave impetus to the New Right's review of policies on multiculturalism, anti-racism and parental choice in education.[11] Around the same time, applications submitted by Muslim private schools for voluntary aided status, as in the case of the Islamia School in Brent, fuelled protracted disputes on the question of state funding for Muslim denominational schools (Halstead, 1986). With the launching of the terrorist attacks in September 2001, Muslims were once again thrust centrally into the public light, the July 7 bombings of 2005 resurrecting all the old suspicions of the 'Islamic threat' to Britain.

The above incidents reveal some of the major problems that have emerged for Muslims since their settlement in Britain, as well as for national and local policymakers. The educational issues in specific are linked to several sets of concerns which have developed over this period. It is estimated that there are about half a million Muslim pupils attending state and Muslim independent schools in England, with the vast majority of them enrolled in state maintained schools.[12] Dissatisfaction with public education has led some sections of Muslim communities to pursue alternative schooling options, such as the setting up of independent schools, requests for single-sex schooling for adolescent girls, or applications for voluntary aided status for denominational schools.[13] In relation to state schools where the majority of students are Muslims, adjustments have been sought by some Muslim parents and organizations in school regulations and routine, such as flexibility in the dress code, the provision of halal food, and requests for prayer facilities.[14] On the question of the curriculum itself, conservative-minded Muslim parents have sought exemption for their children from swimming, physical education, sex education, music and art on the grounds that these subjects and activities compromise what they consider to be Islamic norms.[15] Of special relevance here are concerns centred directly on religious education in state schools, leading Muslims in a small number of local authorities to express their grievances by withdrawing their children from religious education classes and collective worship, or asking for separate arrangements to be made (Hull, 1998).

If there is a single theme that underpins these issues, it is the reference to Islam as a framework of values by which Muslim parents have appraised what constitutes acceptable education for their children. The deep-seated concern on the part of many Muslims that the upcoming generation should be inducted into their Islamic faith, as a system of beliefs and values, as history and heritage, and as a way of life, has led to the setting up of Muslim denominational schools and supplementary classes on religious instruction. Currently, there are over a hundred Muslim independent schools in Britain, catering to less than 5 per cent of the overall Muslim student population.[16] At the secondary level, Islam is presented in these educational institutions in the form of an Islamic studies programme, usually based on recognized GCSE examination syllabuses, alongside the National Curriculum. A few of these independent schools are dar al-'ulums or theological colleges where the major focus of the curriculum is usually on religious and juridical sciences, based on madrasa syllabuses that developed historically in South Asia and other Muslim regions.[17] Most Muslim pupils who attend state schools also receive supplementary schooling in madrasas and other

communal centres where instruction on Islam is imparted on a confessional basis after regular school hours.[18]

In responding to the new policy environment that Muslim communities encountered upon settling in Britain, educational strategies which first emerged under colonial rule appear to have been an important reference point. British colonial intervention in various regions elicited a range of responses from Muslim communities, from the retention or adaptation of traditional educational institutions like the madrasas to the embracing of secular schooling administered by colonial governments, including the resort to other options such as the setting up of Muslim private schools, denominational colleges, Qur'anic schools and supplementary religious classes. We find these choices exercised once again in the immigration phase in Britain, reflected in parental requests for the accommodation of their children in public education, the soliciting of state funds for independent schools, and the resort to supplementary education.

As a consequence of the duality of state and denominational provisions of religious education, the new generation of Muslims growing up in England are currently being exposed to different forms of Islam. The community-based education, made available through madrasas and supplementary classes, approaches Islam from a normative perspective by inducting Muslim children into their faith. State schooling, in contrast, initiates them by and large into a liberal, phenomenological view based on a non-confessional study of Islam as one faith among others. Within and between these two contexts are to be found a range of particular constructions of school-based Islam, depending on the types of localized policies, aims and ethos observed by individual local authorities, schools and communities.[19]

The complex range of positions and responses of Muslim communities in relation to Islam and education are brought into relief by numerous studies which have engaged with issues of identity, ethnicity and culture.[20] Despite the findings of this growing body of research, debates on Muslims in the educational context have usually been framed in polarized terms, casting 'Islamic' and 'liberal' education as essentialized categories. At one extreme, there is the standpoint as represented by Hirst (1981) and other liberal philosophers that a clear demarcation be made between education and cat-echesis. From the liberal perspective, it is argued that Islam taught confessionally in faith and supplementary schools indoctrinates children and undermines their autonomy. Muslim educators such as Ashraf (1987), from an opposing platform, consider state education as implicitly promoting secularistic values, apprehensive of approaches which relativize fundamental religious beliefs. Halstead (1989) puts forward a compromise viewpoint

by suggesting that it may be possible for Muslim pupils to receive a 'weaker' form of liberal education in state schools without compromising their faith commitment.[21] These arguments and proposals remain at a conceptual level, and few empirical studies reveal in any depth how 'Islamic' and 'liberal' positions are interpreted in relation to each other and translated into educational policy and practice.[22]

The Theoretical and Methodological Frames

In the context of the current geopolitical situation, understanding how Islam is taught in state and Muslim schools has become imperative, in terms of the underlying influences, constraints, tensions and transformations that shape it and the socio-political implications raised by its various pedagogic representations. The various modes of religious education, whether applied in state or denominational schooling in England, give rise to major questions on educational policies and practices defining Islam in these two contexts and which this study seeks to address:

- What influence have changing policies on religious education had on the construction of Islam as a pedagogic category since its introduction in the English education system?
- What has been the nature of the socio-political dynamic generated by the parallel presentation of Islam in state and Muslim communal contexts?
- How have practitioners in these settings interpreted school-based Islam, and how have they imparted it to their students?
- And finally, what lessons can be drawn from this analysis which can be applied at a more general level to the issue of cultural representation in education?

The above questions are approached through a sociological study of curriculum policy and pedagogic discourse as pertaining specifically to symbolic categories in school knowledge. The theoretical framework applied to the study is an adaptation of Bernstein's (1990) model of curriculum analysis, which also incorporates his work on knowledge structures and identity.[23] The enquiry utilizes, in particular, his principle of recontextualization as a conceptual tool for tracing transformations in cultural representations which are extracted from their original socio-historical contexts and reconstructed in the pedagogic arena. Recontextualization is understood here as

the process by which a discourse is removed from its original, substantive practice and context, and relocated within a pedagogic frame through selective reconstruction. In Bernstein's framework, cultural categories, once they have been appropriated and reconceptualized in the academic domain by subject experts, are reconfigured by mediating agencies before being made available as publicly acceptable school knowledge, such agencies comprising governmental, local and communal institutions and agents who are directly or indirectly involved in structuring pedagogic practices. When the original cultural form is subjected to recontextualization, the social basis of its practice and the accompanying power relations are reconfigured. As a result, cultural categories are transformed from actual to virtual or imaginary enactments through the processes of dilution, condensing, selective emphasis and reordering (Bernstein, 1990; 1996).

Of special importance to the study is the distinction Bernstein (1999) makes between different forms of knowledge. In his scheme, 'vertical discourses' consist of specialized structures of knowledge which operate in formal, official, explicit and context independent modes, while 'horizontal discourses', in contrast, are culturally segmented subjects, typified by everyday knowledge that is likely to be oral, local and context dependent. Segmental pedagogy, according to Bernstein, usually takes place in family, peer group or local community situations through which specific, culturally localized competencies are acquired. Segments from horizontal discourses may be incorporated into vertical ones in education in order to improve students' ability to deal with issues arising in their everyday world or to give 'voice' to marginalized groups.

These descriptors are valuable for probing into what I have designated in this study as 'symbolic categories' or 'symbolic knowledge' in the school curriculum. The term 'symbolic' here carries multiple meanings. It refers broadly to frames of signification of a metaphorical or metaphysical nature which underpin both intellectual conceptions and social practices given expression by various groups in a society. It also includes existential themes speaking to philosophical, social and ethical issues of fundamental concern to individuals, communities and societies, and addressed through diverse often conflicting frameworks of beliefs and values. And it pertains to cultural formulations which figure centrally in the self-image, self-esteem and self-representation of communities of tradition, belief constituencies, status groups and other cultural collectivities. The symbolic domain in the curriculum is open to the interplay of both the vertical, specialized disciplines and the horizontal, segmental modes of knowledge identified by Bernstein.

While Bernstein's model of recontextualization provides a useful theoretical framework for studying Islam in the English education system, his notion of the hierarchical levels of influence does not fully capture the processes, agencies and relations that are specific to Islam and religious education. On the whole, his theory lends itself more readily to a structural than a historical analysis of the relations between relevant contexts. The recontextualizing model generates a useful set of descriptions for examining a synchronic structuring of pedagogic discourse, but does not have an equivalent vocabulary to capture the developing relationships between social groups and their symbolic representations across different historical periods.

To compensate for this theoretical weakness, the study on Islam also utilizes Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) to allow for a more refined relational and developmental analysis of the contexts and categories identified by Bernstein. For this purpose, special use is made of Bourdieu's concept of the 'field', defined by him as a social arena within which ongoing struggles or manoeuvres take place over access to specific resources or various types of capital. A field is structured internally in terms of power relations, with individuals or institutions positioned unevenly in relation to one another by virtue of their access to required forms of capital. Bourdieu uses the term 'capital' to describe the social products of a field, material and ideational, by means of which individuals are empowered to carry out social intercourse, but which is not uniformly apportioned among social groups. The strategies required for position-taking and accessing resources in a field are determined by 'habitus', the embodiment of culture in individuals and groups which equips them with appropriate dispositions to manoeuvre themselves through the differential power relations inherent in social fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

The theoretical framework employed in the present study investigates the interrelation between four specific fields or spheres of influence drawn from Bernstein's and Bourdieu's theories which are of particular importance in understanding the recontextualizing of Islam. The first of these is the *regulative* context as the domain in which formal and official policies on the aims and content of religious education are identified, negotiated and legislated, primarily at the national level but also in terms of their local translations. Bourdieu (1998) views the state as a concentration of different forms of capital (material, economic, cultural) and which claims monopoly over the legitimate use of physical and symbolic violence over its subjects. Developing Durkheim's hypothesis that a society's 'forms of classification'

are a derivative of their group structure, he sees the state as imposing, through its demand for moral order and the framing of social practices, political forms of symbolic classification. The state therefore becomes a foundation of logical and moral conformism, of a 'tacit, prereflexive agreement over the meaning of the world' (p. 53). Since the 1990s, the relation between the state and the curriculum in England has become a subject of renewed enquiry in the field of policy sociology.[24] The study on Islam offers a revealing window for exploring the relation between the project of the modern nation-state and the regulation of pedagogic discourses for the purposes of cultural reproduction or transformation.

Also of special significance to the enquiry is the *intellectual* arena, the site where specialized discourses on symbolic categories are pioneered by leading thinkers, innovative subject specialists and frontier researchers located in universities, colleges and other academic institutions. In Bernstein's theoretical framework, the intellectual field is the context of knowledge production where 'new' ideas and perspectives are selectively created, modified or transformed. This process is governed by distributive rules which allocate forms of knowledge to receiving groups within and beyond the academia by differentiating between the 'thinkable' and the 'unthinkable'. According to Bernstein, these forms refer to the distinction made in all societies between the quotidian and the esoteric, between incoherence and order. A 'discursive gap' is created at the point at which these two forms of knowledge meet, a space where alternative realizations between the material and the immaterial become possible. It is this crucial site of the 'yet to be thought' which Bernstein sees as being prone to regulation through distributive rules which determine who has access to this site. In the contemporary period, the control and management of the 'unthinkable' is undertaken mainly by the upper strata of the educational system, a domain which in recent years has become increasingly subject to state regulation (Bernstein, 1990; 1996).

If Bernstein dwells on the output of the intellectual field, Bourdieu (1988) throws light on the actors who generate new knowledge, viewing this arena as the 'locus of a struggle to determine the conditions and criteria of legitimate membership and legitimate hierarchy' (p. 11). The struggle arises through specialists in academic institutions having a vested interest in maintaining their role as symbolic classifiers, having acquired their authority in the first instance from their status as classified products of the field. Bourdieu, in effect, embeds the process of epistemological classification within that of social classification in the intellectual domain. While this reductionist nature of the relationship between social and epistemic

categories needs to be questioned, Bourdieu's description is significant in drawing attention to the relation between the intellectual producers and the primary discourses constructed in this field, a consideration which is central to the study on Islam. In focusing on the relation between cultural knowledge and social classification, the enquiry seeks to probe into the epistemological considerations and criteria applied in the intellectual context to define symbolic categories such as Islam. Equally, the extent to which these criteria are influenced or conditioned by socio-political factors becomes a critical point for investigation.

The *social* arena presents another field of importance to the study, comprised of collectivities which Bourdieu (1998) defines as social aggregates united by common experiences and habitus and pursuing parallel strategies towards similar goals. Class conflict is interpreted as the strategic positioning of social groups for maximizing capital in various fields, such as the domain of cultural reproduction. Of special relevance to the enquiry are status groups with a stake in symbolic knowledge transmitted through the educational apparatus, due largely to concerns on the representation of their particular national, religious, ethnic or cultural identities. Weber affiliates status groups with the concepts of honour, prestige and dignity, and committed to maintaining particular ways of life and codes of membership through defined symbolic boundaries. As moral communities advancing exclusive and at times supremacist truth claims, they are generally more effective than social classes in mobilizing themselves for competitive struggles to pursue material or symbolic ends (Parkin, 1982). The present enquiry is centrally concerned with the interrelation between established and emergent status groups in the social field, approached from the perspective of their struggle to control or influence symbolic knowledge in the curriculum.

How these groups are to be defined raises an important consideration for the study. In conceptualizing social categories, theorists in the sociology of the curriculum have tended to characterize identities in either 'essentialist' or 'hybridist' terms, the former positing a clear demarcation between collectivities in terms of their cultural representation, and the latter approaching identities as an ongoing process of cultural formation through the encounter and interaction of different groups. In the context of the present study, the methodological stance endeavours to avoid the polarizing tendencies of either class-based or poststructuralist analyses of the social field, and aims instead for a better understanding of the play between generalizing and particularizing factors in the theoretical classifications, definitions and representations of social groups involved in the recontextualizing of symbolic knowledge.

Lastly, the study attends to the *pedagogic* sphere as the context in which specialized discourses on culture, by interfacing or engaging with the other three domains, are reconstituted. Bourdieu presents this field as positioning social groups according to the amount of cultural capital they possess. He argues that it is through the control of the educational system by the established class, through its defining say over the criteria of cultural selection, that the legitimization and reproduction of the prevailing culture is ensured. Under ruling class hegemony, the educational system canonizes particular modes of knowledge, skills and values which are encoded within the school curriculum and pedagogic practice. Through the deployment of symbolic power, the dominant group imposes on society its own view of reality which Bourdieu designates as the 'cultural arbitrary', a notion that underscores for him the relative value of all cultural frameworks (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

The construction of symbolic content in pedagogic discourses, involving as it does the inscribing and embedding of the narratives, identities and relations of status groups, is a process exposed to the politics of representation. How cultural forms are intellectually conceived, socially influenced, politically governed and finally translated in pedagogic terms requires a methodology which can identify and engage with multiple factors and influences at work in the recontextualizing of symbolic categories in the curriculum. Bernstein's and Bourdieu's theories suggest the application of critical social research as a methodology specifically concerned with exposing social structures, processes and agencies veiled by hegemonic discourses, perceived as dominating and controlling, if not oppressing, subordinated and marginalized classes in society (Harvey, 1990). However, the unqualified use of this perspective tends to reduce the world simplistically into bipolarized, antagonistic divisions instead of revealing the more nuanced and differentiated struggles that characterize the circulation of power within and between various levels and contexts.

The foundational premise of the critical social stance is that all knowledge, and therefore the curriculum, is socially constructed, with the consequence that greater attention is given to the social dynamics of the selection, classification and organization of school subjects than to epistemological criteria which intrinsically define this knowledge. Power relations are claimed to be inherently embedded in the curriculum, reflecting the class divisions and material distribution of resources in society. Pressing this argument further, the curriculum is considered a tool of the ruling classes for perpetuating hegemonic relations, attained through symbolic control and cultural reproduction of the dominant code, leading to the conclusion

that marginalized groups are disadvantaged by the curriculum, materially and culturally, and need to be emancipated from their subordinated positions.[25]

The above assumptions have been brought into question from a variety of post-positivist perspectives which argue that there is a reductionist tendency in critical methodologies of reading the curriculum from a standpoint perspective by claiming that knowledge is essentially and exclusively a social construction[26] (Ladwig, 1996; Moore and Muller, 1999; Moore, 2007). A direct, deterministic association is forced between social and epistemic classifications, with knowledge being attributed to factors outside itself (e.g. class, race or gender) instead of an engagement with its own intrinsic conceptual criteria. In their failure to engage with epistemological considerations, studies approaching the curriculum from a critical perspective may implicitly or explicitly end up assuming a relativistic position. In effect, the critics argue, knowledge viewed exclusively as social construction becomes no more than the perspectives of those upholding particular standpoints. In adopting this position, researchers are unable to defend their own views logically as being more worthy of consideration than other perspectives and unwittingly undermine their own case. Consequently, the methodology applied by critical social researchers arguably becomes reduced to 'voice discourse', described as a stance in which the source and social location of evidence is privileged over the need to examine substantively the content of the data. The use of relativistic, reductionist and perspectival principles in critical social research, constituting in essence a standpoint epistemology, may result in research which becomes narrowly ethnographic and ideologized.

The objections against standpoint research raises important methodological implications for the present study. Of particular significance to the enquiry is the nature of the relationship established between social and epistemic categories in the recontextualizing of Islam. Approached exclusively from a social perspective, the study admittedly risks being reduced to a series of 'voices' advancing selected viewpoints, while, on the other hand, a purely epistemic investigation fails to do justice to the social relations and contexts that necessarily define symbolic categories such as Islam. While it may be possible to consider the natural sciences in terms of their own intrinsic criteria, without regard to *who* frames this knowledge (though even this assumption has been questioned), the social sciences and humanities are recognized as outcomes of interpretive acts where the relation between the producers of knowledge and the knowledge produced is an intricate one. When it comes to symbolic knowledge, where we are

concerned integrally with the world of beliefs and values, this relation becomes even more complex, to say the least. In the case of Islam and the other faiths, it is extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, to make a neat division between social and epistemic categories since forms of knowledge in religious education are integrally concerned with social representations and identities.[27]

Given these considerations, the methodological position adopted for this study reflects, to some degree, the perspectives of Young (2000) who argues that there is a role for a *constructive* social theory of knowledge in the sociology of the curriculum. Avoiding the excesses of both standpoint views and hard positivism, this approach is concerned with investigating particular ways in which social interests influence the form and content of the school curriculum, calling for relevant processes and outcomes to be explored empirically in specific cases. As such, the methodological perspective in this enquiry acknowledges the potential of sociological approaches to generate insights on universal knowledge claims without relapsing into standpoint positions. The research does not assume a polarized association or distinction between 'what is known' and 'who knows it', but aims at *theorizing* the complex relations obtaining between these two categories by analysing relevant forms of evidence in explicit, relational and reflexive terms. To ensure a representation of multiple perspectives rather than a single viewpoint, the study adopts a wide empirical base that applies a multi-contextual approach, incorporating a range of data from diverse sources of evidence, national, local and communal, which reflect homologues as well as divergences between and within various contexts.

In adopting this methodological position, the intention of the study is not to promote a reductionist, doctrinaire or ideological view of the curriculum by approaching it from a 'Eurocentric' or 'Islamic' perspective, or for that matter, from any particular secular, theological or culturalist stance. Nor does it seek to privilege the identity of one social group above another. Within this framework, 'Islam' and 'Muslims', including other faith traditions, are not presupposed as essentialist, homogeneous or reified categories, nor at the other extreme as predominantly amorphous, fragmented or hybrid manifestations, but rather how they are constructed in diverse settings by different actors. The focus on Islam in this enquiry, therefore, is intended purely as a vantage point to shed light on the general relation between religion and education in the English context, the theoretical and methodological approaches used here being equally applicable to other world faiths which have been subjected to parallel processes of reconstruction in the school curriculum.[28]

Research Design

The study of the recontextualization of Islam is executed at two levels: diachronically across changing periods in the history of English religious education, and synchronically across national, local and communal contexts. Accordingly, the research is divided into two main components, the first part based on a socio-historical policy study of Islam from the inter-war period to its present status, and the second part on a local community case study which examines the reconstruction of Islam as a pedagogic category at the local and school levels. The advantage of this division is that it combines a 'macro' perspective of the policy formulation of a curriculum topic in the national context with a 'micro' perspective of its translation in the pedagogic field of a selected locality.

The aim of the socio-historical enquiry is to gain an understanding of the conditions under which Islam was constituted as legitimate school knowledge in mainstream English education in the interwar and subsequent periods. More specifically, the study investigates how Islam was recontextualized as a curriculum topic in religious education as a consequence of major educational policy changes. Few studies exist on the introduction and development of Islam, or for that matter the other non-Christian traditions, as specific categories of school knowledge in English education. A recent historical survey on English religious education by Copley (1997), covering the period from 1944 to 1994, unfortunately makes only passing reference to Islam and the other minority faith traditions. A more specific study investigating the introduction of world religions in schools by Bates (1994, 1996) attributes the rise of the comparative study of religions in Britain to the influence of nineteenth- and twentieth-century liberal Protestantism. Once again, there is no direct consideration of the pedagogic construction of specific religious traditions like Islam, the studies by Copley and Bates being illustrative of other generalized approaches applied to historical profiles of religious education such as those by Hull (1975), Holm (1980), Bell (1985) and Jackson (1990).[29] In general, Islam as a symbolic category in historical treatments of religious education is often subsumed under the diffused, umbrella terms of 'world religions', 'faith traditions' or 'multi-faith teaching', or is cited serially as one among several of the world religions. Like the Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist and Sikh traditions, it receives marginal attention by being subordinated to studies on key legislative and policy shifts, pioneering reformers and institutions, or innovative theoretical paradigms and pedagogies connected with religious education.[30]

As the above review discloses, the examination of Islam as a school topic in English education is deeply embedded within and interlocked with the history of religious education, raising the question of whether a separate and original study of school-based Islam is at all possible. It is evident that the incorporation of Islam in the English school curriculum is synonymous with the policy history of religious education as a whole. However, the assumption that individual religions featuring in the school curriculum ought to be studied *only* in the context of their collective manifestation as 'world religions', or as inseparable constituent elements of the bounded subject of religious education, needs to be questioned. While such an approach may reveal general issues common to all the faith traditions, it misses out on the specific and unique perspectives that can only be offered by individual religions. In addition, it cannot be ignored that the representation of each religion in terms of policy and practice is intimately linked to a communal context that is specific to each faith group and its various denominations. A generalized treatment does not do justice to the differences to be found in the concerns, outlooks and responses of each community on the issue of religious education. Moreover, the framing of the subject as a collation of several faith traditions is itself a particular political, conceptual and educational formulation that has been the source of recurrent dispute, as this study reveals. The tensions, issues and conflicts generated by the cohabitation of several faiths within the single edifice of religious education have been a matter of much discussion, and approaching them from the perspective of an individual tradition stands to deepen generalized treatments of this dynamic. The worthwhileness and originality of this research therefore arises from disclosing hitherto unconsidered perspectives on religious education based on the unique platform afforded by Islam as a distinct religion.

The historical analysis in the study is divided into four periods identified as being of significance to the enquiry on Islam: the 'ecclesiastical' phase (the 1920s–1960s), the 'liberal' turn (1960s–1980s), the 'neo-conservative' reaction (1980s–1990s), and the post-September 11 period. The commencement of each of these phases is marked by a significant reformative change in religious education policy and practice. The early 1920s saw the introduction of the first agreed syllabuses in England and the appearance of the first official but oblique references to non-Christian traditions in a few of these documents. The 1960s constituted another crucial transition phase for religious education with the demise of confessional Christian instruction, accompanied by the growing presence in schools of students from other faith communities. The 1980s introduced further transformations, this

being the decade in which multiculturalism reached its zenith with the publication of the Swann Report, followed by the mobilization of the New Right cultural restorationists and the revision of legislation on religious education in the 1988 Education Reform Act. Following September 11, the debate on the place of religion in education has come to be dominated by questions directed at how young people are being educated about cultural diversity, social identity and civic participation.

The historical analysis draws upon a range of sources to trace the development of school-based Islam at the national and local policy levels. Documents in the form of policy texts and agreed syllabuses constitute an important base of information on the policy history of Islam, representing the 'official' public statements of intent regarding educational programmes.[31] The agreed syllabuses of LEAs in particular provide a valuable record of local consensus on the subject in various areas and periods. The aim of referring to the syllabuses has been to gain a general sense of the representation of Islam in these frameworks in different policy periods, and therefore the mapping here is by no means exhaustive. Also examined in the study are educational 'advisory' documents which, while not at the same level as policy texts, have exercised important influence over public policy and classroom practice.[32] The policy and advisory documents are recognized as significant milestones in the history of religious education, representing critical 'one-off' events in the development of the subject. Publications produced by Muslim and other associated organizations on Islam and education, in the form of journals, reports, conference proceedings, monographs and other documents, have been used as additional sources of information, together with instructional resources in the form of teachers' handbooks and pupils' textbooks. Finally, reference has also been made to relevant articles in national and local newspapers, community newsletters and other publicity oriented information.

As is to be expected, there are proportionately fewer sources available for the earlier period, in contrast to recent decades, that refer to Islam in explicit terms. Moreover, many of the policy and advisory texts do not always provide the contextual background necessary to understand the reasons behind particular changes. At the same time, generalized historical treatments of religious education have little to say directly on the specific formulation of Islam as a pedagogic topic. As a result, the study has solicited, through oral interviews, the input of religious education specialists and other practitioners to provide contextual information on policies, events, agencies and issues in religious education as they pertain specifically to Islam. The specialists identified are recognized authorities in the

field of religious education who have been closely associated with key policy events and changes in their discipline since the 1960s, including initiating pioneering and innovative reforms in terms of philosophical perspectives and pedagogic approaches. They currently hold or have held positions as directors, professors and lecturers in various universities and institutions of higher education in England, and have been at the forefront of introducing Islam, along with the other world religions, in agreed syllabus conferences, teacher training courses, and other academic programmes in universities and colleges of education. They have also been directly involved with Muslim communities in Britain and are conversant with critical issues regarding the teaching of Islam in various contexts. In addition, the oral history interviews have included Muslim educationalists who are prominent representatives of Muslim communities, and who have engaged closely with educational issues at the national and local levels in the state and community sectors since the immigration phase. Also represented in the interviews are ethnic minority researchers who have undertaken extensive research on Muslim affairs in Britain and Europe. All the interview data in this study are quoted anonymously to maintain the confidentiality of the respondents.

The input of the specialists is recognized as being perspectival in its construction, originating from an elite group of professionals located in institutions of higher education and other organizations, who are naturally adept at formulating accounts of educational problems from opposing perspectives, and who are highly articulate and persuasive in presenting their case on controversial matters. In the interview situations, the specialists, *qua* directors, professors and lecturers, may have been minded to adopt the official and institutional line by exercising a certain degree of discretion in their responses on what is, after all, a controversial subject. This and other considerations have pointed to the need for caution in interpreting the intellectual discourse, requiring attention to the subtext and assumptions underlying the responses. Perhaps the most significant issue in the oral history interviews resulted from what Seldon and Pappworth (1983) refer to as the influence of hindsight, arising from the subconscious adaptation of a view about the past by an interviewee to fit a stance adopted in the present. Most of the specialists were actively involved in the introduction of multi-faith religious education in the 1970s and 1980s. The neo-conservative 'backlash' that ensued against this approach had a significant impact on attitudes in the profession, requiring *post hoc* apologia, defensive posturing or recasting of past practices. The extent to which the reconstruction and justification of past events by the specialists is conditioned by

their engagement with the New Right critique in the 1990s has posed an important question in the analysis of the data.

In overall terms, the interviews have proved useful in providing both factual and perspectival data on the introduction and development of Islam in the context of religious education. The specialists were able to give first-hand information on Islam and Muslim communities that arose from their direct engagement with specific policies, events, personalities and processes. This is the type of experiential information that is not documented in textual sources and has therefore been extremely valuable to the study. The specific benefit of the oral history interviews has been the opportunity of addressing questions that refer directly to Islam, rather than to the generalized category of 'world religions'.

While the first part of the study is directed at providing a historical picture of the formulation of school-based Islam by examining the relations between the intellectual, social and regulative fields, the second part is concerned with the influence of these contexts in the local policy arena and the pedagogical field. The case study approach provides an opportunity to focus on the pedagogic field through an investigation of a selected number of state and Muslim secondary schools, offering certain distinct advantages as a research method to the investigation of a local community. In what Stake (1994) calls the *instrumental* case study, a particular case is examined to provide insight into a specific issue or to refine a selected theory. The example itself is of secondary interest, facilitating an understanding of a pre-identified area of enquiry. While the instrumental case study offers insights into the particular, the unique and the situational, it can also be viewed as a preliminary and exploratory platform for more extensive research aimed at generalizable outcomes. The disadvantage of this method is that it can never tell the whole story, or even a reasonable part of it. However, as Stake points out, while a single case is poor grounds for advancing grand theories, as a negative example it can at least establish limits to such generalization. The particular locality chosen for the case study presented in this work admittedly does not tell the whole story on school-based Islam at the local level in England, and the study does not pretend to present the findings as such. Rather, it is intended to serve as an exploratory portal to illuminate the micropolitics and dynamics associated with the recontextualizing of Islam as school knowledge from the national level to a specific, situational context, with the hope that it will inspire research of additional localities.

The site of research chosen for the field enquiry is an LEA situated in a large urban centre in England which offered interesting prospects for

investigating issues related to Islam, designated in this study as 'Crossford'. Of foremost significance is that this borough has one of the largest population of multi-ethnic, multi-faith and multi-lingual communities in Britain, including a substantial presence of Muslim denominations. These communities reflect a wide range of internal differentiation in terms of social class, denominational membership, political orientation, inter-ethnic relations and their period of settlement in Britain. The rich and diverse mix of social groups reveal interesting insights into the relationship between local policies, social identities and school knowledge.[33]

Crossford is also ideally suited for an investigation into the relations between the regulative field and cultural discourses at the local level. The local policies have experienced phases of radical liberalization of the curriculum in the 1980s at one extreme and, at the other, the institution of New Right measures in the 1990s. The relationships between the state, the LEA and local school governance have undergone major policy swings, providing a highly interesting setting in which to study the regulation of religious education and Islam at the local level. Another unique advantage offered by the borough is that it is an important location in England where a series of applications have been made by Muslim independent schools for a voluntary aided status over a period of time. It represents an area where Muslim leaders have actively negotiated with the local council and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)[34] on a range of issues pertaining to the education of Muslim pupils in state and denominational schools.

Crossford is by no means representative of the majority of the LEAs characterized by largely white, nominally Christian school populations where Muslim communities are absent or in a small minority. Nor is it reflective of those localities where Muslims form a majority but are composed of ethnically homogeneous groups. It is one of the few locations in which the *majority* of the school population has a plural multi-faith background. The borough has been chosen not on the basis of its capacity to represent other areas, but on the interesting mix of factors which reveal insights into the reconstruction of cultural categories in contested local arenas. In particular, it highlights significant concerns and tensions related to school-based Islam in different policy climates and pedagogic environments.

In undertaking the field study, three major sites of research were identified in the locality, chosen on the basis of gaining insight into the relation between the regulative, social and pedagogic fields at the local level. The LEA and the SACRE[35] provided entry points in the local regulative field, the research involving interviews with relevant authorities and members

affiliated with these bodies. This information was complemented with documentary analysis of policy texts, as well as past and current editions of the local agreed syllabus. The local Muslim community context was another important source of data, approached with the aim of gaining a sense of its position in relation to other fields of relevance. General information gathered from mosques, madrasas and Muslim centres was supplemented with formal interviews of prominent local Muslim leaders, representing both Sunni and Shi'a Muslim groups in Crossford. The investigation also focused on state and Muslim secondary schools in the borough, representing the pedagogic field in which Islam as a curriculum topic is taught. Interviews were carried out with the heads of religious education departments in seven of the thirteen state maintained secondary schools in the locality. In addition, three Muslim schools were examined, with interviews conducted with the headteachers, imams and teachers of Islamic studies.[36] The field research in the schools also included documentary analyses of work schemes, instructional resources and textbooks on Islam, together with classroom observations of relevant lessons.

Taken as a whole, the research presented in this work is based on the dual and interrelated aspects of the historical and contemporary formulations of Islam as school knowledge. Tracing the 'horizontal' development of Islam in religious education at the national level across different policy periods, complemented with the 'vertical' translation of these policies in a local arena, opens up revealing insights into the dynamics between governance, social interests and cultural recontextualization. The next part of the book turns to the socio-historical analysis of the ecclesiastical, liberal and neo-conservative periods, followed by the local community case study. The post-September 11 developments are examined in the last part of the book.

Notes

1 England and Wales together form a separate jurisdiction from Scotland and Northern Ireland.
2 The government, however, has left the door open to exercise a wide measure of discretion in its response to legislative provisions declared incompatible with Convention rights by the courts (Glendenning, 2008).
3 Voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools with a religious character are also known as faith schools, and may be partly or wholly funded by the state. These schools have to follow the National Curriculum, and have the option of presenting religious education based either on the local agreed syllabuses or the religious or denominational preference stipulated by each school's trust deed. See Meredith (2006) for a more detailed explanation of these distinctions.

4   Education Reform Act 1988, s. 8(3).

5   Education Act 2002, s. 78(1).

6   Education Reform Act 1988, s. 7(1) and (2).

7   School Standards and Framework Act 1998, s. 71.

8   2001 figures from the Office for National Statistics.

9   See Chapter 5.

10 This figure reflects an estimated increment from the 1.59 million revealed by the 2001 Census.

11 The Honeyford affair centred on a right-wing headmaster who criticized traditionalist Muslim parents of children in his school for their 'purdah mentality' and was subsequently forced to resign (Halstead, 1988). The Burnage enquiry was commissioned to investigate the murder of a 13-year-old Bangladeshi student by a white peer in a Manchester high school in 1986, leading to controversies on anti-racism policies in schools (Burnage Report, 1989). In the Dewsbury case, a local council in 1987 refused to admit children of a group of white parents to schools of their choice, allocating them instead to a school with a majority Asian population. The parents' refusal to comply with this decision sparked off controversial debates on parental rights, multiculturalism and race relations (Naylor, 1989).

12 The age-group distribution of Muslims reveals that around one-third of the Muslim population is of a school-going age (under 16), as compared to the small fraction (less than 10%) of Muslims who are over 60 (2001 Census – Office for National Statistics). Given this pyramidic age-structure, educational issues can be expected to feature prominently for British Muslims in the next few decades.

13 Research in this area includes studies which have investigated factors influencing Muslim parents' choice of schools (Osler and Hussain, 1995) and the education of Muslim girls (Basit, 1997; Haw, 1998).

14 For studies commenting on the religious, social and academic needs of Muslim pupils in state schools, see Parker-Jenkins (1995), Parker-Jenkins and Haw (1998) and Coles (2008). See also a recent report by the Muslim Council of Britain (2007) on this subject.

15 Some of the school subjects examined from this perspective include physical education (Carroll and Hollinshead, 1993), music (Halstead, 1994) and sex education (Halstead, 1997). Many of these studies tend to uniformize the stance of Muslims on 'problematic' subject areas. It would be illuminating to map the range of views among Muslims on this issue, based on class, ethnic and denominational considerations.

16 Association of Muslim Schools UK; House of Commons Hansard Written Answers for 16 March 2009 (pt 0012).

17 See Lewis (1994) for a description of the disciplines taught in these colleges.

18 The term 'madrasa', in the classical period of Muslim history, referred originally to a centre of higher learning where religious law, theology and other ancillary sciences were taught. This term was subsequently adopted in the Indian subcontinent and later applied to lower tier Qur'anic schools. Upon their settlement in Britain, the South Asian communities instituted the subcontinental model of madrasas as a form of supplementary schooling (Nielsen, 1981).

19 Halstead (1993), for example, identifies four models of Muslim education that have emerged in Western Europe, based on policies of assimilation, isolationism,

multicultural education and Muslim participation. These models reflect varying degrees of exclusion or inclusion of Muslims from national educational systems.

[20] See, for example, ethnographic studies of local Muslim communities (Barton, 1986; Lewis, 1994; Geaves, 1996) and youth identity studies (Jacobson, 1997; Vertovec and Rogers, 1998; Archer, 2003; Lewis, 2007).

[21] The weaker form of liberal education promotes critical enquiry without questioning the foundational principles of those upholding a religious (or some other comprehensive) system of beliefs. The stronger version argues for open-ended enquiry without any restriction on what can be questioned (Halstead, 1989).

[22] Merry's (2007) study is of relevance here in presenting a philosophical analysis of these concepts, but the author opts to leave out the sociological research undertaken by him on which his analysis is based.

[23] See Bernstein (1999) and Bernstein and Solomon (1999).

[24] See, for example, Ball (1990).

[25] This position finds its most forceful expression in the works of critical pedagogists such as Freire, Giroux and McLaren (Ladwig, 1996).

[26] One group of critics are critical realists who acknowledge the historical and social contingency of scientific findings, but unlike standpoint epistemologies, uphold the position that some scientific explanations reflect 'superior adequacy' than others, in contrast to the absolutist stance of positivism and the relativist perspectives of postmodernism (Moore, 2000).

[27] An analogous debate in ethnography between hermeneutical and deconstructivist approaches to the study of culture, as advocated by Geertz (1983) and Clifford (1986), points to the complexities involved in establishing boundaries between social and epistemic categories in research dealing with cultural subjects.

[28] In the chapters that follow, I have chosen to keep the technical theoretical analysis and methodological discussion to a minimum so as not to overly extend the scope of the book. Those interested in a fuller account of the theory and methodology underpinning the study should refer to my doctoral thesis (Thobani, 2001).

[29] Jackson's (1996) study of the construction of 'Hinduism' and its incorporation in the subject of religious education in England and Wales is one of the very few studies that touches on the recontextualization of world faiths in pedagogic discourses.

[30] Where Islam is mentioned explicitly, it is often done so as a 'discursive other' to illustrate contentious issues between liberal and conservative standpoints. See, for example, Halstead (1997) on sex education, Halstead and Lewicka (1998) on the teaching of homosexuality, and Hull (1998) on school worship and withdrawal from religious education classes.

[31] The main policy references to religious education are the clauses on the subject in the Education Acts of 1870, 1944 and 1988, together with the contextual information available in the *Hansard* on the latter two pieces of legislation. Reference has also been made to the 1996, 1998 and 2002 Education Acts which make current the previous measures on religious education.

[32] These advisory documents assume the form of reports, circulars and papers by government departments of education, the Schools Council, the QCA, Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and other agencies, often triggered by a perceived crisis in religious education.

[33] See Chapter 6 for demographic details on Crossford.

[34] This department was formerly known as the Department of Education and Science (DES).

[35] In accordance with Section 11 of the Education Reform Act of 1988, each LEA is required to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). The main function of the SACRE is to review the local agreed syllabus every five years and to advise the LEA on all matters pertaining to religious education. The SACRE also considers determinations for schools applying for exemption from Christian worship.

[36] The local community study has not included an examination of madrasas since attention to the non-formal, supplementary context, although a valuable facet for investigation in its own right, would have substantially increased the scope of the study. Moreover, the theoretical frame applied in the enquiry is concerned with comparing Islam in two homologous systems, the state and Muslim schools, in order to identify parallels and divergences in these formal educational arenas.

Chapter 3

Tradition and Innovation in the Curriculum

The Introduction of School-Based Islam

How Islam, along with the other non-Christian religions, became incorporated as school knowledge in English religious education reveals an interesting episode in the history of a subject whose destiny has been closely regulated by parliamentary legislation from the very point of its inception as a formal school discipline. An understanding of the contemporary presence of Islam in state schools requires a contextual grasp of the historical relation that developed between the state and religious education from the late nineteenth century onward.

The origins of religious education as a legislated subject in the school curriculum can be traced to the historical policy milestone when the state first committed itself to overseeing and maintaining public education (Cruickshank, 1963). The Elementary Education Act of 1870, also known as the Forster Act, was a momentous turning point in English educational history when the state acknowledged its share of responsibility over mass education, a function which, for the major part of the nineteenth century, had been assumed by the Church of England together with other denominations and foundations (Chadwick, 1997). In seeking to complement rather than displace the existing network of parochial and voluntary schools, the Act led to the creation of a 'dual system', consisting of denominational schools in the voluntary sector operating alongside the state maintained system.

The passing of the 1870 Act hinged delicately on a formulation of religious instruction in rate-aided board schools[1] that would be acceptable to the Established Church, on the one hand, and on the other, to Roman Catholics, Methodists and other Protestant Dissenters (Chadwick, 1997). The solution eventually adopted, after protracted negotiations, was the insertion of the Cowper-Temple clause in the Act which required that in schools established by local rates '[n]o religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught'.[2] In practical

terms, the clause meant the observance of a non-denominational Bible-centred approach to religious instruction in state schools which, nevertheless, still allowed for a *confessional* teaching of Christianity but from an ecumenical perspective (Murphy, 1971).

The Cowper-Temple clause was a compromise agreed upon after fierce opposition and acrimonious debate in both Houses of Parliament, with different groups perceiving it as glossing over fundamental theological differences. The Church of England and the Protestant Nonconformists eventually submitted to the clause on the recognition that biblical religious instruction was advantageously in their favour in keeping with the Protestant tenet of privileging scripture over ecclesiastical intermediaries. The Roman Catholics, however, insisted on their right to a Catholic education for their young, viewing non-denominational teaching to be, by default, 'Protestant', and argued resolutely for the continuance of their own denominational schools. Chadwick (1997) concludes that the 1870 Act was ultimately a 'compromise of the dual system [that] papered over the cracks of a society divided by sectarianism and religious defensiveness' (p. 14).

It is important to note here that the 1870 Act did not make religious instruction a *statutory* requirement for state schools, nor did it delineate the content of the subject – the only condition it stipulated was that the Cowper-Temple clause be observed wherever religious teaching was provided. Although religious instruction was not made mandatory, almost all the local boards expected schools in their areas to offer the subject, issuing syllabuses based on those already in use in church schools but divorced of denominational leanings (Hull, 1975). As sectarian rivalry declined and co-operation between the local authorities and churches increased, frameworks of consensus which would find acceptance among the different Protestant communities, or 'agreed syllabuses' as they came to be known, began to be produced in the 1920s by committees consisting of headteachers, Anglican churchmen and academics.[3]

If the enactment of the 1870 Act was seminal to the introduction and defining of religious instruction in public education, an even more significant piece of legislation was the 1944 Education Act which made the subject statutory for all state maintained schools. In doing so, this Act became a foundational policy event for religious education, exercising considerable influence and leverage in the postwar period over local policymakers and practitioners alike. However, as with the 1870 Act, a vital precondition for it to be approved in both Houses of Parliament was the settlement of religious issues raised by the dual system (Barber, 1994). Policy studies of the 1944 Act indicate that the churches in this period still owned approximately

half of all existing schools which they were finding increasingly difficult to maintain. One of the key agreements in the Act was that the Church of England consented to relinquish control of a sizeable number of its schools in return for increased support for the rest, while, at the same time, religious education was legislated as a compulsory subject in the state maintained sector (Earl, 1984).

Some commentators have perceived this 'bartering' between church and state as a deciding factor for religious education being made mandatory, while others have drawn attention to the concern on the part of policymakers to revive the moral and spiritual values of the nation in the aftermath of a devastating war and the need to safeguard the values of a liberal democratic society (Cox, 1983; Niblett, 1966). Given the social conditions obtaining at the time, it is likely that the religious instruction statute in the Act was an outcome of a complex of factors rather than any single identifiable cause. Although hailed as a consensus building piece of legislation, the policy measures did not however entirely resolve the issue of the dual system, with the Anglicans, Methodists and Roman Catholics continuing to provide denominational education through the voluntary sector.

The 1944 Education Act identified several provisions for religious education, the key ones pertaining to the legal requirements for collective worship and religious instruction in state maintained schools:

> . . . the school day in every county school and in every voluntary school shall begin with collective worship on the part of all pupils in attendance at the school . . . [R]eligious instruction shall be given in every county school and in every voluntary school.[4]

As the above clauses reveal, the 1944 Act did not specify *which* particular religion was to be taught in the compulsory religious instruction classes. However, from the speeches made in support of the Bill in both Houses of Parliament, there was the unquestioned assumption on the part of policymakers that this instruction in state schools was not to be based on all the world faiths but was to be specifically Christian in character (Parsons, 1994). Edwin Cox (1983) suggested the possibility that the word 'religion', rather than 'Christianity', may have been chosen by those who drafted the clauses out of deference to a minority of Jewish schools and pupils, or perhaps because Parliament did not want to lend its support to any specific form of organized religion. The more likely reason, in his view, was the general assumption among legislators of this time that Christianity was the only religion that merited study in England and therefore did not warrant explicit mention.

The 1944 Act stipulated that the specific content of religious instruction in state maintained schools was to be determined by the LEAs through agreed syllabuses which now became statutory curriculum frameworks at the local level.[5] It directed that each local authority develop its own agreed syllabus or adopt one produced by another authority, and that this framework be approved by an 'Agreed Syllabus Conference' consisting of four committees, representing respectively the Church of England, 'other religious denominations', the LEA and teachers' associations.[6] In the postwar period, these statutory conferences became critical agencies at the local level for determining the aims and content of religious instruction.

In observing the Cowper-Temple clause, local councils were obliged to give representation to biblical scholars, theologians and churchmen in their conferences to ensure that the scriptural content was not distinctive of any particular Christian denomination. Consequently, the interwar and postwar syllabuses were written substantially by churchmen who drew their expertise from theology degree courses, the academic study of religion being dominated by the Anglican-informed discipline of theological studies established in the ancient universities (Cunningham, 1990). The involvement of biblical scholars and theologians left their mark on the syllabuses produced in this period, whose aims and content remained overtly confessional in their formulation (Bell, 1985; Hull, 1975).

As the composition of the 'agreed syllabus conference' reveals, the policy frameworks of the 1870 and the 1944 Education Acts created conditions in which religious education became subject to national and local interventions as a result of its linkage with communal identities. The institution of state controlled education in 1870 transformed catechetical Christianity as an overarching and integrating ethos in the voluntary sector into a bounded school subject with academic leanings in state maintained schools. Moreover, as a consequence of the historical partnership between the Established Church and the state, the pedagogic discourse of religious education in public schooling from the 1920s to the 1960s essentially became an *Anglican* rendering of Christian confessional instruction, although it was not explicitly admitted to be such (Chadwick, 1997; Bates, 1994). In overall terms, religious education became largely stable in this period, buttressed on the one side by the voluntary system of both the dominant and fringe churches, and on the other by a consensus maintaining machinery of the state, in the form of agreed syllabus conferences, to arbitrate between the various Protestant denominations.

Within the context of this general stability that held sway over some 40 years, religious education as a school discipline experienced limited

shifts in its contents. One of the rare but momentous and far-reaching changes in this period was the incorporation of world religions other than Christianity in a few agreed syllabuses, an innovative turn which has been traced in a seminal study by Dennis Bates (1994; 1996).[7] His research, identifying the various influences at work behind this important development, provides valuable information in the light of which the specific case of Islam is investigated here. A content analysis of agreed syllabuses by Bates from the interwar and postwar years reveals the scope of the inclusion and nature of the treatment of non-Christian religions in these local curricular frameworks.[8]

In most syllabuses from this period, there appears to be no mention of world religions other than Christianity. The Cambridgeshire syllabus of 1924, for example, which became one of the most popular of the interwar agreed syllabuses and adopted by 87 local authorities,[9] did not allocate any place to the study of Islam or other faiths except for Christianity (Bates, 1994). The expanded 1939 version continued to exclude world religions from its framework, a policy that was also reflected in the West Riding syllabus of 1937. Bates notes that most syllabuses of the 1930s remained predominantly biblical in content, with no reference to the study of other religious traditions. Only in a small number of interwar syllabuses does he find a tangential mention of Islam and the other non-Christian traditions, generally with reference to Christian missions abroad. The Nottinghamshire syllabus (1921), for example, included a theme on missionary work in Asia Minor and 'heathen countries today', while the Macmillan syllabus (1923) recommended a study of Paton's *Jesus Christ and the World Religions* for 14-year-olds. Paton's (1916) textbook, used as the standard source on comparative religion for the sixth form in the interwar years, presented Islam as a 'half-truth' illuminating the completeness of Christianity. In another of his work published in 1932, *The Faiths of Mankind,* the worth of Islam and the other faiths continued to be judged against the perceived superiority of Christianity. Disconcertingly, these books were cited in agreed syllabuses well into the postwar phase (Bates, 1994).

Ecumenical Christian instruction grounded in biblical theology continued to dominate the syllabuses of the 1940s and 1950s, with the study of Islam finding only a marginal place in them as part of the topic on comparative religion. Agreed syllabuses of these decades gave greater attention to world faiths than those of the 1920s and 1930s, but this study was reserved exclusively for the sixth form and framed by evangelical arguments on how world religions were to be treated in relation to Christianity (Bates, 1996).

Among the first of these postwar syllabuses was Sunderland (1944), which was widely adopted by other LEAs such as Durham (1946), and contained a

summary of Islam in an essay on comparative religion. Muhammad was seen, at one and the same time, as an 'Oriental potentate' and a reformer, whose new religion was heavily influenced by Judaism and spread with 'epidemic rapidity'. The Arab world was set ablaze by Muhammad's fanaticism, yet his task was perceived as concerned with theological, political, social and moral reform. The essay concluded that '[t]his review of the great religions of the world should lead us to see that whatever is good . . . in these religions is found unified and elevated in the Christian religion' (p. 144). The West Riding syllabus (1947) upheld a similar view, while the 1949 Cambridgeshire framework alluded to a brief sixth form course on comparative religion but within the context of Christianity. An even more circumspect treatment of non-Christian faiths can be found in the Carlisle, Cumberland and Westmorland syllabus of 1951 which suggested that world religions be surveyed 'possibly in the form of outlines by the teacher, with dictated notes' and that pupils could extend their knowledge by 'private reading' (Carlisle, 1951, p. 282). In the same vein, the London syllabus of 1947 allocated slightly over three pages to non-Christian faiths, with Islam being afforded only nine lines. What little exposure was given to Islam in this syllabus was heavily conditioned by evangelical views:

> The Mohammedan religion originated in Arabia in the seventh century A.D. Its founder, Mahomet . . . claimed to have a new revelation from God . . . . The religion is monotheistic but has a strong materialist element, which is shown, for example, in its conception of the future life. Moslems are perhaps, of all religious people, the least responsive to Christianity. (p. 143)

A slightly longer exposition, in the form of a 12-page essay on world religions, was included in the Middlesex syllabus of 1948. The Lancashire syllabus of 1947 contained a more detailed coverage of the teaching of world religions by F. H. Smith who conceded that '[i]f other religions point to Christ, we need not deny to them degrees of truth.'[10] However, Smith saw Islam as having 'learnt her monotheism from Judaism and Christianity', presenting it as a practical religion of concrete acts in which the commands of its 'all-too-powerful' God had to be obeyed, even if it violated the moral sense of the believers (pp. 200–2). The task of the teacher was 'to show that Christianity, as a concrete religion, is the richest expression, satisfying in the highest degree all that is potentially involved in the universal fact of religion.'

Table 3.1 provides two examples which illustrate the type of schemes on Islam that were incorporated in the post-1944 agreed syllabuses.

Table 3.1 Examples of two schemes on Islam in postwar agreed syllabuses

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**West Riding Syllabus of Religious Instruction (1947) Secondary Syllabus –
Ages 16–18 years**

G. A comparative study of the great religions of the world

. . . The teacher should not only aim at describing the outstanding features of the great religions of the world but should also bear in mind that the study is to be a comparative one . . . The pupil should be led to appreciate that while each great religion has made its contribution, at some period of the world's history, . . . all these contributions are unified and on a higher plane in the Christian religion.

(viii) Mohammedanism

   Life of Mohammed; his reforms in regard to idolatrous practices, social evils (blood feud) and moral offences (infanticide).
   Influence of Judaism and Christianity.
   Basis of his teaching: 'There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet'.
   The sacred book of the Mohammedans (Koran).
   Material view of paradise for the believer and hell for the unbeliever.
   Mohammedan worship: the mosque-times of prayer, fasting (ramadan), almsgiving, pilgrimage (Mecca). Treatment of women.
   Mohammedan sects, e.g. Shiahs (Persia); Sunnis (the orthodox group); Sufis and Dervishes (influences of mysticism).

Source: West Riding (1947), pp. 73 and 75.

The Middlesex County Agreed Syllabus of Religious Instruction (1948)

Sixth and Seventh Years – A Comparative Study of Religions

Mohammedanism (Islam):

An absolute Monotheism with stress on the unconditioned omnipotence of God. Derives most of its characteristics from Judaism though the general conception of God is ethically somewhat lower. Involves an absolute determinism, in which human free will is practically non-existent.

(i) Revelation.

Mohammed and Scripture (The Koran).

(ii) Ideal.

Attainment of Paradise after death. Paradise is a purely sensuous existence in which there seems to be no intimate contact with God.

(iii) Sin.

Moral offences (the standard rather lower than in Judaism), violation of tabus.

(iv) Atonement.

Good deeds, penitence, prayer, pilgrimage, sacrifice.

Source: Middlesex (1948), p. 240.

What stands out in these examples, once again, is the recasting of Islamic beliefs and practices within a Christian evangelical framework. Approached from a 'comparative' perspective, Islam is presented as a Judaeo-Christian derivation, its particular 'contribution' finding consummation in Christianity. In the West Riding case, Islam is reduced to 'Mohammedanism' by attributing centrality to the prophet's life and teachings, supplemented by references to literalistic eschatology and ritual. The classification of Muslim 'sects' resorts to the problematic concept of 'orthodoxy', and by implication 'heterodoxy', while the injection of 'treatment of women' into the theological frame alludes to gender issues and assumptions that are not elaborated. In the Middlesex outline, Islam is read through the Christian redemptive notions of sin and atonement, juxtaposed against Orientalist images of a sensuous Islamic paradise. What is evident here, in a period dominated by late imperialism and evangelical discourses, is the attempt to give some acknowledgement in the local regulative field to the existence of belief systems other than Christianity, but only through the exercise of symbolic control and the imposition of the dominant and reductive code over what could count as acceptable school knowledge.

While the analysis of agreed syllabuses presented here refers to a limited sample, and is therefore not representative of the policies on religious education of all the local authorities between the 1920s and 1960s, it is possible to draw some provisional conclusions on the approach to Islam reflected in these documents. As corroborated by Bates' (1994) findings, it appears that Islam did not feature in the majority of the interwar and postwar agreed syllabuses. In the minority of frameworks where it was incorporated, it was done so as an integral part of a topic called 'comparative religion' in which it featured serially as one among a range of several world religions. It is also interesting to note that this was a topic mostly restricted to the sixth form and was at times presented as an 'option', being left for teachers to decide whether they wanted to teach it in their classes. Evidently, it was felt that this information had to be restricted to the upper strata of the school system, younger minds deemed to be vulnerable to doubts and confusions if exposed to alternative beliefs. In terms of its substance, Islam was presented through a Christian evangelical discourse, rather than on the basis of criteria intrinsic to its own traditions of interpretation. In addition, there appears to be a preoccupation with the doctrinal, ethical and ritualistic aspects of Islam, and relatively less attention paid to the historical and cultural contexts within

which various Muslim conceptions of Islamic doctrine, law and ethics evolved.

The constructions of pedagogic Islam presented in the agreed syllabuses of this period are embedded within a Christian proselytizing perspective which acknowledged other faiths as partly true, but not possessing the complete truth of the fulfilled Christian message. Islam in particular, approached from this frame, was all too easily reduced to an offshoot of the Jewish and Christian traditions, or else cast as a usurper that posed a competitive threat to the Anglican and other evangelical missions being undertaken in various parts of the world. Moreover, this being the colonial period, the renderings of Islam in agreed syllabuses and textbooks were not free of the Orientalist gaze that cast Muslims and other 'Easterners' in exotic, mystified and obscurantist terms.

Inferring from the policy stipulations discussed earlier, it appears that the inclusion of Islam and other world religions in a selected number of agreed syllabuses between the 1920s and 1960s could not have been effected without the common agreement and formal assent of a predominantly Protestant representation on the agreed syllabus committees. We are led to conclude that it was, in essence, from within a Christian ecclesiastical framework that Islam emerged as a topic in the English school curriculum, a significant but paradoxical event in the light of the historical relationship between Christianity and Islam marked by mutual suspicion and deep hostility. How was it then that Islam and other non-Christian faiths were being recommended to be taught in the confessional space of state maintained schools? Why was a subject, traditionally considered by the Church a heresy and perceived as the quintessential 'other', granted a border status in the school curriculum?

It is difficult to address these questions directly, in the light of the fact that little historical information is available which furnishes insight into the underlying motivations of social actors in the agreed syllabus conferences who were promoting the incorporation of comparative religion in religious instruction. It is also likely, though a matter of speculation, that the conservative establishmentarians may have raised serious objections in these conferences to the inclusion of topics which appeared unconventional and provocative, leading to the question of which particular group was promoting this change. To gain some purchase on the underlying rationale behind the insertion of world religions in local frameworks, it is necessary to trace debates and developments linked to interfaith relations in various circles at this time, and the nature of the influence this issue exerted on religious education.

Islam and Comparative Religion

A survey of articles on comparative religion in the professional journal, *Religion in Education*, and other academic works in this period reveals three groups in particular who were involved in a debate on the teaching of world faiths in schools: liberal Protestant educators, secular humanists and conservative establishmentarians.

Foremost among the liberal Protestants advocating a programme of study in world religions for 13-16-year-olds was K. J. Saunders (1935) who argued that 'Christianity has nothing to fear and much to gain by such studies' (p. 136). In Saunders' scheme, Islam was categorized as a 'lower' form of monotheism, though his classroom activities included readings from the Qur'an and essays on the life of Muhammad. Another education-alist, G. E. Phillips (1939), although holding a less liberal view, nevertheless affirmed the value of studying the great religions. Phillips suggested that the 'higher religions' should first be presented with actual readings from their scriptural texts before explaining their doctrines: 'a few verses from the Quran . . . will quickly introduce the atmosphere of the ethnic faith, and indicate the real questions to which it attempted to give an answer' (p. 225). Here, we find a conflicting notion of Islam being typo-logically located on the upper rungs of belief systems, and therefore reflecting some degree of universality, and yet restricted to its particular cultural, Arab roots. Perhaps the most influential of the liberal Protestant educators was F. H. Hilliard (1945) who called for a fair, objective and sym-pathetic representation of non-Christian faiths, though not deviating from the prevailing view that such study be undertaken separately and only at the higher secondary level (Bates, 1996). Based on the reasoning of these educators as reflected in their writings, it appears that the political and social changes taking place globally in the late colonial period, and impact-ing on the self-perception of Christians, may have furnished an important justification for them to suggest the incorporation of comparative religion in Christian confessional instruction.

Another group keen to introduce world religions into the school curric-ulum, but with a somewhat different motive, were the secular humanists. In the early part of the century, supporters of the Moral Instruction League argued for the incorporation of non-Christian faiths in the school curricu-lum, a move which Bates (1994) interprets as a covert strategy for under-mining establishmentarian Christianity by relativizing it. As early as 1919, secularist advocates like Hayward and Freeman proposed the radical measure of a national school liturgy that would include the representation

of other faiths. 'We fail to see why,' they argued, 'because of the "religious difficulty" youth should be brought up in ignorance of the characteristics of the Mohammedans and the Buddhists . . . and the other groups into which humanity is at present divided' (p. 126).[11] Despite being supported by distinguished secular-minded educationalists, these suggestions failed to gain official acceptance. In 1943, a letter published in *The Times* and signed by eight prominent secular humanists, including Julian Huxley, recommended that 'religious instruction should be directed to a general knowledge of the common ethical and spiritual elements of the great faiths of the world.'[12] Their reasoning was based on the perceived need for young people to have some understanding of the different religions practised by millions of believers across the globe who formed the subjects of the British Empire (Leeson, 1947).

These liberal and somewhat radical suggestions for their time were not met without some degree of scepticism and resistance, as reflected in the conservative establishmentarian view. This third form of response to the teaching of world religions was advanced by Spencer Leeson (1947) who, in a riposte to the secular humanists, doubted whether students even at the age of 15 or 16 were ready to undertake the comparative study of world faiths. 'It is hardly fair to confront a child with his mind as yet undeveloped with Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism,' he objected, 'laying them side by side as it were on the table, and inviting him to choose for himself' (pp. 23–4). Another example of the cautious establishmentarian attitude was expressed by Robinson (1947) who could not see how it was possible to make world religions a regular part of the school curriculum. 'As it is, the time that can be given to the general subject of Religious Knowledge is all too short, and our instinct is rightly to concentrate on the Bible', he argued. 'It may be possible to take up the subject in special classes for Sixth Forms, but this is probably the utmost that can ever be allotted to express teaching on it' (p. 19).

These debates between opposing groups of educators reveal that the inclusion of plural faiths in religious education was a highly contentious matter, with different underlying social motives on their part to either promote or restrict the teaching of world religions in state schools. Of these three groups, it appears that it was the liberal Protestants who were keenly promoting comparative religion in the school curriculum by proposing innovative content and pedagogic approaches in the professional journal *Religion in Education*. It is possible that the incorporation of this new subject in a limited number of interwar agreed syllabuses may have been primarily due to their influence, as claimed by Bates (1994). The emergence of

comparative religion as a specialized discipline in the intellectual domain throws further light on its inclusion at the school level.

For the major part of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the approach to religion in English universities was dominated by the tradition of theological studies as it had evolved in the ancient universities, largely devoted to biblical exegesis and the historical examination of patristic works, and taught predominantly by Anglican clergy (Bates, 1994; Cunningham, 1990). A radical departure from this tradition appears to have occurred when Nonconformist scholars took the initiative of pioneering the study of non-Christian traditions in dissenting academies and civic universities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[13] This new area of enquiry, euphemistically dubbed as 'comparative religion', was not based on an impartial, academic comparison of the various faiths as the title suggested, but on how they were to be positioned in relation to Christianity.

Sharpe (1970) traces the roots of comparative religion[14] in Britain to the nineteenth-century philology of F. Max Müller and anthropological studies of scholars such as Tylor, Frazer and Marett, who were inspired by Darwin's evolutionary theory to apply its methodological principles of organization and classification to the vast and amorphous collection of details pertaining to the various religions. Sharpe adds that the evolutionary hypothesis also allowed the various traditions to be plotted along a developmental trajectory from animism to monotheism, and that 'the crown and culmination of the whole process was that largely undogmatic, moralistic Christianity . . . called . . . "Liberal Protestantism"' (p. 4). J. E. Carpenter (1913), one of the first pioneers in the field, perceived the entire study of the history of religion resting on classifying its 'multitudinous facts', convinced that the general progress of humanity advanced 'from the cruder and less complex to the more refined and developed' (p. 33). This social Darwinism as applied to world faiths was further bolstered in its ordering of culture by the philosophy of neo-Hegelianism which cast teleological history as the progressive awakening of the universal *geist*, with sections of humanity positioned variously along the path towards intellectual and moral self-realization.

Comparative religion represented a new academic discourse that was seeking to establish itself in the intellectual field towards the end of the nineteenth century. It aspired to assume the features of a specialized discipline, centred on a defined form of knowledge with its own epistemic criteria of self-validation. It was also a discourse seeking to emulate the empirical model of taxonomic science, but in effect materializing as a pseudo-scientific discipline with unstable foundations, its adoption of the evolutionary hypothesis soon to be displaced by a series of other methodological

languages. This was, in effect, a fledgling discipline appropriating a scientific theory to justify what were ultimately theological ends. Moreover, the new discipline was creating what may be called a 'segmental' form of symbolic knowledge through the collation of a series of religious traditions which were classified and positioned in relation to one another on the basis of pre-established 'evolutionary' criteria. 'Islam' was reconstituted as one of these segments, alongside other non-Christian faith traditions, and confined to the category of 'lower monotheisms'. While Islam as a symbolic category became an integral part of this innovative discipline, it was only at the expense of being hierarchically classified, subordinated and framed within a reductionist perspective.

The recontextualization of Islam in comparative religion, through its appropriation from its original discursive arenas in Muslim societies, appears to have been accomplished by drawing on the cognate subject of Oriental studies.[15] The philological scholarship in this discipline approached Islam through a study of its core texts, directing attention to the formative and classical canon that materialized in Muslim history, in contrast to the anthropologists who were more interested in the ritual, myth and folklore of contemporary Muslim traditions.[16] Islamic doctrines and practices, in both their textual and cultural forms, were reconfigured in comparative religion to form a new symbolic discourse detached from its indigenous socio-historical contexts. Islam was effectively reconstituted as a bounded segment through reification, dilution and compacting in an epistemological space shared with other world religions, allocated an epistemic weighting based on social Darwinism, and emplotted in a new regulative context.

On the whole, however, comparative religion prior to the 1960s remained a fringe subject in a few civic universities and significantly conditioned by the dominant Oxbridge model of theological studies (Sharpe, 1986; Cunningham, 1990). The attempt to establish comparative religion as a formal discipline in British universities points to the growing struggle between established and marginalized actors in the intellectual field. Nonconformist scholars were evidently challenging the dominant paradigm through the introduction of comparative religion in the dissenting academies, composed of Congregational, Unitarian and Methodist institutions, not being able to gain access to the traditional academic domain of theological studies in the ancient universities under the control of the Anglican establishment.

Comparative religion represented a subordinate discipline positioned on the periphery of the intellectual field, compared to the privileged status granted to theological studies under the patronage of the Established

Church. Sharpe (1970) remarks that comparative religion was viewed by evangelical Christians as 'a new obsession of the liberal mind' and carried with it an image of 'a curious, rationalist, eclectic discipline . . . dedicated to the devaluation and relativization of all absolutes, the slaughter of all sacred cows, and the humanization of all religions' (p. 17). The case of comparative religion in the interwar period, perceived as an unorthodox, off-beat and 'pariah' discipline by established groups, reveals a potent connection between the development of innovative epistemic categories and marginalized social identities in the intellectual field (Bourdieu, 1988). From the evidence available, it appears that Islam and the other non-Christian faiths, as forbidden categories and dangerous knowledge, were appropriated by liberal theologians to challenge the conventional boundaries between the thinkable and the unthinkable in the domain of religious thought.

Since comparative religion failed to secure a stable foothold in English universities until the 1960s, the extent of its influence over the policy apparatus of religious education was limited. The scope of this influence is discernible in the cautious grafting of the discipline from the intellectual field into a confined space in the upper reaches of a few local curricular frameworks. On these grounds, it is probably safe to conclude that specialists in the academic sphere inspired a model for the study of world religions which was adopted and applied in a tightly controlled manner in a small number of syllabuses in the interwar and immediate postwar periods.

Bates' (1994) study of the origins of world religions in English religious education points to another important source of influence which may have led to the incorporation of comparative religion in the pre-1960s agreed syllabuses. In the early part of the twentieth century, there was a growing realization in the Protestant ecumenical movement that it needed to reassess its views of other faith traditions in the face of mounting challenges to colonial and missionary ventures abroad from nationalist movements. At the same time, theologians were confronting the full force of positivist philosophies casting reductionist aspersions on religion, leading many churchmen to believe that Christianity was more at risk from modern scientific secularity than from faith traditions like Islam. In response to these concerns, two major positions emerged in the ecumenical movement that sought to define the nature of the relationship between Christians and other religions. One was the 'fulfilment missiology' of Protestant thought which repudiated 'religious imperialism' and recognized the spiritual insights of other faiths, but at the same time continued to firmly uphold the superiority of Christianity. An influential advocate of this view was

Hendrick Kraemer (1938) who argued that there was a radical difference between the Christian message and other religions. A contrasting view was the 'way of reconception' as put forward by W. E. Hocking (1940), who acknowledged the distinctive insights of each religion, not all of which were contained within Christianity. Hocking saw every faith growing in its path towards godhood by assimilating the insights and truths of other traditions through syncretic progress (Bates, 1994).

The debate within the Protestant ecumenical movement represents an interesting development centred on negotiating the boundaries between status groups and their epistemic conceptions in a rapidly changing world where colonialism was experiencing its last throes. Kraemer's position reflected a strong classification between Christian identity and the self-definition of people of other faiths, while Hocking favoured slightly more diffused boundaries between these identities. The dilemmas raised by religious identity among status groups reveal engaging debates taking place in the social field on the relation between social and epistemic categories.

As we have observed, it was the 'fulfilment missiology' school of Protestant theology, upholding the notion of Christianity as consummated truth, as against the syncretic 'reconceptionist' approach with its egalitarian leanings, which found favour in the syllabuses incorporating comparative religion as a topic for the senior levels. The adoption of this particular theological stance points to a strong connection in the interwar period between the Protestant ecumenical movement and the agreed syllabus conferences, at least in relation to the approach to world religions, suggesting some degree of influence exercised by Nonconformist status groups over local policy regulators in religious education. The studies undertaken by Bates (1994) and Bell (1985) reveal that the connection between social influences and policy contexts manifested itself in the form of an institutional link between the Protestant ecumenical movement and English religious education, creating possible opportunities for the introduction of innovative ideas such as comparative religion in an otherwise closed subject.[17]

Transnational Communities and State Education

In the 1960s, the profile of the status groups in the social field changed radically, from being composed predominantly of Christian denominations to the inclusion of non-Christian faith communities who were settling in Britain. The presence of these new groups inevitably impacted on the long-established boundaries between religious traditions, defined so far by

denominational identities within Christianity. The immigrant communities raised new questions on the positioning of symbolic identities, given the differing cultural capital and habitus of these groups. The reconfiguration held implications for the common and specific identities of the various religions and their denominations, and for their symbolic representation in religious education as a result of the shifts in social classification. The case of the Muslims provides interesting material for insights into these social changes and their impact on religious education. The analysis below examines the official educational policy response to immigration that emerged in the 1960s before considering developments among the Muslim communities in this period.

The 1960s and early 1970s was a period fraught with tensions for minority groups, with the state enacting, on the one hand, a series of immigration acts to curb the entry of non-white Commonwealth citizens into Britain, and on the other, responding to the mounting racial discrimination against immigrants by introducing legislation on race relations (Solomos, 1992). The racialization of political discourse in the postwar period set the tone for the educational policies to be adopted henceforth by the state towards New Commonwealth immigrants, aimed primarily at their assimilation and integration into British society.[18]

In 1966, the Labour Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, called for a shift away from assimilation to the 'integration' of immigrants, defining it 'not as a flattening process . . . but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity'.[19] Although there was some recognition of the internal diversity within immigrant communities, the emphasis remained on their social incorporation over recognition of their particular identities. In 1967, the DES adopted integration as its official policy, based on the recommendations of the Hunt Report (1967) on *Immigrants and the Youth Service* which called for 'full integration between immigrants and the host community and between the various immigrant communities themselves'.

By the end of the 1960s, the curriculum had been identified by educational policymakers as one means among others to act as a 'bridge between cultures and communities' and to reduce the 'cultural shock' for immigrant children.[20] A subject lending itself readily to achieving these aims was religious education, one of the few disciplines in the school curriculum engaging directly with the identities of social groups. The settlement of religious minorities in Britain raised, however, the question of how the provisions of the 1944 Act, originally intended for Christian instruction, were to be interpreted henceforth. How was Section 25.2 of the Act, which required that 'religious instruction . . . be given in every county school and

in every voluntary school', to be understood in the changed conditions? How were the new communities, such as the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, to be included in the local policy structures if the 1944 Education Act had not originally intended their inclusion? These questions were beginning to raise awkward issues in the policy context of religious education.

The agreed syllabus conference organized by the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) in 1967 to produce a new syllabus was the first of its kind to invite representation from non-Christian minorities, including Muslim representatives (ILEA, 1968). In the absence of any statutory change to the religious instruction clauses in the 1944 Act at the national policy level, and in responding to the large presence of faith minorities in its jurisdiction, the ILEA took the initiative to have these communities represented in its agreed syllabus conference. This step, in effect, was based on the legal decision to interpret the term 'religious denominations' in the 1944 Education Act with some latitude to accommodate the participation of faith communities other than Christian denominations in the conference, leading to greater weight being placed on the letter of the law as against its original spirit.

However, in the main, the degree of policy change in the 1960s in local authorities responding affirmatively to the presence of immigrant groups in Britain was extremely limited. Although religious minorities were involved, the ILEA syllabus of 1968 contained only an introductory article on 'Religious Education in a multi-racial community' and did not see the need for non-Christian faiths warranting explicit treatment for all age-groups, despite a large number of immigrant children in its schools (ILEA, 1968). The document included in its sixth-form section the comparative study of religions, but within the evangelical framework of 'The truth and relevance of Christianity'. The 1966 West Riding syllabus, recognized as a major departure from previous frameworks in its use of progressivist themes, suggested comparative religion as an option for late adolescence,[21] and devoted only a single leaf out of 132 pages to discussing the presence of faith minorities under the title, 'Immigrant children and their religion'. The 1968 Lancashire syllabus recognized the need to introduce pupils to the faiths of communities arriving from the Commonwealth, but nevertheless confined the teaching of world religions to the sixth form.

Overall, there appears to be a deferral of the inclusion of world religions and the representation of minority communities in the agreed syllabuses of the immigration period, a stance reflected in the oblique reference to the faith minorities in the influential Durham Report (1970), commissioned by the Church of England to review the concerns faced by religious education

in the 1960s. 'The religious education of immigrant children', the report observed, 'raises a wide variety of complex issues and should be the subject of a separate enquiry' (p. 279). At the same time, the report continued to uphold a marginal and restrictive treatment of non-Christian faiths: 'This is a good time [in the first year of sixth form] for further work on the study of world religions, as it is also for a review of the main doctrines of the Christian faith. This can be done by making use of a separate allocation of time' (p. 125).

As a result of the needs articulated by Muslim organizations in this phase of settlement, some local authorities such as ILEA, Birmingham and Bradford drew up clear policies to ensure that school practices did not result in giving offence to the religious sensibilities of pupils from the various faith traditions. Such LEAs were instrumental in encouraging the creation of an appropriate school culture for Muslim pupils which led to an accommodation of their special needs related to diet, dress and other requirements. Halal food was therefore provided in school lunches, girls allowed to wear scarves and long trousers, and adolescents exempted from swimming and physical education. Other local authorities left it to the discretion of individual schools to formulate their own policies with regard to these matters (Nielsen, 1986). However, the local policies on the aims and content of religious education were not changed substantially by these LEAs in the 1960s.

This last situation inevitably led to the creation of significant problems for the new faith groups, centred on exposures to symbolic identities in the pedagogic space which they could not claim as their own. Accounts of the immigration experience in the interviews suggest that tensions between state schools and Muslim parents were already beginning to surface in this early period, the latter being worried that public schooling would 'educate their children out of their culture rather than into it'. More fundamentally, Muslim parents began to confront the reality of living in a predominantly liberal, secular society with a Christian heritage, and that the value system their children were gradually adopting was in tension with their own. Perceiving that state schools did not respond to their needs for religious and moral instruction, they were naturally fearful of their younger generation being divided by what they saw as conflicting environments and ways of life.

In the context of these tensions between school and home, religious education became an issue of contention, with some Muslim parents taking exception to the confessional teaching of Christianity in religious educa-tion, alleging that schools were 'missionary centres' seeking to convert their children. Oblivious of their legal rights and the conscience clause pertaining

to religious instruction under the 1944 Act, many of them did not appear to be in a position to object to the confessional teaching their children were receiving at school. It therefore fell upon some of the Muslim organizations established at this time,[22] such as the Muslim Educational Trust, to make parents aware of their right under the conscience clause to withdraw their children from Christian collective worship and religious instruction.[23] This organization also started in 1969 to send Muslim teachers to state schools to conduct collective worship and deliver religious instruction to Muslim pupils wherever schools agreed to a separate arrangement. Muslim communities were also starting to set up at this time their own supplementary classes in mosques, leased school halls and private residences in which denominational interpretations of Islam were imparted, this early endeavour stemming from the need to provide Qur'anic teaching not available in state schools. Most supplementary schools were based on the model of maktabs (elementary Qur'anic schools) and madrasas from the Indian subcontinent, with imams appointed to teach Qur'anic recitation (Nielsen, 1981).

These developments in the immigration period of the 1960s reveal several types of responses to statutory religious instruction that were beginning to emerge from Muslim groups and organizations. The determining factor for the Muslims was the degree of insularity or integration they saw desirable between state education and their own denominational forms of Islamic education. For some groups, a rigid demarcation between the two spheres necessitated the setting up of independent Muslim schools, while for others, the withdrawal of Muslim pupils from acts of collective worship and religious instruction was deemed to be sufficient. The vast majority however were tolerant of state religious education, though pursuing the reproduction of their own symbolic forms in supplementary contexts. These different responses to religious education were reflective of the diverse profiles and outlooks of Muslims who settled in Britain, based on their particular expectations of education in the new context.

The South Asian Muslims[24] who migrated to Britain in the 1960s and 1970s consisted of both Sunnis and Shi'as, representing the two main historical traditions of Islam. Among the Sunnis were several groups who settled in Britain, including the Barelwis, Deobandis, Tabligh-i Jamaat and Jamaat-i Islami, while the Shi'as consisted of Ithna 'ashari, Bohra and Nizari Isma'ili communities (Lewis, 1994; Raza, 1993). These groups shared in common the observance of the fundamental tenets of Islam, but were distinguished from one another by their particular interpretations of these principles and the sources of religious authority they upheld. While some

of these communities traced their roots to the formative period of Muslim history, others were of modern origins, belonging to revivalist movements that arose in India and elsewhere during colonial rule (Geaves, 1996).

The Muslim communities who settled in Britain were also distinguished by their particular stances to education, which to some degree, were shaped in the colonial period. The subject of the development of Muslim responses to modern education in colonial India is a complex one and falls outside the scope of this work. However, it is possible to draw certain broad inferences from historical studies in this area with a view to highlighting issues of significance pertaining to Muslims in Britain. One of the key themes these studies reveal is that the question of education for various Muslim groups in colonial India was intricately linked to their sense of religious identity (Metcalf, 1982; Lelyveld, 1978). Muslim leaders and reformers in India in the nineteenth century were confronted with the dilemma created by the bifurcation of education into communal and colonial systems, raising questions of how future generations of Muslims were to be educated.[25] The variety of responses to this crucial question resulted in several divergent strategies being pursued, with approaches to education becoming broadly demarcated by the perspectives of modernists, traditionalists, revivalists and Islamists, these stances reflecting various views on the relationship to be established between Islamic and secular forms of education.[26] The Deobandis argued that the most effective way for Muslims to respond to colonial power was not by adopting Western science and values but through a return to a 'pure and unalloyed' Islam which would restore their moral and political authority.[27] Opposed to this urban-based, scripturalist and conservative Islam of the Deobandis, the Barelwi tradition was intent on preserving its folklorish and mystical roots originating in the syncretic encounter of Muslim and Hindu cultures in India.[28] In contrast to both these groups, the Jamaat-i Islami came to uphold, after the founding of Pakistan, a politically inspired Islam aimed at establishing theocratic sovereignty in the new state and which would provide the necessary ideological framework within which issues raised by modernization could be resolved.[29]

The denominational forms of Islamic education which materialized in India in the colonial period, whether with modernist, reformist or traditionalist leanings, were therefore integrally linked to the social identities of different Muslim groups (Metcalf, 1982). The question of the relation between inherited and imported forms of education, as raised by the encounter of South Asian Muslims with British colonizers, was resurrected once more with the immigration of some of these groups to Britain.

Detached from their indigenous symbolic arena, the various Muslim communities were confronted with the prospect of having their younger generation inducted into pedagogic experiences no longer devoted to maintaining their identities as distinct status groups. In locating to Britain, the Muslims encountered a new policy context which was to significantly influence their particular responses to both general and Islamic education (Geaves, 1996; Lewis, 1994). They also found themselves operating in a social field composed of new status groups where religious and denominational identities were not distinctly recognized but classified in generalized terms as 'immigrant', 'black' or 'Asian'. The internally differentiated identities of Muslim groups, such as the Deobandis, the Barelwis and the Ithna 'asharis, were coalesced in the British context into broader, uniformizing categories related more to race, colour and class than religious sect or denomination.

Towards the end of the 1960s, the Muslim communities and the other non-Christian faith groups emerged as new players in the established context of English religious education, located on the margins of the social field through their lack of cultural capital linked to religious instruction in the English system, and with limited capacity to influence the subject significantly in this early phase of settlement. One of the consequences of this positioning was the establishment of denominational forms of Islam in the supplementary education classes organized by the various Muslim communities. It is probable that the sidelining of Muslims and other religious minorities in local policy and academic contexts at this early stage may have constrained the emergence of more innovative and integrative forms of religious education which might potentially have served to bridge the developing rift between mainstream and communal pedagogic spaces (Nielsen, 1981).

The Dual System and Dichotomous Islam

To sum up the analysis here, religious education in England originated and developed within a sphere of national regulation established specifically for the purposes of defining and controlling its status and aims, unlike other school subjects in this period. In the formative phase, it came to be designated as a school-based discipline with a strongly defined policy context, over which the state was forced into exerting direct control from the very establishment of the state maintained educational sector. The early policy history of religious education also reveals intellectual and social interests

around the subject activated through the creation and devolution of the policy sphere. Status groups in the social field with a strong stake in religious education sought to influence these statutory parameters, particularly at those junctures when significant legislative measures were being enacted, but also through syllabus defining events in local contexts. The interaction between these various spheres of influence resulted in a policy approach to religious education which placed some groups at an advantage over others.

Within this framework, two forms of school-based Islam in the English education system emerged in this ecclesiastical period between the 1920s and the 1960s. Both appear to have been outcomes of shifts that took place in the relation between social identities and epistemic classification as a result of state intervention, reflecting a complex play between status groups, academic specialists and policymakers. In the first case, the emergence of a specialized subject of religious instruction in state schools through official regulation seems to have created a symbolic space for social contestation between liberal Nonconformists, establishmentarian Anglicans and secular humanists, leading eventually to the embedding of comparative religion, and Islam as an integral segment within it, as a peripheral topic in religious education. In the second case, Muslim immigrant groups arriving in Britain in the postwar period, confronted with confessional Christian instruction in state education and a secular, liberal value system in the wider society, found it necessary to turn to independent or supplementary means of transmitting their various forms of denominational Islam.

In both the state and communal domains, we find an interesting play between tradition and innovation in the curriculum. The Islam of comparative religion was an innovative category being used by Nonconformists to challenge the boundaries between the thinkable and the unthinkable in the long-established epistemic space defined by Anglican confessionalism. The incorporation of what was once looked upon as the 'demonic other', within the very confines of a closely regulated religious instruction, marks a radical shift in the ecclesiastical acceptance of Islam, although done so in a highly contained manner. At the same time, the reproduction of Islam in the new Muslim communal contexts in Britain reveals the beginnings of a fresh educational dynamic through the grafting of a traditional subject in what to the Muslims was largely an alien context. Here, too, we find challenges beginning to surface between the permissible and the unimaginable in the Muslim engagement with the education of their young.

In overall terms, religious instruction as a whole changed little in state schools in the interwar and postwar periods, except for the marginal

presence of comparative religion at the sixth form level in a few agreed syllabuses. More significantly, the ecclesiastical phase effectively created conditions for what would become an ongoing and fractious engagement between the regulative, intellectual and social fields through which the subsequent development of religious education would be shaped. The next chapter examines further changes that transpired in the subject, and which impacted on school-based Islam, as a new group emerged to unsettle the privileged position of Anglican Protestantism – the 'liberal professionals' with their advocacy of multi-faith education.

Notes

[1] These new schools were set up in areas where there was inadequate provision of elementary education, to be financed by local rates and central government grant.

[2] Elementary Education Act 1870, s. 6.14(2). An additional conscience clause allowed parents to withdraw their children from religious instruction if it did not meet their requirements.

[3] Hull (1975) states that by 1934, there were 40 different syllabuses of this kind in circulation, being used by 224 of the 316 LEAs.

[4] 1944 Education Act, s. 25.1–2.

[5] 1944 Education Act, s. 27.6.

[6] 1944 Education Act, s. 29.2. The representation of religious groups was defined as 'such religious denominations as, in the opinion of the authority, ought, having regard to the circumstances of the area, to be represented' (Fifth Schedule, s. 29.2(a)). The reference here was implicitly to Christian denominations, particularly of a Protestant non-Anglican background.

[7] I am deeply indebted to Dennis Bates' study for providing valuable leads to sources which make references to school-based Islam in this period.

[8] This analysis also draws upon surveys of agreed syllabuses by Hull (1975) and Bell (1985).

[9] Hull, 1975, p. 99.

[10] Smith's essay in the 1947 Lancashire syllabus was reproduced in the Lancashire syllabus of 1968.

[11] Quoted in Bates, 1994, p. 9.

[12] *The Times*, 10 August 1943, p. 5, as quoted in Bates, 1994, p. 10.

[13] J. E. Carpenter, a Unitarian, began to offer courses in comparative religion at Manchester College in 1876 and A. M. Fairbairn introduced the subject in Mansfield College in 1886. In 1904, as a result of Methodist influence, a Department of Comparative Religion was set up in the new civic university of Manchester (Sharpe, 1986).

[14] Sharpe (1970) notes that the discipline suffered from a long history of methodological uncertainty, as reflected in the variety of names assigned to the subject,

such as comparative religion(s), the science of religion, the history of religion(s), the phenomenology of religion and religious studies.

[15] A valuable overview of Islam as a field of enquiry in British scholarship is provided by Bosworth (1997) who remarks that its study in the Victorian period was not as scientific and scholarly as that in Germany and France, drawing primarily upon the writings of individuals such as E. W. Lane, Sir Richard Burton and Sir William Muir through their personal experience and encounter of the Muslim world.

[16] Examples of scholars whose works reflected these two approaches can be found in Bosworth (1997).

[17] Some of the leading religious education institutions and specialists in England were a product of this movement, who in turn were responsible for assisting many LEAs to formulate their agreed syllabuses (Bates, 1994; 1996).

[18] Thus, the Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council (CIAC), set up by the Conservative government to advise on the integration and welfare of immigrants, maintained that 'a national system [of education] cannot be expected to perpetuate the different values of immigrant groups' (CIAC, 1964, p. 7).

[19] Quoted in Grosvenor, 1997, p. 56.

[20] The Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration in 1969 called for the teaching of 'immigrant cultures' more from the need to maintain good 'race relations' than on the recognition of the intrinsic value of each culture. This curriculum intervention was conceived in localized terms for 'problem areas', instead as being educationally worthwhile for the whole system (Grosvenor, 1997).

[21] It also suggested, for the first time, the study of world religions for a slightly younger age-group (13-16-year-olds), but under the broader heading of 'Facing world problems' (p. 84).

[22] The Deobandis founded the Majlis Ulema UK in 1967 while the first Barelwi organizations were the World Islamic Mission and the Jamaat-i al-Sunnat. The Jamaat-i Islami is claimed to have developed several independent organizations in Britain which included the UK Islamic Mission, the Islamic Foundation and the Muslim Educational Trust (Nielsen, 1989).

[23] There are indications of provisions being made in a few places for 'withdrawal classes' for Muslim children in the mid-1960s. See 'Muslims in Britain', *Learning for Living*, January 1966, 5, 3.

[24] I have restricted myself here to considering the majority Muslim population in Britain, which is of South Asian origin. Additional studies need to be undertaken on other Muslim groups represented in Britain.

[25] Prior to the colonial period, the intellectual field in Muslim India consisted of an upper tier of madrasas and nizamiyyas (colleges) located in urban centres, engaged in a scholastic study of religious sciences. The introduction of better resourced schools offering secular subjects by the colonialists effectively created a dual system in which traditional Islamic education was relegated to a marginalized status (Nielsen, 1981; Metcalf, 1982).

[26] The educational strategies of other Muslim groups such as the Shi'a communities, though not mentioned here, also need to be taken into account.

[27] The setting up of a higher academic institution was seen as essential to propagating a revived Islam and rekindling the Muslim religious consciousness, leading to the establishment of the Deoband Dar al-'Ulum in 1867. Little attempt was made to incorporate secular subjects taught in the colonial schools, the religious sciences perceived as being of ultimate importance (Geaves, 1996).

[28] The founder of the movement, Ahmad Riza Khan, defended the legitimacy of the Sufi doctrine of the pre-eminence of Muhammad, the interceding and mediating roles of prophets and saints, and rituals centred around the devotion of the charismatic figures of pirs and their shrines (Geaves, 1996).

[29] This movement was founded in 1941 by Mawdudi who, after the creation of Pakistan in 1947, sought to establish an Islamic state based on theocratic sovereignty. The Jamaat-i Islami developed into an organized movement, with confessional Islam forming an important part of its proselytizing activities (Geaves, 1996).

Chapter 4

Liberalism and Social Parity

Plurality, Phenomenology and Professionalism

The 'liberal' period in Britain from the 1960s to the 1980s saw radical changes at the social and political levels, brought about in part by the radical liberalism of the 1960s, the severe economic crises of the 1970s, and the rise of political conservatism in the 1980s. In this climate of rapid change, education increasingly became an arena of social dispute precipitated by the introduction of comprehensive secondary schooling, the influence of progressivist, multicultural and anti-racist movements on educational policy and practice, and the growing desire of the government in exercising central control over school knowledge. In relation to the curriculum, the period was characterized by innovatory reforms in a whole range of school subjects initiated by the Schools Council,[1] attracting at the same time mounting criticisms of progressivism by pressure groups. Subjects dealing explicitly with cultural issues, in particular, became a target of academic and public scrutiny (Lowe, 1997; Batho, 1989).

The 1960s was also a period of radical change for religious education, brought about by a combination of intellectual, social and pedagogic factors (Cox, 1983; Bell, 1985; Copley 1997). At a conceptual level, liberal theology, popularized in the 1960s by Bishop Robinson in his book *Honest to God* (1963), generated widespread controversy by questioning the traditional interpretation of Christian theological principles, a debate which inevitable had ramifications for religious education.[2] A more direct challenge to the subject was raised by analytical philosophy which questioned the aims of religious instruction in public schools based on the confessional teaching of Christianity, leading to growing doubts about its status as an *educational* subject in the curriculum (Hirst, 1965). At the same time, shifts in social norms involving changing perceptions and attitudes of young people towards religious beliefs thrust into the foreground the receptivity of the learners, with pedagogic approaches to religious education coming under severe criticism from empirical research in the early 1960s.[3]

The consequence of these changes was for a move away from biblical-centred confessional instruction to the adoption of experiential and neo-confessional approaches in agreed syllabuses.[4] However, these perspectives were compromises which did not fully address the crisis in religious education, the subject being too closely associated with Christian aims and content to distance itself sufficiently from its ecclesiastical roots to attain an autonomous status (Cox, 1983; Bell, 1985). As a result of the questions raised on religious education at various levels, there was a widening search among educators and the Christian establishment for alternative strategies to the subject, as reflected in the enquiry commissioned by the Church of England that led to the publication of the Durham Report (1970). An increasing sense of urgency was also felt by leading thinkers and practitioners in the field to 'make the subject more intellectual . . . to give it intellectual bite', as one specialist put it. Religious education teachers, in particular, were keen to establish a professional identity for themselves which would be acknowledged by school heads and their colleagues in general.[5]

Faced with this crisis, multi-faith teaching increasingly became an attractive option in the 1960s in response to the difficulties faced by religious education. Significantly, some teachers were beginning to depart from the norm of restricting non-Christian faiths to the sixth form by extending the teaching of these traditions to lower age-groups, confronted with their own low professional status and the growing disenchantment of their pupils with confessional instruction. While the adoption of the multi-faith model in the 1960s may not have been widespread, possibly being confined to a few urban centres or isolated schools within a locality, changes were nevertheless beginning to occur at the school level in this decade.

The publication of the Schools Council *Working Paper 36* in 1971 is recognized as a historical milestone in the shift from a confessional to an educational approach to religious education. This document was produced as part of the Schools Council project set up in the late 1960s by Ninian Smart, the head of the then newly established Department of Religious Studies at Lancaster University. By providing a philosophical rationale and a practical framework for the treatment of world faiths in religious education, academic legitimacy was granted for the first time to the teaching of Islam and other non-Christian religions to pupils of all age-ranges in English state schools, in contrast to the confinement of these faiths to the sixth form in the ecclesiastical period. The document's main argument was based on the premise that '[e]ducation in Britain today needs to be education for world understanding and our conception of religious education must be sufficiently comprehensive to promote this aim' (pp. 10–11). The seminal

nature of this paper in the postwar history of English religious education was acknowledged by the specialists interviewed as 'a breath of fresh air', a 'manifesto' that offered an educational rationale to religious education for the first time, and which replaced Christian theology with the 'new orthodoxy' of phenomenology. It was generally considered as providing a sound philosophical justification and educational approach for the teaching of world faiths to pupils of all ages, and in doing so, made available a much needed innovative paradigm that had already found limited application in the classrooms. For the first time, the teaching of non-Christian religious traditions such as Islam was being openly proposed as an integral and not a marginalized part of English religious education. Table 4.1 shows an abridged version of the six-dimensional approach to the study of world religions suggested in *Working Paper 36*.[6]

Several important inferences can be drawn from this outline on the representation of Islam in the multi-faith framework. To begin with, it is interesting to note that a common, predetermined schematic template was

Table 4.1   The six-dimensional approach to the study of religion

1. *Doctrinal*: Most religions have official teaching or doctrines . . . [In Islam, these are principles such as tawhid (divine unity), nubuwwa (prophecy) and akhira (life after death).]
2. *Mythological*: Religions usually express their beliefs in story form, sometimes stories based upon actual historical events, sometimes fictional stories with symbolic religious meaning . . . [E.g. the tales of Allah's prophets and messengers, the life of Muhammad, the deeds of the prophet's companions, martyrs and other religious figures.]
3. *Ethical*: Religions prescribe principles, and sometimes codes of moral conduct. These are usually related to the doctrinal and mythological teaching . . . [E.g. the ethical precepts in the Qur'an and hadith, such as charity, generosity, forgiveness, honesty, compassion, respect.]
4. *Ritual*: In this dimension Smart includes all specifically religious actions . . . [E.g. the five pillars of Islam – shahada (profession of faith), salat (prayer), zakat (obligatory alms), sawm (fasting) and hajj (pilgrimage).]
5. *Experiential*: Religious faith is founded upon, and sustained by, intuitive insight . . . Sometimes these were catalytic experiences, bringing about great changes of outlook and behaviour . . . [E.g. Muhammad's experience of revelation, mystical events in his life, the experiences of Sufis.]
6. *Social*: Although the continuance and development of religion may be nurtured by inward experience, it is also sustained by the company of fellow-believers . . . [E.g. the umma (the global Muslim community), madhhabs (Islamic schools of law, denominational traditions), tariqas (religious orders or brotherhoods).]

Source: Schools Council (1971) *Working Paper 36*, pp. 47–8.

superimposed on all the faith traditions, rather than applying conceptual categories intrinsic to each religion. The common structure may have provided a practical and expedient template for teachers, but in doing so, the schemes of logic integral to each faith were overridden. As a consequence, certain dimensions believed to define religion substantively were selected for emphasis, while others, perhaps perceived as being of less direct relevance to understanding religious phenomena, such as the historical, political, economic, cultural and aesthetic, were underplayed or excluded.[7]

That a classifying and sifting process was at work is evident from the distinction made in *Working Paper 36* between the first three dimensions, which were seen as representing 'the general standpoint and *world view* of a religion', and the next three, which referred to the *context* of the living practice of the faith (p. 48). The document admittedly recognized the need for a contextual understanding of religion by arguing that, for example, if pupils are to be aware of the social dimension of Islam, ideally they should visit a Muslim country, or alternatively be exposed to 'second-hand and third-hand experience' such as a film on hajj, key verses from the Qur'an, Muslim poetry or novels, or information illustrative of Muslim civilizations, history and culture (p. 49). Despite this acknowledgement, by the very fact of dividing religions structurally into six dimensions, and in doing so giving selective emphasis to these aspects, the approach disregarded a wider, relational, dynamic and more complex understanding of religions as historical and social phenomena. The doctrinal, mythological and ethical aspects of Islam are not context-free, as the paper seems to imply, but evolved from *within* particular socio-historical and cultural contexts. In particular, in subduing the historical development and cultural manifestations of religion, it could be claimed that the framework tended towards rendering Islam and other faiths into phenomena that were historically static, doctrinally essentialized and culturally disembodied. The six-dimensional scheme, while open to a certain degree of flexibility in its interpretation and application, provides an interesting example of how symbolic categories such as Islam were subjected in the liberal period to processes of restructuring, condensing and reification to create 'virtual' pedagogic discourses (Bernstein, 1990; 1996).

The dimensional approach to the study of world religions, as proposed in Schools Council *Working Paper 36*, and which deeply influenced the course of English religious education in the multicultural phase, was derived from Ninian Smart's (1968) phenomenological approach to religious studies, a specialized discipline whose introduction and development in English universities is of significance here. In the previous chapter, the difficulty faced by comparative religion to establish itself as a legitimate discipline in the

intellectual field was highlighted. Cunningham (1990) estimates that in the mid-1950s, there were no more than 16 academics in English universities teaching religions other than Christianity, the field being dominated by theological studies. In the few universities where comparative religion was taught, it was located on the fringes of a theological faculty or department and presented from a perspective which was seldom open to debates taking place in other disciplines (Smart, 1988). In 1967, the first religious studies department in England was established at the new Lancaster University under the headship of Ninian Smart, aimed at pursuing an open, plural and multidisciplinary study of world religions. The establishment of this new discipline as a university subject in the late 1960s was not free of con-troversy, and its relation with theological studies was often polemical (Cunningham, 1990). In the 1970s and 1980s, the treatment of religious studies in English universities fared little better than comparative religion, suffering from 'academic conservativism, political narrowness, economic blinkers, ecclesiastical interests and public confusion' (Smart, 1988, p. 9).[8]

Religious studies, as a specialized discourse considered to have weak epistemic foundations, seems to have been treated with reservation by the academic establishment because of its 'eclecticism' and 'incoherence', the lack of historical legacy posing significant difficulties for the new discipline in gaining academic legitimacy.[9] That it was now a new generation of 'lib-eral professionals'[10] who were advocating the study of world religions out-side the dominant ecclesiastical code did not appear to make much difference (Smart, 1988; Sharpe, 1986; Cunningham, 1990). Like the lib-eral Protestant educators of the interwar period, this group of professionals were located on the periphery of the intellectual field, marginalized by both the 'secular' sections of the academic community[11] and the conserva-tive Anglican theologians who felt threatened by the implications the new discipline of religious studies raised for traditional biblical scholarship (Smart, 1988).

If the marginalized status of religious studies in English universities remained similar to that of comparative religion, the conceptual difference between the two was by no means insignificant. Whereas the latter sought to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over Islam and other tradi-tions through the deployment of evolutionary theory, the former was committed to a social scientific as against a theological study of religions (Smart, 1968). Islam was no longer perceived as a 'half-truth' within the framework of 'fulfilment missiology', but an independent religious phe-nomenon in its own right. Sharpe (1986) attributes this paradigm shift to a combination of political, cultural and intellectual factors that led to changes

in the way religions came to be perceived in the post-colonial period.[12] Among these factors was the emergence of a new discourse of social justice and egalitarianism in the liberalized period of the 1960s which was increasingly beginning to exert its influence over constructions of social identities. Regardless of their particular beliefs and ethics, Islam and the other non-Christian faiths were argued to have the same epistemic status as Christianity in religious studies, in contrast to the attitude that prevailed in comparative religion and theological studies (Smart, 1968). A concerted attempt was made on the part of the liberal professionals to ensure segmental parity in their specialized discipline, in resonance with the dominant principle of social equality that was celebrated in the liberal period.

While several methodological approaches gained prominence in religious studies, including the historical study of religions and hermeneutical philosophy, the approach that exercised most influence was phenomenology. Assuming the moral high ground, it called for an empathetic understanding of religions based on two major principles. The study of Islam, for example, required the exercise of *epoché* or the 'bracketing out' of the scholar's presuppositions through a suspension of judgement about 'Islamic facts'. It also called for the identification of *eideia* or the intuition of a pure irreducible 'essence' of Islam, presumably as an abstracted and absolute conception derived from particular Islamic beliefs and practices (Sharpe, 1986; Jackson, 1997).[13] The phenomenological approach to the study of religions provided an appealing and convincing philosophy to religious educators in their handling of world religions in the transition from a Christian confessional to a liberal mode of education, made all the more practical by the deployment of Smart's six-dimensional schema. However, phenomenology was a sophisticated theoretical construction in the intellectual field, requiring the employment of a complex if not arcane methodology directed at the boundaries between subjectivity and objectivity in areas of enquiry integrally connected with social representation.

While phenomenology may have readily become the 'new orthodoxy' in religious education, its practical application by teacher educators and teachers to instructional situations was by no means free of difficulties. New policy regulations in the 1960s transformed teaching into a graduate profession requiring candidates to study their subject of specialization at a degree level. Surveys carried out in the mid-1960s reveal an acute shortage of specialist teachers in religious education, exacerbated by the lack of appropriate training programmes for this particular vocation in universities and colleges of education (Hilliard, 1966; Parnaby, 1966). The introduction of multi-faith teaching at this very point in time compounded matters

further by creating an additional demand for specialized courses to provide training in the new area. The commencement of religious studies programmes in the late 1960s and 1970s in several universities proved opportune, but these were extremely limited in their capacity (Smart, 1988). In this phase of transition, much naturally depended on the quality of religious education specialists, lecturers and trainers available to the teachers in the specialized courses. Given a shortage of professionals in this area, training programmes on multi-faith religious education were largely improvised, 'self-help' activities, and according to the specialists interviewed, the lack of graduates with a specialization in Islam in the 1960s forced trainers lacking this expertise to start teaching Islam to their graduating cohorts 'from scratch'. In effect, the trainers themselves were becoming acquainted with Islam and other religions at an academic level while at the very same time imparting instruction on these faith traditions to their student teachers.

The introduction of improvised training programmes on multi-faith teaching at this stage does not appear to have raised questions on the feasibility or desirability of teachers becoming competent in a short period of time in subjects such as Islam on which they had little previous knowledge. The induction of teachers in the new religions, instead, seems to have been accompanied by a certain sense of euphoria and romanticism centred on the innovative turn to the multi-faith approach. One religious education specialist involved in teacher training in the 1960s remarked:

> I think, for a lot of them, it was a brave new world and you sailed in with great enthusiasm and the students were enthusiastic. And in those early days, people didn't think about caricatures, or the factual accuracy of some of the information that they were transmitting . . . I think it was like a lot of things in pop music . . . Ninian did this stuff, *Working Paper 36* followed, 'Shap'[14] arose, and suddenly there was a bandwagon where everyone was frightened of being called confessional. And everybody wanted training . . . It was easy in those early days not to realize how subtle and complex a religion is, particularly if you yourself are approaching it as an outsider.

In the context of the improvised training programmes on multi-faith education, *Working Paper 36* was an important reference point for both teacher educators and teachers, but difficult to comprehend because of its new ideas and orientation. Consequently, the conceptual theory underpinning phenomenology did not infiltrate the thinking of most teachers,

resulting in a superficial application of it through the six-dimensional framework at the classroom level. 'What was happening was a kind of lowest common denominator of teaching', commented one specialist, 'and I think all that had really happened over the thirty or forty years since the 1944 Act was that we had moved from teaching a lot of information about the Bible to moving towards teaching a lot of information about Muslims and Sikhs and Hindus and everybody else.'

If many teachers found the intellectual basis of phenomenology difficult to fathom, their own beliefs and attitudes presented another hurdle in the attempt to apply a methodology which called for the 'bracketing out' of all presuppositions. The personal stances of teachers often become barriers to exploring the deeper significance of non-Christian religious practices to which they did not subscribe. 'With the pilgrimage to Mecca . . . they'd say, "Oh yes, we could talk about going on journeys, and we can say some people made this special journey, and they put on special clothes", and the rest of it', revealed a practitioner who was involved in training teachers in the 1960s. 'But the moment it gets down to, "What does it mean for a Muslim?" at that point they would say, "I couldn't handle that. I am not a Muslim."'

As a result of these and other difficulties, the phenomenological approach that eventually materialized in schools was quite different from its original conception in the universities, as revealed in the following accounts of two professional educators:

> Phenomenology at classroom . . . level . . . became very descriptive: 'A Muslim way is this; there are these five pillars; there's this building called a mosque, with these elements of furniture in; these are the dietary regulations; these are the festivals; when you've done these, you've done Islam.'

> Teachers . . . began to realize that you could teach about faiths without simply teaching, in this case, the Qur'an . . . They had never read the Qur'an, they didn't know anything about it. And to require them then to teach about Islam, as they had Christianity traditionally, would have been very difficult. They found the phenomenological approach [to be] one which meant, 'Well, we don't need to teach the theological doctrines *per se*. We can teach about the pilgrimage.'

One of the specialists who was a teacher in the 1960s and 1970s sums up the difficulties practitioners had of being conscious of the frame-of-reference they were using in dealing with the new faith traditions: '[W]here

did I get a framework for . . . the nature of Islam?' he reflected. 'With many years of hindsight now, I would say that I was looking at a Western construct of Islam, one that probably started in the eighteenth century, that came through in the nineteenth-century early comparative religion, and then twentieth-century phenomenology of religion.'

The above accounts may not be representative of the experiences of all the religious education specialists and teachers involved in applying the phenomenological approach in the liberal period. However, these descriptions provide revealing glimpses into the challenges of translating a research methodology in religious studies into a pedagogic strategy. They also yield insight into how the professional identity of these educators was being forged in the transition from a confessional mode of teaching Christianity to an educational one involving multiple religions. Bell (1985) makes the observation that through the 1960s the term 'professionalism' was used increasingly in religious education. The appropriation of Islam and other non-Christian traditions as pedagogic categories was an important factor in how teachers and specialists were coming to perceive themselves. The new 'professionalism' required a degree of authority on world religions which, it seems, was not as yet attainable by the practitioners. At this early stage, professionalism meant more a detachment from confessional instruction than competency in the new field of phenomenological religious education. Nevertheless, the difficulties associated with teaching the new content did not prevent the growth of a new body of 'liberal professionals' who were becoming an influential force in bringing about change in religious education. As in the pre-1960s ecclesiastical period, a close association was once again established between new social identities and innovative epistemic categories.

Although religious studies was positioned, like its predecessor, on the periphery of the intellectual field, it seems to have exerted a far greater influence on religious education than comparative religion. As revealed by the specialists interviewed, phenomenology served as an important bridge between religious studies in the universities and religious education at the classroom level. The application of this new philosophy to a subject dealing with social identities represents an interesting development. Islam continued to be appropriated as a symbolic category by producers of cultural discourses in the liberal period through its detachment and distancing from its indigenous socio-historical contexts, as was the case in the ecclesiastical phase. However, the relations between the producers and their discourses had changed. In comparative religion, Islam was subsumed into the evangelical framework of dissenting promulgators. In the case of religious

studies, phenomenology encouraged empathy (through the application of *epoché*) between the specialists and the beliefs underpinning Islam. In addition, it required them to recognize and acknowledge (through *eideia*) what was intrinsic to Islam, based on the assumption that it was possible to identify its core essence. What this 'essence' of Islam was, however, failed to take into account the lack of consensus among Muslim traditions themselves, based on theological and historical differences on this fundamental question.

At a more general level, Jackson (1997) identifies several significant weaknesses in the application of phenomenology by researchers. In its formative phase, theorists of this approach tended to derive their knowledge of faith traditions subjectively, in isolation of the relevant historical and cultural contexts, leading to charges of authoritarianism on their part. There was also a tendency by them to accept the concept of 'religion' uncritically without paying sufficient heed to it being a modern construct. Further dangers arose from the unwitting projection of Christian and Western conceptual frameworks onto other faiths in order to identify and classify individual phenomena, while the adoption of a Christian theological agenda led some scholars to present syncretic, inclusivist or supremacist readings of other traditions. In addition, the empathetic leanings in phenomenology resulted in an inadvertent domestication of fundamental differences between religious traditions (pp. 21–4).

The net result of this methodology was to transform Islam in the English intellectual and pedagogic contexts from an evangelically reduced segment to an academic but *essentialized* category. What was once perceived as heretical and dangerous now became domesticated and worthy of academic consideration. In the liberal period, Islam was promoted from a regressive to a progressive form of knowledge, gaining epistemic parity with Christianity in the marginalized discipline of religious studies. Overall, there was a significant if contained shift in the intellectual field between the thinkable and the unthinkable.

It was perhaps due to the principles of impartiality and egalitarianism being embedded within the phenomenological approach that religious studies managed to exert greater influence on religious education than comparative religion, and therefore posed a more fundamental challenge to the establishmentarian discipline of theological studies. By suggesting an approach that was 'non-dogmatic' through the inclusion of non-Christian faiths, Smart was able to address the criticism of analytical philosophers that the teaching of religion in schools should avoid indoctrinating pupils into a particular faith.[15] The influence of phenomenology may also have been

due to the practical utility of the six-dimensional framework proposed by Smart which translated the abstract methodology of phenomenology into a concrete and formulaic schema. However, as the findings in this section reveal, phenomenology became recontextualized at the practitioners' level into instruction that was information centred and factually 'monochrome'. Consequently, Islam as school knowledge in the pedagogic field was reconstructed schematically by an emphasis on predefined structural features and represented at the level of the 'lowest common denominator', rather than through a deeper engagement with its historical development and contemporary manifestations in diverse Muslim contexts.

Cultural Equality and Local Innovations

Working Paper 36 offered a philosophically defensible model for the presentation of world faiths to the entire school age-range. The Schools Council publication, however, was not a legal policy document and the teachers were not obliged to implement its proposals. It nevertheless raised the question of whether the local agreed syllabuses could introduce multi-faith topics as statutory content in religious education. The original intention of the 1944 Education Act had been that this subject should be aimed at delivering Christian teaching, although the letter of the law referred to the imparting of 'religious instruction', and whose specific details were to be determined at the local level by agreed syllabus conferences. If the LEAs took the step of changing the content of their agreed syllabuses to reflect the non-Christian traditions, would they in effect be breaking the law?

This and other issues, such as the mandatory requirement for collective worship in schools, were increasingly being perceived in the liberal phase as indicators of the inadequacy of the 1944 religious instruction statute to answer to the changed circumstances of the times. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, several LEAs began experimenting with the machinery for the formulation of agreed syllabuses, giving greater control to the professionals and practitioners to determine how best to respond to the needs of their teachers and pupils (Hull, 1975). However, while it was the procedures in these LEAs that were testing the limits of the 1944 Act, the aims and content of the agreed syllabuses themselves had not as yet challenged the law.

In 1970, Bath produced an agreed syllabus which acknowledged in its opening statement that 'in a pluralistic society there must also be an attempt to understand views other than Christianity.' This statement, however, was

not translated into actual content and remained at the level of an aim. The Bradford Supplement to the West Riding Syllabus (Bradford, 1974) was the first curricular document, but not a fully fledged agreed syllabus, to recommend and include the teaching of world faiths to the full age-range of pupils. The need for the supplement arose from 'the belief that to base religious education solely on Christianity does justice neither to the local scene nor to the reality of religious experience' (p. 4). In the Bradford Supplement, the official status of Islam and other non-Christian faiths became adjusted from a marginalized to a supplementary position. Here, the multi-faith component was included as an appendage to the neo-confessional parent syllabus of West Riding, but no attempt was made to integrate the two into an overall, consistent scheme. At the upper second-ary level, the idea of integration was entertained but left to the teachers. The slotting of non-Christian faiths into a supplementary and contained curricular document in this particular instance is reminiscent of the pio-neering agreed syllabuses of the ecclesiastical period which introduced innovation in a segregated space to challenge the status quo.

The 1975 Birmingham agreed syllabus was the first local framework to introduce, formally and officially, the teaching of world faiths and life stances in its contents to the entire age-range of pupils attending state schools, from early childhood to the adolescent level. The justification by the local policymakers for introducing the multi-faith approach was based squarely on social and cultural changes that had taken place in Birming-ham since the 1950s, and the imperative to address the new social reality was clearly articulated in the syllabus.[16] The Birmingham framework was formulated by an agreed syllabus conference, in accordance with the 1944 Education Act, that was operational between 1970 and 1975. One of the significant features of this forum was the composition of the committee representing religious denominations other than the Church of England, which included a member of the Muslim community alongside other repre-sentatives of Christian, Jewish, Sikh and Hindu backgrounds (Birmingham, 1975a). The inclusion of non-Christian faiths in the conference signified a preference for a broad interpretation of the 1944 Act on the part of the Birmingham Council, made possible through 'a little dodge' by regarding Islam as a 'denomination'.[17]

The Islamic component in the Birmingham syllabus was delegated to a group of Muslims on the working party. Since this was the first time that it was being developed comprehensively within an agreed syllabus framework, the drafters of the document seem to have found themselves on a learning curve. One of the specialists interviewed who played a leading role in the

finalization of the framework commented that '[i]t was through being involved on that agreed syllabus that I first encountered the problems and possibilities of teaching Islam in a critical spirit, in a systematic way.' At this stage when the processes for developing the content on Islam in the syllabus were as yet unclear, tensions surfaced between the Muslim representatives on the working party and the editorial committee, as revealed in the following account by the religious education specialist who was on this committee:

> It was at that point we encountered for the first time . . . the instructional spirit of Islam. Because I can remember that when the Muslim syllabus came along it had no questions. And . . . we said to the Muslims . . . 'It is a very good syllabus, but there are no questions.' And these Muslims said, 'Questions? There are no questions in Islam.' And we said, 'Well. Then you've got to make some up because they've got to be some questions for the children to discuss.' And the Muslims said, 'If they have questions, they can ask their imam or they can ask their parents at home.' And we said, 'Questions in the classroom?' And they said 'No. The classroom is not the place for questions.' And we were very much taken aback . . . in our innocence, perhaps.

This account is interesting in revealing the difference in the conceptions of Islam assumed by the communal representatives and the liberal professionals. The critical line of tension between the two emerged in relation to the role of different pedagogic spaces, the responses of the Muslim participants expressing doubt in the capacity of state school religious education to address enquiries on Islam, while the liberal professionals being of the conviction that such questions would be more appropriately answered in a non-communal environment. The polarized relationship is evident in the liberal practitioners' questionable generalization of the 'instructional spirit of Islam' and their somewhat patronizing attitude towards their Muslim counterparts, while the latter appear to come across as being overly defensive by not acknowledging intellectual engagement as historically an integral activity of Islamic schools of thought. The exchange is revealing of the boundaries that were being set at this formative stage between communal and professional groups in terms of how each perceived the other's role in relation to the teaching of Islam. At one end we find the liberals with their impassioned and newly deployed stance of critical enquiry in religious education being held back by what they perceived as regressive faith communities, and at the other, conservative representatives suspecting secular

schooling and its innovative tendencies as an intellectual threat to their deeply held beliefs.

The epistemic distinction between religious traditions and non-religious life stances in the 1975 Birmingham syllabus presented another major issue of contestation in the policy field. The radical step to incorporate topics on Communism and Humanism in the teachers' handbook (Birmingham, 1975b) accompanying the syllabus stirred up a major public controversy, leading to questions regarding the legal status of the syllabus as defined by the 1944 Education Act. The Birmingham Council was forced to seek legal advice as to whether it was legitimate to interpret the 1944 Act to include Communism as a life stance in the curriculum, leading ultimately to the withdrawal of its reference from the syllabus (but not from the handbook) (Hull, 1975). By formally incorporating the teaching of non-Christian religious traditions and non-religious life stances in its contents, the Birmingham syllabus mounted the most controversial and radical of local level challenges in the liberal period on the interpretation of the national legislation embodied in the 1944 Act. The legal challenge was a significant event which disclosed the limits of the interpretation of the law. In the case of the Birmingham syllabus, it became necessary to refer to national statutes on religious education to define what constituted legitimate knowledge for the subject. One specialist based the need for distinguishing between 'subversive' and 'tolerated' knowledge on social reasons:

> And this again, you see, came out with regard to that syllabus, with Humanism and Communism being included. The feeling that this was not religion, and that, okay, because they're here, we've got to broaden out and include Islam. But we don't have to include non-religious stances for living . . . Islam was accepted on the grounds of needing to study, grudgingly study, other religious traditions.

Bell (1985) contends that while Communism was the focus of the controversy over the Birmingham syllabus, it eclipsed the potentially controversial issue of the degree to which religious education should include faiths other than Christianity. The evidence considered here suggests that it was in some respect through a negative process, of what was to be *excluded* from the syllabus, that Islam, together with the other non-Christian traditions, seem to have become accepted in the local regulative field as legitimate school knowledge for the entire school age-range. Even if the original intention to adopt a multi-faith approach is recognized, the controversy over Communism certainly posed a major diversion from a full and frontal debate on the meaning of '*religious* instruction' in the 1944 Act in relation to faiths other

than Christianity. The failure to change the national law at this point in time by making the inclusion of world religions and non-religious stances in religious education explicitly legitimate effectively suppressed the need for reform which would ultimately erupt in the late 1980s.

While the non-religious stances courted public controversy in the 1975 Birmingham syllabus, the inclusion of Islam and other world faiths did not, however, escape criticism from conservative sections of the Christian establishment. This criticism was advanced by pressure groups such as the Order of Christian Unity who wished to preserve the Christian evangelical interpretation of the 1944 Act and who were active in petitioning Parliament to enforce the original meaning of the law. Representing a 'moral crusade' against the radical liberalism of the 1960s, the movement was concerned about the dilution of Christian content in religious education (Bell, 1985). One of the underlying causes for the perceived malaise in the subject was implicitly attributed by these groups to the presence of immigrant faith communities in Britain. A pamphlet produced by the Order of Christian Unity in response to the Birmingham syllabus (Tullock, 1977) claimed that 'the influx of immigrants from Africa and Asia . . . opened the way for the advocates of comparative religion. Some of them asserted that Britain had become a pluralist society and that . . . the religious provisions of the 1944 Act need to be reinterpreted so that "religious" should no longer mean "Christian"' (p. 7). In the same publication, Rhodes Boyson, a prominent Member for Parliament, insisted that 'the predominant part of religious education in this country must be Christian . . . If there are Muslims or Jews in our schools they should similarly be brought up in the faith of their religion. We don't want a mish-mash of synthesized religion where nobody knows where they are' (p. 36).

As a result of the controversy over the Birmingham syllabus, and partly due to the lobbying of Christian Right pressure groups for a separatist and purist policy, religious education became the subject of three parliamentary debates during 1976 and 1977.[18] The concerns voiced by conservative fractions over the multi-faith approach at this point in time expose a simmering discontent among alienated fringe groups whose grievances may have been overshadowed by the controversy over non-religious life stances, and who were becoming increasingly embittered with the growing acceptance of multicultural education.

Given the tensions, conflicts and controversies raised by the Birmingham syllabus, how was the Islamic component presented in the document? Table 4.2 shows the outlines of the major and minor courses on Islam for the secondary level, as suggested in the accompanying teachers' handbook (Birmingham, 1975b).

Table 4.2   Secondary-level frameworks on Islam in the 1975 Birmingham teachers' handbook

Major course

Approach 1: Qur'anic study

Approach 2: Catechetical study

Approach 3: Islam in the world today

Approach 4: Worship

Approach 5: Expansion of the minor study

Approach 6: Problems in living as a Muslim today

Approach 7: For pupils with learning difficulties

Minor course

Unit 1: The Islamic world now (Muslims in Birmingham and other parts of Britain; the idea of Islam as a brotherhood)

Unit 2: Family and personal life in Islam (Relationships within the family; the role of women; food and drink; education; the Muslim year; daily and weekly devotions)

Unit 3: Muhammad (The first forty years; the call to prophethood; early persecution; the *hijrah*; the last ten years; Muhammad's personal qualities)

Unit 4: The Qur'an (Revise the hearing of the Qur'an by Muhammad; the place of the Qur'an in Islam now; reading passages from an 'interpretation')

Unit 5: The five pillars (Affirmation – *shahada*; worship – *salat*; fasting – *siyam*; the giving of alms – *zakat*; pilgrimage – *hajj*)

Unit 6: The expansion of Islam (The rightly guided caliphs; the policy adopted toward subjugated peoples; the full extent of conquest; the position of Jerusalem and the Holy Places)

Unit 7: What Muslims have done for civilisation (Factors in the spread of learning and culture; science, astronomy, medicine, art and technology, commerce; the impact of the Muslim world upon the Crusaders)

Unit 8: Muslim spirituality (A study of Islamic prayers, legends, sayings and parables)

Unit 9: What does Islam mean? (Islam *not* Muhammadanism; the totality of the demand that God makes upon the individual; the responsibility and dignity of the individual living in the knowledge of the sovereignty and judgement of God; the communal nature of the response)

Source: Birmingham (1975b), pp. c99–c112.

The introduction of the Birmingham syllabus (1975a) states that 'whereas in the past attention was concentrated on doctrines . . . the tendency now is to emphasise that these other aspects – history, mythology, doctrine, ethical outlook, liturgical life, inner experience, artistic and social expression – must also be given their proper weight' (p. 4). The framework on Islam

provided in the syllabus for the adolescent age-group attempts to reflect these aspects. There is clearly here a close parallel between Smart's six-dimensional model to the study of world religions and the approach in the minor course, with perhaps more attention being given to the historical and social aspects. However, this outline discernibly lacks coherence in terms of the units selected, being composed of an assortment of topics which have been put together from Muslim civilizational history, religious practice, spirituality, social life and the contemporary Muslim world. The outline of the major course, too, begs the question of whether concentrating exclusively on topics like worship and 'catechetical study' as significant areas of study would engender a broad understanding of Islam in its various aspects.

Whatever its shortcomings, the Birmingham syllabus was the first local curricular framework to explicitly adopt a stance of parity on all religions. Most of the specialists interviewed perceived its importance more in political than pedagogic terms, having displaced confessional Christianity in favour of an educational treatment of world religions. However, it also has to be credited for moving towards a model of religious education in which there is a broader coverage of contextual topics connected with religion than was conventionally the case, a change also reflected in other agreed syllabuses that adopted the multi-faith approach. In general, there appears to be more attention given to the historical, political, social and cultural dimensions in these syllabuses in contrast to the concentration on the doctrinal and ritual in the Christian confessional schemes.

While the treatment of several faith traditions on an equitable basis was a significant departure in the liberal period, their organization in the syllabuses presented a major practical problem for the formulators of these curricular frameworks. The answer, as the more innovative among them saw it, lay in the use of 'themes' as an important device for managing the teaching of multiple faiths in a limited amount of time. Appropriating Smart's six dimensions of religion and the subcategories within them, the thematic strands cut across faith boundaries to privilege conceptual facets perceived to be common to all faith traditions, such as founders of religious traditions, places of prayer, rites of pilgrimage and the celebration of festivals. On this basis, the distinctiveness of each faith was established within the *thematic approach* through pre-identified features common to them all, making it difficult to consider how the religions compared to one another in terms of their own internal logic. An alternative less favoured model utilized the *systematic approach*, focusing on the study of one religion at a

time, and based on a conceptual structure reflecting the emphasis placed on selected principles and practices defining each faith tradition.[19]

The result of using the themes, more often than not, was a surface treatment of the faith traditions at the expense of substance and depth. According to one professional educator, although teachers recognized the 'great danger in religions . . . to present the externalities without giving any attention to [their] inner depth . . . they tend[ed] to be pushed to the externalities by the sheer pressure of time and by their own lack of knowledge.' These constraints inevitably had an impact on how Islam was presented as school knowledge in the classrooms. One of the specialists commented that 'in the early 1970s, there gradually emerged this image of Islam which became the orthodox . . . skeleton image', a point corroborated by another practitioner who admitted that the teaching of Islam 'wasn't very historical at all . . . Given the limited amount of time, it was only related to the bare bones of the subject.'

It is difficult to gauge the extent to which the multi-faith perspective gained acceptance across England. Bell (1985) is of the opinion that although its impact in the public domain was limited, it managed to exercise a level of influence over religious education that was difficult to ignore, as reflected in the shift of authority from churchmen and university theologians to professional teachers, lecturers and researchers. The liberal professionals became recognized as the key actors in this period, displacing the Anglican establishmentarians from their traditional position of power. The populist rise of egalitarianism appears to have inspired a new ethic of tolerance in the local policy contexts that was appropriated by the religious education specialists and given educational expression through their new 'orthodoxy' of multi-faith phenomenology. In this changed climate of liberalism, Islam as school knowledge underwent a radical reconstruction in the Birmingham and other multi-faith syllabuses through a phenomenological treatment, resulting in new ways of perceiving it as a 'world religion'. Along with other faiths, it became constructed as an objectified phenomenon meriting educational enquiry through the deployment of a variety of predefined structures, templates and schema in the agreed syllabuses, on the one hand, and on the other, as a subjective engagement whose 'inner essence' could be apprehended and transmitted in the classroom through phenomenological empathy. The net effect of this recontextualization was the gaining of parity by Islam and the other world religions with Christianity at the expense of a dilution and 'domestication' of their substance.

The Liberal Project and Communal Input

It is of significance from a historical perspective that the period of radical change in religious education in the 1960s and 1970s coincided with the migration of Muslim and other faith communities to Britain. With the increasing settlement of immigrant families in the 1960s, the presence of pupils of different religious backgrounds in schools started to become an important point of consideration for teachers and specialists in religious education.[20] However, these schools were largely confined to a few areas in the urban conurbations, such as Bradford, Birmingham, Manchester, Leicester and London.

Surprisingly, the presence of Muslims and other immigrant communities was not perceived by the religious education specialists as a determining factor in the introduction of multi-faith instruction in the English state schools in the 1960s. This claim was confirmed by the Schools Council (1971) *Working Paper 36* which established the following relation between the study of non-Christian religions and the religious needs of minority groups:

> Although the two themes . . . are related they are separate issues. It is not the presence of African, Asian, and Caribbean immigrants that forces us to recognize that religious education in Britain must not be limited to white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism . . . The arrival of non-Christian religious groups in Britain reinforces a case that has already been argued on educational grounds. (p. 61)[21]

It was, then, the philosophical argument for plurality in religious education which was being given precedence to justify teaching about religious communities whose physical presence in the country, ironically, was felt to be of secondary importance in arriving at this logic. While it could be argued that it was essential to promote the principle of plurality regardless of the religious profile of society in general, according lesser weight to the social reality of pluralism, on the other hand, could be construed as giving credence to the view that the religious educators had not as yet fully embraced the significance of new faith communities in their midst.

How best to negotiate the changed configuration of the social field was to become a standing challenge for the professionals. As revealed in connection with the Birmingham syllabus, the relationship between the liberal

professionals and the representatives of the faith communities was by no means a straightforward one, this tension between the two also surfacing in other agreed syllabus conferences and collaborative ventures. The general feeling among the specialists interviewed was that there were not enough educationalists in the Muslim community at the time to contribute meaningfully to the debates taking place in religious education. The imams who were invited to participate in the conferences and workshops were perceived as traditional preachers with little understanding of the progressive approach being introduced in state schools. A specialist involved in organizing an agreed syllabus conference recalled the following incident:

> . . . it came to this working party, and getting a Muslim to come and talk to us about what he felt we should be teaching. And a member of the Muslim community then said, 'Ah, well, the man to ask, because he is a very knowledgeable maulvi, or whatever he was, is so and so.' . . . He came along and chatted as an academic expert. Now the weakness of this, of course, was that he was an academic expert in Islam. He could tell us what to do in the way of Islamiyat. And if you ran a madrasa, or something like that, everything would be fine. But he had never been inside an English school, he had no idea of this broader approach.

Having seen off the biblical scholars, ecclesiasts and schoolmen, the religious education specialists do not seem to have had much patience left for Muslim clerics and imams, and there appears to have been little effort made at this point in understanding how their knowledge of Islam could have been creatively and profitably applied to enrich the content that was being identified for the syllabuses. The liberal educators, who were in the very thick of building a new philosophy and pedagogy around religious education, were clearly frustrated that their principles were not being understood by the religious communities, including the newly settled immigrants. 'In those days, I don't think any of the religions had the slightest idea about what we were trying to do', one specialist recalled. 'It wasn't just the Muslims . . . there was no real understanding of plurality, and of the educational problem which plurality was creating.' In his view, 'these Muslims . . . had not even begun to enter into the exploratory character of the religious education that we were beginning to create.' The assumption here was that plurality in the classroom was best handled by the professionals, based on the suspicion that faith communities were inclined to promote their own normative claims.

Partly as a result of these attitudes, the division that was beginning to emerge between these two groups of stakeholders was to have serious implications for the future development of religious education. The consequence of this rift in the liberal phase itself was limited participation on the part of Muslims and other groups in the formulation of their faith traditions as presented in state schools:

> . . . the people who came to Britain who were Muslims or Hindus or Sikhs . . . didn't know the new approaches to education – you know, discovery learning, children doing simulations, getting a prayer carpet and thinking how you say your prayers, how a Muslim says his prayers with a compass, directions, all these things. The adults who came didn't see Islam being taught like that . . . therefore, they couldn't participate as much as they might have done. And also, they weren't always encouraged to participate.

This specialist, perhaps unwittingly, assumed that Muslim parents did not teach their children to pray through practical exercises, and that communal socialization of young Muslims into their faith did not make any use of 'discovery learning'.

Whatever reservations the liberal professionals may have had against the participation of faith communities, they need to be acknowledged nevertheless for widening the participation in agreed syllabus conferences, such as the one on the Birmingham syllabus, where communal representation was deemed important in defining the content of religious education. The brief provided to the Muslim working group involved in syllabus making, as described by one participant, was, 'You are writing for non-Muslims to help them to understand your religion . . . you must decide what the priorities of your religion are.' However, while this brief appears to allow a great deal of latitude in deciding what was to be taught on Islam, it was found by Muslim educators in practice to be constraining:

> . . . when [the syllabus formulators] were doing the syllabus, they would come up with a certain structure. They would divide religion into these sorts of things: places of worship, great men, festivals, doctrine. So they would have certain themes, and all religions would have to fit into that . . . I said that Islam does not fit into this kind of categorization. But that was of no avail . . . [As] a Muslim scholar . . . you make sure that whatever is there is not wrong . . . But as regards the total structure, you cannot do very much there.

This account reinforces the point made earlier on the conflict between phenomenologically conceived thematic dimensions and conceptual frames indigenous to each faith, or what in effect was the superimposition of the structural on the cultural.

As revealed in the previous section, the official incorporation of Islam in the Birmingham syllabus was initiated by the religious education professionals and not the Muslims. While Muslim representatives were co-opted into contributing to the Islamic section, it was largely due to the project of the professionals to institutionalize multi-faith religious education that Islam became incorporated at the local level. Since the specialists wished to distance their approach from any communitarian association, the Muslims to a large extent were positioned outside the curriculum development process. From the interview information, it appears that the Muslim presence in Britain was of secondary importance to including Islam in the new multi-faith religious education and that the contribution of Muslims to its formulation was limited in the liberal phase.

This restricted say on how Islam was represented in state schools may have contributed to some Muslim organizations and educators reacting adversely to the liberal conception of Islam and adopting a position that advanced a conservative stance on what was commonly perceived by these groups as 'secular' education. North (1987) states that the Muslim communities of Birmingham expressed deep reservation when they realized that non-religious stances were to be included in the 1975 syllabus and pursued their protest through both legal and political channels. The Islamic component in the framework drew little interest or support from Muslim communities, although it was given an equal educational status to that of Christianity. North attributes this position to the distrust felt by conservative Muslims towards the radical inclinations of liberal educational theories of the 1960s which promoted religious and secular eclecticism, including agnosticism, atheism, Communism and Humanism.[22]

A more direct and trenchant criticism of the phenomenological and thematic approaches arose from Yaqub Zaki (1982), a governor of the National Muslim Education Council of UK who was involved in the Schools Council Lancaster Project headed by Ninian Smart. Zaki was convinced that the phenomenological tools applied at the school level could only lead to confusion and were best left to university researchers, claiming that the thematic approach to religion 'bristle[d] with perilous ambiguities' and resulted in superficiality and 'crude equationism' between the religions. He concluded that '[t]he child brought up to believe that all religions are equally valuable is more than likely to end up believing that they are all

equally valueless' (p. 35). This was admittedly an extreme view in not acknowledging the educational value of children and youths being exposed to beliefs other than their own by engaging in some form of comparative learning.

In the 1980s, the criticism of the liberal multi-faith approach by conservative Muslim groups assumed the form of protests against local policies on religious education introduced by the LEAs. In 1983, an umbrella organization known as the Muslim Liaison Committee was formed in Birmingham which raised a series of concerns with the LEA regarding educational matters pertaining to Muslim pupils. One of the demands was for the agreed syllabus on religious education to be revised and corrected by Muslim specialists (Joly, 1989).[23] In London, a joint statement was issued by several Muslim organizations condemning the secular and relativistic assumptions of the new ILEA agreed syllabus of 1984 (Nielsen, 1986). From the mid-1980s onward, the Islamic Academy, under the direction of Syed Ali Ashraf, began to organize a series of seminars with the aim of exploring the implications of 'secularism' for Muslims and other faith communities. Other bodies, such as the Union of Muslim Organizations and the Muslim Educational Trust, were also actively involved in defining a conservative stance on religious education in state schools through periodic conferences, seminars and publications. By the 1980s then, religious education in the state sector had become a critical concern for Muslims in terms of their self-definition and presentation. For some sections of Muslim communities, the privileging of the phenomenological (or what they saw as 'secular' or 'multi-faith') over the confessional lay at the heart of their grievances with state education. In having limited influence over the liberal philosophy that had come to dominate Islam in state religious education, these Muslims actively sought ways of reclaiming their faith as a mode of socialization integral to the upbringing of their young.

One of the ensuing positions adopted by some Muslim educators in the late 1970s was as a result of the influence of a series of 'World Conferences on Muslim Education', the first of which was organized in Saudi Arabia in 1977 (Iqbal, 1978). Aimed at eliciting agreement among traditionalist Muslim educationalists from different parts of the world on an Islamic philosophy of education, the participants deliberated at some length, among other topics, on the relation between 'Islamic' and 'secular' education. A view widely shared among the participants was for Muslim educators to embrace a policy of 'Islamization' which would lead to the teaching of different disciplines and subjects from within an Islamic framework (Prickett, 1978; Thobani, 2007). Based on the assumption that the only

true knowledge was that which was in conformity with scriptural revelation and prophetic tradition, and overlooking the debates within classical Islamic philosophy on the relation between revelation and reason, this stance sought to recast 'secular' knowledge exclusively in religious and moral terms (Hurst, 1985).

In the communal context then, there was an opposite tendency of regulating school-based Islam through a theological colonization of subject areas as a means of reconciling the division between secular and religious domains of knowledge. 'Islamization' was seen by some Muslim scholars as an essential measure to introduce in communal schooling contexts, with conceptual and practical implications for the curriculum.[24] In finding themselves located on the margins of the intellectual arena and policy contexts in the liberal period, conservative and revivalist Muslim groups were forced to turn to alternative foundations for Muslim education which privileged Islam as a pedagogic discourse in contexts outside state control.

Multi-Faith Islam and the Liberal Project

To conclude the findings of the liberal phase, Islam as school knowledge in English education became part of a 'multi-faith' discourse in state schools, while at the same time acting as the core of an 'Islamization' policy for some fractions in the communal context. These shifts were brought about by a complex of factors related to the social identities of various groups (both professional and communal), the epistemic constructions of 'religion', and the tensions in policies created between national legislation and the local interpretation of the law which led to a limited sanctioning of innovative practices as manifested in multi-faith agreed syllabuses.

The liberal period saw the emergence of an organized, non-ecclesiastical professionalism which secured a prominent position over the Established Church in the field of religious education. In the reconfiguration of power that took place between the ecclesiastics and the liberals, Islam was recontextualized from a subject perceived as 'the other' to one which was worthy of inclusion as an educational topic in the school curriculum and suitable for study by a child of any age. Where previously it had been part of 'comparative religion', it was now designated as a 'world religion' and approached from a 'non-dogmatic' perspective. In being promoted by a new group of specialists, it became recast within liberal and progressive perspectives, aiding to broaden pupils' horizons by acquainting them with

a panoramic understanding of humanity's religious experience, including non-religious life stances. In the process of presenting Islam in the classroom, along with other beliefs, the teacher was able to remake his/her professional identity, no longer vulnerable to accusations of promoting partisan Christian instruction.

In this struggle for control over the religious education curriculum, the faith communities were by-passed in a move perceived by some interviewees as being 'neo-imperialistic'. It was a historical co-incidence that migrant faith communities settled in Britain at the very point in time when religious education was undergoing reform by changing from a confessional to an educational framework. In the attempt to 'professionalize' the subject, the faith minorities appeared to be a complicating factor for the liberal professionals if involved too closely in the reform process. Kept at a distance, their presence could conveniently serve as a useful justification for moving away from confessional Christianity. The result of this ideological struggle was the recontextualization of Islam from a complex cultural category into a skeletal one, fitted into structures underpinned by phenomenological assumptions. In this ideological struggle, liberal philosophy displaced the historical hold of Anglican Christianity over religious education, using the multi-faith approach as a leverage. In some respects, this struggle reflected the wider socio-political trend to privatize religion in an increasingly secular, 'post-ecclesiastical' society.

In the new scheme of things, the Christian establishment was forced into the background, with Muslims and other new communities positioned on the fringes. The net effect of the changes in the field of religious education was a reconfiguration of the social identities into three generalized categories – the liberal professionals, the Christian establishment and the faith minorities. In this new formation, the specific denominational expressions of each religion, such as the Barelwi, Methodist or Hasidic traditions, were of lesser consequence than the generalized ecumenical identities under which they were classified. While the status groups seem to have exercised greater influence than the intellectuals on the policy context in the ecclesiastical period, the liberal professionals on the margins of the academic arena gained the upper hand in the liberal phase. In this paradigmatic shift in religious education from the ecclesiastical to the liberal period, the principle of equality – embedded as 'cultural parity' in the phenomenological approach – appears to have played a significant role. This privileging of cultural egalitarianism was to come under increasing interrogation by the neo-conservatives whose discourse of social relations came to be defined by

the politics of national identity, leading to further ramifications for the symbolic category of Islam in the school curriculum.

Notes

[1] The Schools Council for the Curriculum and Examinations was a body set up by the Government in 1964 to meet the need for 'co-operative machinery' on school curricula and examinations within the framework of the existing decentralized policy on education.

[2] Robinson's work was based on the radical and liberal theologies advocated by Christian thinkers such as Bultmann, Bonhoeffer and Tillich.

[3] Studies conducted by Loukes (1961), Ackland (1963) and Goldman (1964) in the early 1960s revealed a mixture of ignorance, confusion, scepticism and apathy arising from religious instruction (Copley, 1997), provoking a major rethink on the subject that continued well into the 1970s.

[4] The experiential approach, centred on contemporary social and moral issues, was advocated by Loukes (1961). Neo-confessionalism retained the centrality of Christian induction but conceded primacy to children's understanding of religious concepts. The Durham Report (1970) went a stage further by advocating a non-confessional approach to Christian instruction which was considered as being more relevant to a 'post-ecclesiastical' society.

[5] The religious education teacher's professional credibility seems to have been a major issue confronting the subject. Bell (1985) states that religious education lacked the academic standing of other subjects, given that 'manifestly anybody could teach it since anybody was liable to be asked by a head teacher' (p. 188).

[6] In the original version, the framework provided examples drawn from several faith traditions to illustrate the meaning of each dimension in the scheme. In Table 4.1, these examples have been extrapolated to illustrate the approach intended to be applied to Islam specifically.

[7] Smart (1968) makes an important distinction between the historical and parahistorical dimensions in religious experience but these aspects remain undeveloped in his six-dimensional framework in *Working Paper 36.*

[8] In the late 1980s, only 14 universities in England had departments of theology and/or religious studies (Cunningham, 1990, p. 28).

[9] The few religious studies departments that were set up were established in new universities instead of the civic or ancient ones in a period of educational expansion. Some of these departments suffered from financial cutbacks in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of Thatcherite policies (Cunningham, 1990).

[10] The term 'liberal' here refers to the commitment of these specialists to an *open* as against a confessional study of religions, while 'professional' refers to their belief that it was possible to teach all religions 'objectively' without personal convictions colouring professional conduct. The liberal professionals were by no means a homogeneous group, consisting of secularists, humanists and Christian liberals.

[11] Smart (1988) comments that the 'rationalists' in philosophy departments viewed religion as a category beyond the pale of objective, scientific study.

[12] One of the factors that Sharpe (1986) mentions is the realignments in patterns of power at the end of the colonial period. As colonized regions of the world became independent, Western scholarship was forced to re-evaluate its earlier reductionist portraiture of non-Western traditions.

[13] The phenomenological approach had two major variations, one based on classifying religious phenomena under various categories to facilitate comparisons between religious traditions, and the other on the interpretation of religious data, drawing on the ideas of social theorists such as Dilthey and Weber (Jackson, 1997). Smart's six-dimensional framework leant towards the former approach.

[14] The reference here is to the Shap Working Party which was set up by a group of religious studies specialists in 1969 to support the teaching of world religions in schools.

[15] The undogmatic approach, in contrast to the dogmatic and anti-dogmatic stances, promoted 'the view that religious education must include both the personal search for meaning and the objective study of the phenomena of religion' (Schools Council, 1971, p. 43). It was this synthesis between the secular and the religious that made Smart's phenomenological approach appealing to both confessionalists and modernizers, turning it into a pivot for innovatory change.

[16] The following justification was offered in the document: 'Those who have prepared this syllabus . . . have been conscious of the swift rate of social change and of the new Birmingham which is being created, where men and women and boys and girls are having to learn to live and work together in a pluralist situation' (Birmingham, 1975a, p. 7).

[17] The denominational representation in agreed syllabus conferences stipulated by the 1944 Education Act (Fifth Schedule, s. 29.2(a)) implicitly meant Christian denominations at the time the law was formulated.

[18] Echoing the sentiments of the Christian conservatives, the debates criticized the perceived 'attack' on the provision of Christian instruction and worship in the 1944 Act by progressivists, Humanists, multiculturalists, as well as the churches themselves. The calls for the revision of the 1944 Act by the Durham Report and other church organizations were rejected and the House of Commons recognized 'the need to maintain and improve the opportunities for religious education and an act of worship in schools' (*Hansard* HC vol 907 cols 1785–875 (19 March 1976)).

[19] Like the thematic framework, this approach tended to overlook conceptual differences between denominations in favour of the dominant tradition in each religion.

[20] One of the first direct references to Muslims in the professional journal for religious education appeared in 1966 and was in the form of a photographic inset accompanied by brief captions ('Muslims in Britain', *Learning for Living*, January 1966, 5, 3). The first comprehensive discussion on immigrant communities in Britain and their implications for religious education appeared in the journal in 1969 ('Special edition on immigrant children', *Learning for Living*, January 1969, 8, 3). It was not until 1972 that a full issue was devoted to the teaching of Islam in schools ('World Religions in Education: Islam', *Learning for Living*, January 1972, 11, 3).

[21] The educational argument called for an undogmatic approach to the study of religion.

22 One of the earliest of these types of concerns was reflected in a paper presented by the Muslim Educational Trust (1970) to the Secretary of State for Education which objected to the secularist and humanist proposals for the replacement of religious education with non-religious moral education. The paper argued that 'total neutrality is impossible, but as far as the Muslims are concerned, we hold that it is also *unwanted*' (p. 4; emphasis in original).

23 The Muslim Liaison Committee also asked for syllabuses to incorporate elements of Islamic thought into the teaching of history, geography, literature and music, that Islamic studies be promoted to 'O' and 'A' level subject status, and that a college of education be established to train teachers of Islam (Joly, 1989).

24 Chapter 8 provides examples of this approach as it came to be applied in some Muslim schools in Crossford.

Chapter 5

State, Religion and Cultural Restoration

Muslim and Christian Conservatism

As noted earlier, Muslim conservative opposition to the pluralistic multi-faith approach in state schools had already taken form by the mid-1970s, the response to the 1975 Birmingham syllabus revealing communal unease with the new direction that religious education was adopting (North, 1987). Further reservations were expressed by Muslim organizations on the treatment of Islam in the multi-faith syllabuses produced by ILEA and Birmingham in the early 1980s. The dissatisfaction of Muslim conservative groups with liberal religious education surfaced once again in the mid-1980s, this time directed at the recommendations of the Swann Report (1985) on questions pertaining to 'separate' schools and religious education. In considering the issue of voluntary aided schools for Muslims, the Swann Committee was keen to identify the underlying reasons behind this demand:

> Much of the pressure for aided schools from the Muslim community can we believe be seen as a consequence of the moves to reaffirm adherence to Islamic principles in order to counter what is seen as the increasing 'westernisation' of Muslim children in this country . . . [T]here is a growing tendency to take the view that . . . to provide a true Islamic education for their children, it is necessary to provide Muslim aided schools.[1]

This observation underscores the centrality that was being accorded by some Muslim groups to the need for Islam as an overarching, orientating frame in the schooling of their young. While acknowledging concerns for appropriate forms of Islamic education for Muslim children, the Swann Committee's conclusion on this matter was that 'separate' schools would jeopardize the pluralistic concept of education required for a multi-ethnic,

multicultural society, and instead recommended that the relevant clauses in the 1944 Education Act for the right of religious communities to establish their own voluntary aided schools be reviewed.[2] Arguing for a pluralistic 'education for all' within the context of 'diversity within unity', the report endorsed the phenomenological approach in religious education as 'the best and indeed the only means of enhancing the understanding of all pupils . . . of the plurality of faiths in contemporary Britain'.[3]

In response to the Swann Committee's recommendations, several Muslim organizations produced an 'agreed statement' in which they rejected the 'secular philosophical' basis of the report, together with its 'integrational pluralism' which they saw as imposing upon Muslim children educational values which militated against their own faith and culture (Islamic Academy, 1985).[4] The phenomenological pedagogy endorsed by the committee was perceived as 'a secularist, dogmatic approach to religion' that would create conflict in the minds of the young because the objectivity it called for required them to step out of their acquired faiths. The recommendation on voluntary aided schools was regarded as being prejudiced against Muslims when the state continued to extend support to large numbers of Anglican, Catholic and Jewish denominational schools.

The disagreement between the liberal multiculturalists and Muslim conservatives reveals that Islam as an educational basis constituted one of the central issues in the debate on 'separate' schools. For the multiculturalists, Islam outside the maintained sector posed a threat to the ideal of pluralism, upheld not simply as an absolutist life stance but a political category that was associated, almost with alarmist connotations, with the 'world-wide resurgence of the Islamic faith'.[5] From this viewpoint, only the segmented and domesticated phenomenological Islam, contained within the multi-faith education of state schools, could contribute to the formation of a pluralistic society. In contrast, the conservative Muslim opinion read the integrative code of liberal schooling as relativizing Islam and reducing its potency as a moral and social framework for young Muslims. The boundaries between symbolic categories were deemed by traditionalist Muslims as having a direct impact on the social identities of their young, a concern highlighted by one of the Muslim educationalists: 'If you tell them that, "Well, you know, God is three into one and one into three", and then later on say, "the Hindus believe this, the Sikhs believe this and . . . that's what Judaism is" . . . and then come to what Islam is', he remarked, 'I mean this is really utter confusion. And some parents . . . felt that this type of mish-mash was almost certainly dangerous for the mental or religious health of their children.'

A much more direct and potent relation between curricular classifica-
tions and social identities is reflected in the claims of the Christian
Right.[6] As we have seen, the origins of Christian conservatism in relation to
multi-faith education can be traced back to the ecclesiastical period when
conservative establishmentarians expressed their reservations against
comparative religion. The previous chapter revealed that this conservatism
materialized as an educational lobbying force during the introduction of
the 1975 Birmingham syllabus when pressure groups such as the Order of
Christian Unity sought to preserve the Christian evangelical interpretation
of the 1944 Act by petitioning Parliament to enforce the original meaning
of the law. In the mid-1980s, the Christian conservatives once again began
to articulate their opposition to multi-faith religious education, this time
with much greater zeal, mobilizing themselves into a movement which
came to be referred to as the 'Christian Right'. Taking advantage of the
rise of the New Right in the political arena, and the growing critique of the
neo-conservatives against multiculturalism, these activists managed to push
multi-faith education high on the reform agenda.

By the late 1980s, a 'cultural restorationist' discourse (Ball, 1990) had
crystallized which made increasing reference, among other aspects, to the
place of Christianity in public education. The inscribing of Christianity into
this discourse, by articulating notions of nationality, history and identity
with religion, is explicitly reflected in the following extract from a speech
delivered by Margaret Thatcher in 1988:

[R]ecently there have been great debates about religious education.
I believe strongly that politicians must see that religious education has a
proper place in the school curriculum . . . [T]he Christian religion . . . is a
fundamental part of our national heritage . . . For centuries it has been our
very life blood. And indeed we are a nation whose ideals are founded on
the Bible . . . and that's the strong practical case for ensuring that children
at school are given adequate instruction in the part which the Judaic-
Christian tradition has played in moulding our laws, manners and institu-
tions . . . But I go further than this. The truths of the Judaic-Christian
tradition are infinitely precious . . . because they provide the moral impulse
which alone can lead to that peace, in the true meaning of the word, for
which we all long . . . People with other faiths and cultures have always
been welcomed in our land, assured of equality under the law, of proper
respect and of open friendship. There's absolutely nothing incompatible
between this and our desire to maintain the essence of our own identity.
There is no place for racial or religious intolerance in our creed.[7]

This discourse, with its embedded contradiction of religious supremacy and racial tolerance, asserting at the same time the Judaeo-Christian tradition as the sole moral guarantor of peace while according the status of civic equality to other faiths, was appropriated by the Christian Right to reclaim the centrality that Christianity had once held in English education before the introduction of multicultural and multi-faith approaches. In the phase leading to the 1988 Education Reform Act, it appears that the ground had therefore been laid for conservative fractions to strategically influence Parliament once again, this time with a view to legislating Christian dominance into the religious education curriculum through a group of members in both Houses of Parliament who were either affiliated with or sympathetic to the Christian Right (Hull, 1996).[8]

During the rewriting of the legislation on religious education at this point, the liberal professionals appear to have been caught wrong-footed, as disclosed by several of the religious education specialists interviewed. These university professors and lecturers, who had taken it for granted that the educational justification for multi-faith religious education was self-evident to the general public and who did not anticipate the tactical move by the Christian Right, were forced to launch their own lobbying to defend the pluralistic approach while the Bill on religious education was being debated. Some of them deemed the professional educators' influence on the legislative process to be circumscribed, while others were convinced of their intervention as being instrumental in changing the outcomes in the final drafting of the legislation.

A reading of the *Hansard* and the commentaries on the legislation of the revised clauses provides revealing insights into the underlying motivations of the Christian Right for the changes suggested to the law. During the passage of the Bill in the House of Lords, Baroness Cox, an active campaigner on behalf of the New Right lobby, initiated a move to amend the proposals on religious education, arguing that the letter and spirit of the 1944 Act had been 'grossly violated' in schools and 'what passes for worship and RE is . . . a shallow dabbling in a multifaith pot-pourri' (McLeod, 1990, p. 43). Supported by other members and bishops in the House of Lords, she called for the insertion of a new clause in the 1988 Act which would require religious education in all state maintained schools to be 'predominantly Christian'. In advancing the case for a revision of the existing statute in the 1944 Act, the Christian Right mounted a concerted attack on the shortcomings of multi-faith religious education, embedded within which were the following anxieties, allegations and recommendations as identified and highlighted by John Hull (1991). Baroness Cox, the leading critique,

proclaimed that '[a]s a nation, we are in danger of selling our spiritual birthright for a mess of secular *pottage*.' Another speaker urged that 'we must get away from the *mixing-bowl* approach to this great subject', which it seemed had been reduced to 'a touch of Christianity; a dash of Judaism; a slice of Islam; and so on through a *fruit cocktail* of world faiths'. A major concern that was repeatedly expressed by various speakers was 'the dilution of Christian teaching in a multi-faith *mish-mash*'. This attack on pluralistic religious education incorporated a qualified gesture to the value of studying non-Christian traditions: 'Of course, there is a strong case . . . for including some teaching about the other great world religions . . . But that is very different from presenting young people with a position of extreme relativism in which all belief systems are presented in a value-free *hotch-potch*.'[9] The metaphors of cuisine pervading this debate were penetratingly analysed by Hull (1991) who exposed the veiled discourse of racial and national 'integrity' and 'purity' underpinning the arguments of the Christian Right. Operating within this discursive frame, the multi-faith critics picked out the thematic approach as a progressivist innovation of liberal educators which had created profound confusion in the minds of the pupils. At the same time, the Church of England was attacked for sanctioning a permissive approach of 'syncretistic relativism' in religious education which was undermining the distinctiveness and authenticity of the Christian faith.[10]

In this debate, Muslims and other faith minorities appear to have been co-opted by the Christian Right for their own exclusion. There are several references in the House of Lords' debate where the support and approval of Muslims and Asians in reinstating Christianity in the curriculum is cited. One of the peers alleged that '[l]eaders of the Moslem community have urged us to restore Christianity to our schools.'[11] Another member disclosed that '[t]hose Asian parents of whom I speak are happy and eager that their children should experience that Christian worship . . . They admire the Christian ideal for life . . . They want for their children Christian standards . . .'[12] Yet another speaker put forward the following extraordinary claim as further endorsement for the case advanced by the Christian Right:

Support [for the amendments to religious education] was also expressed outside your Lordships' House by members of the Moslem community. These supporters shared the same anxieties, especially over the developments in RE of that thematic, multi-faith approach, which they saw as trivialising their faiths in ways which might undermine all faith . . . The Imam of a major mosque led his people in prayer that the name of Christ should once again be revered in Britain's schools.[13]

Whether the incident referring to the imam actually took place or was conjured up by the peer was a point that came to be questioned in various circles. One specialist who was closely involved in events during the passage of the Bill in the House of Lords provided the following insight into the above claim:

> I would say that the Muslims, like all of us, were conscientized by the 1988 Act . . . my reading was the Muslims were unscrupulously exploited by the Christian right wing . . . The famous anecdote about the imam in the Regent's Park Mosque leading five hundred Muslims, praying that the name of Jesus would once again be reverenced in our schools – that little story became very influential . . . So the Muslims were recruited as participants in this attempt to exclude them.

The solution to the 'liberal mish-mash', as conceived by the Christian Right and their sympathizers, was to have Christianity taught separately from the other faiths and to have pupils instructed in segregated religious groups (Hull, 1991), as reflected in this comment by a member of the House of Lords:

> . . . if we consider religious faith and precept as the spiritual lifeblood of the nation and all its citizens, then effective religious instruction can no more be administered by and to persons of a different faith than can a blood transfusion be safely given without first ensuring blood-group compatibility. Indiscriminate mixing of blood can prove dangerous and so can the mixing of faiths in education.[14]

A thematic treatment of Islam and other religions was clearly an anathema to the separatists in risking, as they saw it, the contamination of the national 'lifeblood', an argument that resonated with colonial, if not fascist, discourses of eugenics and racial purity. The weak thematic boundaries between Islam and Christianity invited the diffusion of doctrinal categories, and the highlighting of structural similarities between faiths could all too easily lead to conceptual confusion and loss of distinction. If thematic Islam was perceived as a problem, phenomenological Islam posed an even greater threat, requiring the 'bracketing out' of Christian beliefs and empathetically walking in the shoes of a Muslim devotee. It asked for an unthinkable identification, no matter how momentarily, with the 'other' at its very core, with what constituted the 'essence' of Islam. Phenomenological Islam, as proposed by the liberal professionals,

was deemed to be nothing less than the transgression of sacred boundaries which maintained the integrity and identity of each faith community.

The developments in the neo-conservative period reveal in vivid detail the intense contestation between status groups in the field of religious education. While it was the liberal professionals who had emerged as the influential force in the preceding period, the field was reconfigured from the mid-1980s onward as conservative Christian and Muslim groups sought to exert their influence over religious education in the state maintained sector. In particular, the Christian Right succeeded in gaining ascendancy as a pressure group and to wield considerable influence over national policymakers by skilfully exploiting the historical position of the Established Church, based on the traditional links between church and state. In this process, the liberal professionals were usurped by being sidelined in key decisions affecting the legislation of the religious education statute in the 1988 Act. At the same time, the Established Church was portrayed as being unable to defend its own interests, while the minority communities were co-opted for their self-exclusion and marginalization. In effect, symbolic control over religious education at this critical juncture passed from the hands of the liberal professionals to a small minority of ultra-conservative and communitarian elements within the Christian churches.

The internal dynamics of religious education in the neo-conservative period reveal the close relation between social identities and symbolic categories as school knowledge. The rise to prominence of conservative fractions in this phase can be directly associated with the influential critique levelled by these groups at the liberal conception of religions in the pedagogic context. The diluted boundaries between curricular categories were perceived as having a direct influence on the formation of social identities of the emerging generation, with segmental equity, relativity and syncretism in religious education all being read as threats to the classification of the social order. The solution for the Christian Right lay in reimposing impermeable barriers between the segments, echoing the division between confessional Christianity and comparative religion that existed in the pre-1970s agreed syllabuses, to ensure that there would be no doctrinal leakage or 'pollution' between the symbolic categories. This meant a reversion to the 'systematic' approach to religious education, with strong demarcations between religions instead of weak permeating themes, thereby safeguarding the integrity, purity and identity of Christianity, cast in essentialized and unified terms, as the national faith of Britain.[15]

Reassertive Politics, Serendipity and Interpretation

The original aim of the Christian Right was to seek the incorporation of a revised clause in the 1988 Act which would require religious education in all maintained schools to be 'predominantly Christian'. During the passage of the Bill in the House of Lords, the Bishop of London argued for wider consultation on the draft legislation with churches and faith groups not represented in the debate.[16] While the move to solicit the input of other religious communities was strategically important, the representatives of these communities, in being located outside the policymaking mechanism of both Houses of Parliament, had limited scope for input on the proposals presented to them, as revealed by a Muslim representative whose advice was sought by the bishop during the final redrafting of the Bill:

> . . . we had a proposal that was there, and we knew that the only thing to do [was] to amend it . . . because it was very enthusiastically supported in the House of Lords and it was obviously going to go through the House of Commons with no comment . . . So what we wanted at that time . . . was to see that this would not affect [Muslim] children, that we [would] have the right to withdraw, that our religion would be represented, that when we [had] a majority, we would have . . . the right to have the school run in a way to reflect that majority within the school.[17]

By the time the faith groups were consulted, the drafting of the legislation had already proceeded to an advanced stage, constraining Muslim representatives to attend to the limited option of ensuring that the conscience clause in religious education was not eroded, and that the teaching of Islam would be included at some level, particularly in schools where Muslim students were in a majority. The final outcome of the legislation on religious education, as a result of last-minute consultation and negotiations undertaken by the Bishop of London, turned out to be a compromise formulation that was to fuel rather than assuage further controversy.[18]

A reading of the relevant clauses on religious education in the 1988 Education Reform Act discloses a whole raft of specific requirements, provisions and qualifications incorporated into the revised legislation. The new Act instituted, at the core of this policy, religious education as a compulsory subject to be implemented in every state school as part of the 'Basic Curriculum'.[19] Section 8 of the Act stipulated that:

> Any agreed syllabus which after this section comes into force . . . shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the

main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.[20]

The new legislation reinstated Christianity to the privileged position it had held in religious instruction in the ecclesiastical period. At the same time, however, the 1988 Act introduced and sanctioned, formally and explicitly, the teaching of non-Christian faiths in the subject, opting not to use the undefined and contested term of 'religious instruction' that featured in the 1944 clause. In attempting to foreground Christianity while also being inclusive of other faiths, the 1988 Act sought to strike a difficult balance, a policy compromise which became the source of further ambiguity, interpretation and dispute. The Christian Right immediately pronounced the policy change as ascribing statutory predominance to Christianity in schools, but the liberal professionals disagreed and argued instead 'that you could spend five years teaching Islam, as long as you said to children, "Bear in mind that the religious traditions in the UK are in the main Christian." If you said that in one sentence, you . . . almost fulfilled the law.'

The professional view, led by John Hull (1989), interpreted the Act as requiring the incorporation of the pluralistic approach in all the agreed syllabuses of the LEAs, the 1988 Act being understood as reinforcing the case for multi-faith teaching rather than promoting Christian supremacy in education. The inclusion of world religions in the Act was perceived by the liberal professionals as a major historical achievement for religious education policy, although this aim was not part of the original intention of the policymakers. 'It's one of those ironies that you've got people . . . whose initial motives seem to be to want to go backwards in RE, ending up going very significantly forwards', one specialist observed, noting that 'the political machinations behind the scenes were very powerful.' However, in his view, 'what came out of it was so positive in terms of, for the first time, it being recognized in law that the main religions in Britain . . . have to be covered in religious education.' From the specialists' viewpoint, the inclusion of Islam and other non-Christian faiths as statutory requirements in English religious education was due mainly to the play of serendipity in educational policymaking, a product more of accident and circumstance than a carefully deliberated and planned measure. The 1988 Act also demonstrated a wider trend in modern legislation in which decision-makers were forced to use the law as a framework within which to reconcile conflicting interests and accommodate multiple aims in rapidly changing situations (Harte, 1991).

Whatever the reasons for the unexpected outcomes of the law, Islam along with the other faiths became legislated as part of the religious

education curriculum in the state maintained schools of England. The specific manner in which it was implied as a statutory pedagogic category in the Act warrants closer scrutiny. At the level of definition, the Act did not make a direct and explicit reference to Islam or the other non-Christian faiths but instead to 'principal religions' of Britain (s. 8.3). Since the Act did not identify which faiths fell under the category of 'principal religions', the designation of Islam as a statutory component in religious education remained implicit and oblique, thus gaining official legitimacy as a curricular segment without being specifically named. An additional implication for Islam as school knowledge was that under the provisions of the Act, it was referred to as a 'religion', with all the implications that this term raised if understood as a modern construct substituted for complex, differentiated and multi-faceted 'life-orientations' (Smith, 1978).

The Act also stipulated that the faith traditions to be taught in schools were not to be distinctive of any denomination, thereby pointing to an educational as against a confessional treatment of them in religious education classes. This requirement may inadvertently have suggested an ecumenical formulation of Islam to be presented in the agreed syllabuses, although the Act did not forbid teaching *about* particular denominations, such as the traditions of Sufis, Deobandis or Ithna 'asharis, as long as these were not conveyed exclusively or confessionally. In addition, with the specific content on religious education left to each local agreed syllabus conference to determine, the door was opened for local, communal readings of Islam to come into play in each area.[21] In applying these conditions, no matter how broadly formulated, it can be argued that the 1988 Act recontextualized Islam as school knowledge by giving definition to its conceptual and epistemological boundaries as a symbolic category.

Before concluding the analysis for this section, consideration needs to be given here to the response of Muslim groups to the changed law on religious education in the 1988 Education Reform Act, which originated initially from some of the national Muslim organizations. It was the general view of these groups that the 1988 Act had further strengthened the case for Muslim voluntary aided schools and for religious education provision in state schools that was more relevant to the needs of Muslim pupils. In more specific terms, the Islamic Academy saw the new law as failing 'to indicate a proper balance between the emphasis given to Christianity and that to other faiths . . . the very wording of the Act [placing] Christianity in a dominant and privileged position . . .'[22] Another nationally proactive organization, the Muslim Educational Trust (1989), urged Muslim parents to exercise their rights as provided by the conscience clauses in the 1988 Act

to secure exemptions from Christian collective worship and religious education, and to demand for the arrangement of Islamic assemblies and separate Islamic classes in schools where the majority of pupils were Muslims.[23]

In the mid-1990s, local Muslim groups in a few areas also began to react to the new legislative measures. Towards the end of 1995, Muslim parents in Batley, West Yorkshire, protested against the 'predominance' of Christianity in their local agreed syllabus, concerned that their children would be confused by the Christian content advocated in it. As a result, according to some reports, 1,500 Muslim pupils were withdrawn from religious education lessons in both primary and secondary schools, with the number rising to 2,400 by June in the following year.[24] In 1996, Muslim parents in Birchfield Primary School in Birmingham, where 70 per cent of the pupils on the roll were Muslims, succeeded in having separate religious education lessons arranged for their children in which the agreed syllabus was taught by a Muslim religious education teacher.[25]

While the above responses are by no means representative of the majority of Muslim communities in England, they indicate that the new status accorded to Islam in religious education was perceived by some groups as being far from adequate to meeting their needs. The provisions in the law were used by these Muslims to exercise their 'curricular rights' as a result of becoming much more conscious of the changed legislation, a development foregrounded by an ethnic minority specialist:

> The Muslim community leadership, whose attention was thoroughly diverted by the Rushdie affair at that time . . . suddenly realized that the new Act actually guaranteed them something that no previous legislation guaranteed them. It guaranteed them access and Islam in the curriculum . . . So, on balance, in the last half-dozen years, the Muslim organizations that have an interest in education, both nationally and locally, have moved very skilfully to exploit what the law and the regulations actually give them.

An important development in this period was therefore an increasing sophistication by Muslim organizations and communities in the use of legislated provisions to assert their educational rights. However, as the above findings reveal, the exercise of these rights also embodied the potential for self-exclusion by minority faith communities from mainstream religious education.

The events in the neo-conservative period illustrate how the policy context related to religious education became significantly affected by tensions

between multiple agencies within and outside the state apparatus, with status groups attempting to influence cultural control over symbolic categories in the school curriculum. Pressure groups constituted a special force in the social field, strategically positioning themselves to influence the representation of cultural identities at the national level. Given that the policy arena consisted of a complex of multiple agencies seeking to safeguard or promote their own political or cultural interests, the influences exerted by radical groups on the policymaking process were reined in by moderating forces, leading to the search for compromise solutions to ensure that both communal and professional interests would be taken into account.

This struggle for control in the policy field may explain to some extent the serendipity that entered into the legislation of religious education and the ambiguity which became inscribed in the key clauses of the 1988 Act. Marginalized groups found their status both upgraded and contained at the same time by measures which were embedded with contradiction. Some of these groups sought to empower themselves by utilizing the legal provisions to their own advantage, but at the expense of being excluded from the public policy environment. At the same time, the role played by specialists in the intellectual arena in national policymaking was substantially curtailed. The liberal professionals, who became the target of resurgent conservative fractions, found themselves operating on the margins of the regulative apparatus as substantial revisions were enacted on national policy on religious education for the first time since 1944.

The Theology of Ideological Closure

The post-1988 phase which followed was equally critical to religious education policy due to the continued attempt by the Christian Right to secure the predominance of Christianity in the curriculum through a series of additional regulative measures.[26] One of the most influential of these interventions was the introduction of national 'model' syllabuses by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA), which promoted the separate treatment of each faith while prescribing greater instructional time for Christianity.[27] These model syllabuses were intended to be used as key reference points to inform the content and approach of local agreed syllabuses, the training of teachers, and the appraisal of religious education classes by Ofsted inspectors to ensure that the Christian Right policies impacted on classroom practice. The use of the term 'model' was clearly intended to present the non-statutory national syllabuses as a paradigm for emulation, engendering conformity in local contexts and so forestalling any deviations

and radical innovations which might lead religious education to revert to the liberal period. The interviews with the specialists reveal that the selection of the two models was a controlled manoeuvre on the part of those who proposed these curriculum frameworks, privileging the systematic study of each faith above the previously influential thematic treatment.[28] The incorporation of other equally viable models reflecting a more integrated approach of presenting the religious traditions, supported by the professionals and some faith representatives, was ruled out by the chairman on the grounds of the lack of time. In the final version of the SCAA syllabuses, the thematic approach was briefly acknowledged but without explicit reference to the term.[29]

A distinctive feature in the development of the model syllabuses was the setting up working groups, each group consisting of representatives of a particular faith so that the religious traditions would be defined and authorized by the faith communities themselves (SCAA, 1994b). This arrangement required the delegates of each community to transcend their internal denominational differences and diversities of interpretation to arrive at an ecumenical formulation of their religion for the purposes of school-level consumption. It also meant that the liberal professional voice was to some degree sidelined in the process, with a communal perspective predominating in the 'exemplary' frameworks.[30]

The involvement of the faith communities was perceived with mixed feelings by the specialists, one of them seeing this participation as a political ploy on the part of the Christian Right to secure its own interests: 'We also have to be very critical there of the little bit of neo-colonialism which says, "Okay, let's have some Muslim representatives, get them to okay it, therefore it's got to be . . . okay"', he stated. 'I think there needs to be a lot more deliberation, a lot more active involvement from people, and not what . . . that exercise did, which was to separate out expertise in the religion from expertise in curriculum design and development – seeing it as two separate bodies.' What appears to have transpired in the attempt to craft the exemplary models is the dual movement by the Christian Right of the co-opting of minority faith communities, most likely for the purposes of eliciting their ratification of the new framework, and at the same time, the displacement of the liberal professionals from their previous sphere of influence on curriculum content, creating fresh tensions between these two groups. This renewed friction became apparent in views aired by the specialists on communal intervention in religious education intended for the public domain:

. . . the belief was expressed strongly, not just by the Christian Right, but also by some members of the Muslim community, that the best people to

determine . . . the curriculum . . . should be the faith communities them-
selves. They should in a sense own religious education. And that the pur-
pose of religious education is to teach what the communities say should
be taught . . . It was partly an attempt to sideline professional religious
educators who were seen to be dominated by a liberal secular view . . .
I have very great scepticism about the role of communities as owning
religious education. I think they have an important place in religious
education, but as to owning the content of religious education, I have got
a lot of questions about that.

Clearly the model syllabuses had caused sharp tensions to come to a head
between the professionals and the community representatives, explicitly
bringing to the fore issues of ownership and control over the subject.
Despite these differences, in which the communities were perceived to be
at an advantage, the articulation of Islam under the controlled framework
imposed by the syllabus organizers was not seen as wholly conducive from
the Muslim viewpoint either. Although Muslim representatives were involved
in the formulation of the Islamic component, there were misgivings
expressed about the nature of the participation and outcomes of the input.
Mabud (1995), who was involved as a Muslim consultant during the draft-
ing of the syllabuses, expressed the following reservations on the represen-
tation of Islam:

As different faith groups had a lot of freedom in the selection of the con-
tent . . . of their faith, one would expect that these syllabuses would pres-
ent Islam the way most believers understand it. However, we find that the
syllabuses suffer from some conceptual and methodological problems . . .
There is a lack of breadth and balance in the presentation of the key
concepts representing the religion of Islam . . . some minor issues have
received more prominence and some major issues less prominence . . .
[The model syllabuses] show religion as something different from other
aspects of life . . . Muslims never separate culture from religion or reli-
gion from the political structure . . . Islam is not a private religion . . .
teachers will get a wrong impression about . . . the way Islam has been
presented in these syllabuses. (pp. 26–9)

While the categorical relationship posited between politics, religion and
culture in the above statement is not borne out by its diverse formulations
in past and present Muslim states and societies, the underlying point on the
question of emphasis is nevertheless significant. Once again, as in the

liberal period, preconceived curricular structures were found to have a determining constraint on the articulation of the substantive content on Islam, despite communal input and participation. The weaknesses identified in the above critique can be discerned to some degree in the scheme on Islam in Table 5.1 for Key Stage 4 (14-16-year-olds) which has been reproduced from the model syllabuses.

Table 5.1   Scheme on Islam for Key Stage 4 in the SCAA model syllabuses (Model 1)

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING	LEARNING EXPERIENCES RELATED TO ATTAINMENT TARGET 1	LEARNING EXPERIENCES RELATED TO ATTAINMENT TARGET 2
Allah • His attributes • The importance of Tawhid • How Tawhid permeates all aspects of thought and practice	**Pupils could** • Encounter the variety of attributes of Allah . . . • Consider how Tawhid permeates all aspects of Islamic thought and practice	**Pupils could** • Reflect on how naturally-occurring patterns . . . might contribute to an understanding of Tawhid
Iman (faith) • Qur'an – as the main source of Shari'ah • Akhirah – life after death • Khilafah/Imamah • al-Mahdi – the (rightly) guided one	• Through selected passages of the Qur'an, identify some sources of the Shari'ah • Talk to Muslims about their belief in Akhirah • Find out about authority and leadership in Islamic communities	• Consider the impact of religion on history, tradition and values • Discuss the possible impact of belief in accountability on a person's moral decision-making • Compare their own experiences of examples of responsibility and the nature of effective leadership
Belief in action • Service through the implementation of the Shari'ah • Political, economic, social and religious aspects of Shari'ah in daily life • The practice of Islam in a non-Muslim environment • Da'wah – helping people to understand Islam	• Through the study of Qur'anic text, consider the human rights guaranteed by the application of Shari'ah • Compare rights under the Shari'ah with aspects of British legal practice • Consider current issues relating to the development of Muslim community life in Great Britain and Europe	• Discuss what they consider to be fundamental human rights, and how these might be upheld • Consider the importance of the law for community and social stability • Consider the extent to which laws are indebted to religious principles and traditions • Reflect on the implications of being a member of a minority in a society dominated by different cultural norms

(Continued)

Table 5.1   (Cont'd)

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING	LEARNING EXPERIENCES RELATED TO ATTAINMENT TARGET 1	LEARNING EXPERIENCES RELATED TO ATTAINMENT TARGET 2

Islamic conduct and ethics
• Conduct based on beliefs that humanity is
  – created from one soul
  – mutually interdependent
• Islamic view of contemporary issues
  – care for the environment/animal rights
  – usury and interest
  – morality and health education
	• With reference to Qur'anic text, examine the relevance of Islamic teaching to a variety of contemporary issues
	• Examine how Muslims relate to non-Muslims in a multi-faith society
		• Consider ways in which societies are interdependent, and what happens to individuals when ethical parameters break down
		• Discuss the implications of implementing an Islamic world view

Source: SCAA (1994b), p. 64.

There are several features in this framework that merit attention. To begin with, a clear departure is made from the agreed syllabuses of the liberal period in presenting Islam through a curricular order based on a systematic classification of the faiths as against a thematic structure. In contrast to the six-dimensional schema of Ninian Smart, there is an attempt to select and structure the content by drawing to some extent on conceptual categories intrinsic to Islamic traditions. The model employed in this self-referencing is based on a tradition-centred approach reflecting knowledge and understanding from an 'Islamic' viewpoint. It captures two pedagogical strands: learning *about* religions (Attainment Target 1) and learning *from* religions (Attainment Target 2). The former emphasizes acquaintance with the facts and details of religious traditions, and the latter the learning acquired from religions in the light of personal beliefs and experience.[31] As is apparent from Table 5.1, this model of Islam is structured around a selected set of core beliefs, practices and values.

Assessing the scheme in terms of its framing of Islam, four concepts have been foregrounded: tawhid (divine unity), iman (faith), ibada (worship and belief in action) and akhlaq (moral conduct). While these principles undoubtedly constitute important facets in various forms of Islamic instruction, other equally important aspects have been left out, such as prophethood and revelation, two fundamental principles that lie at the core of all

Muslim theological frameworks, and which draw attention to the role of prophets as human mediators between divinity and humanity.[32]

In addition, the recognition of the diversity of Islamic traditions has been subsumed within specific concepts rather than forming a broader framework. It is not entirely clear, for example, why a reference to 'authority and leadership in Islamic communities' has been inserted under the category of iman (faith), when Muslim history reveals that it is the diverse interpretations of Islam of different Muslim traditions, defined by their particular notions of authority, which have determined what is to be understood by faith, including other principles such as revelation, law and ethics. This point also holds true for the concept of shari'a, which has been formulated and applied in different ways in historical, political and theological contexts, whereas the scheme seems to imply a single prescriptive code to which all Muslims subscribe.[33] Other notions in the framework, such as 'Islamic teaching', 'Islamic world view' and 'Islamic life', appear to presuppose a uniform understanding of Islam among all Muslim traditions.

Overall, the impression conveyed by the model scheme is that it appears to privilege a juridical reading of Islam above other possible interpretations, with little reference to the philosophical, rational and mystical understandings which are also integral to Muslim traditions. Within this frame, greater emphasis has been placed on doctrinal, scriptural, legal and moral aspects over the historical, socio-political and cultural contexts within which these aspects evolved. There is also a restricted exploration of the historical and cultural interactions between Islam and the Judaeo-Christian traditions, and with other faiths such as Hinduism and Sikhism. The consequence of this form of reconstruction is a version of Islam that is disembodied from the wider civilizational and cultural engagements which characterize Muslim history.

Given that a broad base of Muslim representation was solicited in the model syllabuses, it is difficult to understand why the scheme is slanted in its orientation and riddled with the deficiencies identified above. Part of the explanation may lie in the contrived ecumenical thrust solicited by the organizers of the syllabuses from the faith communities, a point picked out by the specialists:

> I think [the involvement of communities] served a political point because . . . what it was really saying was that here we have some kind of national agreement about religious education. And what it means is that if . . . the imam in the mosque just down the road . . . wants to create a noise about . . . the fact that what's being taught in the school isn't straight down the

Deobandi line, he can't really do that because here is something that has been agreed by other people at a sort of a national level.

　　The fallacy of it all was the notion that by having, you know, a certain number of so called representations from the religions, that you could somehow by saying, 'What to you is the most important?', 'What to you is the most important?' . . . what comes out from all of that is common . . . and let that be the core – it's fallacious, a fallacious way of dealing with it.

In effect, the exercise in creating model syllabuses was read by the liberal professionals as the state seeking to regulate the content of each faith by co-opting communal consensus, although these documents were accorded a non-statutory designation. A state-sponsored intervention, however, was looked upon favourably by those wishing to institute an ecumenical understanding of Islam in schools. 'The importance of having one Islamic syllabus agreed by both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims must be stressed', a Muslim newsletter noted. 'As Umar Hegedus put it, "For the first time, the content of agreed syllabuses for religious education will be free of ethnic customs, misconceptions about rituals and will, Insha-Allah, bring new standards of accuracy and respect to the teaching of Islam in schools."'[34]

Whatever sentiments may have prevailed among the Muslim representatives of a unified view of Islam, the end result appears to have been the privileging of a prescriptive, juristic rendering in the guise of an ecumenical framework, rather than an acknowledgement of the diversity of observances of Islam that exist among Muslim denominations, interpretive traditions, schools of law, spiritual orders and other religious groups, as given expression in regional and local contexts by the plurality of ethnicities and cultures that make up the Muslim world. On the basis of the model syllabuses being promoted as exemplary guides, we can infer that the epistemic underpinnings of pedagogic Islam in the neo-conservative period were significantly influenced by an ecumenist theology conditioned by uniformist and regulative tendencies, in contrast to the evangelical and phenomenological frameworks of the preceding periods. It is important to consider what influence the theological outlook of the Christian Right itself might have exerted on the construction of Islam in the model frameworks.

　　John Hull, who has probed into the theological world-view of the Christian Right, describes its stance as an 'ideological closure' and a 'totalizing' approach to Christianity which seeks to 'screen out from the curriculum and, if possible, from the entire social world of the child, anything which is

explicitly other than from the Christian religion'.[35] This is a theology based on purity and heritage, with an interest in predominance and power, which can be described as 'religionism . . . the form taken by religion when tribalistic or exclusive forms of personal or collective identity are maintained, especially through negative images of other religions.'[36] The 'totalizing' theology is not unique to Christianity, but manifests itself in every religion, including Islam, where one form of it appears as 'Islamization'. Based on a concept of social order that espouses homogeneity and supremacy, this regulative form, when it gains hegemony, attempts to control the pedagogic domain through a rigid classification of symbolic categories.

This ideology of 'religionism' seems to have influenced the framers of Islam, exerting a determining sway, via the particular curriculum development strategy and structure adopted for the model schemes, on how Islam was reconstructed as school knowledge at the level of national syllabus-making in the neo-conservative period. The interview accounts suggest that the SCAA models became an important reference point for many, though not all, local agreed syllabus conferences, although these frameworks were advisory and not statutory documents.[37] Several specialists were of the view that the approach to Islam presented in the model frameworks would have tended to exercise undue authority in contexts which did not have recourse to alternative sources of expertise. 'If you are insecure in your knowledge of Islam', commented one of them, 'it's tempting to just lift [it from] the SCAA syllabus.'

Exemplary Frameworks and Ecumenical Islam

To summarize the developments in the post-1988 phase, the policy context pertaining to religious education came under renewed pressure from conservative fractions seeking to institute, for the first time, a national curriculum framework for religious education through 'model' syllabuses. The control over symbolic categories in this framework was exercised in two ways: through a bid to give greater weightage to one cultural category over others; and by the imposition of insulated boundaries between symbolic categories, effected by a socially segregated division of labour in curriculum development through the arrangement of separate faith community working groups. Social and epistemic classifications were linked in order to generate a 'systematic' mode of representing religious traditions, in preference to a 'thematic' mode which would have compromised these boundaries.

This whole episode of the attempt by radical pressure groups to acquire regulative control over a contested pedagogic space brings into relief the strong relation between curricular categories dealing with symbolic representations and status groups whose identities are at stake through different modes of epistemic classification. The neo-conservative period witnessed the reimposition of influence over the policy context by alienated fringe groups, an influence which had predominated in the ecclesiastical period but was subdued in the liberal phase. Conservative tendencies in other faith traditions became exploited in the discourse of purified identities, while at the same time deployed for their own segregation and marginalization.

One of the significant outcomes of the neo-conservative period was the loss of influence by the intellectual field in the determination of regulative measures, leading to the ownership of symbolic categories for pedagogic use becoming a battleground between communal and professional groups. In addition, the identification of the epistemic basis for these categories shifted from the liberal professionals in the academic arena to the faith communities. In particular, it was the 'communal epistemology' of religionism that usurped the phenomenological mode of representing cultural groups, at least at the level of the national paradigmatic frameworks.

As a result of the confrontation between these various spheres of influence, Islam as school knowledge in this period became recontextualized as a statutory and discrete but subordinate segment in religious education, characterized by an homogenizing and codified ecumenical theology within a conceptual structure underpinned by the ideological assumptions of the Christian Right. The theological and historical links of Islam with Judaism and Christianity, and its historical engagement with other faiths, were deemed to be of secondary importance in favour of a static, absolute and essentialized representation of its core concepts and practices. Previously framed by thematic interweaving and phenomenological projections, Islam was now to be presented as a bounded faith ratified by the consensual endeavour of Muslim communities. While the phenomenologists sought to approach Islam through an empathetic study in search of its 'essence', the intermediaries were no longer required if the Muslims themselves could articulate this core, but within a governed conceptual space. This approach resonated well with the separatist stance of some Muslim groups, but it also provided a recipe for isolation and containment of the faith traditions instead of a dynamic, dialogical approach to religious education.

The study of the national policy context over the three historical periods examined so far has traced the contrasting recontextualizations of Islam in English religious education, from an evangelized segment in comparative

religion to a liberal phenomenological 'essence', before being framed within a segregational religionist perspective. These changes have been attributed largely to the shifting relations between the regulative, intellectual and social fields as they impinged on religious education. The analysis presented here would remain incomplete, however, without some understanding of the reconstruction of Islam as school knowledge at the local level, especially in terms of its realization in state and Muslim schools. The next three chapters therefore turn to the dynamics of the interpretation of pedagogic Islam in the selected English borough of Crossford between the 1960s and the 1990s, using this particular locality as a case study.

Notes

1 Swann Report, 1985, p. 503.
2 Ibid., p. 520.
3 Ibid., p. 474.
4 These organizations included the Islamic Academy, the Islamic Foundation and the Muslim Educational Trust.
5 Swann Report, 1985, p. 503.
6 The Christian Right was a coalition of heterogeneous interests that became mobilized in the late 1980s, consisting of ultra-conservatives, traditionalists, evangelists and charismatic groups, as well as 'staunch supporters of the rights and privileges of the established Church' (Hull, 1996).
7 Speech to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 21 May 1988. Source: Margaret Thatcher Foundation website (www.margaretthatcher.org).
8 In the initial drafting of the 1988 Act, the Government intended only modest changes to the 1944 religious instruction clauses, adjusting the law to permit greater flexibility over the timing of the act of worship during the school day, and to allow sections of a school to worship separately (McLeod, 1990, pp. 38–9). This minimalist intervention reflected the government's traditional wariness in tampering with the delicate and controversial area of religious education.
9 I am indebted to John Hull for the identification of the quotations in this paragraph which are extracted from the House of Lords debate on religious education in 1988 as reported in the *Hansard*, and which are cited in his *Mishmash* (Hull, 1991, pp. 9–13). All the emphases in the quotations are mine.
10 *Hansard*, HL Deb vol 493 col 1458 (26 February 1988).
11 *Hansard*, HL Deb vol 497 col 12 (16 May 1988).
12 *Hansard*, HL Deb vol 493 col 1463 (26 February 1988).
13 *Hansard*, HL Deb vol 538 cols 249-50 (17 June 1992). See also, for instance, HL Deb vol 493 col 1477 (26 February 1988), and HL Deb vol 496 col 772 (5 May 1988).
14 *Hansard*, HL Deb vol 496 col 419 (3 May 1988).
15 See Hull (1996) for the construction of Christianity as a unified category by the Christian Right.

16 Hansard (1988) *The House of Lords Official Report*, February–May.

17 Another Muslim input at the redrafting stage was a letter from the Director of the Muslim Educational Trust, addressed to Kenneth Baker, the Secretary of State for Education, expressing concern at the prospect of minority faiths not being given the rights in the new law to conduct their own worship or to provide separate instruction on their own religion (Muslim Educational Trust, 1989, pp. 8–9). This letter reflects the apprehensions felt by religious minorities on the legislation of educational issues of direct concern to them over which they had little say.

18 McLeod (1990) comments that 'much of what appears in the Act was not the subject of widespread consultation outside the inner councils of the churches and the DES. Much of the settlement was assembled in haste at the end of a lengthy Parliamentary process . . . there was simply no time to consult in depth' (p. 51).

19 The 1988 Education Reform Act, s. 2.1.

20 The 1988 Education Reform Act, s. 8.3. Following the tradition established by the 1870 and 1944 Acts, the new legislation also included a revised Cowper-Temple clause (s. 84.8). Another provision in the Act pertained to the SACREs, which were now made into statutory bodies required to be established by every LEA. Section 255 of the 1993 Education Act qualified this representation by stating that the number of representatives shall 'reflect broadly the proportionate strength of [the] denomination or religion in the area'.

21 The content on Islam would therefore depend on the composition of Muslims on the agreed syllabus conferences. The *type* of Islam formulated was likely to be influenced by the particular interpretations of Islam upheld by Muslim representatives in each conference.

22 Mabud, 1992, p. 92.

23 These organizations also urged Muslim parents to become more closely involved with local and school policies by becoming members of SACREs and school governors (Mabud, 1992; Muslim Educational Trust, 1989).

24 *Muslim News*, 26 April 1996, p. 1. While the withdrawal of Muslim pupils did not spread to other areas such as Bradford, these developments raised fresh fears of religious education collapsing into denominational instruction from demands for separate classes by various faith communities (Hull, 1998).

25 *Muslim News*, 16 February 1996, p. 1; *Q-News*, 9–15 February 1996, p. 3.

26 The first of these measures was the issuing of *Circular 3/89* which did little to clarify the inherent ambiguity in the phrasing of the religious education clauses of the 1988 Act under dispute (DES, 1989). In 1992, there was a bid on the part of the Christian Right for specific percentages of time to be allocated to each faith, with Christianity getting the greater share (Robson, 1996, p. 18). This demand was translated as one of the guidelines in *Circular 1/94*, issued by the Department for Education (DfE), which stated that '[a]s a whole and at each key stage, the relative content devoted to Christianity in the syllabus should predominate' (DfE, 1994, p. 16, para. 35).

27 See Robson (1996) and Chadwick (1997).

28 See Chapter 4 for a definition of these terms.

29 The concession to thematic teaching was couched in the following terms: 'There will be occasions when it is important to look at an issue in terms of two or more

religions in order to explain the relationship between them . . . it is recommended that [agreed syllabus] conferences should first identify the religions to be covered in depth at each key stage, and then consider any issues which may be addressed by those faiths, e.g. monotheism in Judaism and Islam' (SCAA, 1994b, p. 6).

[30] The promoters of the model syllabuses were explicit about their preference for communal rather than professional involvement: 'The Working Group Reports are innovative in that each faith group has chosen the areas of study it considers essential to gain an understanding of its religious traditions. Previously, choices were often made by educationalists and publishers in an *ad hoc* way' (SCAA, 1994a, p. 3).

[31] SCAA, 1994b, p. 7.

[32] This omission, although not to be found in the lower key stages, raises questions on the impartiality of the Key Stage 4 scheme, given that some Muslim traditions place emphasis on the Qur'an and others on the figure of the prophet Muhammad in their observance of Islam.

[33] It is interesting to note that in a second model of Islam (SCAA, 1994c), the development of laws is recognized in the general context of human experience, but no equivalent discussion of the historical development of the shari'a is mentioned in the column on 'knowledge and understanding of Islam' (p. 56).

[34] *Q-News*, 28 January 1994.

[35] Hull, 1991, pp. 41–2.

[36] Hull, 1996, pp. 158–61.

[37] The impact of the model frameworks on local agreed syllabuses, training programmes and classroom practice was thought by almost all the religious education specialists to be significant, partly because these syllabuses had been promoted by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) as suitable for use in teacher training.

Chapter 6

The Micropolitics of Representation

The Cultural Topography of the Inner City

Crossford[1] is a borough in a large English city characterized by contrasting and conflicting features, making it an interesting site for investigating school-based Islam at the local level.[2] Its layered history, its overlapping inner city and suburban zones, its criss-crossing and shifting settlements of indigenous and *émigré* classes, and its polyglottic make-up have to be carefully negotiated to gain insight into the underlying social strata and relational dynamics of the area. Crossford's most notable feature is the wide diversity of its ethnic and religious composition, its population of 263,463 highlighted as being one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse of all the local authorities in England, with a broad range of languages spoken in the area.[3] The black, Asian and other non-white communities in 2001 accounted for 55.7 per cent of the local population, with Asians from the Indian subcontinent and East Africa being the largest group in this category.

Crossford also hosts a wide spectrum of faith communities comprising Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Baha'is, Jains and Zoroastrians.[4] The census data of 2001 reveals a substantial Muslim population of 32,290, who constitute 12.3 per cent of the population, the borough being perceived as a microcosm of the global Muslim community. Muslims initially began settling in this area in the 1960s, with the first large group to arrive here being part of the exodus of East African Asians from Uganda in 1972. Since then, other communities representing nearly 30 nationalities from South and South-East Asia, North and West Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe have added to the overall population of Muslims (Crossford Islamic Society, 1998).[5] A diversity of Islamic denominations can be found in the locality, consisting of Sunni and Shi'a communities, including Sufi, Salafi, Deobandi, Barelwi, Ithna 'ashari, Isma'ili and other traditions. The majority of Muslims have a working class background, with a

large number suffering from long-term unemployment, while the remainder are professionals and business owners (Crossford Muslim Forum, 1994).

Crossford has been an important location of settlement in England for Muslims, serviced currently by five mosques, with new ones planned for the near future. Parents also have access to one voluntary aided and three independent Muslim schools,[6] including over 12 madrasas offering supplementary classes after school hours and on the weekends. In addition, British Muslim communities have national and local organizations based in the area, which include a denominational foundation, a student society, a women's relief organization, a local newspaper group and a higher education college (Crossford Muslim Forum, 1994).[7]

From a demographic perspective, Crossford is an urban conjunction where the inner city meets the suburb, producing a stark socio-economic divide between the two zones. Some areas in the north-west suffer from disturbing levels of social deprivation, high unemployment rates, overcrowding, health problems and poor housing, while the south-east enjoys a relatively secure and wealthy lifestyle (DES, 1999).[8] This condition has led some social researchers to view the borough as two separate urban spaces: a predominantly white, affluent and conservative south-east, and a deprived, mainly black, neighbour to the north-west.[9] The geopolitical space in Crossford is marked by stark socio-economic and cultural fault-lines running through it, the uneven distribution of material resources in a bipolarized demography creating deep social divisions which local policies have had to confront. How educational policies on cultural identities and symbolic school knowledge have been formulated in this complex, pluralistic landscape which Crossford exemplifies warrants closer attention.

The LEA is responsible for 52 primary schools (20 of these being voluntary aided) and 13 secondary schools in its area of jurisdiction, with a very high proportion of its population in the 5–14 age-group (12.4%) as compared to other LEAs. Approximately 70 per cent of all school-age pupils in Crossford are from non-white ethnic groups (DES, 1999), the implications raised by these figures highlighted by a social researcher in the following terms:

> . . . the Afro-Caribbean and Asian populations are crucial components of the local populace and if anything are likely to become more so over the next few years . . . It follows from this that services which are intended to be sensitive to the needs of so-called 'minorities' are, in [Crossford's] terms, catering for a *majority* of the population. They cannot, therefore, be considered as marginal or peripheral to the tasks of local government.[10]

The demographic reality of immigrant settlement in the locality has converted the minority presence of new cultural groups in its schools into a majority, a change in the social composition of the school population that commenced in the 1960s. As a response to the significant transformation of the social profile, Crossford Council instituted an official policy of multiculturalism and anti-racism in its educational programmes in the 1970s. In the early 1980s, the Crossford Education Committee began to consider the need for special educational provision for pupils of 'ethnic background', including multi-racial education for all students in the borough's schools (Crossford Teacher's Association, 1980). The thrust of its argument was that in a multi-ethnic society, it was essential for every school to observe the principle of equality by treating the cultures of pupils from minority communities with respect in order to combat prejudice and racial discrimination. Teachers were urged to move away from a 'colour-blind' approach and to recognize the cultural identities of students in their schools in order to promote self-esteem. Among some of the practical measures recommended was the incorporation of 'multicultural studies' in the school curriculum which would make direct reference to the variety of cultures represented by the pupils.

In 1981, Crossford Council reasserted its commitment to pursuing a policy of multicultural education based on the concept of cultural pluralism and one which afforded equality of opportunity to all pupils.[11] In 1985, the Council developed a flagship programme, known as the 'Programme for Cultural Awareness' (PCA), whose overall purpose was to 'enable schools to develop methodologies, structures and curricula which [would] improve the attainment and life chances of black pupils' (DES, 1988, p. 4). Official reports from special enquiries commissioned by central government on the borough's educational policies and programmes disclose that the ideal of equality upheld by the Council became subverted by the 'Radical Left' into an ideology of anti-racism with heavy doctrinaire overtones, spearheaded by activists campaigning for a strong interventionist programme of anti-racism in the local educational policy and other social services.[12] The cultural categories in Crossford's educational programmes were crudely formulated and recast in terms of a politicized struggle between monolithic groups of 'blacks' and 'whites'. 'Eurocentric' elements in the school curriculum were isolated for their bias, to be replaced by pedagogic selections from 'ethnic minority cultures' (DES, 1988), but how these cultures were to be presented was not specifically defined and left for schools to identify. As a consequence, the anti-racist policy led to the promoting of generalized and amorphous forms of culture in the borough's educational programmes, disembodied from the lived realities and identities of local communities.[13]

Local policy documents indicate that the doctrinaire policy of anti-racism and multiculturalism had a direct impact on religious education. One of the complaints voiced by the local SACRE on these policies was the lack of attention given to religious education in the flagship cultural awareness programme promoted by Crossford Council.[14] The SACRE representatives claimed that 'multicultural education [had] neglected the centrality of religion in the lives of religious people [and] that multiculturalists had invariably ignored the religious aspirations of the faith communities.'[15]

The above grievance, directed at the local policy of equality promoted by the Radical Left in the 1980s, questions the foregrounding of homogenized representations of faith groups in the locality which resulted in greater emphasis being placed on the generalized categories of race and culture than on religion. Religious identity, in particular, may have been perceived by the activists as too divisive a category to include within the anti-racist framework, threatening to dismantle the fragile unity they desperately wanted to forge among the migrant communities. As a consequence of this policy, Muslim communities in Crossford were not recognized by the local council in administrative terms as social groups with their own distinctive identities, leading to essential services on their religious and cultural needs being overlooked, a concern reflected in the publications of two leading Muslim organizations in the borough:

> There has been a long-running dialogue with the local council to have Muslims recognized as such, not as part of the Asian community . . . The Muslims, numbering around 30,000, are being treated as an invisible community which can only exacerbate the situation. They are being bypassed in services and subjected to insensitive and inadequate provision.[16]

> Amending the equal opportunity statement that does not cover religion will be a good start, as it will send out positive signals to the Muslim community that faith is important in meeting needs and that discrimination on the grounds of religion will not be acceptable.[17]

One local organization highlighted the social consequences of by-passing faith as a vital category in the provision of social services and support by drawing attention to the plight of Crossford's Muslim youth:

> About 50% of the Muslims are under 16 years of age. The majority of Muslim youth face tremendous problems. Most come from an under-privileged socio-economic background. Their alienation from society is

made complete through resistance by service providers to provide meaningful and relevant programmes and facilities. Among the issues confronting the youth are a lack of access to genuine and user-friendly sources of Islamic teachings, inability to distinguish between culture, tradition and Islam, victims of anti-Islamic diatribe, lack of positive and relevant role models, lack of clear tangible and attainable roles within the community and society at large, and lack of forums and facilities enabling the development of community relations and personal development. The plight of young Muslims, especially women, is serious. There is the need for reassurance of one's self-esteem and sense of identity.[18]

In the reckoning of Muslim groups, the disenfranchisement of the youth, which state schooling was unable to address and in some cases even exacerbating the situation, was an issue that could not be left unresolved. The problem of providing appropriate educational facilities for the young had become an imperative, leading some Muslim groups to take the path of creating their own schools. In the 1980s, a visible rift emerged between the Council's implementation of policies on multicultural equality and the aspirations of Muslim groups to gain state funding for their schools. One of the leading campaigners for Muslim voluntary aided schools in the borough attributed the lack of support from the Council directly to the policies upheld by the local politicians: 'Instead of trying to close voluntary-aided schools by hiding under the popular "anti-racist" banner', he complained, 'why don't the socialists admit that the reason they are opposed to such schools is because they have no control over them for their own political indoctrination purposes?'[19]

For the Muslims of Crossford, a construction of social identities based on the principle of 'equality' as understood by the local council seems to have failed to register their presence as distinct communities that refused to fit neatly into the categories of 'race' and 'culture' of the Radical Left. '[W]hat tends to happen in Crossford schools is that they, generally speaking, see these people [as] different races as opposed to people of different faiths', commented a Muslim member of the local SACRE. '[What] I feel really strongly about is that majority of Muslim kids in school . . . leave being a Muslim behind because the school has not taken it on board that aspect of their psyche and identity.'

The above analysis reveals a policy landscape embedded with deep tensions in terms of socio-economic differences between the two key zones in the locality, a highly diversified and mobile immigrant population, the majority presence of non-white ethnic groups in the schools, the political agendas and ambitions of local policymakers, and the unrecognized needs

of faith communities. Having mapped the terrain, we can now attend to how national policies on religious education, and Islam within it, were applied by local agencies to Crossford's agreed syllabuses.

The Local Reconstruction of Pedagogic Islam

When the Crossford LEA was formed in 1965, it inherited the Middlesex agreed syllabus of 1957, a document that was based on the confessional teaching of Christianity (Crossford Council, 1986). True to the tendency in the 'ecclesiastical' period, the Middlesex syllabus was Bible-centred and made peripheral reference to Islam and the other non-Christian traditions, confining them to the comparative study of religions at the senior level (Middlesex, 1957). In 1972, the Crossford Education Committee adopted two additional syllabuses as supplementary policy frameworks, but both these documents were seen by local groups as failing to address the needs of a rapidly growing multi-faith school population in the borough, being predominantly Christian in their orientation (CACE, 1980).[20]

In contrast to the national situation which saw ground-breaking changes in religious education in the liberal period, Crossford seems to have experienced a lengthy ecclesiastical phase which extended well into the early 1980s. The borough does not seem to have been immediately affected by the multi-faith approach introduced by Schools Council *Working Paper 36* in 1971 or the 1975 Birmingham syllabus, the two landmark events of the liberal phase. While world religions were being presented phenomenologically at the national level, the local policy context preferred to retain the marginal status of non-Christian faiths in a predominantly confessional framework. The prolonged ecclesiastical stance in the locality is puzzling, given the rapid changes taking place in its demographic composition from the settlement of immigrant communities. The vigorous promotion of multiculturalism in the field of education raises further questions on the local council's policy to continue using agreed syllabuses centred on Christian confessional instruction.

The reluctance of Crossford Council to adopt a multi-faith policy in the liberal phase points to either a cautious establishmentarian attitude towards religious education, or that religious issues were not considered a matter of priority in the local policy context. It may also have been due to the fact that in this period, no single, specialist organization in the Council represented the educational interests of the faith communities.[21] Whatever the reasons for this decision, Islam as a school topic in Crossford remained confined to an evangelical framework from the 1960s to the 1980s. Partly in response to

the lack of appropriate teaching on Islam in state schools, Muslim groups began to set up their own supplementary classes on religious instruction in the 1970s.

It was not until the early 1980s that Crossford Council (1986) resolved to develop a new syllabus which would meet the need for a 'broader interpretation of religious education'. The proposal for a change in the policy, however, was not accepted without some degree of controversy, raising concerns among the local clergy on the need to use appropriate legal procedures in creating the framework: 'The best way to decide on how we should go forward is by setting up a Standing Conference, as provided by law', suggested the vicar. 'The wrong way to do it is – as the education committee suggests – by a group consisting solely of councillors. Councillors are concerned with politics, not religion. Whenever in the past these two have been mixed, the usual end result has been disagreement and anger.'[22] This caution exposes some degree of friction between the Christian establishmentarians and local policymakers in Crossford over the question of religious education, pointing to issues of roles, responsibilities and ownership linked to the defining of cultural categories in the pedagogic field.

A statutory agreed syllabus conference was eventually set up in 1983 by the Council, the committee on denominations other than the Church of England consisting of representatives from a range of faith communities (Crossford Council, 1986). The selection of Muslim representatives did not pass without controversy, being questioned and contested by Muslim groups in the borough and exposing anxieties on who would ultimately decide the aims and content of Islam in state schools. As at the national level, social identities and regulative measures appear to have been in a state of high tension in defining religious education policy.

A new Crossford syllabus, which was finally implemented in 1986, adopted an explicitly pluralist orientation, aimed at servicing 'a multicultural and multi-faith locality whose children are being brought up by parents who represent a large number of beliefs both theistic and non-theistic' (p. 4). The launch of the new syllabus, however, raised doubts in the local media over the change: 'Parents who want their children to have traditional religious instruction will not be too happy about Crossford's "all in" approach to the subject, which embraces every religion and none', a local newspaper reported. 'An all-party committee of MPs last week urged that religious education should reflect the predominance of the Christian faith in the country . . . Many people will be surprised that the MPs' views are rejected . . . by Crossford Council.'[23] The late adoption of the multi-faith stance locally, it appears, was running into headlong conflict with the rising tide of

neo-conservatism nationally. The criticism against the liberal approach to religious education was spearheaded by a Christian conservative fraction in the borough, represented by the Crossford Association for Christian Education (CACE), which expressed serious reservations on the introduction of multi-faith innovation in the agreed syllabus despite an expanding black and Asian population in the local schools.[24] A leading religious education specialist, who was the keynote speaker at the launch of the new framework, staunchly defended the liberal perspective in the face of this intransigence by claiming the syllabus to be a 'quiet revolution', convinced that the time had come for non-Christian religions to be given equal importance in Crossford.[25]

The 1986 syllabus provided the official seal of approval that ratified Islam and the other non-Christian faith traditions as legitimate school knowledge for all age-groups in Crossford, marking a significant change in the local religious education policy. At the secondary level, religions came to be presented through both systematic and thematic approaches, based on the general framework reproduced in Table 6.1. The syllabus took care to stress that these two approaches were not mutually exclusive and that both should be used by teachers.

As reflected in this outline, the syllabus did not make a direct reference to Islam but provided a generalized template intended to be applied to each faith tradition. The format used here was in keeping with many

Table 6.1 Approaches to RE at the secondary level in the 1986 Crossford agreed syllabus

The Systematic Approach	*The Thematic Approach*
This is the study of individual religions one by one.	*This is the study of a selection of topics across several different religions.*
For example, an individual religion can be studied under the following headings:	Many of the same topics will be used as the systematic approach. Other topics include:
• Founder and leading figures	Family life and relationships
• Historical and geographical background	Rites of passage –
• Beliefs and doctrines	• Initiation
• Worship and prayer	• Marriage
• Festivals and ceremonies	• Death
• Culture and organisation	• Rituals
• Moral teachings	• Signs, symbols and art
• Experience and faith	• Stories and myths
• Sacred writings	
• The community in Crossford	

Source: Crossford Council (1986), p. 13.

schemes of this period which incorporated broad guidelines rather than detailed specifications on religious education, leaving it to the teacher's professional judgement to determine the final instructional content. Consequently, the reconstruction of Islam as school knowledge in this local framework has to be inferred from the points listed in Table 6.1.

Foremost, the syllabus departed from the earlier Christian confessional versions by adopting a non-reductive view of Islam, with the aim of 'develop[ing] positive attitudes toward, and a sensitive understanding of, the demands of living in a multi-faith society'.[26] The framework also suggested an approach that allowed for both a systematic and thematic study of its contents. In doing so, Islam was recognized as a faith with its own distinctive features, but also lending itself to being examined through categories and structures shared with the major world religions. The boundaries of pedagogic Islam were loosely defined, allowing teachers to decide where the lines between faith traditions were to be drawn. Another discernible feature is the influence of Ninian Smart's six-dimensional framework of religious traditions in the syllabus, incorporating the doctrinal, ethical and mythological aspects of religions on the one hand, and the social, experiential and ritual dimensions, on the other. Overall, the framework suggested for Islam was broadly in keeping with phenomenological multi-faith religious education which became widespread in the liberal period.

Despite the fundamental change in the formulation of school-based Islam, the grievances on state religious education continued for some sections of Muslim communities in Crossford in the 1980s. The dilution of boundaries between different faiths was put into question by a Muslim member of SACRE, previously a religious education teacher, who commented: 'If you feel that every religion is the same, at the end of the day you will receive this reaction from the child: "So what if every religion is the same? Why do I bother to be a Christian or a Muslim or a Sikh or whatever?"'

The perceived relativizing of Islam added to the general discontent felt by some Muslim groups about declining educational standards in state schools and the 'moral laxity' they engendered, reinforcing further the imperative of setting up independent Muslim schools in Crossford.[27] A prominent Muslim leader reasoned that the case for independent faith schools was based on an integrated approach to Islamic education which the state schools were failing to provide. 'Islam [is] not just a religion, but a complete way of life', he argued. 'The education of Muslim children can best be given in institutions with an Islamic environment where there is a commitment of teachers and elders to the main Islamic principles and all

the curricular and extra-curricular activities.'[28] Between 1978 and 1984, five applications seeking planning permission for a Muslim school were submitted to Crossford Council, all of which were rejected.[29] After a prolonged battle, this permission was finally granted by the Council in 1984 when the first Muslim school was established in the borough.[30]

In the mid- and late 1980s, additional Muslim schools were set up in Crossford, based on a growing demand by parents for an alternative to state school education which they saw as failing to fully develop the educational, cultural and spiritual potential of their young. Not all Muslim communities and parents, however, were preoccupied with the question of separate schools for their children. A leader of a prominent local Muslim organization believed that greater attention needed to be directed at the vast majority of Muslim pupils in state schools. 'The main objections to the [Muslim] school are that it is in the voluntary sector and therefore cannot address the problem of how to protect the religion in state schools', he explained. 'I must concern myself with 10,000 poor Muslim kids in the state schools.'[31] However, an influential lobby of Muslims in Crossford felt that independent or voluntary aided schools offered the only viable option to mainstream schooling, its response to the above objection being uncompromising: 'For those who wish to follow some wishy-washy culture, based on something roughly British, the state system is fine. But for the real thing, there is a need for the voluntary-aided system. We ask no more than that which is already established for Jewish and Catholic children.'[32] By the end of the 1980s then, the move to establish independent Muslim schools had gained strong momentum in Crossford, as it had at the national level.

From the Radical Left to the New Right

The liberal construction of Islam as school knowledge in Crossford materialized some 15 years after the publication of Schools Council (1971) *Working Paper 36*, indicating a considerable time lag in the percolation of ideas from the national to the local policy context. The liberal multi-faith phase in the borough, which officially commenced in 1986, was curtailed in its duration however by the introduction of the Education Reform Act in 1988. With barely two years having passed since the implementation of the new framework, there was inevitably reluctance and even some overt resistance on the part of the Council to bring about changes in the 1986 multi-faith syllabus.[33] It was not until 1992 that the decision was finally taken by Crossford LEA to revise its policy, the reticence to change still prevailing

strongly among those dealing with religious education. The local SACRE's Annual Report for 1991–1992 noted that members were generally unenthusiastic about reviewing the newly adopted syllabus as it was felt that it had come to be widely accepted by teachers and parents.

In drafting another framework as demanded by the revised legislation, an attempt was made by the local conference to preserve the aim and spirit of the 1986 syllabus so as to reflect the 'rich diversity of religious commitment' in the borough while ensuring that the new document complied with the law.[34] The observance of the 1988 Act, however, was found to pose difficulties in the particular case of Crossford. In a locality in which the majority of pupils were non-Christians, how was the teaching of Christianity to be undertaken in relation to the other principal religions?[35] Confronted with this dilemma, a concerted attempt was made by the local policymakers to retain as much of the approach and structure of the 1986 multi-faith syllabus as was legally possible, the latter being perceived as better suited to meeting the needs of the highly diversified cultural situation of Crossford than the statutory changes demanded by national legislation with its Christian Right leanings.

In the process of drafting the new framework, the national model syllabuses (SCAA, 1994 b and c) appear to have been an important reference point, but also the target of strong criticism in the LEA levelled at the approach adopted to faith traditions in these advisory documents. 'The SCAA approach, which limits the study of individual religions other than Christianity to particular key stages, is inappropriate in Crossford if all pupils are to feel that their faith is valued', asserted the local policymakers. 'The adoption of such a syllabus could result in teachers exerting their legal right not to teach the subject', they warned.[36] The threat of teachers resorting to legal action in this instance reveals the depth of grievance that the model syllabuses were generating in this particular locality. As was also the case with other local authorities, the introduction of these frameworks was viewed resentfully by the borough's policymakers as an attempt by central government to reduce local control over agreed syllabuses. 'There is a contradiction between the maintenance of locally determined syllabuses and increasing central control over the nature of these syllabuses', they argued. 'If the government is committed to the decision-making process of SACREs, then why interfere with their decisions?'[37] Although this perception was shared nationally, the policies of central government ultimately prevailed, forcing the statutory conference in Crossford to incorporate selected elements from the model frameworks in the revised syllabus to demonstrate that reference had been made to national guidelines. The new syllabus was

finally issued by the Council in 1995 based on the requirements of the 1988 law on religious education. The frameworks that were developed on Islam for the secondary level for Key Stage 3 (11-14-year-olds) in this document are reproduced in Tables 6.2 and 6.3.

Three major tensions are apparent in these schemes on Islam. First, there is a noticeable departure from the national SCAA models in adopting a different organizing framework for the content. The Crossford syllabus

Table 6.2 Framework on Islam in the 1995 Crossford agreed syllabus – Key Stage 3 (core)

Learning objectives	To be taught	Examples of key questions/learning experiences
• For Muslims, Allah's guidance, revealed in the Qur'an, is the most important source of authority in their lives.	**Tawhid: Oneness of Allah to whom nothing is comparable or equal**	*Discuss people and writings which pupils think have influenced them and enhanced their lives.*
• The shari'ah (Islamic law and code of conduct) is developed from the Qur'an and the Sunnah and is applied to every aspect of Muslim life.	**Allah's attributes recorded in: e.g. Surah 1, 112 and 59: 22–24** **Islamic expressions of belief: sawm, Hajj, salah, zakah**	*Compare the implications of laws and customs in different situations – sport, school, society – and why they are needed.*
• The emphasis upon and importance of the ummah – the Muslim community in its world-wide unity and diversity – has implications for the rights and responsibilities of the individual.	**the shari'ah** (Islamic law) **and the way Muslim belief is reflected in Muslim teaching on global issues** **the ummah** (community) **and the interdependence of all humanity/creation**	*How do the use of the Arabic language, Hajj, the positions of salah and the contributions of zakah maintain a strong sense of ummah among Muslims?*
• As Islam has spread throughout the world it has adapted to a variety of customs and cultures absorbing and contributing to what is halal (lawful), rejecting what is haram (unlawful).	**Muslim life in Britain today: family and the home, mosque**	*Find out how Muslims in Crossford respond to British culture.* *How might belief in being accountable for one's actions affect one's behaviour and moral choices?*

Source: Crossford Council (1995), p. 40.

Table 6.3 Example of an additional unit (communicating belief) in the 1995
Crossford agreed syllabus – Key Stage 3

Learning objectives	To be taught from Christianity and from the other principal religions	Examples of key questions/learning experiences
• Complex religious ideas and truths can be communicated symbolically.	**symbolism of Hindu deities veneration of icons** (Christianity) **impossibility of representing God visually in human form** (Islam and Judaism)	*Explore the difference between signs and symbols.* *Look at different ways of communicating complex ideas such as truth, honesty, freedom, courage.*
• The ritual actions of worship can express a corporate and personal belief and response.	**Christians sharing bread and wine ritual washing** (Islam) **using the senses in worship the positions of salah expressing relationship with Allah** (Islam)	*Examine the meaning and significance today of some Christian symbols e.g. icthus, chi-rho, dove, rainbow, cross, crucifix.*
• Religious writings use a variety of literary forms to explore and express faith.	**imagery, simile, metaphor parable and allegory**	*Listen to some 'spirituals'. Discuss how they express ideas of struggle and freedom.*

Source: Crossford Council (1995), p. 43.

did not wholly adopt either of the 'tradition' and 'human experience'
approaches suggested in the models, but proposed instead a systematic
(Table 6.2) and thematic (Table 6.3) treatment of the various traditions.[38]
While both schemes foregrounded the doctrinal, ritual and ethical dimen-
sions of Islam, the framework as a whole endeavoured to incorporate social
and cultural aspects in two of its four objectives.[39]

   Secondly, the adoption of the dual systematic and thematic modes in the
Crossford syllabus indicates an attempt to resolve the dilemma posed by the
weighting and relations to be established between the faiths. It is interest-
ing to note that the regulative measures introduced by the Christian Right
to impose a conceptual distance between the faiths were not quite observed
in Crossford's framework, as illustrated by the 'Additional Units' compo-
nent in Table 6.3. Here, references to Hindu deities, Christian veneration
of icons, and iconoclastic beliefs in Muslim traditions, all sit in close but
awkward if not sacrilegious proximity to one another, without undue

concern at the pollution of epistemic categories and social identities. The framework in Table 6.3 does not make any meaningful connections between Islam and other faith traditions, other than presenting the exotic diversity of practices that world religions collectively reflect. The retention of the thematic approach in the syllabus, inherited from the liberal multi-faith period, may be read as an attempt to resolve the tension between national policy requirements of Christian predominance and local realities of cultural pluralism. For all their attempts at influencing local practice, the national model syllabuses of the Christian Right policy regulators were clearly having a limited impact in the case of Crossford.

A third tension is related to the issue of the diversity of interpretations of Islam in the local syllabus. In the development of the Islamic component, the working group had to contend with the wide range of perspectives of Muslim groups represented in the borough. 'The advisory teacher did her best to consult a range of opinions', the Inspector of Humanities and RE claimed. 'Obviously she contacted different mosques and different groups within Crossford. It's quite difficult within Crossford because . . . here it's Iraqi, it's Iranian, it's Afghani, it's Somali, it's Egyptian.' The concern to cater to this diversity of Muslims was also voiced by a Muslim member on the SACRE, who pointed out that the central question was whether Islam was being represented 'as clearly and as fairly as possible', matching 'the composition of the population of every locality'. Despite these consultations and considerations, the syllabus makes little reference to different traditions, interpretations and denominations within Islam, even in terms of the most basic divisions. On the contrary, a unified, ecumenical formulation is attempted, in this case along the lines of the model syllabuses. The representation of the diversity of Muslim groups in the borough has been reduced, as revealed in Table 6.2, to generalized references on the unity and diversity of the global Muslim community.[40]

The consequence of these tensions embedded in the above frameworks is the rendering of an Islam that is a hybrid version of the phenomenological and 'religionist' approaches, and which does not do justice to conceptual categories central to Muslim traditions, their diverse interpretations of Islam, and their historical relations with other faiths. The injection of the neo-conservative theology of closure into the multicultural 'mish-mash' of the liberals in this local space leads to a disjunctional symbolic conjugation. In seeking to meet the legal requirements of the 1988 Act on the one hand, and address the majority non-Christian plurality in the schools on the other, the 1995 Crossford agreed syllabus fails to adequately address school-based Islam from both perspectives. The overall result is a construction of

Islam that is neither internally coherent nor contextually convincing, constrained by an uneasy compromise to comply with the law while taking into account the imperative of local needs.

The Advisory Council and Religious Grievances

One of the key stipulations of the 1988 Education Reform Act was a provision for greater involvement of faith communities on policies pertaining to religious education at the local level. The legal requirement for local authorities to set up a SACRE, which would represent proportionately the major faith groups or denominations reflected in their area, seemed to open up a valuable statutory space in which Muslims, alongside other faith representatives, could participate and where concerns on religious education could be aired. In interviewing the Crossford SACRE officials on issues related to Islam, two distinct views emerged.

The SACRE Chair and the Inspector of Humanities and RE towed the official line in the interviews, careful to present the local setup in the best light possible and free of communal grievances. In terms of its role, the SACRE was considered to be of great value to the faith communities, being perceived by the inspector as 'the only body within any authority that does have that kind of voice because there is nowhere else that all of the faith groups are collected together.' Both the chairperson and the inspector asserted that the statutory body had not encountered any major problems pertaining to Muslim communities, the concerns of Muslim parents being thought to be more of a 'cultural' than 'religious' nature. 'I get some concerns from Muslim parents but it's not about the teaching of religious education, the teaching of Islam', the chairperson remarked. 'It's about cultural issues that they are concerned about, washing facilities, about prayers, about changing facilities, and about girls' swimming. These are not about the teaching of religion.' This comment betrays a view of Islam which, to say the least, overlooks the complex relations between religious and cultural issues in Muslim contexts.

The responses of the Muslim members of the SACRE, on the other hand, revealed an oppositional stance defensive of communal interests. The interviewees were far from being convinced that the statutory body in its existing form was a workable forum for effecting change, their representation being constrained by having to share their vote with other faith groups who collectively formed one of the four committees.[41] One of the Muslim members complained that '[your] voice and the vote if you compare to the

other groups and to the overall, is minimal. Minimal. There is no one independent voice. Your voice actually is part of the voice of the whole group, the faith minority group.' The opportunity to discuss views and issues particular to Islam and the Muslim communities was perceived by these representatives to be subdued by the pluralistic organizational context in which discussions became generalized to concerns faced in common by all faith groups. 'You go there once a term . . . you have your own issues you want to talk about, but there's no time to do it', admitted one of the Muslim members. 'Other than it being a forum to have good relationships with people in the locality, it's not really doing what I would perhaps see as a priority.'[42]

These two sets of perspectives, one representing the official position, and the other a communal viewpoint on the role of the SACRE, point to continuing underlying tensions between local policymakers and sections of Muslim communities which had first emerged in the 1970s and the 1980s, as revealed previously. The official stand saw the statutory bodies as empowering the faith groups, while the Muslims drew attention to the positioning of social actors in the local policy context circumscribed by the particular structure stipulated for the SACRE.

Although there was greater participation on the part of Muslims in the formulation of the Islamic component in the 1995 Crossford syllabus, the Muslim members on the SACRE revealed that religious education in the state sector remained a major source of concern for them. 'Religious education now, as it stands from the point-of-view of a multicultural, multireligious teaching, this is not religious education. It is . . . a little bit like sociology', claimed one of them. 'Among faith groups, Islamic teaching or religious education bears the idea of nurturing, of instruction . . . [T]o the Muslim mind, it means that you *educate* someone to a certain faith.' In this perspective, the conflating of non-indoctrinatory religious education with confessional religious instruction led to the relevance of multi-faith teaching for faith communities being questioned. This particular representative was also critical of the pedagogic approach adopted in state religious education which in his view bred scepticism instead of enquiry: 'When the [first Qur'anic] verse was revealed, iqra, it . . . means ponder and think and investigate and enquire and look. And the more you investigate, the more you realize the power of God', he explained. 'But the message the child receives at the school is sceptical and critical . . . And sometimes you get an atheist child out of the religious education session because of this sceptical thing.' Intellectual enquiry, in this interviewee's consideration, could only be sanctioned if it reinforced the faith perspective, leading him to reject the value of critical thought in its own right. School, then, was deemed to be

alienating for Muslim pupils, as was religious education within it. The revised formulation of Islam in the new syllabus, according to these SACRE members, had failed to address the concern of Muslims for a more 'holistic approach', integrating tradition with education:

> The Islam they are learning [at home] is a contradiction of what they are learning at school . . . If they can't see how it makes sense in their lives . . . they leave it outside of their lives. It's not part of their equation. And then the other side of it is that they get a lot of harassment at school and then they either become very strict and fundamentalist about it, very flag-waving kind of Muslim, or they'll just reject it completely and leave it. So, this is what people don't realize, the impact of having an Islam which is not an integrated thing.

The above concern on the approach to faith traditions in state schools was also reflected in the comments of representatives from four faith communities in a consultation on voluntary aided schools undertaken by Crossford Council in 1990.[43] The Muslim input expressed anxiety that the 'absence of a spiritual approach to religious education and school life in general [was] causing spiritual impoverishment.' Overall, the Council report found that religion was 'not being delivered as a fundamental constituent of being and identity', and that each faith community believed that their own cultural values could only be adequately taught within their own schools.[44]

For the Muslim representatives, the setting up of independent denominational schools continued to be viewed as the only option open for ensuring a form of education appropriate to the needs of Muslim pupils. 'Muslim schools are not . . . contradicting the input in mainstream schools', one interviewee insisted. 'It doesn't mean that if a child is in a Muslim school, he is being nurtured to be anti-society or anti-other religions or anything. It is just that you give him a general Islamic education which will never be given to him in mainstream education . . . because of lack of resources, because of manpower, and so on.' The case for separate schooling and the need for sound Islamic education were intimately connected for these representatives. On the basis of this argument, the response of some Muslim groups in Crossford to national and local policies was to turn internally to their own resources by establishing local community organizations and self-help initiatives. By the end of the 1990s, there were four Muslim schools in the borough, with proposals for the establishment of additional ones in the near future.

Between Equality and Identity

Based on the sources discussed in this chapter, it is possible to identify two significant influences intersecting in the policy context which had a direct bearing on the recontextualization of Islam at the local community level. The first of these was the principle of *equality*, upheld by the local council as formal policy in response to the growing diversity of pupils from ethnic groups in the schools. This egalitarian view was promoted by the Radical Left who appropriated the rhetoric of multiculturalism and anti-racism in its ideological form, and advanced it as the dominant cultural framework within which to situate the local educational policies. In the process, religion as a category was marginalized, with faith communities rendered 'invisible' by being subsumed within the generalized and amorphous categories of 'race' and 'culture'. In the context of religious education, the principle of equality materialized in Crossford in the mid-1980s in the form of the levelling multi-faith philosophy of the liberal professionals.

The second influence, manifesting in the local context as the principle of *identity*, was introduced by the religious education statute in the 1988 Education Reform Act, and in being underpinned by the separatist politics of the Christian Right, became operative to some degree in Crossford's policy on religious education. An attempt was made to incorporate the legal requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act, but without altogether resolving the tensions arising from the need to address, at the same time, the demands of equality raised by the majoritarian pluralism of Crossford. In the case of this particular locality, the policy measures introduced by the New Right appear to have failed to bring about greater inclusion for the faith communities, as illustrated by the situation of the Muslims. Those who spoke on their behalf were concerned by the marginalizing of Muslim identity in state schools, a problem compounded by the superficial and fragmented treatment of Islam in religious education.

The situation of Crossford illustrates both complementary and contentious relationships between the national and local regulative fields. From a historical viewpoint, the local recontextualization of symbolic categories *reflected* those at the national level, but with a significant time lag. However, attempts to implement centralized policies in the local context became subject to a high degree of interpretation, adaptation and even subversion. In the case of religious education, a space of ambiguity opened up between the central and local policy contexts which *refracted* and reconstituted symbolic categories such as Islam in response to local realities.

The clash between issues of equality and identity provoked by policy shifts from liberal to neo-conservative positions seem to have raised dilemmas which proved difficult to reconcile in formulating the Islamic component in the 1995 Crossford syllabus. The result was an ambivalent representation of Islam, which attempted to reflect, at the same time, both uniformist and pluralistic conceptions of Muslim identity. The case of Crossford also reveals that the influence of the local social context was substantial. Status groups were co-opted by the state apparatus to become part of the official recontextualizing process, but the power of minority groups to influence local policies was limited by the way in which their participation was emplotted. Partly in reaction to the unsatisfactory representation of symbolic categories in the state sector, fractions within marginalized groups opted to form their own formal but independent system of education, creating a new institutional presence in the denominational sphere.

The next two chapters examine the particular ways in which pedagogic Islam, mediated by national and local policies, became interpreted and reconstructed in both state and Muslim schools of Crossford.

Notes

[1] For reasons of confidentiality, names and details of places, events, institutions and individuals, including bibliographic references, have been changed in this and the next two chapters.

[2] The evidence used in this chapter is drawn from interviews, documentary sources and field visits to selected research sites, as outlined in Chapter 2.

[3] The 2001 Census revealed the composition of different ethnic groups in the locality as consisting of the following groups: White British (29.2%), Indian (18.5%), Caribbean (10.5%), Other White (9%), African (7.8%), Irish (7%), Other Asian (4.8%), Pakistani (4%) and other groups (11.2%) (Office for National Statistics).

[4] Crossford's population is composed of the following religious groups, according to the 2001 Census: Christian (47.7%), Hindu (17.2%), Muslim (12.3%), Jewish (2.5%), Buddhist (0.9%), Sikh (0.7%), and Other (1.1%), including 'No religion' (10%) and 'Religion not stated' (7.7%) (Office for National Statistics).

[5] The Muslim population in the locality increased significantly in the 1990s with the settlement of refugee families from areas such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and other parts of the world which experienced military conflicts.

[6] See Chapter 2 for an explanation of the different categories of schools.

[7] The Muslim organizations see themselves as an important part of the voluntary sector in Crossford, seeking to provide social support and services to Muslim families, but operating with constraints on funding, permanent facilities and professionally qualified human resources (Crossford Muslim Forum, 1994, pp. 14–15).

8 Crossford has suffered from major economic changes in the region in the 1980s and 1990s. With a dramatic decline in manufacturing industry, employment in this sector fell by 41 per cent between 1971 and 1981, with a further drastic shedding of jobs after 1981. The growth of the service sector failed to offset these declines in the manufacturing industry (Source C, 1991, pp. 20–1). In 1999, the unemployment rate was 28 per cent higher for black and other minority groups than for the white population (DES, 1999).

9 Source C, 1991.

10 Ibid., p. 15; my emphasis.

11 This action was in response to *The School Curriculum* and *Circular 6/81* released by the DES which called for each LEA to review its policy on the school curriculum and make it known to its constituencies. In response, the Crossford Education Committee (1983) produced guidelines on multiculturalism and anti-racism which it saw as being of central concern to its schools.

12 DES, 1988; Source L, 1988; Source B, 1987.

13 DES, 1988; Source L, 1988.

14 This concern was related to the reluctance of the PCA organizers to allocate funds for the recruitment of professional RE teachers in the programme. The organizers sought to recruit teachers specialized in various fields, including the humanities, but no special allocation was made for RE specialists (Crossford SACRE minutes, 5 May 1987, p. 1).

15 Crossford SACRE minutes, 21 September 1987, p. 3.

16 Crossford Muslim Forum, 1994, pp. 3 and 5.

17 Crossford Islamic Society, 1998, p. 4.

18 Ibid., p. 15.

19 *National Newspaper*, 'Muslim points', 18 July 1986.

20 These two documents were the West Riding syllabus (1966) and the Inner London syllabus (ILEA, 1968), which served as important reference points for religious education teachers in the borough.

21 The 1944 Education Act made provision for LEAs to set up an advisory body, in the form of a SACRE, to oversee matters related to religious education (s. 29.2), but Crossford did not set up a SACRE until 1986.

22 *Crossford Chronicle*, 2 July 1982.

23 *Crossford Chronicle*, 3 October 1986.

24 In one of its newsletters published just before the 1986 Crossford agreed syllabus was released, the Association supported the opinion that 'the progressive abandonment of Christianity from its central place in British culture is producing a vacuum which is not being filled . . . In seeking to meet the needs of the future there has to be change, but there is no wisdom in abandoning satisfactory practices of the past' (CACE, 1986, p. 4).

25 *Crossford Observer*, 9 October 1986.

26 Crossford Council, 1986, p. 10.

27 *Crossford Observer*, 'Muslim school gets aid promise', 16 April 1984.

28 *Crossford Observer*, 30 September 1983.

29 Ibid.

30 *Crossford Chronicle*, 'Muslims to get school', 15 June 1984.

31 *National Newspaper*, 'Muslims split over separate schools', 2 April 1986.

[32]	Ibid.
[33]	The Council noted that the revised religious education clause (s. 8.3) of the 1988 Education Reform Act applied only to new syllabuses produced after 1988, and that the legislation did not call for an immediate revision of existing syllabuses (Crossford Education Department, 1988, p. 3). This legal loophole in the 1988 Act, allowing the LEAs to retain their existing agreed syllabuses, was closed by the 1993 Education Act which required local authorities that had not as yet revised their syllabuses to do so by April 1995 (Chadwick, 1997, pp. 94–5).
[34]	SACRE Annual Report 1992–1993.
[35]	This concern was voiced in the Crossford SACRE Annual Report for 1993–1994.
[36]	Crossford Inspection Service, 1994, p. 5.
[37]	Crossford Inspection and Advice Service, 'Response to Chapter 8 of the White Paper *Choice and Diversity*', p. 1.
[38]	Table 6.3 illustrates one of several themes which were suggested in the 1995 Crossford syllabus. In addition to the topic of communicating belief, other themes at Key Stage 3 included focal figures, life and death and the hereafter, making commitment to faith, pilgrimage, and religion and family life (Crossford Council, 1995, pp. 43–8).
[39]	See Table 6.2.
[40]	In its introduction, the 1995 Crossford syllabus acknowledged the need for recognizing the diversity of interpretations within and between religious traditions. However, this intention was not fully developed in the schemes provided to the teachers.
[41]	The other three committees on the SACRE are represented by the Church of England, teacher associations and the LEA, the fourth being other Christian and non-Christian denominations reflecting the principal religious traditions in the area (the 1988 Education Reform Act, s. 11.1, 4).
[42]	This interviewee also stated that the time devoted to the meetings was extremely limited (once a term) and many of the items discussed on the agenda dealt with administrative matters, such as requests for exemption from collective worship by schools.
[43]	The communities represented in the consultation were Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Jews.
[44]	Crossford Education Department, 1990.

Chapter 7

Symbolic Imaginings in State Schools

Contextual Location and Pedagogic Analysis

Crossford is a site where an irresolvable ambiguity became inscribed in school-based Islam as a result of tensions between social equality and cultural identity in local educational policy. The particular rendering of Islam, by virtue of being incorporated in the agreed syllabus, assumed a formal status for all religious education teachers in the state schools of the borough, and an essential frame-of-reference for the heads of RE departments[1] in planning their annual programmes. The syllabus at the school level, however, was open within broad limits to these heads' personal judgement of what exactly needed to be taught, falling upon them to interpret the local framework and apply it in ways which they deemed best suited to cater to the specific situation of their schools. As the 1995 syllabus was embedded with tensions between the local Radical Left and national New Right positions, how did practitioners of religious education in Crossford's state schools negotiate this ambiguity in their presentation of Islam in the classroom?

To address this question, interviews were conducted with the RE heads of seven of the thirteen secondary schools in Crossford.[2] Five of these schools catered to pupils from the disadvantaged areas in the north-west of the borough, while two schools were located in the affluent south-east, reflecting the socio-economic divide of the locality.[3] The enquiry also drew information from Ofsted reports, work schemes on religious education, and resources used by the RE heads. In addition, sample lessons on Islam were observed in selected schools with the aim of gaining a sense of the instructional approaches used in the classroom.

In these school-centred investigations, three facets of classroom interactions and outcomes were selected which promised to provide revealing insights into Islam.[4] The first of these was the *regulative discourse* expressed by the RE heads, underpinned by principles informing the moral and social

order, including notions of hierarchy and identity, which defined the ethos of each school. Of particular interest here were the constructions of religious identities and social relations of teachers and learners influencing pedagogic situations at the classroom level. It was important to understand the ways in which the RE heads classified Muslim pupils in terms of religious groupings, as well as framed their own authority in relation to Muslim pupils' claims to ownership over Islam, bringing to light issues of identity, hierarchy, authority and control. A second aspect investigated was the *instructional discourse* of the RE heads to identify the ways in which they positioned Islam in the school curriculum and the pedagogic strategies employed in its delivery.[5] The intention here was to examine the boundaries used to define Islam within religious education as well as in relation to other disciplines in the curriculum, and the control exercised by the practitioners in framing the subject matter through their teaching approach. The third aspect dealt directly with the RE heads' *conception of Islam* as school knowledge, opening up insights into how they reconstructed this subject in overall terms in their classes. In examining the relationships between these three facets, the aim was to understand the impact of regulative ethos and pedagogic strategy on Islam as symbolic output in the state school context.[6]

Social Identities and Cultural Equality

Given the rich mix of cultural groups in Crossford, and with immigrant communities collectively forming the major part of the population in the borough, most of the RE heads interviewed foregrounded the policies of multiculturalism, anti-racism and equal opportunity which they perceived as informing the dominant ethos in their schools. In direct response to the plural composition of the schools, heavy emphasis was placed on the values of tolerance, respect and social harmony among the pupils. These values reinforced a social order based largely on a conception of cultural equality which was explicitly upheld and promoted by the schools as part of their overall policy. It was evident that the multicultural and anti-racist stances advocated by the Radical Left in the local policy agenda had been readily adopted by the state schools, reflected in the social relationships established between teachers and pupils, and interwoven into the curriculum and the instruction imparted through various subjects.

In the case of religious education, the egalitarianist stance was largely translated by the RE heads as requiring the emphasizing of similarities

between different faith traditions in their classes. This assumption is exemplified in the response of an RE head (school C) who preferred to subdue differences in order to avoid prejudice and misunderstandings among the various faith groups, mutual respect for one another being a cornerstone of the school's ethos. 'I don't want people to say, "Oh, you're different!"' he explained. 'Yes you are, because you don't like the same things. But the reason you are doing something is perhaps the same as somebody else . . . And if you respect somebody's beliefs, then you are half the way to a better understanding.' Cultural or religious differences, in this case, were downplayed and attributed to personal preferences. That choices might reflect fundamental differences in reasons and convictions were dismissed in favour of common, universal motives as a basis of explaining, or perhaps explaining *away*, differences in identity.

This tendency towards similarity was shared by several other RE heads, though perhaps not so emphatically. However, there were situations where their commitment to the principle of equality appears to have been undermined by pupils in religious education classes. 'Already you have all sorts of dividing lines in the classroom. And that's something I really do not like', complained the RE head of school B. 'When the boys walk in, you usually have the Afro-Caribbean boys sitting in one corner, the Muslims boys here . . . And you have the Hindu boys just stretched all over the place, and Travellers in one section, that kind of a thing.' The ethos of equality, which ought to have led ideally to greater social integration in the classroom, was unfortunately being subverted in this particular school by the persistence of segregational impulses along religious and cultural lines, despite the best endeavours of the practitioners to downplay differences.

The approach of treating everyone 'the same' also necessarily embraced the Muslim pupils. The RE heads generally found no prejudice against Muslims or Islam in their schools, no evidence of Islamophobia which Muslim communities and concerned organizations reported as being prevalent in the wider society.[7] In some schools, the problem of discrimination was perceived to do more with 'race' than religion among pupils, with friendship groups being formed along ethnic lines. 'I think in this school there is more of a race issue, not a faith issue', claimed one of the practitioners (school D). 'There might be problems between Asians and Afro-Caribbeans or . . . they may be racism between the different groups, but it doesn't crop up so much to do with the faiths.' While 'race' may have been the visible divider in this situation, it may have obscured the intricate ways in which a variety of identity markers, such as religion, ethnicity, class and gender, operate as a complex to constitute prejudice, rather than any single

trait. The situation in school B, as revealed in the quote cited earlier, shows that religion was indeed a significant classifier for the students.

Despite attempts at subduing cultural differences as part of the school ethos, the RE heads necessarily had to engage with religious identity as a distinctive signifier in relation to the diverse faith traditions represented in their classrooms. However, uniformizing tendencies in most schools led to the presentation of each major faith tradition as more or less a diluted, homogenous category, with little discussion of the diversity of perspectives reflected within religions. Several of the RE heads indicated that they were inclined not to discuss in their classes the specific denominational identities of different Muslim groups, or for that matter, of other traditions, leading to a blanket, undifferentiated presentation of Islam in these contexts. Muslim pupils were classified broadly according to their nationalities, but more specific categories, such as the individual denominations, communal affiliations or historical traditions to which they belonged, linked to the particular interpretations of Islam observed by them, were not identified.

In justifying this stance, the RE heads claimed that the syllabus did not allow for a diversified treatment. 'With our syllabus', admitted one of them, 'we never talk about Sunnis and Shi'as – it never gets that detailed.' It is disconcerting that this practitioner was failing to discuss the most basic of divisions within Islam with his pupils, considering it as being 'detailed'. In these pedagogic contexts, it was left to pupils to bring out denominational identities and diversity in classroom exchanges. 'You have a hard enough job trying to get across the main beliefs of what's going across', remarked the RE head of school B. 'So for instance, Muslims believe x, y and z. "But Miss, my friend's a Muslim and he doesn't de de de de de." So . . . that comes from within them. If it doesn't, then I don't bother about it really because it just confuses things even more.' It can be argued that the problem of confusion identified by this head, and which was his reason for not dwelling too deeply into detail, might well have been compounded by the *ad hoc* and spontaneous input from students. In contrast, a planned and structured discussion may in fact have better addressed the subject of religious pluralism instead of being left entirely to fortuitous interventions.

A few practitioners, however, took pride in pointing out the diversity of Muslim pupils in their schools who originated from a variety of national, ethnic and denominational backgrounds. In school F, the RE head stated with some degree of pride that 'we have an incredible diversity . . . We have representatives of both Sunni and Shi'a . . . we do have a lot of Muslims from Pakistan and India. But we also have students from the African countries that are Muslim. We have students from Yemen, Somalia, Egypt and a

whole range of the . . . states which are represented . . . And some students who would describe themselves as Persians.' Religious identity, in this case, was being approached through a more refined lens, making reference to denominational, national and cultural origins as significant definers of Muslim profiles. The RE head of this particular school acknowledged the need for a proactive policy on anticipating and accommodating the plurality reflected in the profiles of students: 'As you talk about Islam and the practice of Islam at home, you will have two or three students saying, "Oh, we do this or we do that"', she remarked. 'So . . . you can't say, "This is what you do." And that's where the flexibility of the RE department has to be very, very important in teaching Islam because sometimes people assume that Islam is a religion where there are no differences.' In this school, the programme was planned so as to take into account the religious backgrounds of students entering the school each year, and not by treating it as a marginal issue. Also noteworthy here is the conscious and direct focus on the diverse profiles of Muslim communities, leading to an activity-centred approach to deconstructing pupils' stereotypical assumptions about Muslims:

> . . . the question was, 'How can you tell whether this person is a Muslim?' So to try and put across the idea – you can't, until they then filmed them at home, preparing the food, and . . . going to the mosque. So they created like a video diary . . . And they chose two students, one of whom was an Egyptian and the other . . . from Nigeria, and . . . they asked the question 'Which one is Muslim?' – trying to get the class to automatically say, '[the] Egyptian'. And they all did! 'No they are both Muslim!' (School F)

In this revealing example, the division between the domestic space and the school was bridged without qualms, allowing pupils to gain insight into the actual, lived expressions of Islam, and therefore helping them to understand the specificity of Muslim identities. The barriers between the 'private' and the 'public' were penetrated to open up spaces which might not otherwise have been studied.

In general, with the exception of one or two schools, the tendency was more towards an undifferentiated presentation of Islam as well as the other faiths. A combination of factors, such as the diktat of the syllabus, lack of instructional time, students' level of comprehension and interest, and the teachers' own knowledge of the subject matter, seem to have conspired to present monochrome renditions of faith traditions in most of the state schools investigated. The RE practitioners may be condoned to some degree

for this situation in having to juggle with multiple world religions in compressed time spans. Nevertheless, they also risked reinforcing stereotyped images of Muslims and other communities, unwittingly linked to their egalitarian sentiments. Such images fitted in well with a social order projected by the policy of cultural equality, based on assumptions of distinct but monolithic religious groupings in schools relating with one another on equal terms.

Religious Ownership and Contested Authority

This perception of bounded and internally unified religious groups appears to have influenced how the practitioners defined their relationships with their students. In the context of state schooling, they rightly saw their role as educating pupils and not inducting them in their respective religious traditions. 'I do not teach Islam, I am not an imam, I cannot teach Islam', the RE head of school C stressed. 'What I can do is to teach the principles behind the faith and its relationship with other faiths. That's what I see my job as being.' A clear distinction was being made here between confessional instruction in Islam and the educational presentation of it. However, this response also reveals the rift created in many of Crossford's state schools between an educational coverage of Islam as a *lived* faith, expressed in actuality in the communal and domestic spheres, and the more manageable, formulaic subject of 'Islamic beliefs and rituals' as suitable for classroom treatment. The mediation between these two forms of Islam was left in the hands of articulate Muslim pupils, who consequently came to acquire a special status in being perceived by teachers as valuable resources in the class. Those believed to be well acquainted with their religion were frequently drawn upon to demonstrate the various religious practices or shed light on obscure points: 'Generally you've got pupils who are very knowledgeable about their own religion', commented the RE head of school E. 'If I am not sure of something in Hinduism, I will ask one of the Hindu children, "Just clarify what's the difference here, what do you do there?" And same with Islam.'

While soliciting the input of pupils to explain ambiguous points on religious traditions may have been an inclusive pedagogic strategy, it could result in conferring far too much credibility on the particular knowledge-at-hand of a few students without recourse to wider sources. In some cases, the RE heads recognized the importance of projecting their authority in class, but based on a more controlled input from pupils. 'Where I think the

children are a good resource is in that we don't so much rely on them', revealed the RE head of school F. 'They contribute and they offer an element or insight into how they might practice religion which may back up what you said, or may alternatively give a different interpretation of what you said.' While this relationship may have ensured that the teachers remained in charge of their class, they could also find themselves in the awkward position of having to reconcile their own accounts of faith traditions with contradictory ones presented by pupils. Overreliance on students as resources in some cases led to situations where the lines of authority between the mentors and their charges became blurred. In extreme instances, which were perceived as being rare, Muslim students could directly challenge the RE heads' knowledge of Islam as reflected in this example from school E:

> . . . the main one that will be thrown at you is, 'Have you read the whole Qur'an?' And the answer is, 'No I haven't read the whole Qur'an.' 'Well, I have so therefore I know.' . . . I am thinking of one pupil in specific who was like that. And I said, 'What about this situation? What's happening here?' And he said, oh, he didn't know the answer. I said, 'What about this this this?' 'Oh yes, and that as well.' There's ways of knocking down those sort of . . . feelings without turning it to an all-out war over on authority.

In this particular situation, having been found wanting in his acquaintance with the foundational text of Islam, the RE head was forced to reassert his authority, but only through challenging the student's claim to be more knowledgeable about the Qur'an. Here, we find an example of a state school where the teacher drew upon students as resources, but also had to confront them as threats, engendering ambiguity on his own role and status as a figure of authority. Such situations did not have to get out of hand if the teachers could steer disagreements into engaging discussions, but this of course also presupposed some degree of good will on the part of pupils. In school F, the RE head seems to have fostered a more conducive ethos. 'If I made a comment and the student felt that this was wrong, what they would tend to say is, "Well, where I come from, this is what we would do"', she explained. 'So it's more of a discussion than a "I am a Muslim and I know. So you must be wrong."'

In extreme situations where the teacher's authority was at risk of being seriously compromised, the RE heads felt that there was a non-negotiable line to be drawn between the official 'Islam' taught by the multicultural

state schools and the confessional stance adopted by non-conforming Muslim students:

> As far as possible within the schools, we support the faith. We have prayer rooms, they are allowed to wear scarves, we have halal meat. But apart from that, then they are expected to take in the lessons as we see . . . well, as the government lays down, as Crossford lays down . . . as being appropriate. If they want something other than that . . . we do have the Muslim schools, and if they wish to be more traditional, then that's where they should be . . . And I am being quite firm about that. If you come here, you take me and the subject as we are. If you don't like it, I am sorry . . . this is a multicultural or a multi-faith school. (RE head of school C)

The sharp division forced here between 'multicultural' and Muslim schools cast the former as the accommodative domain legitimized by official regulative policy, while the latter became demoted to the performative space for the ultra-traditionalists, leaving little room in this particular case for mediating between entrenched notions of the 'secular' and the 'communal'. Potentially conflictual situations could, however, be resolved through dialogue if teachers were willing to engage with pupils adopting a radicalized stand:

> Once, we had a student who was very negative and he belonged to an extreme group outside of school . . . I ended up talking to [him] and saying, 'If this is your view, that's fine. You are allowed to think of whatever you want to. But if you have views . . . you can't actually come to a school like this one and express those views and think that everyone is going to be interested and you will get away with it. It won't happen.' We talked about it for a long time. Eventually he realized that he was being . . . totally unacceptable. (School F)

These examples reveal the tensions surfacing between practitioners in state schools and Islam as school knowledge, especially in those few cases where a teacher's understanding of Islam came into direct conflict with a Muslim pupil's viewpoint. In general, the RE heads found it difficult to reconcile the principle of cultural equality in their schools with the affirmation of plural cultural identities. The regulative ethos was constructed around strong projections of bounded identities, generating a discursive space in the pedagogic field where ambiguity over authority gave rise to claims about the ownership of symbolic knowledge. The dilemmas were

raised by the encounter of 'official', multi-faith knowledge promoted by state institutions with context-specific, confessional knowledge of communal fractions espousing perspectives that at times challenged the authorized cultural discourse of pluralism. The findings suggest difficulties of negotiating and resolving incompatibilities between official and communal voices, leading to an impasse in some instances between 'transmitters' and 'recipients' of cultural codes. In these situations, the dominant views of the cultural reproducers seem to have prevailed, both through discursive and disciplinary interventions.

Bounded Subjects and Interdisciplinary Connections

The equality of status afforded to pupils in the state schools investigated was also extended to the major faiths taught in religious education, reflecting a parallel and equitable representation of symbolic identities and curricular categories. In these 'multicultural' schools, the New Right's project of giving greater prominence to Christianity had been substantially diluted, the egalitarian practitioners feeling it important for all pupils to realize that their faiths were recognized and acknowledged as worthy of attention in the classroom. 'I have always taught the six religions', the RE head of school C claimed, 'and while not giving quite equal weighting, there has been far more equality in the time given than perhaps you would find in other establishments.' These state school teachers obviously did not want to contravene the letter of the law on religious education in the 1988 Act, requiring them to give greater emphasis to Christianity, but at the same, the plural composition of their classes was a hard fact which they could not ignore, leading them to a more equitable treatment of world religions.

Given that each school endeavoured to cover several if not all of the major faiths, the RE heads were inevitably faced with the question of what kind of relationship to establish between them. In some schools, a concerted attempt was made to compare faiths in terms of their similarities and differences, with the emphasis falling on making students aware of commonalities between religious traditions. 'I don't want boundaries. I don't want the divisions. I want them to be aware of the differences, but there's a lot of intolerance', the RE head of school C remarked. 'What I believe my role as an RE teacher to do is . . . to provide a forum where people can actually say, "Hey, you did the same thing as me. Why?" So there is no longer this division and that people can live together.' To transcend religious differences and cement a bond between believers of diverse, often contrasting

traditions, this head was inclined to use the dimensional approach to world religions, focusing on themes common to all faiths such as doctrine, ritual, ethics, mythology, spirituality and community. Following this same line of thought, another RE head (school E) felt it important to place emphasis on the common factors that 'thread right through' all religions. 'If I am talking about Islam and . . . when I am introducing mosque', he said by way of example, 'I will link it and say, "like church, like mandir . . ."' In many schools, Islam was linked closely with Christianity and Judaism because of its perceived similarity and affinity with these faiths.

Even where there was an emphasis on making pupils aware of differences between various stances, an attempt was made to point to the common underlying concerns between different viewpoints:

> The [ethical issue] that we followed the other day was the pigs being used for transplant. You know, if a pig organ became available, would a Muslim be able to have that. And one group said, 'Oh no, because technically it's inside your body, you have eaten it.' And another group saying, 'Well you haven't eaten it, 'course you can use it if it's going to save your life . . .' And it was the same argument as some [non-Muslims] saying, 'Oh, I don't want a pig inside me' . . . I said, 'Well look, look at what you are doing.' And then they sort of realized that in actual fact . . . they were having the same argument. (School G)

Had the conclusion to this debate been developed further, this head might also have drawn attention to the underlying, fundamental differences in the particular justifications offered by her pupils, whether these were theological, humanistic, medical or personal. Emphasis on respect for the 'other' could quite easily become translated into glossing over cultural differences, resulting in a reluctance to explore substantive distinctions which warranted discussion. A few of the RE heads recognized the need for going beyond a superficial comparison of the faiths, arguing for an approach which respected each religious tradition as being discrete and unique. 'I think that the problem that can arise when you look at something thematically and always comparing and contrasting is that it all runs into one', claimed the RE head of school F. 'And there is no distinct "This is Islam, this is Christianity, this is Hinduism." And so from that point-of-view, if you can make that distinction, then it gives an identity to the religion.'

Table 7.1 highlights the concern of this RE head, providing an example of an abridged work scheme developed in one of the schools (from the north-west part of the borough) that illustrates the weak boundaries drawn between faith traditions in the religious education curriculum.

Table 7.1 Example of an Year 10 work scheme on Christianity and Islam (state school D)

Religious studies core unit – Christianity and Islam		
Topic focus	**Aims and objectives**	**Examples of activities**
1. Introduction to the unit. Why study Islam and Christianity?	– To understand the basic reasons for studying these two religions. – To acknowledge that people worship in different ways.	2. Brainstorm: Why study Islam? e.g. fastest growing religion in world. Over 400 mosques in G. B. 3a. Ask pupils to write down their idols – individuals/groups who they worship.
2. Places of worship: the mosque.	– To understand the reasons for communal worship. – To understand the . . . symbolism and artefacts found in a mosque.	3. Label and draw mosque from sheet. 4. Design guided tour of the mosque.
3. The role of the imam.	– To understand the position and beliefs of the imam.	2. . . . fill in on the sheet an advertisement for a full-time imam at a local mosque describing what he is expected to do.
4. Activities at the mosque.	– To recognise the importance of the mosque as central to the Muslim community in Britain.	2. Design a poster (computerised?) explaining what is available at the mosque in terms of activities.
5. Muslim prayer.	– To look at how important Islamic beliefs are expressed in salah.	1. If possible ask Muslim pupil to demonstrate prayer positions . . . 3. Draw clock faces with times on.
7. Places of worship: 'The church' – worship and symbols.	– To understand the ways in which the symbols and layout of a church reflect the attitudes and beliefs of worshippers.	2 . . . . draw the symbols and explain each one briefly.
9. The role of the vicar/ priest/minister.	– To appreciate the varied role of a vicar.	Worksheet – 'How the church works' – add on – baptism, counselling, visits to hospitals . . .

(Continued)

Table 7.1   *Cont'd*

Religious studies core unit – Christianity and Islam		
Topic focus	**Aims and objectives**	**Examples of activities**
10. Christian prayer.	– To understand the meaning and purpose of prayer.	1. Ask pupils to write this down: Four types of prayers: Adoration (praising God) Confession (of sins) Thanksgiving Supplication (asking for something)
11. Pilgrimage – Muslim pilgrimage of hajj focused on.	– To understand the nature of pilgrimage. – To recognise the differences between a tourist and a pilgrim.	3. . . . do the hajj interview in the form of role play in worksheet.
13. Christian pilgrimage.	– To understand the nature of miracles. – To recognise the importance of sacred sites for Christians.	3. . . . Ask pupils to write an imaginary postcard home from Lourdes describing how you feel . . .
15. Birth rites in Islam.	– To understand the religious significance and observance of birth ceremonies.	Put a razor, list of boys and girls' names and copy of adhan, silver coins etc. on the table for each one. Ask them to write down how each one is used and why . . .

Source: [School D] scheme of work, 1999/2000. Abridged version of the original.

In this scheme, references to Christian prayer and pilgrimage have been interwoven into content dealing with Islamic rites and ceremonies. Parallels are established between, for instance, the role of the imam and the vicar, but missing from the outline is any attempt to discuss the similarities and differences between these vocations. Both Christianity and Islam are presented in essentialist terms, without reference to diverse forms of worship, places of prayer and rites of passage in communities of each religion. In a few instances, religious sensitivities are also overlooked, as in asking Muslim and Christian pupils to identify their 'idols' in terms of individuals or groups 'who they worship'. Overall, this instructional framework with its egalitarian inclination resonates strongly with the liberal multi-faith approach and its thematic orientation, having little regard for the 'purity'

and integrity of each religion which the Christian Right sought to legislate in the neo-conservative period.

This segmental and thematic emplotment of Islam in state schools by and large confined it as symbolic knowledge to the subject of religious education, being accorded limited treatment in other subjects in the curriculum. Integrated humanities programmes which became popular in the liberal period had generally been abandoned in favour of compartmentalized subjects because students were believed to cope better when disciplinary boundaries were respected. As a result of this classification, most of the RE heads made a clear demarcation between Islam as a belief system and its historical, political and cultural expressions in various periods and regions in Muslim history. A study of Islam in its broadest sense, from historical, civilizational and global perspectives, was viewed by these heads as best suited to be undertaken in a subject like history. The bifurcation of Islam into 'faith' and 'civilization', projected as two distinct and separate aspects, was realized through a conceptual division of labour between different departments:

> I think the faith side is obviously what I concentrate on . . . You are going to broach the cultural aspects. But I have to admit that . . . it is not an emphasis . . . It certainly used to be covered in history . . . which involved the spread of Islam and particularly the influence that Islam had in India with the Mughals . . . which was very interesting because then they'd come back to me and say, 'We are doing this and this . . .' And we'd be able to follow it up, but I am not sure whether that is still happening. (RE head of school C)

The reference here to an optional topic on Mughal India in the history curriculum reveals the potent connections between religious education and history, leading students to a deeper understanding of the appropriations and translations of religious ideals in diverse socio-cultural milieu.[8] Sadly, the detachment between the two subjects in this particular school meant a reversion to a historically disembodied version of Islam in religious education.

The relationship between Islam and the contemporary political context was another aspect which the RE heads in most schools were not willing to address in their classes. Given the political controversies surrounding events associated by the media with Islam and Muslims, there was a general reluctance to engage with what were perceived to be sensitive and divisive issues in this area. Some RE heads indicated, explicitly or implicitly, that a clear separation between Islam and political issues in the classroom was

desirable. One of them (in school C) justified limiting the discussion on politics on the grounds of the large presence of refugee pupils in his class. 'I am going to say that I pussyfoot around a lot of the political issues', he confessed. 'The reason being that we have many people who are or have been refugees, or have come here for political reasons, and I do not wish to make their lives any more difficult then the trauma some of them have had to put up with.' A sharp line was drawn in this school in discussing Islam as a belief system in the curriculum, but not as the lived reality of Muslims in many parts of the world, including war-torn zones, where religion was inextricably enmeshed with politics. It could be argued that pupils from these areas might well have benefited from discussing their experiences while being made aware of contrasting political forms ensuing from different relations between state and religion in the Muslim world. This rigid division between Islam as 'faith' and the historical and cultural contexts in which it was given expression, partly arising from its embedding in religious education, was likely to promote an abstract, hypostatized Islam disembodied from the contemporary experiences of Muslims in various regions of the globe.

This bifurcation, however, was not rigidly observed in all schools. A few RE heads felt it important to discuss political issues impacting on Muslim countries:

> When there was a great deal in the press on the Taliban, for example, it was something that we ended up discussing rather a lot because students, both Muslims and non-Muslims, were coming in with pictures they found in newspapers. They were horrified at what was happening. You know, 'Is this what Islam is about?' And Muslim children saying, 'This isn't what Islam is.' So at that time, there were lots of discussions and we spent quite a bit of time in lessons talking about what was happening in Afghanistan. (RE head of school F)

These heads were not inclined to divorce the study of Islam from headline events occurring at the global level, in contrast to the reserved approach to political issues in other schools. Politics was frontally addressed by making it the subject matter for class debate. In the above school, for example, pupils were asked to consider the portrayal of Islam as an archetypal subversive force. 'We have ended up with quite interesting pieces of coursework done by students, both Muslim and non-Muslim, which have titles such as, "Has Islam become the new bogeyman in the West?"' the RE head revealed. 'They have looked at the ways in which things are put into the press, and

coupled that with their own studies and with students that they know who are Muslim in school, and said, "Well this is wrong."'

Table 7.2 provides an example which illustrates a broader treatment of Islam, studied in the GCSE course of one of the schools in south-east Crossford.

Table 7.2   The Islamic component in the GCSE religious studies syllabus (state school G)

Unit A4: Religion and life from a Muslim perspective

Section 1: Believing in Allah

- How religious upbringing . . . in a Muslim home and community can lead people to believe in Allah . . .
- How the miracle of the Qur'an and other miracles can lead people to believe in Allah.
- The evidence of design and order in nature and how these provide for Allah's existence . . .
- Why some people do not believe in Allah or are unsure about belief in Allah.
- How Islam responds to the problem of evil and suffering.

Section 2: Matters of life and death

- Arguments about life after death. Islamic teachings and interpretations about life after death . . .
- Islamic teachings on life as created by Allah and sacred to Allah. The social context of abortion, including current legislation in the UK, and non-religious arguments about abortion.
- Muslim attitudes to abortion and contraception and the reasons for them . . .
- Muslim attitudes to euthanasia.

Section 3: Marriage and family life

- Changing attitudes to cohabitation, marriage and divorce and family life in Britain.
- Islamic teaching on relationships between the sexes, the nature and purpose of marriage, choice of partner, cohabitation, adultery, homosexuality and the reasons for these teachings.
- Differences among Muslims in their attitudes to divorce and the reasons for them.
- Changing attitudes to the nature of the family in Britain.
- Islamic teachings on the family and how the mosque and madrasah help with family life.

Section 4: Social harmony

- Differences among Muslims on the roles and status of women and men, and the reasons for them . . .
- Prejudice and discrimination and the nature of Britain as a multi-ethnic society.
- Islamic teachings on racial harmony . . .
- The contribution of one Muslim person or organisation to racial harmony.
- The quality, variety and richness of life in Britain as a multi-faith society and [related] problems.
- Islamic teachings about relationships with other religions.

(Continued)

Table 7.2   Cont'd

Option 1: Religion and the media

- The variety and range of specifically religious programmes on the five terrestrial TV channels . . .
- How one religious or moral issue of concern to Muslims has been dealt with in *either* a TV soap opera *or* the national daily press.
- A religious theme or themes as explored in *one* film or TV drama.

Option 2: Religion and wealth and poverty

- Islamic teachings on: possession, uses and dangers of wealth: stewardship; charitable giving, compassion and justice, the relationship between rich and poor.
- The relief of poverty and suffering in Great Britain by Muslims.
- Detailed knowledge of the work of *one* Muslim person, community or organisation.
- An outline of the need for world development in response to the causes and effects of poverty in the world; the work of Muslim agencies in world development . . .

Option 3: Religion and the environment

- The religious and moral issues concerning care for the environment . . .
- Islamic teachings on creation and stewardship . . . attitudes to the environment . . .
- The work of Muslims in support of the conservation of the planet and its resources . . .

Source: Religious studies – GCSE, May/June 2000, pp. 26–8.

In comparison to the scheme in Table 7.1, this curriculum framework reflects an attempt to discuss doctrinal beliefs of importance to Muslims, but also the wider social and ethical concerns which they share with the rest of humanity. The syllabus acknowledges the diversity of Muslim perspectives on issues such as arranged marriages, the evolving nature of Muslim identity in Britain, and Muslim contribution to social welfare and development in Britain and globally. The framework draws attention to vital points of contact between Muslims and the wider society, pointing to a conception of Islam that is intellectually dynamic and not historically and culturally static. This kind of treatment invites greater interaction and exchange between religious education, history, geography, citizenship education and other areas in the curriculum. While this scheme is not free of conceptual weaknesses, it presents a departure from codified and uniformist paradigms in adopting a broader contextual, pluralistic and relational approach to Islam as school knowledge. Unfortunately, in the Crossford schools investigated, very few of the RE heads actively sought to pursue this form of creative, interdisciplinary study, resulting in faith traditions being reduced to a narrow treatment of doctrine and ritual.

Foundational Pedagogy and Exploratory Impulses

If we move from curriculum to pedagogy, the egalitarian stance exerted a defining influence on the instructional approach, with most RE heads preoccupied with all pupils receiving some basic understanding of each faith tradition. A large part of the instruction, particularly at the lower secondary level, was devoted to providing introductions and laying the foundations of the concepts and principles underlying religious traditions. 'If you haven't got the building blocks, of where a religion comes from, the basic principles behind it and the basic traditions, and the way that affects the people', said the RE head of school C, 'then you cannot go on really to understand . . . the experiential side of it.' A few heads, on the other hand, felt there to be far too much emphasis on facts and wished to balance this by presenting the affective aspect of faiths. 'Obviously to learn and understand about a certain religion, you have to have a certain vocabulary, a certain understanding of the basics', explained the RE head of school E. 'But even within the basics, I feel there's area to improve on the feelings, the emotions and the slightly spiritual sides of the religions.'

While some attempt was made to go beyond a surface understanding of religions, the academic ability of students in most schools was perceived to be a major limitation in exploring the faiths in any great depth. The practitioners were therefore forced to resort to an activity-oriented pedagogy in order to retain the interests of pupils, based on the use of artefacts, worksheets and visits to places of worship. A few of these heads expressed caution on the use of progressive methods and approaches in the religious education class unless they were tried and tested. In two schools in particular (F and G), the pedagogic strategies employed placed emphasis on innovative methods in learning about religions. The pupils were encouraged to be researchers and guided to explore aspects of Islam through an active use of information technology. 'One of the things that we have done – we got the students to . . . present various elements of Islam', explained the RE head of school F. 'So I had one group looking at Islamic art, another group looking at the mosque, and another group looking at prayer. They had to go away and research it . . . and I said, "Be as different as you can in the way you present your work." . . . We got them to use digital cameras and produce things, packages, on the computers.' This instructional form was directed at engaging students with intellectually stimulating content and applying enquiry-based methods that cut across disciplinary categories, the teachers being involved in a transformational process with the intention of challenging pupils' received assumptions about misunderstood cultures.

The study of Islam in these cases was characterized by openness and explo-ration: 'If you are teaching Islam as a whole, then through the way you teach it, through exploration, through presentation of work, through giv-ing students tasks to explore, you can actually tap into the mainspring of any religion', the above RE head suggested. 'If you approach it with an open-ended attitude, that is reflected in how students will receive it. And you then get the full richness of the religion you are studying.'

In general, however, the tendency on the part of most RE heads was to exercise pedagogic strategies that led to a strong framing of Islam, employ-ing a basic, factual, foundational approach and avoiding exploratory or innovative 'risk-taking' strategies. The presentation of Islam in these schools suggested a preference for the cultural reproduction of, rather than an engagement with, received concepts, categories and aspects perceived as being central to what was deemed as the undifferentiated, unchanging Muslim community.

'Authentic' and Consensual Islam

What, then, were the outcomes on how Islam was constructed as a symbolic category in the state schools investigated in Crossford? In analysing the interviews, two traits in particular were highlighted by the RE heads in their reconstruction of Islam: consensus and orthodoxy.[9]

Consensual Islam was defined by the RE heads as that Islam which was acceptable to all the Muslims. Consensus and general acceptance, however, were also appropriated as the legitimizing criteria for distinguishing between 'authentic' and other versions of Islam. 'When I say authenticity here . . . a lot of specialists in religious education will inculcate in the head of the child certain ideas . . . Shiʻa or Sunni', explained the RE head of school A. 'We go back to the major . . . the well-known Islamic theologians who are accepted by all Muslims in general.' There is clearly an idealized projection here of a consensual theological base existing between the two main branches of Islam which made it unnecessary to dwell into their par-ticular interpretations. While each branch has been fundamentally defined by its own distinctive theology in Muslim history, not to mention further diversifications within these traditions, 'the well-known Islamic theologians' became a convenient if suppositious means of justifying the Islam presented in this school as 'authentic'.

Another RE head (school E) chose to make a clear distinction between what he thought to be legitimate and unacceptable practices in Islam.

'There [are] some aspects . . . which pupils bring with them that I think aren't based on the Qur'an, they aren't based on what Islam is about', he asserted. 'It's something I want to approach and find out where these things are actually coming from and what [are the] stances from the Islamic community itself.' The concern in this case related to whether prayer recited at 3 o'clock in the morning was guaranteed to be answered. 'From my understanding', said the RE head, 'it's not based on Islamic faith. And I wanted to check these things out.' The issue referred to a distinction between obligatory and supererogatory forms of worship, but this division was conflated with 'orthodox' and 'heterodox' Islam, a dichotomy which has been the subject of historical as well as contemporary dispute among Muslim traditions.[10] In some schools, there was a discernible tendency to present the 'correct' reading of Islam in the religious education classes, with pupils' beliefs then being cast as alternative renditions. 'First I teach them the orthodox [version] and then they will bring in their different meanings', disclosed the RE head of school G. 'So I am not using the kids first, I am using the books myself, but then saying . . . you've got different viewpoints.'

The difficulty of defining what constituted legitimate Islam in the classroom led one practitioner (school A) to the extreme view of labelling ethnic and cultural expressions of Islam as 'distortions':

> . . . it happens that within the Muslim community many parents are . . . from different cultural backgrounds and they came to Britain as immigrants, [with] the standard of education within the family not so high . . . Their religious knowledge from my point-of-view is distorted . . . I use the word 'distorted', but it is within their own context of their own culture – they don't see it as distorted. But I see it from the purely Islamic point-of-view and the academic.

The appeal to a 'purely Islamic point-of-view' begged the question of who ultimately defined what that 'Islamic' view was, and with what authority. In addition, a categorical judgement was made between the 'academic' Islam of the state school and the domestic version imported into Britain by 'immigrants'. This particular head may not have been aware of advocating a 'purist' and uniformizing stance which, in its ideological form, is actively promoted by fundamentalist groups contemptuous of the rich diversity of Islamic traditions to be found around the globe.

In rare instances, the RE heads saw value in approaching Islam as an area of enquiry instead of defining it exclusively as a set of received doctrines

and practices. In these cases, Muslim pupils were actively involved in debating conflicting notions of Islam:

> . . . some Muslim students said that they seemed to agree with some of the things [advocated by fundamentalist Muslim groups and scholars]. The vast majority of the Muslim students said, 'Yes, but even Muslim countries say this is wrong. So they have just taken something to an extreme.' They were trying not so much to justify it, as to say, 'Well, I don't agree with it either. Don't automatically assume that if you are a Muslim, you will agree with everything that happens in Islam, in the same way as you don't agree with everything that happens in Christianity.' (RE head of school F)

In sum, the mode of Islam reconstructed by most of the RE heads appears to have been mediated by the principle of strong egalitarianism, leading to the construction of a homogenized Muslim identity, which in turn may have encouraged an essentialized rendering of Islam presented as a monolithic and static category detached from its varied historical and cultural contexts. In overall terms, there was a tendency in the schools towards 'consensual', 'authentic' and 'orthodox' renderings of Islam, constructs which overlooked the theological and cultural diversity among Muslim communities. In a very few cases, there were indications of a more discursive, open-ended and enquiry-centred study that challenged the 'official', codified Islam of national policies and the local syllabus.

Egalitarian and Expressional Influences

In analysing the interviews conducted in the state schools, two contrasting modes of recontextualizing Islam can be identified, distinguished by the overall ethos adopted by the schools and the pedagogic approaches deployed. On the one hand, we can identify an *egalitarianist* tendency which framed the responses of the RE heads whose schools were located in the less well-endowed north-west area of Crossford. On the other hand, the RE heads of two schools in the affluent south-east broadly upheld what may be called an *expressionist* stance. These two positions describe modes of representation which were by no means divided by clear boundaries, but reflected at certain points a diffused, overlapping and complex relationship between 'voices' and 'locations'. There were situations where aspects of one mode fitted in more appropriately into those of the second. The contrasting

constructions of pedagogic Islam discussed in this chapter should therefore be read as situational and dynamic rather than school-specific, affected by shifting interactions between teachers and pupils across a range of pedagogic situations.

The particular manner in which the principles of equality and identity were interpreted and applied by the practitioners in Crossford played a significant role in influencing the recontextualizing of Islam at school level. The RE heads exercising an egalitarian stance sought to downplay the boundaries between pupils of different faith traditions as much as possible. Islam was conceived of in terms of its basic categories and treated as a closed and defined construct, with the vernacular, denominational and ethnic Islam of the pupils as observed at home tolerated but not fully engaged with at school. This created, in some cases, an ambiguity between authority and ownership in terms of the RE head's knowledge of Islam and Muslim pupils' contributions in class. The instructional discourse was predominantly reproductional in its overall orientation, seeking to bring out similarities between cultural categories and emphasizing the basic, factual and received content on Islam. Overall, there was a tendency towards an 'orthodox', consensual form of Islam that overlooked the diversity of historical and cultural traditions within Muslim societies.

The responses of the second category of RE heads, primarily but not exclusively from the two schools located in the affluent south-east sector of Crossford, indicate a shift in the relational stance where the distinctness of social identities and faith traditions was stressed without, at the same time, privileging any one religion. This platform allowed them to exercise an 'expressive' pedagogy where exploration and enquiry were encouraged. The practitioners did not translate the principle of equality into parallel but compartmentalized representations of knowledge and identity. Rather, the distinctive and unique nature of each faith was allowed to be explored and expressed, with dialogical interfacing between the religions. Islam was approached as an open enquiry, with pupils encouraged to enrich their understandings of the different faith traditions in the class. The relationship between teachers and pupils seemed on the whole to be less contentious, with the latter invited to express their views without being curtailed. The instructional discourse sought to emphasize the distinctiveness of the faith traditions and their denominations, and an attempt was made to engender new perspectives in the pupils by exploring issues across, as well as within, cultural boundaries. The RE heads with expressionist views approached Islam globally and locally, deconstructing stereotyped notions

of Muslims and engaging their pupils in looking at religious and cultural categories from alternative perspectives.

From a broader viewpoint, it appears that the principles of Liberal Left equality and New Right identity operative in the intellectual, social and regulative fields in the national and local contexts manifested themselves as active forces at the school level and interacted in two different ways in the pedagogic field. In the case of the RE heads in schools with pronounced egalitarianism, the principles of equality and identity appear to have been in direct tension with each other to yield a form of classroom knowledge that was mostly closed and reproductional. With the 'expressionists', these principles were brought into some degree of dialectical engagement to produce an open-ended and transformational form of cultural knowledge.

It also appears that the exercise of strong or weak forms of egalitarianism, and the particular instructional strategies adopted, were closely associated with the overall quality of the schools and the catchment area. The division between the two approaches generally reflected the divide between schools which catered to pupils from the poorer areas in the north-west of the borough and the well-resourced and prestigious ones in the south-east. In the case of Crossford, material and institutional resources, as well as the profile of teachers and pupils, seem to have constituted significant factors in influencing the ethos and pedagogy applied in the schools, as did the particular appropriations of the bipolarized national and local policies of equality and identity by the practitioners.

The next chapter turns to Muslim schools in Crossford with a view to investigating the particular constructions of Islam that materialized in the communal pedagogic context.

Notes

1 All references to 'heads of religious education departments' in this chapter have been abbreviated to 'RE heads'. Given the shortage of teachers in religious education, most of the teaching on the subject in the state schools investigated was undertaken by the RE heads.

2 All these are state maintained comprehensive schools of non-denominational orientation, catering to between 800 and 2000 students from Years 7 to 13 (11–18 age-range). They offer a wide range of subjects based on Key Stages 3 and 4 of the National Curriculum which lead into GCSE and A-level studies. Religious education is taught as a compulsory subject in all the schools, with some of them offering religious studies as an examination option at the GCSE level.

3 The first five schools are designated here as A to E, while the other two schools are labelled as F and G.

4 The approach to pedagogic analysis in this and the next chapter draws on Bernstein's (1990; 1996) concepts of regulative and instructional discourses, including the principles of classification and framing. Bernstein offers a useful conceptual vocabulary for analysing the operation of *power* over the maintenance of curricular boundaries and forms of *control* exercised in pedagogic interactions.

5 I have adapted Bernstein's notion of instructional discourse in my analytical framework. Bernstein (1990) defines this term as referring to how teachers select, sequence and pace their instruction, and provide evaluative criteria for it. I have broadened this concept to discuss the teachers' approach to curriculum organization (classification) and the pedagogic strategies employed by them (framing).

6 Bernstein (1990) posits the regulative discourse as dominating and determining the instructional approach, the moral and social order being prior to, and a condition for, the transmission of specialized competencies. In his theory, principles of order, relation and identity, as social facts, have a significant bearing on the classification and framing of curriculum content.

7 Runnymede Trust, 1997a; 1997b.

8 This topic features in the QCA's schemes of work on history for Key Stage 3, in addition to two other topics on the formative and classical periods in Muslim history. However, since these themes are optional, they sit on the periphery of the curriculum and rarely find their way into history lessons (see Thobani, 2010).

9 The findings in this part of the study, based as they are on a limited sample of schools, ought not to be read as being representative of other local contexts. What is inferred from the interviews is a provisional picture that needs to be consolidated with a broader investigation.

10 The term 'orthodoxy' in religious discourses, referring to the upholding of the 'correct' or 'true' belief, norm or practice, is closely linked to the exercise of power and influence by dominant or majoritarian forces to assert their hegemonic perspectives. By implication, those not subscribing to this frame become, by default, 'heterodoxical' or 'heretical' in their views, and end up being marginalized in terms of their social status.

Chapter 8

Creating the New Community

The Communal School Context

The local policy mapping of Crossford[1] revealed the emergence of a separate pedagogic space from mainstream schooling, with some Muslim groups aspiring to enact their own epistemic and moral order in these communal contexts. The pluralized form of religious education imparted in state schools, catering to the highly diversified school population, was perceived by these Muslims as being inadequate, if not wholly inappropriate, to addressing fundamental concerns on the upbringing of their young. The setting up of Muslim denominational schooling in the borough was a direct attempt to address these concerns with a view to safeguarding the Islamic identities of the younger generation growing up in Britain. A major challenge raised for Muslim leaders and educators in creating the new institutions was the type of school knowledge to be introduced in them. In responding to the marginal location of Islam in the state curriculum, the relationship to be established in particular between the subject of Islam and the rest of the curriculum in Muslim schools became a crucial question for the practitioners.

Of the four Muslim schools in Crossford catering to both primary and secondary students, three expressed their willingness to be used as sites of research.[2] These schools had either applied for or were intending to seek voluntary aided status in order to become eligible for state funding. Two of the schools were open to all Muslim denominations, one being co-educational and the other a single-sex girls establishment. The third school was Shi'a Ithna 'ashari in its orientation. In terms of outreach, the schools catered to less than 5 per cent of the total Muslim student population in Crossford, reflecting closely the national pattern. The investigation of the faith schools, as part of the overall case study of the borough, provided a valuable opportunity to examine the representation of Islam in the Muslim normative context. The enquiry attempted to gain an

understanding of the forms of pedagogic discourse constructed in the local communal arena, how this domain was influenced by national and local educational policies, and what processes were involved in recontextualizing Islam as school knowledge.

The findings in this chapter are based on interviews conducted with headteachers, including imams and teachers of Islamic studies. As with the state school enquiry, reference was also made to syllabuses, work schemes and instructional resources, including classroom observations, to gain a general sense of the teaching of Islam in the Muslim context. The analysis, as in the previous chapter, focused on the relationship between the regulative ethos, the pedagogic approach and the particular output of Islam as school knowledge.[3]

It needs to be stressed here that the findings presented below on the three Muslim schools investigated in Crossford are limited in their scope, and by no means intended to represent the education imparted in other Muslim schools in England. The preliminary mapping here of the tensions and dilemmas arising from the dynamics between knowledge, identity and control need to be substantiated with research based on a larger sample of schools. The positions explored in this chapter must therefore be read provisionally in the context of a small-scale study of school-based Islam, dealing with the education of a small minority of Muslim students in a single locality.

The Imperative of a Unified Identity

A common theme which emerged from the responses of the Muslim educators referred to the location of British Muslims in the context of the wider, 'secular' society. For these interviewees, the settlement of Muslims in Britain offered an opportunity for the development of a new, united community through an educational emphasis on a common 'Islamic' identity, leading them to subdue the national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds of various Muslim groups represented in Britain.

The major issue facing the Muslims, as perceived by these practitioners, was that of acting in unison and presenting a common front. Doctrinal divisions were viewed as a major source of dissension and Muslim traditions needed to be united in order to make progress in the new country, Britain holding the promise for creating a redefined, bonded Islamic community which could set a new direction for the Muslim world. The new generation of Muslims, in particular, offered the potential for the creation of this new

community. 'Our aim is to unite and to bring up our community, because we believe ours to be the rich community of Islam . . . from different areas of the world with different teachings', explained the imam of school L. 'We find it very difficult sometimes to come together. But now hopefully this new generation who are our children will be together and united.' Interestingly, the diasporic migration to a new land was seen as an opportunity to overcome the historical schisms and to uniformize the diversity of interpretations among Muslim traditions into one harmonious univocal Islam. The older members of the communities, steeped in their particular faith practices and their irreconcilable dogmatic differences, were by-passed by attending to the younger generation, born in a Western country, who presented themselves as pliable *tabula rasa* for induction into a uniform Islam.

In order to attain this unity, the diversified groups of Muslims needed to break free off their attachments with their home cultures and instead concentrate on the future. 'I am trying to say, "Here, we are just a Muslim community." Forget about the ties back home', said the imam. 'Whether you come from North Africa, or you come from Asia, Europe . . . it doesn't matter, we are all together.' The proposal of wiping the slate clean of regional, ethnic and cultural roots was perceived as being essential to the rejuvenation of the migrated groups, the only signifier needing retention within a foreign context being the Islamic one. The long-term aim of the educators, within this vision of a unified community, was to produce a new generation of Muslims who would be successful academically while fulfilling their spiritual potential. The mission of one of the schools, as articulated by its imam, was to 'provide excellent education in a peaceful and secure environment based on the Qur'an and sunna, to bring up a qualified generation successful both academically and on the Islamic side.'

The Muslim educators perceived the diaspora to have taken place in two phases, an earlier one in the 1960s and 1970s, leading to a more established community who had experienced frontline problems in settling in a plural, secular society and to some extent had developed strategies to deal with them; and a more recent immigrant group, consisting mainly of refugees and asylum seekers, who were beginning to face the same difficulties the earlier migrants had confronted. 'While one sector of the Muslim community is maturing in Britain', remarked one of the headteachers, 'another sector . . . more recently arrived, is coming in with a lot of fire and brimstone.' The perception of Muslims differentiated into two groups, at various stages of settlement and articulating differing understandings of Islam, reinforced the need for a unifying education in Britain. The teacher's role became one of developing Muslim pupils' identities, but in the

context of equipping them to cope with their new environment. An Islamic studies teacher (school J) commented that 'because I have grown up here and gone through the system as a Muslim who was not aware of her identity . . . I feel that that equips me to teach the children to deal with the issues they will be facing because I have experienced them myself in a non-Islamic society.'

The experience gained by the first cycle of settlers, of confronting new challenges in a secular society and developing responses to address them, was considered a valuable educational asset in assisting the emerging generation to become better equipped to live in their new homeland. At the core of this educational process was how best to approach Islam as an encompassing ethos in a society in which religion was largely seen as a private matter for individuals and communities. 'When you grow up in a Western environment . . . unfortunately what we find is that religion and daily life are separated', observed the above teacher. 'So our aim . . . is to teach the children what their identity is and how their faith is a part of everything that they do.'

The diversity of Muslim identities, however, posed a major challenge for the educators, and identifying students on the basis of their different denominations and groups became a delicate issue in the classroom. 'Anything referred to [in the] Qur'an and sunna . . . then that is who we are and what we believe in', asserted the imam of school K. 'Other than that is not part of it. And names do not mean a lot. Categorizing people can be a sensitive issue.' Here, scriptural revelation and prophetic tradition were being used as the two foundational and canonical sources to define what constituted universal Islamic education for all Muslims. However, there appears to have been some reluctance on the part of the interviewees to acknowledge that these sources were subject to contrasting readings and interpretations, as Muslim history reveals, the differences among Islamic traditions being treated as nominal. Except in the Shi'a school, what particular interpretive stance was to be adopted in discussing the Qur'an and the prophet's traditions remained unidentified.

Treating all Muslim pupils alike therefore opened up areas of ambiguity and contestation, which although not frequent and pronounced, nevertheless surfaced to reveal underlying tensions. 'We have [students] of all the different madhhab . . . And our aims and objective in a sense is to look for a common denominator', explained the headteacher of school L. 'We have Shi'a children, we have all of the madhhabs and we have also the Salafi. And we try to sail [a] close line between all of them. And we come up against some problems sometimes.' The central challenge was one of

finding the 'common denominator' that would present a form of school-based Islam which all Muslim traditions could accept. In the absence of an agreed framework as a reference point, disagreements were bound to arise between the schools and parents. One such case concerned the different practices of worship between Sunnis and Shi'as. In this instance, the imam of one of the schools had to grapple with the issue of a uniform approach to collective worship in his school, finally having to seek the assistance of Shi'a parents to resolve the issue.

Faced with denominational and ethnic differences, the principle of unity was difficult to realize in practice, with friendship groups becoming clustered around national and cultural backgrounds, an aspect which became conspicuous during classroom observations. In one school, students preferred to sit with friends of a similar national background, creating an 'Egyptian corner', a 'Pakistani corner' and an 'Iraqi corner' in the classroom. Problems also surfaced between pupils of different back-grounds in terms of their everyday behaviour and relationships with one another, although the headteachers and imams tended to consider these as being 'minor' incidents.

On the part of a few practitioners, a concerted attempt was made to encourage pupils to respect viewpoints which were different from their own, instead of getting them to conform to a single vision of Islam or the Muslim community. One of the Islamic studies teachers (school J) reflected this stance: 'My aim is to concentrate on their akhlaqiyat, on their etiquette, on their behaviour, and teach them that, yes, there are those who have differ-ent points-of-view and that's fair enough. You have to respect others for what-ever they believe.' This remark points to the inclusion of stances within the overarching unifying policy of the schools that recognized and respected the internal diversity within Muslim communities and the plurality in the wider society. On the whole, however, the tendency was towards engendering social identities which would reinforce 'Islamic' unity among the pupils.

Disciplinary Codes and Moral Responsibility

The principle of communal unity was more often than not translated into a strong authoritarian approach by the practitioners in relating to their pupils, reflected in the firm control exercised over students' voices. In imparting instruction on Islam, the Muslim educators expressed their authority by projecting themselves as specialists in their area of knowledge. The imams and the teacher interviewed, who were graduates in the field of

Islamic studies with many years of teaching experience, did not solicit the input of students in the same manner as the RE heads in the state schools. There was a clear line of authority between teachers and pupils, with the latter expected to show respect towards those who were senior to them. The principal of school J was of the view that 'the children can ask questions, but to be rebellious in the way that unfortunately our society propagates . . . the cinema, the television, the films . . . which show no respect for school authorities, for teachers . . . one result is that the children will never learn anything in schools.'

As is evident in this comment, questioning by pupils, in itself, was not seen as a problem for the Muslim educators if it was done so with the sincere intention of learning. Discussion of controversial issues in the class was thus not avoided but undertaken within an Islamic framework: 'No questioning versus questioning. I think we have a balance between the two', stated the headteacher of school L. 'I think there is recognition here of the thinking patterns of children of this time and age which is why we just can't implement that type of classical teaching. So I mean we can hear questions, if you like, which in other contexts would be considered offensive . . . When we see that the intention is not that, the question comes from a sincere point-of-view, then it's answered.' This response reveals the integration of a more progressive vein in some of the practitioners, acknowledging the need to respect the developmental needs of children. The 'balance' to be applied in determining which questions to address, however, may have been difficult to maintain when teachers were confronted with more probing questions perceived as challenging or opposing the fundamental tenets of Islam, necessarily requiring limits to be set in these faith schools between the tolerable and the outrightly forbidden.

The relationship between teachers and pupils in the classroom seems to have been generally based on the wider discipline policy exercised in Muslim schools. The expectations of behaviour were made plain to pupils and there was a concerted attempt at reinforcing values in these schools drawn from the ethical frameworks of Islamic traditions. Students admitted from state schools, in particular, were seen to bring with them a mode of behaviour which was disruptive and required control. 'You notice the boy from day one, when he starts talking, feels like making a joke, mocking others', the imam of school K revealed. 'In Islam, surat al-hijr in the Qur'an is clear about not making fun of others and respecting the people.' Since there was a high intake of Muslim students from state schools, the question of how best to help them settle down in their new environments was an important consideration in formulating the school regulations. The above

imam described the discipline policy applied in his school: 'We have a system of reward and punishment according to Islam . . . And at the end of each week, we gather how many hasanat or sayyi'at did this boy get. Hasanat is [good] behaviour. What is the reason for getting hasanat? Is it behaviour, doing the homework? Count them to see how many . . . if he does his homework well, he behaves well, then he gets hasanat.'[4] The moral code followed in this school was adapted from Qur'anic teachings which warn believers of having to account for each of their deeds on the day of judgement, the enumeration or 'weighing' of the commendable and condemned actions ultimately determining the fate of the soul.

This particular enforcement, however, turned out to be more stringent when compared to another school where, rather than imposing an authoritarian code of morality, an attempt was made to encourage students to take greater responsibility for their own actions:

> One of the kids had a teenage girls' magazine and she was caught with it on the playground, showing other girls . . . The imam . . . said [to the parents], 'Look, now don't make it into a huge thing. It's perfectly normal . . . If you punish and you come down very hard on these things, it's only counter-productive . . .' So I think among the staff there is understanding – I have to call it wisdom really . . . There's no point in imposing things on children and getting them do things by fear. It just doesn't work with them any more . . . So we are trying like all other schools to get children to come to these things by themselves. (Headteacher of school L)

The negotiation of the moral code here was between the more disciplinarian expectations of the parents, and the behavioural latitude the school was willing to allow to the students. A more open and understanding outlook, underpinned by a judicious 'wisdom' of what actions could be tolerated, was combined with the acceptance, almost with a sense of resignation, that the traditional moral discipline was not going to be effective in the new context. Hence, the philosophy adopted was towards engendering moral thinking in the students as against conformity to a rigid code of behaviour.

The relation between home and school revealed in the above incident opened up further insights into the regulatory discourse upheld by the Muslim educators. Most of the parents were perceived as responsible carers endeavouring to educate their children in an Islamic environment. However, a few of the interviewees expressed concern about a minority who adhered to dogmatic or fundamentalist views, while at the same time

accepting differences between school and home as inevitably being part of
the educational context. 'I wouldn't say [they are] the majority but they are
a sizeable minority, and they are a vociferous minority', revealed the
headteacher of school L, '[a]nd the school is really, if you like, it's a tension
of all these different things pulling and pushing, which is a positive thing.'
Relations between the two contexts also became problematic when pupils
inducted into a prescriptive observance of Islam had to relate to parents
whose practice of the faith was not as rigorous. In these cases, the home
environment was seen by some of the Muslim educators to be a 'corrupting'
influence. These parents were accused of exercising inadequate control
over what their children were exposed to because of their failure to appre-
hend the impact of popular culture. 'Sometimes the culture is more diffi-
cult to handle than the environment . . . And the parents think it is cultural
to get them the television channel about films – nothing wrong with it',
observed the imam of school L. 'But you know and I know, Arab films or
Indian films [are] sometimes more damaging than Western, because in it is
built a dream for a child whereby it is not true but it is there, and there are
a lot of things which are not correct.' In this imam's perspective, 'culture'
was associated with that which was ethnic, channelled through popular
movies and modern technology, and deemed as luring away the young into
a world of fantasy.

This suspicion of aspects of home life that were not in keeping with what
was taught as Islam in the schools led most practitioners interviewed to
make a hard and fast division between 'religion' and 'culture'.[5] Pupils there-
fore had to be taught whether certain cultural practices were acceptable
from an 'Islamic' perspective. 'Parents as individuals have to learn to define
and differentiate between what is culture and what is religion', the Islamic
studies teacher in school J stressed. 'I try to address that in my class. I may
pick on examples of common practices and make a distinction . . .
If it's okay, I will say, "Well, that's fair enough, because it's not something
that is against Islam but that is a cultural practice."' In this case, Islam was
projected as an absolute norm, privileging the legitimate 'religion' observed
in school over the suspect 'cultural' practices of the domestic sphere. Dif-
ferences between Muslim communities in the observance of their faith were
recognized only within the framework of the particular conception of Islam
promoted in the school. This stance could lead to the religious teachings
and practices pupils acquired at school becoming a means of altering the
parents' observance of the faith tradition at home. 'You find girls in second-
ary school who are very, very religious', noted the imam of school L.
'Although the mother at home may not wear a hijab, although the father

doesn't go to the mosque most of the time, they become very religious . . . And they are affecting their parents.' With Muslim youngsters thus positioned as mediators between the 'religious' environment of the schools and the 'cultural' domain of the home, tensions were likely to be sparked between overzealous pupils and parents resistant to a prescriptive Islamic code being brought from school.

Based on these findings, it appears that the communal context in Crossford had its own local oppositional field in the form of parents who did not subscribe wholly to the ethos of the community-based schools. The Muslim educators with communitarian inclinations had to contend with modes of thinking and behaviour of pupils, acquired from their acculturation at home, which threatened to subvert the moral order of the school. In the cases examined, the Muslim denominational schools reinforced their regulative ethos by seeking to subdue the diversity of voices reflecting the different cultural upbringing and home environments of the pupils. The principle underlying the moral discourse in Muslim schools was based on communal unity, the social order fostering a strong sense of hierarchy and authority, with clearly established roles for teachers and pupils. The cultural backgrounds and voices of pupils were modulated to produce future identities of a unified community, the domestic sphere considered as posing a not wholly desirable influence in the upbringing of the young. Within this dominant discourse, it was possible to discern a strain that allowed pupils a slightly greater degree of freedom through informal relations and relaxed discipline, based on the development of moral self-responsibility, but within an Islamic ethical framework.

The Islamized Curriculum

The regulative order centred on communal unity appears to have exercised a significant influence on the curriculum in Muslim schools. It underpinned, at a foundational level, the determination of the curricular policy and the particular approach to Islam to be adopted in the school generally. Unlike the state schools in which the local agreed syllabus of religious education acted as a common and statutory reference point, the Muslim schools were free to define their own frameworks on Islam.

There were two approaches adopted by Muslim educators in developing their Islamic syllabus. The Shi'a denominational school used a framework that was produced by a centralized community organization as part of an international curriculum. In the other two schools open to all

denominations, the syllabus was formulated by a process of negotiation and compromise between the various stakeholders. The major difficulty in the latter approach was overcoming doctrinal differences between the different Islamic traditions, as explained by the headteacher of school L. 'We had problems with people who had more of a Salafi point-of-view and others who had more of a Sufi point-of-view and others who were Shi'a and . . . just all of the shades between the two extremes, if you like', revealed the headteacher. 'So that was a problem . . . I would say, at that time, looking back, that the philosophy of education, the particular aims . . . should have been defined.' This head was referring to a phase when his school had just been set up but its policy orientation had not as yet been established, leading to a situation where different Muslim groups were seeking to have their particular views of Islam foregrounded in the curriculum. Being one of the earliest Muslim schools to be founded in Britain, and not having any precedence as a guide to determining the school's Islamic character, the solution for the Muslim educators was to reduce school-based Islam to its common denominators, namely the Qur'an and the sunna. This stance was adopted as the ruling principle to address the diverse interpretations of Islam represented in the schools:

> One question that we try to tackle very carefully is [this school] is for all the Muslims. So we have got Muslim Sunnis and Muslim Shi'as. We have got the Sunnis themselves . . . the Hanafi, the Hanbali, the Shafi'i, the Maliki, and they are the majority in the school. And then we have got the Shi'a, many of them are Ja'fari, and many of them from other schools of thought. Our main focus and point is that what unites us is 'La ilaha illallah Muhammadur rasulullah'.[6] Finished. So our system is based on the Qur'an and the sunna. Everybody is encompassed. No difference between us. (Imam of school L)

While this formulation used the two foremost canonical sources of Islam as a basis for defining what would constitute Islamic education for Muslims, it did not recognize the diverse traditions of interpretation that had evolved historically among Muslim communities. The imam overlooked the fact that different theological, legal and mystical schools understand the canonical texts in contrasting ways, and that these traditions uphold different sources of religious authority for legitimizing their truth claims on Islam. The perceived need for a unified approach in the British context generally led the Muslim educators to circumvent or subdue differences between the various denominations:

What we try to do here, we try to look at the model in every school of thought that is closest to ours to bring them together . . . And some of them are very difficult to bring together, but I try to use the approach that will make people united – in my talks, in my khutbas, in my assemblies, even when I teach, even in the books the references that I use, all different references. So at the end of the day, everything that is common I use. Anything that is only dealing with one school, or one group or one area, I keep away from it . . . We don't have all this squabble, no quarrel, no grouping. No. Almost united. (Imam of school L)

The attempt to retain the common and to bracket out the distinctive may not have produced an ecumenical form of Islam of satisfaction to all the Muslim traditions, since it did not address the fundamental issue that the 'common' was as susceptible to particular readings as what was sifted out. The attempt to bring together disparate schools of thought by making a reference to that which was 'closest to ours' raises questions about the consensual form of Islam which finally materialized in the curriculum. Surprisingly, even within the explicitly Shi'a denominational school, the significant differences between the historical interpretations of various communities were downplayed. 'In respect of those who are Sunni here, the teacher who teaches Islamic studies [will] mention Islam in general', the principal stated, 'and when it comes to the point that there is a little difference between the rituals of Shi'a and Sunni, then he or she will mention [it].' By approaching Sunni and Shi'a Islam as separated only by minor variances in religious practices, the principal of this school was choosing to ignore the major doctrinal differences defining these two branches of Islam. As a whole, there was a concerted bid in the Muslim schools to argue that a form of Islam universally acceptable to all Muslims was being taught in the curriculum.

The emphasis on unity, however, was no guarantee that it would resolve the differences between the various Muslim groups represented in the schools:

I try my best within my own teaching and all the other teachers who are teaching Islam . . . to put the goal before anything else. Unity is more important than anything. So those who are looking for spirituality, yes it is there; those who are looking for intellectual gains, yes they are there; those who are looking for strictly fiqh teaching, according to the madh-hab, yes it is there; those who are looking for the new thought like the Salafi, it is there. It is all there. And sometimes, some of them, they . . . want to take control . . . and every time I try to balance the situation. It is

a very hard thing, but in my last six years . . . I had many, many problems. (Imam of school L)

The dilemmas and tensions arising from presenting a unified form of Islam are revealed starkly in the above response, manifesting over a prolonged period in the case of this particular school. Despite the attempt to incorporate philosophical, theological, legal and mystical perspectives into the teaching of Islam, fractions within Muslim communities were apparently not happy with what was being taught.

It was not only the aims and content of Islam that posed a challenge for Muslim schools, but also the relation between Islamic studies and other subjects in the curriculum. If religious education in the state maintained sector had to struggle for space in the curriculum with other subjects in the humanities, in Muslim schools the main competitor of Islamic studies was the National Curriculum which demanded greater attention, resources and effort. One of the factors exerting a significant influence on the regulative and instructional discourses underlying the teaching of Islam was the academic profile of the Muslim schools. As mentioned earlier, all three schools had applied, or were planning to apply, for state funding with a view to acquiring a voluntary aided status. Consequently, there was intense pressure on these schools to implement the National Curriculum and to be seen to be doing well in the national examinations in order to merit the approval of the DfE so as to attract the required funding. This condition created tensions between, on the one hand, the need to gain credibility at the academic level by giving adequate attention to the subjects in the National Curriculum, and on the other, the imperative of maintaining an Islamic identity.

The interviews reveal that the National Curriculum was a contested space for some of the Muslim practitioners, being perceived as a conceptual territory compromising the interests of Islamic aims in their schools. One of the headteachers (school L) disclosed that the way Islam was approached in his school left much to be desired, being subdued as a subject due to the attention devoted to the National Curriculum: 'It's pretty, pretty superficial at this present point in time', he admitted. 'Earlier, and we are looking at to go back there, we had a topic-based approach to our curriculum which allowed for a lot more depth and profundity . . . I felt at that time, we are exposing the children to the relevance of the Qur'an and the sunna in all aspects. Now, I feel it's kind of cobbled on. I feel it's kind of tacked on. It's not intertwined.' This interviewee was looking back with some nostalgia to the pre-1988 liberal period when the absence of a centralized framework of education allowed schools the choice of presenting some areas of the

curriculum in an integrated manner, through a thematic approach. This integration, in his view, had led to a better treatment of Islam in relation to other subjects through creative linkages, but which the National Curriculum had now made difficult.

Some practitioners saw the National Curriculum more antagonistically as the encroachment of secular subjects in what was supposed to be an exclusively religious domain. The strategy adopted by these educators to control and contain secular elements slipping in through the National Curriculum was 'Islamization'. '[W]e try to integrate Islam at all points [in] the curriculum, so it should be going on all the time, in terms of knowledge, in terms of delivering the National Curriculum even', the headteacher of school L revealed. 'I hate this word very much but we do have to use it. We try to Islamicize all of it so the input from the class teachers is like that.' The principal of school J also admitted following the same approach: '[T]he difference between our school as a Muslim school and the others is that we follow the National Curriculum. However, our emphasis is on Islam also in all subjects, not only to teach Islam in the period that is Islamic studies.' Based on these disclosures, Islam appears to have been employed in these schools as an overarching epistemic structure within which other subjects were subsumed. In other words, theological criteria were assumed to be of greater significance in presenting each form of knowledge over the principles of validity intrinsic to each 'language-game'. The intention of Islamization was to impose a religious perspective on the various disciplines so as to integrate them into a unified view of the universe, an ideological strategy intended to address the bifurcation of knowledge into 'secular' and 'religious' domains deemed to have been introduced by Western modernity.[7]

In general, then, as a result of the integrationist policy, Islam as a privileged subject was given greater priority over other subjects in the curriculum. Serving as a focal reference point, it attracted greater time and resources in Muslim schools than afforded to it in the state system, with as many as five lessons a week assigned to it compared to the single hour that religious education received on a weekly basis in some of the state schools. The subject of Islamic studies was also more finely structured in the Muslim schools, consisting of the teaching of tawhid, tafsir, sira, hadith, fiqh and akhlaq. Each dimension led to a deeper engagement with issues covered at a very general level in state schools. The greater time devoted to the subject allowed for wider coverage of content, with pupils in Muslim schools claimed to be three years ahead in the GCSE Islamic studies syllabus than their counterparts in the state system. Table 8.1 illustrates one of the schemes on Islam devised for use at the secondary level in Muslim schools.

Table 8.1 Example of a secondary-level syllabus on Islamic studies for Muslim schools

1. **Fundamental beliefs:** Allah: Tawhid (Oneness of Allah) and His Sifat (Attributes), Mala'ikah (Angels), Books of Allah, Anbia'ullah and Rusulullah (Prophets and Messengers of Allah), Yawmul Akhir (Day of Judgment), Al-Qadr (Predestination), Al-Akhirah (Life after death).

2. **Basic Concepts:** Tawhid (Oneness of Allah), Risalah (Prophethood), Akhirah (Life after death).

3. **Five Basic Duties of Islam:** Ash-shahadah (Declaration of faith), Salah (Five compulsory daily prayers), Zakah (Welfare Contribution), Sawm (Fasting in the month of Ramadan), Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah), Jihad.

4. **Concept of 'Ibadah**

5. **Life of Prophet Muhammad:** Birth, childhood, youth, marriage, commissioning as messenger of Allah, life at Makkah, hostility of the Makkans, Al-Mi'raj, Hijrah, Life at Madinah, Battles of Badr, Uhud, Ahzab, Hudaibiyah agreement, conquest of Makkah, Hujjatul Wida', death, life at a glance, Accomplishment of the mission as the last messenger of Allah.

6. **Life of Khulafa'ur Rashidun (Rightly guided Caliphs):** Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, 'Umar al-Faruq, 'Uthman Al-Ghani, 'Ali Al-Murtada.

7. **Stories of some prominent Prophets of Allah:** Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus.

8. **Three Prominent Muslim Women:** Khadijah, 'Aishah, Fatimah.

9. **Important Personalities**

10. **Social Life in Islam:** Obligations and Duties, Family Life, Social Manners, Basic Qualities, Prohibitions.

11. **Islamic Political System:** Basic Features: Sovereignty of Allah, Vicegerency (Khilafah) of man; Shura (Assembly), Equality before the Law; Accountability of rulers; Independence of Judiciary; Duties of Islamic State; Difference between Muslim and Islamic State.

12. **Economic System of Islam:** Basic Principles: Halal (lawful) earning and expenditure, Prohibition of Haram (unlawful) earning and expenditure, Compulsory payment of Zakah; Prohibition of Riba (Interest), Laws of Inheritance (Mirath), Guarantee of basic needs by the Islamic State, Social Welfare and Sadaqah (Voluntary charity).

13. **Sources of Shari'ah (Islamic Law):** The Qur'an, The sunnah, Ijma' (Consensus), Qiyas (Analogy).

14. **Suratul Fatihah and the last ten Surahs of the Qur'an.**

15. **Muslim Countries: Names, Population, Resources and Potential.**

16. **Miscellaneous Topics:** Dietary regulations, Dress, Festivals, Sports, Amusements.

17. **Comprehensive Study:** Islam and other Religions of the World; Islam, Capitalism and Socialism; Islam and Science; Islam and Art; Muslim contribution to Science and Civilisation.

18. **Projects:** Al-Ka'bah, Masjidun Nabi, Dome of the rock in Jerusalem, Islamic Art and Architecture, Islamic Calligraphy, Status of women, Crime and Punishment, Polygamy, Islamic Da'wah, Organisation of Muslim Youth, Islam and Science, Islam and Social Welfare, Islam and Contemporary Challenges, Jihad in Islam, Islam and non-Muslims, Muslims and Economic Development, Marriage in Islam, Islamic Festivals.

Source: Crossford Muslim school syllabus derived and adapted from Sarwar, G. (1984) *Syllabus and Guidelines for Islamic Teaching*, pp. 13–32.

The syllabus reproduced here reflects a structured approach which is predominantly concerned with the doctrinal, ritual and ethical aspects of Islam, although reference is made to social and political issues. Some of these topics which also feature in state schools are covered in much greater depth, but from an Islamic confessional perspective. The syllabus makes no reference to the Sunnis or Shi'as as two branches of Islam, or to the diversity of interpretations and perspectives among Muslim societies on the range of issues highlighted in the scheme. When references are made to other subjects such as politics, economics, science, art and culture, they are done so in direct linkage to Islam.

In two of the three Muslim schools, the application of Islam as an encompassing framework, reflected to some degree in the above syllabus, was realized formally by being institutionalized in the overall school structure and organization. Two of the schools had an 'Islamization panel' whose role was to observe that 'Islam is implemented in the daily life of the school within all levels.' Subjects such as science, history and even mathematics had to be taught in a manner which reinforced the tenets of the Islamic faith. The imam of school K explained that the panel 'is responsible for the Islamization of many aspects, including the Islamization of the curriculum. We teach science, we teach geography, English . . . And where there is any conflict or contradiction, then we have to give the Islamic view. And that is the duty of even the science and maths teachers as well. So no secularizing.' Scientific theories not fitting into the interpretations of Islam upheld by these practitioners were therefore liable to be called into question. Whether they were discussed as alternative viewpoints to religious conceptions is not clear, but the 'Islamic view' seems to have been required of every teacher as a religious obligation.

At the level of practice, the regulation of subjects was brought about by special frameworks. 'When the teachers prepare their schemes of work, there is in it a column which says "Islamization"', the imam of school L explained. 'So what they need to do, either at the beginning . . . or during the year when they are teaching, they come to me . . . "By the way, next week, the week after, I am starting this topic. I am looking for Islamization. What's the link? What will initiate my topic in the classroom?" . . . [This is done for] every topic. At least five ten minutes are given at the beginning for it. And talked about, not just superficially but seriously.' This scheme reveals a planned endeavour of introducing Islam methodically in every lesson. At the very least, it appears to have featured as the opening frame of each class, acting as an inspirational prelude to the main content presented.

The Islamization panel, in assuming the role of an interventionist agency mediating between acceptable and unacceptable knowledge, was not looked upon favourably, however, by all the practitioners. One headteacher, for instance, expressed strong reservations about the panel vetting books purchased for his school. 'Me and my teachers totally disagree with it . . . this shows you some of the tensions and pulls between the various levels of management from the various doctrinal positions', he admitted. 'When we buy reading books, it goes through a Islamization panel. And some books are deemed not Islamic and others are, and we find that objectionable. However, if we are working here, we have to accept it.' It appears, then, that this totalizing policy did not pass without criticism by some of the educators, and the interviews indicate both overt and covert resistance against it. If teachers were not convinced of its soundness as a policy, it was unlikely that they would have observed it in their classes as stringently as required of them.

The headteacher of school L was of the view that, instead of Islamizing all forms of knowledge, a more creative approach was required to exploring the relationships between Islam and the other subjects. The challenge in the emerging years was to seek for a dynamic interrelationship between disparate subjects in the curriculum, leading to new interdisciplinary domains which would not otherwise emerge. To explore these possibilities, he was experimenting with areas in history, for example, which would do justice to both the past of Muslim societies and history topics in the National Curriculum:

> I am hoping this summer to do a project concerning the slaves that were brought from Africa to America. Many of them . . . were ulama and were well-versed in Qur'an and philosophy and logic and all sorts of things. And many of them had amazing life stories, some of them even coming back to Africa . . . I want to do a project like that. Because here you have all sorts of things. You are bringing in all the skills required by the National Curriculum. You are looking at historical events. You are looking at the issue of slavery. And you are looking really at the confrontation of two different cultures.

This example is interesting in revealing the endeavour by some practitioners in the Muslim schools to seek for a more creative engagement between Islam and its interface with diverse areas of knowledge.[8] In this case, history was being used as a window to explore the Muslim past, not with a view to 'Islamizing' the topic identified, but as means of developing

the skills of students to consider historical evidence, examine different viewpoints, understand how historical sources were open to interpretation, and the methods by which the past could be reconstructed. Also noteworthy here is the selection of a topic which allowed for the exploration of historical encounters between people of different cultures, traditions and civilizations through the contentious subject of slavery.

Science was another area for these innovative-minded Muslim educators which held the potential of being reconceptualized through the interrogation of conventional boundaries and definitions:

> I think science is the battleground. The depiction of science, its methodology, its paradigms, is where we should be working at . . . What I am talking about is the whole idea of science as a subject by itself. If we look back at the scholars of Islam and the other perennial cultures if you like, traditional cultures, there is very little difference between science and art. So we are taking this division of art and science, we are trying to Islamicize it. It seems to me we have thrown the baby out of the bath water. We are trying to take something in which has been divided already. (Headteacher of school L)

The assumption in this response was that Muslims had inherited a dichotomy between science and other subjects which were not as rigidly demarcated in the Muslim past. The acceptance of modern divisions between different fields within an Islamic framework was simply perpetuating rather than questioning these boundaries. We can discern here another attempt at an integrated concept of knowledge, but this time through an examination of the underlying presuppositions embedded in past and present classifications of the disciplines. Whether a pansophic conception of disciplines prevalent in medieval societies was appropriate for the modern context, and the extent to which it could be defended on theological grounds, were questions the headteacher recognized as posing a formidable intellectual challenge.

In relation to world religions, the main traditions were included for study but within an Islamic confessional framework. 'When we teach other religions within the Islamic studies periods, it has to be from the Islamic point-of-view', said the imam of school K. 'And that does not mean that our [students], after learning about other religions from the Islamic view, that they are going to react negatively against other faiths . . . If you are going to be engaged in criticizing others and talking about the advantages of others, that will be at the expense of clarifying the message of Islam.' In this

response, the practitioner saw either the criticism or elevation of other faiths as compromising the students' understanding of their own Islamic identity. The manner in which the Islamic readings of other religions were undertaken therefore aimed at promoting a normative and not an antagonistic view of them. The more progressive Muslim educators felt that greater attention could be given to the Judaeo-Christian tradition by drawing out common elements between these faiths and Islam:

> The basic concept of other religions in Islam is there is respect for those religions which are known as the people of the book, the Jews and the Christians . . . [W]e have looked at . . . for example Mary or Mariam, the similarities and how they are revered on both sides . . . And we will look at how even in other faiths there are lot of views common to Islam . . . For example, in Christianity, not all Christians drink, not all Christians eat pork, some will stick to the original Testament and also there are Christians who do not believe in the Trinity. (Islamic studies teacher of school J)

We can find resonances here of the thematic linkage forged between religions in state schools as a result of the egalitarian ethos, and the approach observed in this particular Muslim school. Commonality offered a potent means to cross doctrinal divides between the faith traditions, without doing away entirely with a committed Islamic viewpoint. One of the headteachers, in fact, did not feel that it was educationally unjustifiable to present Islam from a confessional standpoint:

> I am not sure whether there is such a thing as a phenomenological approach to religion as espoused in the state system because you are espousing a particular way of thinking and a particular way of being, simply by viewing religion in that way, by not viewing it in a confessional or comparative way. So that's just doctrinal as anything else. You see my point? The state system with its position on representing different faiths, its way of questioning and so on, is itself a doctrine. (Headteacher of school L)

If the confessional stance to Islam was perceived by secularists as dogmatic, liberal philosophies could equally be regarded as rooted in assumptions on the basis of which students in state schools were inducted into a particular view of the world. From the perspective of this practitioner, the question of which approach was more 'educational' was debatable because it ultimately depended on which philosophical platform one adopted.

The information considered in this section suggests the prevalence of a strong classification of Islam in the Muslim school curriculum, but also resistive and innovative tendencies seeking to break out of a mentality of educational closure. The regulative discourse of communal unity exercised significant influence on the schools, Islam as a symbolic category being projected as a homogeneous and unified tradition. However, while Islam assumed the structure of a discrete subject, in the form of Islamic studies in the curriculum, it was also extended with integrative aspirations towards other disciplines through the process of 'Islamization'. Progressivist tendencies within Muslim schools, however, attempted to move away from the epistemic colonization of the school curriculum in favour of more dynamic and interactive symbolic boundaries. In this perspective, subjects were not viewed as bounded and rigid disciplines but as redefinable knowledge categories between which new relations could be established. This conception was directed at an active reworking of taken-for-granted categories in the school curriculum.

Regimented Pedagogy

The pedagogic strategies adopted in Muslim schools appear to have been significantly influenced by the regulative order of strong authoritarianism and the curricular policy of Islamization. One of the imams was not convinced that progressive methods were appropriate for the teaching of Islam, and although favouring student participation in the lessons, preferred that it was done so in a highly controlled and structured manner. The following account, reproduced in an extended form, gives a lucid description of the instructional approach he employed in his class:

> I feel that in state schools, the boys and girls can always go out of control and do not show the required level of respect to the teacher. I feel there is always a way in between. You go into the classroom. Islamization. You start with 'Peace be upon you' or 'As-salam alaykum wa rahmatullah'.[9] And they are told to reply back. And you too. From there we start our relationship. And then I make a du'a. And I praise Allah and His messenger . . . And then ask how is everybody, okay, alhamdulillah. On what was our last lesson about. Link last lesson with this lesson. They start to participate. What then is today's lesson. It's about [this] issue . . . then from there I start giving the lesson.
>
> I have to establish this specific information that I have prepared . . . When I see boys raising their fingers or they have something to say, I am

more than happy to answer, but I do not expect questions before giving the lesson . . . I am the type of person who would like to make sure that every single student in the classroom understood what I said. Because Islam to me and to the boy is a world life. He has to understand, implement and call the people to . . . I ask him, 'What specifically you didn't understand?' Then he starts to tell the problem. Then I tackle the problem. Who else? Who else? Who else? Then we develop from there. Then we leave the last five ten minutes to answer their questions. And it's such a motivating atmosphere, enjoyable, and I do feel they enjoy it a lot. (Imam of school K)

This descriptive account points to a fixed, methodical repertoire underpinned by a high degree of pedagogic control. The prelude to the lesson, consisting of an Islamic salutation as well as the recitation of prayer, set the stage for the interactions which ensued. The sequence of steps followed were very much in keeping with what most teachers would conventionally observe, starting from a review of the preceding lesson and the introduction of the new one to the development and clarification of the topic being covered. The imam was keen to stress the involvement and input of students, but only within a structured framework. As a whole, the framing of Islam in the lesson was significantly shaped by the adoption of a strong regulative posture, combined with a confessional induction into Islam as an encompassing life orientation. The imam justified his controlled instruction by contrasting it with what he perceived to be the anarchic situation prevalent in state schools, his teaching exemplifying the *via media*, neither entirely authoritarian in his reckoning nor giving unfettered freedom to his charges. In overall terms, the pedagogy was effectively made subservient to the imperative of inculcating Islam as an overarching frame of reference in the class.

'Pure' and Unified Islam

Having considered the ethos, curriculum and pedagogy operative in Muslim schools, we are now in a position to attend to the conceptions of Islam articulated in this particular pedagogic domain. As noted earlier, the dominant view put forward by the Muslim educators was of Islam as an all-encompassing faith and way of life. As the imam of school K summarized it, 'I believe that Islam is a firm belief in the heart, word of mouth, supported by the action of the limbs. It's a complete way of life. It's a legislation for all matters. And Qur'an and sunna give an answer to everything we

have. It organizes our lives. And we always have to return to it.' This render-ing of Islam privileged a legalistic interpretation through which the faith became a total code for regulating an individual's life, providing solution to every social and personal issue, and concerned with the physical as well as spiritual aspects of the believers' lives.

Complementing this view was another in which Islam was seen as a peren-nial and universal philosophy applicable to all ages and places, independ-ent of particular historical contexts and social conditions:

> Islam is a way of life . . . Islam is Islam. You can't say this or that. Islam is what it is and it has been, which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, the whole book of the Qur'an and the sunna, the way he practised. And it does not belong to this society or to that society or to this time or that season. No, Islam is for all seasons, for all time, for all places, and you can't say because now I'm a modern man, because of technologies . . . (Principal of school J)

This 'Islam for all seasons' did not exempt Muslims in the modern age from adhering steadfastly to their faith simply because of technological advances or other developments. Being an all-encompassing code, it was vitally concerned with every aspect of human life in every age. Islam, at its very essence, was about human beings, with the Islamic message being revealed for the service of humanity. 'The essence of Islam is about al-insan, the human being', asserted the principal. 'In the Islamic literature, we have laws governing al-insan before even the nuqtah is formed in the womb of a woman.' Here, once again, it was the legalistic over the humanistic which was foregrounded, the laws governing the individual embracing the entirety of human existence from the womb to the grave. In effect, there was no moment in life when a Muslim was free of his or her dependence on and obligation to Allah. While Islam was cast as human centred, it was also evident that this centre was located within a theocratic conception of the universe.

If Islam pertained to each individual's life, it was also very much con-cerned with the social order. 'Islam is a religion which unites and which teaches us how to live with each other with co-operation, whether you are a Muslim or a non-Muslim', the Islamic studies teacher of school J pointed out. We find here the unifying doctrine surfacing once again, as a social bond or cement bringing people together, but also the desire of fostering social co-existence through harmony and co-operation, values deemed essential for living within a plural environment. The internal diversity of

Muslims however, as we have seen, required to be subdued in favour of an ecumenical Islam that transcended denominational and sectarian viewpoints. The common denominators were seen by the practitioners to be the Qur'an and the sunna, these sources being the unifying principles accepted by all Muslims and which provided the common ground among different Islamic traditions and schools of law. Islam was therefore to be taught as proclaimed by the prophet Muhammad, free of the religious schisms that followed upon his death. 'We feel that it is our duty to present Islam as it was first revealed without any changing and amendment to it', the imam of school K asserted. 'That is the guidance you give and then it is up to the child and the family to make up their mind. But within the school we have to abide by the rules and regulations.'

Overall, the dominant construction of Islam which emerged from the interviews was an essentialized, unifying and 'purist' religious tradition that the Muslim educators were keen to promote to the diasporic communities distinguished by diverse national, ethnic and denominational identities. While there was a clear recognition of the wide range of Muslim communities in Britain and in Crossford, reflected above in the 'choice' that was being given to the families, there was at the same time the pressure to transcend internal identities in the interests of unity. For these Muslim educators, it was imperative to eliminate from their pupils' understanding of Islam what were perceived as historical and cultural accretions and to turn to an idealized model of the faith, free of sectarian and fundamentalist extremism, for the purposes of forging a new and united Muslim community in Britain. 'Here, there is no fanatic', the principal of school J asserted. 'Here is pure Islam and Muhammad. This is what we want to implement, pure Islam and Prophet Muhammad.'

The New Communitarians and Reconstruction

To summarize the findings of this chapter, the construction of Islam as school knowledge in the Muslim schools of Crossford reflected the perspective of what may be called 'neo-communitarianism'. This thinking, underpinned by the aspiration for communal solidarity, was actively applied to the educational project of establishing a new Muslim community in Britain based on a purified and essentialized rendering of Islam. An alternative and contrasting, if subordinated, formulation reflected a 'reconstructivist' position advanced by more innovative-minded educators who wanted to approach their religion in an educationally dynamic and engaged manner,

actively responsive to the location of Muslims in a secular, liberal society. This was a stance that cut across the schools, being reflective of the views of individual practitioners rather than the institutions they represented.

Overall, Islam as pedagogic knowledge was recontextualized by the new communitarians through strong control and hierarchy in the social relations observed in their schools. There was also an attempt to reclassify Islam from a bounded discipline to an overarching framework, presenting it as a way of life, an embracing ethos and a regulative body of knowledge, with the aim of creating a united community by subduing national, cultural and denominational identities. A strong regulative code derived from a legalistic interpretation of Islam permeated all aspects of school life, including the construction of Islam within the curriculum. Reduced to the common denominator of the foundational, canonical sources of scripture and the prophetic tradition, this presentation of Islam tended to dismiss important historical differences among Muslim groups, positing instead a universal religion free of all divisive interpretations.

The reconstructivists also generally subscribed to this view of Islam, but not as a closed, regulating and totalizing formulation. On the whole, they were more tolerant of students in the observance of the moral code stipulated by their schools, and keen to break away from conventional approaches to Islam in the school curriculum by exploring new boundaries, intersections and relationships. While drawing inspiration from the principles and values of Islamic traditions, they sought to apply these in a fresh way to bring about a creative dialogue between categories of knowledge which were potentially at odds in terms of their epistemic perspectives. The reconstructivists envisaged in general a form of Islam which was historically contextual and sensitive to contemporary developments, calling for an ongoing encounter between tradition and the discovery of new areas of knowledge. It was also multi-aspectual, not only confining itself to conventional branches of study, but also leading into the exploration of new areas in interdisciplinary niches.

As with the findings in the previous chapter, it appears that both the principles of Liberal Left equality and New Right identity, active at the national and local levels, were refracted in the Muslim schooling context to promulgate internal unity among Muslim pupils and to reinforce a homogeneous and unified construct of self-representation. An alternative form of recontextualization, applying the principles of equality and identity to the relation between Muslims and the wider society, opened up promising possibilities for dialogical interaction and transformative understanding between symbolic identities.

This section brings to an end the local community study of Crossford with its findings on the recontextualization of Islam in state and Muslim schools. The next chapter reverts to the wider, national context, examining issues which the changed circumstances in the post-September 11 period raised for Muslims and British society as a whole, and the adequacy of policy responses to these concerns in the field of education, particularly as pertaining to Islam as a symbolic category in the school curriculum.

Notes

[1] See Chapter 6.

[2] The three schools are designated in this chapter by the letters J, K and L. Other details have been changed to maintain the confidentiality of the schools and the respondents.

[3] See Chapter 7 for an explanation of these categories.

[4] The disciplinary policy of this school was based on rewarding or penalizing students using a scheme of points. 'Hasanat' and 'sayyi'at' referred to the points accumulated weekly, based on approved or unacceptable behaviour.

[5] Geertz's (1971) study of the observance of Islam in the two contrasting contexts of Indonesia and Morocco reveals how intricately enmeshed the experiences and expressions of religion and culture are in Muslim societies. The tendency to detach the two aspects and adopt reductive notions of culture forms part of the historical and contemporary drives of puritanical fractions to produce an 'unadulterated' Islam free of all cultural accretions.

[6] 'There is no deity but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God.' This proclamation, known as the *shahada*, is recited as a profession of the faith of Islam by Muslims.

[7] See Thobani (2007) for the emergence of the neo-revivalist ideology of 'Islamization' as a reaction to the nationalizing of Islamic education in various parts of the Muslim world in the twentieth century.

[8] See Coles (2008) for a recent work on integrating topics on Islam and Muslims across the National Curriculum.

[9] 'May the peace and mercy of Allah be with you'; a Muslim greeting.

Chapter 9

Politicized Islam and Civic Engagement

Militant Extremism and School-Level Islam

In the opening decade of the twenty-first century, the manifestation of a new geopolitical dynamic between the West and the Muslim world, instigated by both jihadist violence and military interventions, led to Muslim education and Islam within it becoming subject to regional and national interrogation. In Britain, concerns on Muslim education resurfaced with the Bradford riots in the summer of 2001, and became heightened in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks (Abbas, 2005). Relations between the state and Muslim communities were further affected by Britain's involvement in the Afghanistan war in November 2001 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, it was the London bombings on 7 July 2005, more so than the preceding events, which forced the question of Islam to the forefront of the policy agenda. This train of events, as a whole, served to sharply polarize the debate on Muslim education in a context already fraught with tensions and disagreements. In this phase, a new discourse emerged on the cultural representation of Muslims, framed predominantly by anxieties generated by militant extremism.

The cornerstone of this discourse was the link made between the grooming of jihadists and the teachings propagated in madrasas in fundamentalist Muslim states. Following the attacks on September 11, the need to trace the underlying causes and motivations behind the violence soon led to claims of madrasas on the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan, labelled as 'jihadist factories', propagating an ideology of hatred and incitement to violence against the West. Alarmist reports whipped up international concern by suggesting that tens if not hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren in Pakistan were being indoctrinated in the ideology of jihadism.[1] While later reports made a more sober appraisal of the situation, limiting the subversive seminaries to areas dubbed as 'medieval outposts' and even challenging the link between madrasas and terrorism,[2] the image of Muslim

education inciting violence had become firmly entrenched in the Western psyche. In Britain, this link gained further credibility when two of the July 7 bombers were alleged to have visited madrasas in Pakistan. While there was little evidence to suggest that they had received any sustained teaching in these religious colleges, their trips abroad were sufficient to implicate Muslim educational institutions in the acts of violence that had taken place (Bergen and Pandey, 2006).

The next construction in this discourse rapidly lodged the link between Muslim education and terrorism firmly within British soil itself, the politicians and the media repeatedly drawing attention to the point that these were no foreign terrorists but 'home-grown' ones. The phrase carried connotations of grooming, nurturance and cultivation, thrusting Muslim communities frontally into the glare of public scrutiny. Questions were raised, on the one hand, on what was being taught in British madrasas, and on the other, whether Muslim parents had any control over their youth who were suspected of being radicalized by extremist groups. In the immediate phase following the bombings, proposals were suggested for the need to regulate madrasas and Muslim schools in Britain, and possibly even their integration in some way within the state system.[3] An alternative but related proposal sought to impose quotas on denominational schools, requiring them to take up to a quarter of their students from other faiths, but this idea faltered in the face of strong resistance from the Catholics.[4] At the same time, the debate on faith schools received fresh impetus from the crisis, with deep misgivings expressed on both state funded Muslim schools and the expanding number of independent ones. The politics of suspicion was fuelled further by reports of fundamentalist groups radicalizing Muslim students in British universities and colleges. Government suggestions that university officials act as 'spies' by identifying extremist influences on their campuses, verging towards a new McCarthyism in British academia, reinforced the assumed link between Muslim education and extremist violence.[5]

A final plank in the discourse engendered by jihadist radicalism, advanced not only by the conservative right but also groups conventionally regarded as left-wing, was a renewed critique of multiculturalism, connecting it either explicitly or tacitly with Islam and militant tendencies. Resurrected allegations about multiculturalism as responsible for social divisiveness, with Muslims implicated in the problem, were highlighted in the widely publicized speech of Trevor Phillips, the head of the Commission for Racial Equality:

> In recent years we've focused far too much on the 'multi' and not enough on the common culture. We've emphasized what divides us over what

unites us . . . This is not only, or even principally, about Muslims. But the aftermath of 7/7 forces us to assess where we are. And here is where I think we are: we are sleepwalking our way to segregation.[6]

More explicit attacks originating well before July 7 accused Islam and Muslims of being responsible for doing away altogether with multicultural-ism by undermining the plural status quo. Arun Kundnani, commenting from an anti-racist platform, interpreted the Bradford riots and events after September 11 as sounding 'the death knell for multiculturalist policies',[7] while Norman Lamont forged a close connection between book-burning and fatwas, and the degeneration of multiculturalism into moral relativism.[8] Rod Liddle's diatribe on 'How Islam has killed multiculturalism' targeted the Left for its policies on immigrant communities in allowing them to retain their indigenous culture, and for conceding all too readily to Muslim pressure despite recognizing, in his view, that Islam 'demands a distinctly illiberal social regimen'.[9] In a more strident critique, penned in the immedi-ate aftermath of the July 7 bombings, William Pfaff saw the terrorists as 'a monster of our own making', belonging to a class of 'technologically educated but culturally and morally unassimilated immigrant demi-intelligentsia', who were products of 'a half-century of a well-intentioned but catastrophically mistaken policy of multiculturalism'.[10]

The last claim was more forthright than the others in directly accusing multicultural education of having schooled individuals who ultimately perpetrated acts of terrorism. We can discern here the continuing neo-conservative attacks on multiculturalism from the liberal period, but now also mounted by the Left, and directed frontally at the Muslim presence in Britain. What remained unexplained in these claims was the exact nature of the connection between multiculturalism and the terrorist attacks. The thread of logic woven, based on questionable assumptions at every point, was that there had been far too much emphasis placed on the distinctness of cultures in Britain, that this indulgence in plurality had led to communal segregation, and that social divisions were in some way responsible for the murderous outrages carried out by four individuals radicalized by the al-Qaeda.

This brief review of developments since 2001, centring on the nature of the discourse arising from jihadist violence and military reprisals, reveals how Muslim education in particular became a source of acute anxiety in the British context. Missing visibly from this discussion was the Islam presented through religious education in state schools to the majority of young Muslims, estimated to be about half a million in number, not to mention

the rest of the school population. Inexplicably, the teaching of school-based Islam remained, and continues to remain, an educational blind spot, with little direct reference made to it in government reports after September 11 or July 7. Given that the coverage of Islam in state schools is perhaps the only educational means available by which to inform the perceptions, attitudes and understanding of the vast majority of young people in Britain on this subject, and which has vital bearing on the future relations and co-existence between communities, its neglect in the post-July 7 period needs addressing in the context of religious education specifically, and the National Curriculum more generally.

In this phase, policy reforms concerned directly with the field of education have been limited. Examined below are two of these interventions, in the areas of civic education and Islamic studies, which were to a large degree responses to the July 7 terrorism, and which are of direct significance to the presentation of Islam at the school level. This analysis leads into a consideration of the current state of religious education, and the status of Islam within it, in the context of the changed circumstances created by fundamentalist violence and the public reaction to it.

Cultural Divergences and Civic Enlistment

Within a year of the London bombings, in May 2006, the Minister of State for Higher Education and Lifelong Learning, Bill Rammell, announced a review by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), headed by Sir Keith Ajegbo, on the treatment of 'diversity issues' in the National Curriculum, including addressing the question of how modern British cultural and social history could be incorporated into citizenship lessons at the secondary level.[11] While the minister claimed that 'this is not just about religious-oriented issues', the contents of his speech indicate that the proposal to mount the enquiry was primarily impelled by the difficult dilemmas which had surfaced in the aftermath of the July 7 attacks. Keen to support Muslims in promoting moderate Islam, on the one hand, but apprehensive at the same time of the freedom of religious expression being subverted by radical groups, the need to yoke 'diversity issues' to citizenship education in the National Curriculum had become an urgent undertaking for the policymakers.

One of the key findings of the Ajegbo Report, published in 2007 as the *Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review*, was that 'not all school leaders have bought in fully to the imperative of education for diversity for all

schools', and the priority assigned to this aspect was too low to be effective (p. 6).[12] The prime reasons attributed to this situation was a want of clarity on the flexibility within the National Curriculum and how linkages were to be made to education for diversity, compounded by the lack of confidence on the part of some teachers to deal with diversity issues. Pupils' voices were not given adequate consideration and links with communities as a rich resource for diversity education were often tenuous or non-existent (p. 6). Despite the alarmist clamour of the multicultural critics, the Ajegbo Report found there to be too little rather than too much attention devoted to pluralism at the school level, leading it to recommend that schools be encouraged to 'audit their curriculum to establish what they currently teach . . . is meaningful for all pupils in relation to diversity and multiple identities' (p. 9).

In drawing attention to the need for schools to foster 'multiple identities', the report highlights the dangers of racial, religious or cultural stereotyping arising from defining identity in terms of any single trait and deploying it as the exclusive basis of an individual's self-concept:

> [W]hile it is important to understand another person's religion, ethnicity and culture in order to appreciate more fully who they are, it is then simplistic to define them by one of these alone. Stereotyping often goes further than that. Many African Caribbean boys, for instance, feel defined in school just by their blackness; a crude popular definition of what it is to be a Muslim is now developing; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are often 'invisible' in the wider community; working class white pupils are all too easily stereotyped as 'chavs'. (p. 29)

This stance is a significant departure from the assimilationist and integrationist policies in the liberal and neo-conservative periods which coalesced the diversified, intersecting and developing identities of 'ethnic' groups into homogeneous blocs of 'blacks' or 'Asians'. The need to help young people approach their self-concepts in the context of diversity opens up a major challenge on how symbolic representations are constructed in schools. In considering the implications of this proposal for school-based Islam, the principal curricular space in which the issue of Muslim identity is foregrounded is religious education. As the previous chapters have revealed, the diversity of interpretive traditions among Muslims has been approached superficially, leading generally to a homogeneous and essentialist presentation of Islam. On balance, religious education has tended to reinforce a uniformizing perspective of Muslims which does not always reflect the political, cultural and religious complexity to be found across denominational communities, interpretive traditions, schools of law and other collectivities.

The risk of stereotyping identified in the Ajegbo Report may arise because discussions on Muslims are approached predominantly through the religious signifier, reinforced further by their status as an 'ethnic minority' in Britain. In the absence of more engaged explorations of Muslims without reference to their historical roots, interpretive orientations, national origins, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, and socio-economic status, not overlooking gender-related perspectives, it has to be asked to what degree a sociologically realistic representation of Muslims is conveyed by state schools and the particular role played by religious education in this construction. The Ajegbo Report argues that the issues of identity and diversity ought not to be confined solely to subjects such as religious education if full justice is to be done to this aspect, advising that diversity needs to be planned coherently across a wide range of subjects in the curriculum for the school ethos to reflect it (p. 25). This suggestion makes good sense if identity is recognized as a complex, multi-dimensional concept calling for interdisciplinary insights, instead of being framed through any one particular subject (Hall and du Gay, 1996).

Another significant concern which the Ajegbo enquiry focused on was citizenship education. Despite being a statutory subject in the National Curriculum, it was found to suffer from a lack of expertise in its treatment, reflecting a huge variation in the scope and quality of its provision in schools. Issues of identity and diversity were largely neglected in the teaching of this subject or covered unsatisfactorily. Citizenship education at the secondary level was 'not sufficiently contextualised for pupils to become interested and engaged with the local, national and international questions of the day', and that questions of ethnicity and 'race' received greater attention than those pertaining to religion (p. 7). This point reinforces the earlier concern on the lack of discussion on the multiple, overlapping and evolving identities which young people from faith backgrounds experience in diverse, shifting contexts and relationships.

Focusing directly on the question of national identity, the Ajegbo review pointed out that the term 'British' meant different things to different people, with concerns being expressed on the term's divisiveness and its misuse to exclude others. The report stated that if young people were to develop an inclusive notion of citizenship, it was crucial that issues of identity and diversity were addressed explicitly. For young people to explore these aspects and to debate the values they share, it was necessary for them to understand the historical development of British society, leading the review to recommend the inclusion of modern British social and cultural history as a 'fourth pillar' of citizenship education (p. 12).[13]

A contemporary history of Britain, within which the dual but interrelated problematic of self-concept and social context can be discussed, has long been highlighted by educators and minority communities as a significant omission in the school curriculum. One of the most critical phases in British history, which has hitherto received little attention in schools, is that of colonialism and its impact on the regions from which many immigrant communities have arrived. The intermeshing of the histories of British and colonized subjects forms a shaping episode in the past of both the host society and immigrant groups, and cannot be ignored if the subject of contemporary social plurality is to be taught effectively. The question of what it means to be 'British' remains unanswered if this part of modern history remains closed to discussion in the classroom (Thobani, 2010). In the context of immigrant communities, this aspect calls for examining significant events in modern times which have resulted in diasporic movements across different regions of the world. In discussing the political, economic and social changes which have necessitated these cross-continental settlements, students can be guided to a more informed understanding of their present location, status and relation to other groups in society.

The inclusion of modern immigration history is of particular value in the case of Muslims in developing a deeper understanding of Islam as an identity marker. The question of 'where we come from' immediately leads to a consideration of the complex, multiple identities which Muslim communities in Britain reflect, making reference to their ancestral roots, ethnic backgrounds, religious orientations and historical legacies. What it means to be both British and Muslim must also take into account the encounters which transpired in colonial times, and the ways in which inherited Muslim identities in this period were impacted by contrasting responses to British rule (Metcalf, 1982). The range of stances to be found among British Muslims, which embrace traditionalist, modernist, secularist, neo-revivalist and fundamentalist perspectives, and whose roots to some degree lie in the colonial period, are central to a discussion of Muslim identity in Britain today for students to have a better grasp of how different groups position themselves or are positioned in relation to political, economic, social and religious issues. While all Muslim communities subscribe to the fundamental tenets of Islam, to conflate Sunni and Shi'a interpretations of Islam, or for example, the Deobandi and Barelwi traditions, or the markedly contrasting perspectives of Wahhabis and Sufis, reinforces the stereotype of the British Muslim community as a monolithic entity with no differentiation within it. This does not mean that what defines Muslims in common should be ignored, but at the same time, education on

social identities must necessarily engender understanding on how Islam is expressed in diverse ways. Unfortunately, the historical development of Islamic traditions, in both the remote and recent past, is accorded scant attention in the subjects of religious education and history at present (Thobani, 2010). If the recommendations of the Ajegbo Report are to be taken seriously, then opportunities will need to be created within the National Curriculum to help pupils appreciate more fully the rich diversity of self-concepts to be found within each faith community in Britain.

The Ajegbo review sees the additional, fourth strand of modern British social and cultural history being undertaken essentially in citizenship education, seeking to link closely the exploration of identity and diversity to the question of being British. Noting that the term 'British' is subject to being defined in different ways, it questions whether national identity can be reduced to set of 'shared values' (pp. 90–4). Instead of inculcating these principles in the abstract, the report argues, it becomes more meaningful for students to discuss them in the context of real situations where values are in tension with each other. Rather than presenting abstract notions of 'Britishness', the report prefers an emphasis on 'the experience of living in the UK', which it sees as being more practical, fluid and inclusive, and which would integrally take into account issues of identity and diversity as they arise in the ambit of the students' own experiences. It therefore recommends a pedagogy of dialogue and communication as being central to citizenship education, with an emphasis on 'civic listening' to encourage the inclusion of marginalized voices (pp. 95–6).

Since the Ajegbo Report was commissioned in the wake of the July 7 attacks, the question of how citizenship education applies specifically to young Muslims is vital. If the report favours the discussion, as against the imposition, of 'shared values', Muslims will necessarily turn to their faith of Islam as an important source of ethical orientation to guide their understanding of civic participation. If respect for law, equality, democracy, freedom of speech, human rights and tolerance form some of the core principles that underpin political membership of Britain today, being a British Muslim will inevitably mean an engagement between these principles and values drawn from Islamic traditions. Within this dialogical frame, it becomes as important to debate on points of disagreement as to identify principles which complement one another, based on a model of civic education that is open equally to political critique and the questioning of self-assumptions. In secular as well as communal schooling contexts, both citizenship studies and religious education stand to play a crucial role

in engendering greater understanding in the young on the interrelation-ship between civic and religious commitments.

In this regard, an initial step has been taken to interface citizenship education with Islamic instruction in the context of British madrasas. In June 2007, Tony Blair announced that the Bradford Council of Mosques had agreed to incorporate citizenship education in the curriculum for their madrasas, an initiative which he hoped would be adopted across the coun-try.[14] The project, mounted by the Nasiha Education Foundation, aims to provide a course on citizenship to students in British madrasas.[15] Inter-woven around character teaching from Islamic ethics, the programme is intended to help young Muslims become informed of their roles and responsibilities in the society in which they live, drawing upon those teach-ings of the Qur'an and prophetic traditions which promulgate a spirit of respect and tolerance. The project is a direct outcome of the government's effort at curbing the rise of extremism among some sections of Muslim youth by establishing closer links with community institutions providing religious instruction, based on the assumption that these institutions play a significant role in the lives of young Muslims.[16]

The Nasiha project represents a new space of interaction between state and religion through the extension of national policy measures to commu-nal pedagogy. The curriculum advocated makes a concerted attempt at drawing on the Qur'an, the hadith, the shari'a, and other sources of tradi-tion to demonstrate to Muslim youngsters the harmony between Islamic values and British law. Many of the lessons are based on didactic teachings around moral and social values, such as honesty and trustworthiness, respect for life and property, and avoiding anti-social behaviour, while others deal more directly with citizenship education, encouraging civic involvement, community work and partaking in elections.[17] A few are more frontal in addressing current concerns, such as abiding by 'the oath of peace' and the condemning of terrorism and suicide bombings in Islam.[18] The pedagogy is related directly to values drawn from an Islamic ethical framework and their application to civic observance in the British context. At this formative stage of the project, there is little indication of students being guided to examine critically the underlying assumptions informing 'Islamic' and 'British' con-ceptions of political and civic order. Central to an intellectually engaged approach is an open exploration of religious and political issues, such as the diverse relations which have evolved between religion and the state his-torically and globally. The project is as yet at some distance in creating con-ditions for the discussion of 'shared values' in the manner envisaged by the Ajegbo review, and verges more on prescriptive teaching than educational

enquiry. At a broader level, this innovative venture injecting citizenship education into confessional Islam raises important questions on the nature of the interaction between state policy and communal pedagogy that has been introduced in the post-July 7 phase.

Islamic Studies as a 'Strategic Subject'

In addition to the Ajebgo Report, the case for reviewing Islam as school knowledge is further strengthened by a second major enquiry commissioned by the government in the wake of the July 7 bombings. In May 2006, the minister responsible for higher education delivered a speech on the subject of community cohesion, but whose underlying thrust was the containment of campus radicalism among Muslim students to prevent 'home-grown' terrorist attacks from occurring again.[19] Proclaiming that the July 7 bombings were a watershed, and of particular concern because they were perpetrated by terrorists who were born and raised in Britain, the minister revealed the government's intention to support Muslims in identifying and neutralizing the minority of extremist voices that had incited the murders in London. Based on evidence of 'unhelpful narrow interpretations of Islam' which were fuelling extremism, it had become necessary in his view to look at what improvements could be made to develop the 'intellectual capital' of Islam in Britain and create a richer understanding of it. To achieve these aims, the minister stated that he was commissioning an enquiry, headed by Dr Ataullah Siddiqui, on how the teaching of Islam could be enhanced. As part of the project to defeat extremist ideology, he also announced £1 million funding to boost Islamic studies in British universities, designating it as a 'strategically important subject' which the government hoped would help stem extremism and improve community relations.[20] The implications this measure holds for the representation of Islam at the school level warrant closer scrutiny.

The Siddiqui Report issued in April 2007 can be divided broadly into two parts, the first one dealing with issues related to Islamic studies at university level, and the second focusing on pastoral needs of Muslim students in higher education. The former, which is of direct relevance here, begins with an overview of the development of Islamic studies in Britain, as inferred from a series of enquiries on higher education commissioned in the twentieth century. The report notes the transformation of the subject from being determined by orientalist and evangelical interests in the colonial era to catering to the training of specialists in the postwar period

for diplomatic service and international relations linked to Muslim regions. The report proceeds to outline the findings of Islamic studies as it currently exists in British universities and colleges, appraising its adequacy in the light of the new circumstances which materialized after September 11. Overall, the thrust of the review is on how to meet the needs of Muslim students expressing an interest in wishing to learn more about their faith, with a view to setting up appropriate structures and courses to curb any future rise of extremism on university campuses. The autonomy of Islamic studies as an intellectual field of enquiry in its own right being compromised by political and communal exigencies and interventions receives limited discussion in the report.

It is important to pause here and reflect on the significance of this development in the British academic context. Islam as a subject of study, as we have noted earlier, was presented in higher education in the late nineteenth century in comparative religion by Nonconformist educators as part of their evangelical missiology, and which later became incorporated into religious studies by a new generation of liberal specialists on the basis of cultural parity. Over this period, it also became a focus of scholarship and research as part of Oriental and Middle Eastern studies, feeding into other cognate disciplines dealing with Islam. On the whole, this was a subject which had emerged on the margins of the intellectual field, largely without any direct policy regulation, as a result of the combination of colonial, evangelical and orientalist interests. The Siddiqi enquiry marks an unconventional intervention by national policymakers in the academic domain of 'knowledge production', targeted specifically at Islam as a 'strategic subject' with the aim of steering it in a new, reformative direction. In effect, universities as largely autonomous sites of the symbolic formulation of Islam are now confronted with interventions by policymakers seeking to redirect, if not regulate, the overall aims and approach to the subject. Whereas it was the intellectual field which had in the liberal period independently spearheaded the reconstruction of Islam as a pedagogic subject, the policy apparatus is once again, as in the neo-conservative phase, looking to influence substantively the intellectual direction of a symbolic category.

Surprisingly, the Siddiqui Report confines itself predominantly to a consideration of Islamic, Oriental and Middle Eastern studies in British universities, overlooking the presentation of Islam in religious studies, a major provider of information on Islam that has significantly influenced the teaching of this subject in both state and private schools across England. More worryingly, the report makes little reference to the provisions needed to be made in universities and colleges for training religious

education teachers and other educators involved with Islam and Muslims at the school level. Although the remit of the review was confined to higher education, and while the report speaks in generalized terms of the need for training courses for public officials, the critical link between universities and schools that determines what conceptions of Islam are conveyed in the classroom is a significant omission. That teachers receive appropriate education on Islam and Muslim societies is crucial if consideration is given to the fact that these practitioners will be shaping the outlook of the majority of Muslim students who attend state schools, as well as the vast numbers of non-Muslim pupils who equally need to develop a sound understanding of Islam and Muslims, alongside other religions and cultures, to address deeply entrenched misperceptions and prejudices.

The Siddiqui Report's recommendations on the reformed approach to Islamic studies require closer consideration in the context of their bearing for potential school-level application. A major shift having implications for the treatment of Islam in religious education is the widening of its scope from being treated exclusively as a faith to its diverse expressions in civilizational contexts (p. 13). While these terms are not defined, it is implied that the study of Islam as a system of beliefs and practices, as has conventionally been the case in religious education, ought to be expanded to consider how it has been understood and applied by Muslims in its relation to a wider range of endeavours, such as its interface with the political, economic, social and cultural spheres in past civilizations and contemporary societies. In addition, the Siddiqui Report recommends the broadening of Islamic studies from a Middle Eastern focus to understanding Islam in its diverse manifestations in national, cultural and social contexts across the globe (p. 13). Here, the challenge for religious education will be to desist from a treatment of Islam restricted to a particular region or ethnic group and instead to expose pupils to the rich plurality it embodies. At yet another level, and significantly, the report advocates the need for Islamic studies to move away from the treatment of 'irrelevant topics' and to connect with contemporary issues and problems faced by Muslims in relation to the changing context around them (p. 14). Islam as approached in religious education needs to be revisited in terms of whether it is being presented as a lived reality or an abstract and hypostatized phenomenon. In all these aspects, the review on Islamic studies appears to be fundamentally challenging the conventional boundaries which have defined Islam as a discipline of enquiry, and recommending the need to broaden its coverage through a more sophisticated reading of Muslim societies and communities.

Another point of relevance is the debate the Siddiqui Report opens up pertaining to the methodology to be adopted for Islamic studies. In the context of higher education, it advocates the application of the human and social sciences to the study of Islam in order to engender critical and analytical perspectives. On the other hand, it suggests that aspects dealing with the everyday practice of Islam be presented by Muslim scholars who have received their training from traditional scholarship (p. 14). This recommendation aims at overcoming the dichotomy created by 'critical' and 'empathetic' approaches to the study of faith traditions, or to use the report's terminology, the application of 'outside in' and 'inside out' perspectives (p. 26). However, in adopting this route, it appears to be rein-forcing the very division between 'Western' and 'Islamic' pathways to the study of Islam which it is seeking to address. What we find here is the tension between exclusively academic approaches to understanding Islam, upheld by Western secular scholarship, and the confessional stand of those who adhere to a particular faith tradition, a dichotomy that has become institutionalized into the secular and religious domains in modern con-texts, and which has not found any easy resolution. Despite the attempts of ethnographers and phenomenologists to portray an insider's view of faith traditions, and willingness on the part of theologians and religious scholars to embrace a more critical approach to the study of religion, a substantial gulf still remains between these two perspectives. In school-based religious education in England, this division is addressed to some extent through the binary principles of 'learning about' and 'learning from' religions, combin-ing the objectivized study of faith with its subjective experience, but both are required to be approached from a non-confessional perspective. While the 1988 legislation on religious education upholds an educational and not a confessional study of belief systems, how young people exposed to dual understandings of religion deal with ensuing dilemmas and tensions needs closer investigation.

This dichotomy is further challenged by the Siddiqui Report's claim that Islamic studies in higher education is not considered by Muslim students as addressing concerns which have come to dominate the contemporary context. They see a need for a deeper engagement with theological issues as they mesh with political, moral and social questions, but from within a faith framework (pp. 36–7). Current approaches to these courses are detached from contemporary realities, with little discussion or debate on how religion intersects at multiple levels with domains of significance in the rapidly changing conditions of a globalizing world. It is also likely that this disengaged approach to religions in universities and colleges is carried over

into schools by teachers through existing training programmes, resulting in religious education being confined predominantly to the beliefs and practices of faith communities and having little connection with the wider reality. The report also has bearing on the status of religious studies as the conventional source of training for religious education teachers on the subject of Islam. If it calls for greater involvement of qualified specialists in Islamic studies in providing courses on Islam, it also opens up the question of the depth of exposure to world religions required by teachers to educate them about particular faith traditions.

In overall terms, the Siddiqui Report signals yet another shift in the relations between policymakers, academics and communities in the way that cultural categories with symbolic significance are presented in the curriculum. In the case of Islam, global and national concerns have converted it into a subject of strategic importance, but this strategizing will only prove effective if consideration is given to it, not only within higher education, but also at the level of the school curriculum where it stands to influence the perceptions and outlooks of the school-attending population, both Muslim and non-Muslim, who constitute the future adult citizens of Britain. This point leads to examining more directly the question of religious education in state schools, and the approach to Islam within it, in the post-September 11 phase.

The Move towards Centralized Religious Education

Multi-faith religious education in the state schools of England has now been taught for over four decades, producing an adult generation that has received some form of exposure to the major world religions, including Islam. Those who have been instructed into particular faith traditions, either through state funded or independent faith schools, or by means of supplementary schooling, also need to be taken into account. In the previous chapters, the findings on school-based Islam revealed the multiple forces and interests contesting to determine the aims of religious education in both state and communal contexts. Among these spheres of influence were regulative bodies at the national and local levels framing the policies on religious education, academic specialists bringing to bear on the subject conceptual perspectives based on what they deemed to be an educational approach to the teaching of religion in schools, and status groups seeking greater control over the representation of their symbolic identities in the curriculum.

In particular, the growing confrontation between the Liberal Left and the New Right over school knowledge roughly between the 1970s and the 1990s fuelled within religious education a polarized discourse between equality and identity. This struggle surfaced not only at the national level in the legislation of religious education in the 1988 Education Reform Act, but was also played out in local authorities and at the school level, as revealed by the case of Crossford. It also became refracted in the communal context through demands for equity of treatment in the state funding of faith schools and the promotion of specific religious identities in these schools. While the institution of the National Curriculum was seen to be a victory over 'multiculturalism' on the part of the New Right, the grievances on cultural pluralism in school subjects erupted once again in the post-September 11 phase, as we have seen.

If the pedagogic representation of plural symbolic identities has become a major issue provoked by militant extremism, how has this question been addressed by religious education in the case of school-based Islam in this period? In its overall emphasis, the subject remains unchanged from the status assigned to it in the 1988 Education Reform Act, Christianity being the main religion to be taught in schools, with the other principal religions in Britain being taken into account.[21] The only development of significance related to it occurred in 2004, when the QCA introduced the non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education. This measure was a response to a long-felt need in various circles for a centralized approach to the subject, in line with the National Curriculum, aimed at giving greater direction to the diverse formulations of agreed syllabuses by the local authorities. Given the controversial policy history of religious education, shaped in large measure by the delicate relationship between state, church and other religious communities, the non-statutory designation assigned to the national framework appears to be a political compromise on the part of the state, allowing for the exertion of some degree of centralized influence over the subject while not deviating from the historical principle of the determination of agreed syllabuses at the local level. The conferences formulating the local syllabuses are thus not obliged to follow the national framework, although there is clearly an intent to exert a directing influence on local approaches to religious education.[22]

In terms of its underlying motive, then, the 2004 National Framework for RE has not been introduced as a direct response to the chain of policy interventions sparked off by the terrorist attacks and ensuing events. However, with religious education a step closer to being centrally controlled, it becomes important to close off this chapter with a review of the

conception of Islam promoted by the state in this framework, and its adequacy in responding to the altered perceptions and situation of Muslims and Islam in Britain following the events of 7 July 2005.

In some respects, the introduction of the national framework parallels the promotion of the SCAA model syllabuses by the New Right in 1994 in policymakers seeking to exert greater national control over local decisions on religious education.[23] However, the communitarian basis of the model syllabuses is not evident in the framework, with no detailed outline for each religion as formulated by community 'working groups', although faith representatives were involved in reviewing the draft version. Instead, a general approach is presented which applies to all the faiths. In this regard, the framework represents a marked departure from the New Right communitarian phase, attempting to provide instead an educational perspective that transcends the specific position of each religion. In doing so, the framework is closer to the Schools Council *Working Paper 36* of the liberal period, suggesting a general outline for educators to follow, with vestiges of the six dimensions of religion still persisting in the contents suggested. The framework also incorporates the use of 'themes' for each age-group, with teachers encouraged to explore both similarities and differences between faith traditions, evidently in order to deflect the controversies the marginalizing of the concept raised in the neo-conservative period.

Another significant departure from previous approaches is the lack of an explicitly discernible theory or ideology through which the content is selected and ordered, in contrast to the application of fulfilment missiology, phenomenology, or the 'theology of closure' which characterized the previous periods. In a broad manner, the framework combines generalized phenomenology ('learning *about* religion') with an experiential perspective ('learning *from* religion'), the former enquiring into the nature of religion in terms of beliefs, teachings, practices, ways of life and forms of expression, and the latter aiming at helping pupils reflect on their and other people's experiences of religion, particularly as related to questions of identity, meaning, truth, values and commitment. At the same time, the framework leans towards an interdisciplinary approach in promoting spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, while also seeking to contribute to personal, social, health and citizenship education (pp. 14–15).

It is at Key Stage 3 (11-14-year-olds) that a substantive attempt begins to be made to develop the links between learning about religion and wider issues. The themes at this stage include religious perspectives on human rights and responsibilities, social justice and citizenship, including global concerns such as health, wealth, war, animal rights and the environment.

The relation between religion and science is approached in terms of issues of truth, explanation and meaning, as well as influences that inform ethical and moral choices. Also included here is a theme on interfaith dialogue, based on a study of relationships, conflicts and collaboration within and between religions as well as beliefs (p. 29). Significant to contemporary events is the aim at this level to 'evaluate the challenges and tensions of belonging to a religion and the impact of religion in the contemporary world'. Equally relevant is the objective of helping pupils investigate why people belong to faith communities and the reasons for diversity in religions (p. 28).

Taking into account these intentions, it appears that the national framework is opening up opportunities for a broader exploration of religions than has conventionally been the case, seeking to make a closer connection between religious beliefs and global realities. If applied to the particular case of Islam, the framework requires teachers to move away from reinforcing simplistic, monolithic or stereotyping images of Islam and Muslims in favour of perspectives which engage with their diversity and complexity. Past approaches in religious education, such as the phenomenological method, tended to essentialize Islam and reduce it to a core of beliefs and practices, with Western philosophical and Christian understandings determining what constituted a 'religion' (Jackson, 1997; Smith, 1978). Previous formulations were therefore inclined to subdue the relation of Islam to the political, economic, historical and cultural spheres, viewing it mono-dimensionally as a 'faith'. From this viewpoint, the dichotomy between 'religious' and 'secular' was not seen as problematic for Muslims in projecting the separation between church and state in the West straightforwardly onto Muslim contexts. Muslim history, on the other hand, reveals the complex dynamics that transpired between Islam as a spiritual and ethical vision communicated by Muhammad to his followers in seventh-century Arabia, and the manifold ways in which it became the inspirational source for a wide range of endeavours in Muslim societies and civilizations. Being subject to interpretation by human agency in all its aspects, it assumed diverse meanings and functions in different political and cultural contexts.

If translated effectively into agreed syllabuses, the national framework has the potential of helping teachers and pupils understand Islam as it evolved historically in Muslim traditions and the pluralistic complexion it assumed culturally. Practitioners in religious education therefore have the opportunity of deconstructing faith traditions as historically static entities perceived as unresponsive to external and internal impulses, conflicts and transformations.[24] Also potentially of value is the framework's invitation to explore the contemporary engagement between beliefs, values and

convictions, on the one hand, and political, economic, social and cultural structures, on the other. In the case of Islam, this aspect should lead pupils to understand the problems and dilemmas which have arisen for Muslim societies in modern times, and the various ways in which they have used Islam to address these concerns. As a final observation, the inclusion of a more granular perspective of faith traditions ought to help pupils to gain some sense of the immense diversity that exists in the Muslim world, including the plurality of interpretations of Islam and the variety of religious authorities who inform the readings of the faith.

As an overall assessment, we can discern elements in the National Framework for RE which have the potential of formulating Islam as school knowledge in fuller, multi-faceted terms than reflected in past approaches. Leading pupils to reflect intelligently on the phenomenon of 'religion' and its engagement with the world, to say the least, is urgently required in an age of global encounters. While the framework goes some way in acknowledging the complex relations between faith and the world, whether religious education at present can do justice to this conception of religion remains to be seen.

Status Quo for School-Based Islam?

Events since September 11 have provoked questions about the adequacy of the prevailing curriculum to prepare young people to address the difficult problems and issues raised by a globalizing context in which historical and modern civilizations, societies, cultures and belief systems are increasingly being forced to interact with one another. In the English context, the development of a pluralized nation, as one of the positive legacies of colonialism, has led to questions of what constitutes 'Britishness' in relation to the multiple cultural identities now to be found in Britain, and how the educational system can best help upcoming generations to create conditions for a truly pluralistic society. The 'Diversity and Identity' venture, the intent to make Islamic studies open up to intellectual reform, and the broadening of religious education reflected in the National Framework for RE, are all important steps in the need to give greater attention to the representation of symbolic identities in the educational sphere.

However, much more needs to be done from a curricular perspective if significant change in the way in which historical civilizations and contemporary societies are studied is to be realized. It would be simplistic to argue here for a more integrated curriculum by advocating that the treatment of

cultural categories be allowed to break out of their disciplinary boundaries and be approached through interdisciplinary perspectives in order to reflect the multi-dimensionality of the reality outside classroom doors. This integration, to some degree is necessary, but so too is the need for disciplinary integrity to allow topics to be elucidated through specialized frames. Curricular reform requires more than adjustments in the relation between disciplines. It also calls for substantive engagements with the representation of cultural categories in the curriculum as a whole, and the particular lenses used for such constructions. In the particular case of England, it needs to be asked how the concept of a national curriculum can be best adapted so as to acquaint young people with the emerging British society as an integral part of the European Union, and as a member of the increasingly globalized human community. The concluding chapter of the book discusses this question from the broader, theoretical perspective of the construction of culture in the school curriculum.

Notes

[1] See, for example, Coulson (2004).

[2] A study of 79 terrorists who launched five major attacks in various countries between 1993 and 2005 found that only in rare cases were madrasa graduates involved. The authors of this study conclude that policymakers' concerns regarding these institutions may be overwrought (Bergen and Pandey, 2006).

[3] Adam Luck and William Stewart, 'Call for madrassas inside state schools', *Times Educational Supplement*, 14 October 2005.

[4] 'Catholic Education Service "robustly opposes" quotas for "non-faith places" in schools with a religious character, says Chief Executive', *Catholic Communications Network*, 4 September 2006.

[5] Vikram Dodd, 'Universities urged to spy on Muslims', *The Guardian*, 16 October 2006.

[6] Speech given at the Manchester Council for Community Relations on 22 September 2005.

[7] 'The death of multiculturalism', Institute of Race Relations, 1 April 2002.

[8] *The Telegraph*, 8 May 2002.

[9] *The Spectator*, 1 May 2004.

[10] *Guardian Unlimited*, 21 August 2005.

[11] Speech given by Bill Rammell MP at Community Cohesion Event, South Bank University, 15 May 2006.

[12] The Ajegbo Report understood 'education for diversity' to refer to instruction which addressed issues around 'race', religion, culture, identity and values in contemporary Britain so as to give pupils 'a real understanding of who lives in the UK today, of why we are here, and of what they as pupils can contribute' (pp. 15–16).

[13] The first three strands refer to social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. The government expressed its intention of incorporating the fourth strand in the National Curriculum from October 2008 onward. It now features as a cross-curricular dimension entitled 'Identity and Cultural Diversity'.

[14] Speech at the international conference on 'Islam and Muslims in the world today', London, 4 June 2007.

[15] See the website of this organization at www.nasiha.co.uk/.

[16] It is not known with any degree of accuracy what percentage of Muslim pupils attend madrasas and other supplementary classes, as attendance figures are not readily available. However, many Muslim communities, mosques and other organizations are actively involved in the confessional imparting of Islam outside regular school hours (Open Society Institute, 2005).

[17] http://www.nasiha.co.uk/lessons.php.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Speech at Community Cohesion Event, South Bank University, 15 May 2006.

[20] Fran Yeoman, 'Islamic studies to be safeguarded with £1 million funding', *The Times*, 5 June 2007.

[21] This stipulation was reasserted in the 1996 Education Act and the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act.

[22] For a general assessment of the National Framework for RE, see Kay (2005). See also Felderhof (2004) for another critique of this scheme.

[23] See Chapter 5.

[24] The National Framework gives some attention to this aspect by suggesting that beliefs and concepts, including sources of authority, should be linked to 'significant events, people and changes from the recent and more distant past, and history from a variety of perspectives including political, religious, social, cultural and aesthetic' (p. 29).

Chapter 10

Recontextualized Culture and Social Implications

Culture in the Curriculum

As Raymond Williams (1961) saw it, the school curriculum in Britain as it evolved in the Victorian period, and whose basic structure got carried over into the twentieth century, was largely a compromise between three major forces of influence: the old humanists with their intransigence to the reform of the historically inherited paradigm of classical education, the industrial trainers keen to generate a new skilled workforce to meet the demands of a burgeoning manufacturing economy, and the public educators concerned with introducing universal schooling to alleviate the plight of the under-privileged classes. The combination of subjects which came to define the curriculum as a result of these influences had not significantly changed in the postwar period, noted Williams. Part of the reason for the curriculum being 'invisible' to reformists and policymakers was the prevalence of functionalist perspectives in educational thought which theorized school knowledge as organically servicing the needs of an industrializing society. From the Parsonian view of education, inspired by Durkheim's sociological functionalism, schooling was regarded somewhat simplistically as an appa-ratus for the social reproduction of the taken-for-granted norms of society.

Who defined these norms, with what justification, and how they were deployed to underpin the curriculum, were questions which only began to be raised in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the rise of the 'New Sociology' of education (Young, 1971). The emergence of what was seen as an upstart and radical discipline, drawing on a sociology of knowledge derived from Mannheim and Marx, injected into education a controversial debate by connecting school knowledge with class control. The school curriculum in Britain, so the New Sociologists argued, was largely a product of middle-class interests serving to perpetuate the social division between the classes, consigning the labouring majority to the lowest

socio-economic tier. The subjects selected in the curriculum, the teaching approaches employed, even the very language used by teachers in the classrooms, were perceived as privileging middle-class students and facilitating their entry into further education, while pupils of working class background continued to underperform academically in schools and whose education did not extend much beyond the age of 16. In the 1970s and 1980s, this line of argument was extended to include the categories of gender and 'race', with the curriculum being interrogated this time to expose the degree to which it overtly or covertly promoted sexual or racial discrimination.

At the centre of the sociology of the curriculum was the attempt to identify codes of social classification believed to be embedded in school knowledge which led to the selective positioning of social groups in terms of authority, rank and privilege. The conceptual vocabulary of the sociologists came to make increasing reference to 'culture', the curriculum being viewed as a vehicle for the 'cultural reproduction' of dominant interests, perceived as mainly white, male and middle class (Whitty, 1985). This discourse, inspired by the sociology of knowledge and reinforced by arguments from the ascendant field of cultural studies, forged a close link between culture and the identity signifiers of class, gender and race. With the settlement of immigrant communities in Britain, the interest of sociological researchers soon shifted from working class experience and youth subcultures to the 'disadvantaged' culture of the *émigrés* (Burtonwood, 1986).

Following the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act, the nationalizing of the school curriculum sparked off a bout of intense debates, this time exposing the cultural restorationist discourse of the New Right underpinning the school knowledge that came to be legitimized as 'official' (Ball, 1990). Given its birth within this highly charged and politicized context, the National Curriculum has since become a contested space upon which social interests have sought periodically to exercise their influence. Since its inception, grievances have continued to be expressed by a variety of groups, from neo-conservative fractions who argue that the curriculum needs to be further consolidated to promote 'British' norms, values, history and culture, to the Liberal Left's critique of school knowledge as too insular and parochial in its outlook to the world.

The terrorist attacks of July 7 have resurrected fresh concerns about the school curriculum, this time with a focus on issues related to diversity, identity, citizenship and religion. It is interesting to note here that religion has belatedly become an identity marker attracting close scrutiny, despite the visible presence of multi-faith communities in British society and scruples about the coverage of religions in the curriculum since the 1960s. By and

large, religion has tended to be assimilated within the umbrella term of 'multiculturalism', constituting a facet of the 'culture of ethnic minorities'. From the issues raised by Islam in Britain and globally, the relation of religion to other signifiers of social designation such as 'race', ethnicity and nationality needs careful consideration.

The politics of cultural representation, then, is not simply an academic debate stirred up by educators disgruntled by imbalances perceived in the curriculum, or more broadly, with how the educational system positions cultural groups. It is fuelled by major social and political dysfunctionalities which exist nationally and globally, and to which education is viewed as contributing in no insignificant respect. Passions are additionally excited by the potential which education offers, if remedied of its deficiencies, of a fairer world with greater understanding and parity between people of different backgrounds. Culture, as an intensely disputed concept, is now the central issue over which the battle for the curriculum is being waged. It is not surprising to find then, given what is at stake, that the debate on school knowledge has become highly polarized and charged. At one extreme, we find the splintering of the debate into standpoint subjectivity arguing for a curriculum which caters solely to the specificities of the local, the situational and the circumstantial. At the other end prevails a dogma of canonical closure, based on civilizational, historical or national justification, which refuses to face up to social plurality (Ladwig, 1996; Moore, 2007).

From any reasonable point of view, it would be irresponsible to adopt either of these stances in the changing reality of a pluralistic, globalizing age. If one of the central aims of education in plural, liberal societies is to prepare young people by helping them contextualize the national demography as it intersects with the wider global diversity, then it becomes imperative to approach culture in the school curriculum as an area of open enquiry, review and deliberation, instead of through pre-set or stock notions. At the very least, it requires an engagement with the curriculum, both as a whole and in terms of single disciplines, with a view to comprehending how cultural knowledge, understood broadly as dealing with the symbolic representations of social identities and diversities, is imparted. This endeavour necessarily calls for, as a precondition, some understanding of the influences and interests operating on the curriculum, and the processes through which culture comes to be 'officially' defined and legitimized as school knowledge. Equally essential is the need to grasp the dynamics through which it becomes pedagogically recontextualized in the curriculum, how it is framed, and the potential and actual impact it has on student perceptions, outlooks and relationships, and therefore ultimately on social outcomes.

Spheres of Influence

The study of school-based Islam in this work has drawn attention to three major spheres of influence, by no means exclusive, which operate on the recontextualizing of cultural categories and their emplotment in the curriculum as a symbolic space. These different forms of influences are exerted through epistemic determinations of culture in the intellectual arena, the interventions of status groups on the representation of their symbolic identities in pedagogic discourses, and the official governance of school knowledge through the policy regulation of cultural forms in the curriculum. The significance and implications of these operative forces are discussed below from the perspective of the sociology of the curriculum.

The foremost sphere of influence that shapes culture in the curriculum, through the governance of the symbolic space, is the state. How political power and control operate in curricular regulation constitutes a core concern in the theory of cultural recontextualization. The 'hard' view of the state considers it as a cohesive and coercive force in cultural reproduction. Bourdieu (1998) for example, as we have seen, presents the state as a complex concentration of physical force, economic leverage and cultural resources through which it exercises exclusive legitimacy on the use of physical and symbolic violence on its subjects. Through the direct regulation of symbolic classification in the pedagogic field, the state induces ideological and moral conformism that reinforces an implicit consensus on how the world is to be understood. Apple (1995), on the other hand, cautions against portraying the state in abstract generalized terms, since the educational policies established by it are more often than not an outcome of conflicts and compromises within its various levels, and between it and multifarious social forces, such as unions, professional organizations, subject associations, special interest groups and other lobbies. While the regulative field in liberal, plural societies may be catalysed by political and social forces to move resolutely towards enacting specific policies, their actual legislation may degenerate into an unwieldy and unpredictable process because of the need to find compromises between competing claims, but also due to the semantic difficulty if not impossibility of phrasing the measures in terms which have a single, unambiguous meaning. The formulation of the religious education clauses in the 1988 Education Reform Act illustrate Ball's (1994) observation that policy making is subject to interpretation at every level, and through the play of serendipity, embedded with deep tensions if not irresolvable contradictions.

Stuart Hall's (1981) conception of the state, bridging to some degree the absolutist and differentiated notions, sees the regulative machinery as a major site of ideological struggle over meaning where cultural forms are disorganized and reorganized through a process of articulation and disarticulation. This struggle consists of attempts to win new meanings for particular concepts or practices and to disarticulate other principles and ideas from their location in competing discourses. In Hall's view, cultural power, as an aspect of the conflict between dominant and subordinate classes in society, is secured through a constant and vigilant policing of boundaries between symbolic categories.

Approached from this angle, England offers an interesting example of a state that has swung from one extreme of a liberal, devolved curriculum to the other of centralized control over school knowledge in the post-industrial period. For much of the twentieth century, the school curriculum remained on the whole a 'secret garden' which was privy only to the teacher as professional in the classroom, the state by and large exercising a policy of non-intervention, except in the single case of religious education. The 1988 Education Reform Act forced a radical reversal in this policy, the sea change being attributed to factors such as falling standards in schools and the lack of educational and professional accountability. However, a primary motive behind the legislation was the need to regulate school knowledge which had 'degenerated' into multiculturalism, an outcome linked to the settlement of immigrant communities in the postwar period. This intervention reveals the post-colonial state reacting adversely to the cultural representation of new identities in the curriculum, an issue which was perceived as needing to be addressed through the legal machinery of the state. The 1988 Act was, in some of its aspects, an orchestrated reaction to the liberalization which promoted multiculturalism, including multi-faith 'mishmash', aimed at reasserting the 'national identity' which the New Right alleged had been corroded by the settlement of immigrants in the country.

From the perspective of modern educational history, the centralizing of the curriculum in Britain, in essence, was a belated measure to forge the link between nationhood and school knowledge, a connection which many nation-states had instituted at the point of their formation or not long afterwards in the modern period. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nascent states were quick to appropriate education as a potent means of creating and reinforcing a sense of national consciousness through cultural reproduction (Gellner, 1983). Anderson (1991) provides further insight into this process by identifying education, along with other factors, as

assuming a crucial role in engendering a unifying national identity to yoke together disparate ethnic, religious and cultural groups into the 'imagined community' of the nation-state. In the age of the sovereign nation, schools became important sites for the promotion of 'national' religions, languages, histories and other symbolic constructions through the elevation of the hegemonic culture at the expense of others which were marginalized, subdued or gradually erased. In England, the act of nationalizing the curriculum in the late twentieth century resulted in greater weight being assigned on the whole to the teaching of British history, literature and culture in the curriculum, including a renewed emphasis on Christianity in religious education.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 7 July 2005, the case has once again been advanced for greater intervention by the state in education, as reflected in recent critiques of faith schools and multiculturalism. The review of school knowledge has been prompted once more by the troublesome question of how to anchor in the national life diasporic communities who express transnational allegiances to alternative sources of social, moral or religious norms. As we have seen in the previous chapter, one of the proposals recently resurrected is based on domesticating 'foreign' culture in education through the promotion of 'Britishness', a concept which itself has been at the centre of intense debate and dispute. As a result, policy drives on culture in the curriculum as they pertain to issues of 'diversity and identity' have been emplotted in the framework of nationality, with a heavy emphasis on citizenship. The debates on what it means to be British, and the challenge of identifying 'shared values' which are specifically British, reveal some of the difficulties in rooting civic obligations directly in bounded and set definitions of nationhood and 'national' culture in a plural, liberal society (Ajegbo Report, 2007). This problem is exacerbated in an age when conceptions of the 'nation-state' are experiencing some degree of transformation through regional unities and global collaboration.

In cases where national identities are being reconfigured through internal differentiation and external interfacing, the question inevitably arises on the adequacy of nationalized or nationalistic curricula in preparing young people for global co-existence. While national identity continues to be an important signifier, education is now being called upon to formulate it in more nuanced terms than has conventionally been the case, contextualizing it within the networks of unities and diversities materializing within and across national boundaries. In this respect, restrictive and fragmentary treatments of cultural categories with global significance in compartmentalized disciplines invites reviewing. Symbolic knowledge, in particular, is

vulnerable to state regulation intent on promoting unified identities in its own nationalistic interests, resulting in interventions which may produce a skewed view of the world. Such a tunnelled vision of global plurality may also result from the state altering the balance between cultural segments in terms of their weighting, and more significantly, in terms of the degree of insulation or integration permissible between symbolic boundaries. Emerging conditions require a creative reconstruction of how best the curriculum can do justice to the location of the nation as an interdependent entity in a closely networked globe in order to prepare the young for a more sophisticated reading of the world.

The second sphere of influence identified in this study pertains to the role of status groups and their stake in the curricular representation of their symbolic identities. The findings of the enquiry suggest that these groups play a far greater role in the recontextualizing of cultural categories than allowed for in theoretical frameworks in the sociology of the curriculum. The example of religious education shows that the more frontally a subject deals with the social identities of status groups, the greater will be their claims over the control of their symbolic representation in the curriculum. The study confirms Bourdieu's observation that '[d]ifferent classes and class fractions are engaged in a specifically symbolic struggle to impose the definition of the social world most in conformity with their interests . . . The field of symbolic production is a microcosm of the struggle between the classes' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 115).

Status groups as a critical category of influence have not been given sufficient attention in the sociology of the curriculum due to the preoccupation with class-based analysis in the 1970s, and later, with gender and race. Weber, as noted earlier, describes these groups as being concerned almost exclusively with the concepts of honour and prestige, and effectively equipped to attain material and symbolic goals through collective mobilization. Status groups which cut across social classes draw upon sentiments and identities that owe little to the fluctuations in the division of labour, and therefore produce greater solidarity than the diffused affiliations characterizing class-based outlooks and aspirations. As moral communities, these collectivities continually seek to maintain and reinforce a distinct sense of their own specific identity and of the symbolic boundaries distinguishing them from others, particularly if these self-constructs are centred on national, racial, religious or ethnic allegiances. Power is mobilized through 'social closure', a process by which 'outsiders' are restricted access to certain attributes and resources over which the status groups have sole possession. Exclusionary social closure results in these groups securing for themselves

self-privileging resources and advantages at the expense of other competitors. Weber sees the educational system as a potent agency for guarding and controlling admission to the 'charmed circle' (Parkin, 1982).

In Britain, as in other contexts, status groups have aligned themselves or been aligned with identity markers such as class, 'race', gender, sexual orientation or religion. These signifiers have shaped British education in fundamental ways, its nineteenth- and twentieth-century history being predominantly a narrative of class conflict. The formative endeavour in the creation of state education was to a significant degree conditioned by sectarian struggles between Christian denominations seeking to exert their influence over both the public and private sectors of schooling. In the postwar period, the preoccupation with the education of the working classes, and in the 1980s, the increasing focus on gender and race issues, highlights continued concerns on the need to address social imbalances and cultural grievances in the educational system. In the post-September 11 phase, it is new religious groups, notably Muslim communities, who have come under consideration, a category largely invisible in educational debates in the immigration period.

The study on Islam points to the close relation between status groups and symbolic representation in education, whether at the institutional or curricular levels. This relationship is not a modern phenomenon – mass education has been instrumental to communities of tradition in proselytizing their creeds in past ages and societies. What is new to the modern age is the displacement of these groups from their traditional responsibility of edificatory pedagogy in the public sphere – a function which has largely been taken over by the state – leading to reactive moves by radical splinter movements, such as the Christian Right, to reclaim that portion of the curriculum in which they can reassert their values and identities. Under these conditions, such groups are prone to exploit the cultural capital of established structures and their historical associations with institutions of power in order to achieve their ends. Modern radicalized tendencies are symptomatic of the increasing vulnerability felt by ultra-conservative sections of traditionalist communities in the face of rapid social change who view alternative traditions as promoting subversive knowledge, especially when given expression and legitimacy in the public pedagogic space. The introduction of innovative cultural categories of symbolic import in the curriculum arouses high anxiety in these fractions who, consequently, may seek political intervention at the national policy level to stem or reverse curricular change.

The findings of this study indicate that the social field has the potential of exerting a powerful influence on educational policy and practice in

being integrally linked to issues of equality or identity. These principles in turn are influenced by whether the social order is conceptualized in terms of homogeneous or differentiated social identities. As this enquiry has revealed, status groups have skilfully deployed the discourse of distinctive identities in pressing national policymakers to exert tighter central control over the curriculum, while justifications based on cultural parity have been used to argue for greater power to be devolved to local agencies. Established groups are better positioned to exercise this influence and to secure forms of cultural reproduction more conducive to their interests by virtue of their symbolic capital, with marginalized communities finding themselves having to contend with compromises or suffering exclusions from the symbolic arena. Under these conditions, the rhetoric of 'innovation', 'progressivism' and 'mish-mash' serves as effective polemic for radical conservatives, targeted at 'dangerous knowledge', to reassert the dominance of traditional forms of knowledge. The professional class, on the other hand, regard the involvement of status groups in education as unnecessary communitarian interference. Whatever the scope of this opposition, the influence of stakeholding agencies, ideological movements and special interest lobbies cannot be discounted, as illustrated by the rise of the rightist ideological coalition in the 1980s. These aggregates have a significant bearing on how cultural categories are reproduced in the symbolic field, and are especially prone to mobilization in times of perceived social and political crises.

The third of the major forms of influence on cultural recontextualization, as revealed by the present study, originates from the academic professional class located in the intellectual field. Bernstein (1990) considers this arena as the primary site involved in symbolic production, the field of knowledge where the boundaries between the 'thinkable' and the 'unthinkable' are defined, raising the question of the basis on which categories of legitimate and forbidden knowledge are determined and the influences acting on this process. Bourdieu (1988) theorizes the intellectual context as subject to both external social and political pressures, and internal struggles over discursive hegemony which condition the types of social knowledge produced.

The case study on Islam suggests that the construction of subjects dealing with social representation and symbolic identities in the academic sphere is particularly susceptible to the socio-political context. These subjects are not produced in a cultural vacuum, as perhaps might be the case to some extent with formal and empirical disciplines such as mathematics and the natural sciences, but are very much an outcome of the prevailing policy

discourses of different historical periods. Regulative principles of equality during liberal governance have therefore inspired an epistemological search for common, underlying structures between homologous cultural categories, leading to the deployment of philosophies such as phenomenology and structuralism which attempt to explicate the underlying essences and grammars of manifestations perceived as being universal. In contrast, regulative principles of identity in neo-conservative contexts have privileged epistemologies which are more concerned with casting cultures as 'pure', discrete and uniform systems whose integrity has to be maintained if their meaning is to be understood. Conservative theologies subscribing to separatist studies of religions are one example of such approaches.

The production of cultural knowledge is also conditioned by internal struggles in the intellectual field over discursive control, as pointed out by Bourdieu (1988). The cases of comparative religion and religious studies in the English intellectual field furnish illustrations of the tensions raised by innovative disciplines in established academic contexts. New cultural formulations may require the creation of separate academic niches, usually in institutions which are located on the fringes, in order to find expression. The establishment of these spaces may not transpire without some form of protracted struggle over the issues of academic authority and legitimacy, underscoring Bourdieu's conception of the intellectual field as the 'locus of a struggle to determine the conditions and criteria of legitimate membership and legitimate hierarchy' (p. 11), a field in which the process of academic classification is viewed as embedded in social classification.

The influence exerted over the pedagogic field by new or established academic institutions and their specialized disciplines is affected inevitably by the political context, with innovative approaches likely to be received more favourably in liberal than conservative periods, as illustrated by the case of multi-faith religious education. The construction of cultural content, involving the inscribing and emplotment of the narratives, identities and relations of social groups, is particularly susceptible to influence by the politics of representation. This form of theorizing is more prone at times of political crisis to being conditioned by the Foucauldian relation between power and knowledge, with the portrayal of marginalized identities subject to reductionist discourses.

The example of Islam shows that the recontextualizing of cultural categories in the intellectual field does not entail a simple extraction and grafting of specialized disciplines from their indigenous sources. Symbolic discourses are conditioned by prevailing social and epistemic relations that substantively affect how these forms of knowledge are received and

reconstituted in the various spheres of influence, including the academic arena. The boundaries between the 'thinkable' and 'unthinkable' in relation to cultural categories are as much a result of socio-political considerations as purely epistemic ones. To some degree, epistemic constructions of culture in the intellectual field tend to be embedded in conceptions of social order or are responses to historical contingencies. Political change may spur a paradigm shift among subject specialists, leading to the elevation of subdued epistemic categories and theories into innovative curricular forms in liberalized circumstances, or conversely, their control and containment in conservative phases. Where the policy conditions become restricted through centralization, the professional class in the academic field may have its influence over symbolic categories in the curriculum curtailed.

To conclude this section, the narrative of Islam in this enquiry demonstrates the struggle over the control of symbolic discourses in the school curriculum, resulting from the claims made by the state, intellectual agencies and various status groups on cultural representation. To some degree, the project of the modern nation-state is intricately linked to its appropriation of pedagogic discourses for the purposes of cultural reproduction and the sustenance of 'imagined communities'. Conflict over symbolic categories in the curriculum arises when status groups feel a loss of ownership over pedagogic formulations of their defining conceptions through increasing control by the state. In this respect, the enquiry on Islam provides an interesting case study which illustrates the relation between a post-colonial nation-state coming to terms with its changing role and self-understanding in the modern era, and the treatment of culture in the official pedagogic space perceived as falling outside the narrative of national history, tradition and identity.

Pedagogic Renderings and Social Outcomes

The most critical of all spheres of influence which has a determining impact on the representation of culture is the pedagogic context, an arena which has been designated as the field of social reproduction in the sociology of the curriculum (Bernstein, 1990; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). The meaning implied here is that the school is more or less a passive context in which the active symbolic constructions of the intellectual field, as refracted through policy mediations, are replicated. However, the practitioner in the classroom perhaps plays as important, if not more critical, a role as other

agencies in the final determination of what constitutes cultural knowledge. As with the national and local mediating agencies operative beyond the school boundaries, including academic inputs, the teacher's pedagogy is an outcome of both constraints and possibilities. To some extent, what is teachable is predetermined by wider policies and the regulative ethos of the school, but within these parameters, what gets presented is very much dependent on the teacher's facility with and disposition towards the subject matter at hand.

At the classroom level, the practitioner's understanding of statutory policy, the curriculum-in-use, and the pedagogic method, all conspire to frame the cultural content as it is presented to students. As examined in the second part of the study, the cultural discourse of the educator is conditioned as much by the regulative ethos of the school as by pedagogic inclinations in the classroom. The philosophy of the school may lean towards the politics of identity or equality, permeating school policies as well as practice. The particular stance adopted significantly influences the profile of the schools, the emphasis placed in the curriculum, and the authority relations that obtain between teachers and students. It also affects the instructional approach of the teacher through preferences for some pedagogic methods over others, ranging from progressive to traditional instructional strategies.

The way in which culture as symbolic knowledge is framed in the classroom is heavily influenced by the interaction of these factors. The practitioner, then, is neither a passive relay nor a wholly autonomous agent in the pedagogic theatre. Rather, it is at that critical point when the teacher personally interprets and translates the mandated regulative policies into the specific instructional act that notions of culture are produced. While the regulative and structural measures may determine *what* is to be taught, *how* this content comes to be understood and conveyed by the educator plays an equally important role. The 'personal teaching style', which shapes the presentation of the curricular content, necessarily draws on internalized principles, both regulative and pedagogic, to ultimately constitute the slant adopted in the classroom. The teaching process is also informed by deeply held convictions on how the world is to be perceived, based on explicit as well as unconscious presuppositions. The final outcome, then, is a cultural reconstruction that is refracted through the lens of the teacher's understanding and perception of the world, a refraction which ensues from the enmeshing of structural, situational and personal factors.

The enquiry on Islam reveals how pedagogic interpretations of policy determinations, including the mediating steps between the two, are crucial to the incorporation and translation of cultural categories in the

curriculum. Without an adequate consideration of national and local policy contexts in which decisions about the curriculum are made, and the influences acting on these regulated domains, the underlying motives behind the selection of cultural content remain obscured. However, to vest too much emphasis on the policy context alone is also a danger because policies, even in the very act of being formulated, are subject to negotiation, and once made statutory, open to interpretation. Culture as school knowledge, over which strong differences prevail, will necessarily be subjected to translations which reflect the understandings and assumptions of individual actors, or groups of actors, as they become involved in mediating curriculum-as-policy as it makes its way to the classroom. The recontextualizing of culture may begin at the policy level, but it does not end there, setting into motion and inviting the play of multiple refractions and mediations.

Policies have a strong bearing on how culture becomes classified and where it becomes located and positioned in the school curriculum. Regulative measures 'discipline' culture by allocating it to particular subjects, thereby determining the epistemic configuration of school knowledge, as they also do through the inclusion or exclusion of particular subject areas in the curriculum. The absence of social, civilizational or global studies in the National Curriculum, for example, has had a significant impact on the approach to cultural issues, a decision taken by the New Right policymakers for fear of these disciplines promoting radical, anarchic or neo-Marxist perspectives in schools (Ross, 1995; Whitty, 1985). The degree to which hard or soft boundaries are established between the subjects further conditions the way in which culture becomes reconstructed, as is evident, for example, from programmes that opt for an integrated humanities approach and those which prefer compartmentalized disciplines. In other words, the curriculum is a policy sieve through which culture becomes filtered into school knowledge, the nature of the sieve having a significant bearing on what is included, how much of it, and where it becomes positioned.

The policy interpretations, curricular renderings and pedagogic translations combine dialectically to constitute a pedagogic discourse through which symbolic content comes to be formulated in the educational context. Cultural content as it is appropriated from the world and introduced into the classroom necessarily undergoes a process of recontextualization, being removed from one context and inserted into another. Culture as it finally becomes reconstituted in the classroom undeniably has some bearing to lived culture. However, through the recontextualizing process, it becomes diluted, condensed and reified so that, in some respects, it turns into a *virtual* rendering of reality (Bernstein, 1990). Policy directives determine

what selections of culture need to be excluded or included, curricular frameworks position culture within disciplinary boundaries, and pedagogic translations frame the final output, the latter determined significantly by factors such as the teacher's competency and outlook, the instructional time at hand, the resources available, and the profile of students being taught. The virtual culture of pedagogic discourse assumes a sense of reality through the self-affirmation of students, but ultimately their presence depends on the quality of education imparted to capture the substantiality and complexity lived culture possesses.

Under adverse conditions, the virtual culture of school knowledge risks degenerating into a pedagogic 'flatland' crudely distilled from four-dimensional reality, a simplification that leaves out much of the complexity of the real world. Even in the most ideal of circumstances, it is admittedly impossible to cover all that there is and at the depth which is ideally warranted. The topography of the cultural flatland becomes contoured by the opportunities and constraints of the classroom, punctuated by emblematic figures, places and events that are deemed to exemplify the selection of culture presented. More fundamentally, this form of pedagogic discourse tends towards the essentializing of social phenomenon, leading to the privileging of condensed categories delivered in the form of generalized concepts, beliefs, values, norms, structures, identities, practices, ways of life and other formulaic constructs. This virtuality in representation can be challenged by teachers to the degree to which they are open to exploring, while dealing with the above aspects, contrasting perspectives, diversities, issues, conflicts, interactions, transformations, contradictions and other exposures which give pupils a more sophisticated insight into the depth and complexity of historical and lived cultures.

Where the cultural content does not form an integral part of the social environment, the recontextualizing process may incline towards reifying what is perceived as the alien and the 'other'. Complexities of other civilizations, other cultures and other religions are compressed, condensed, diluted and simplified to be made pedagogically manageable. Objectivized and domesticated, the incommensurable and incomprehensible can be contained. Diversity is coalesced into uniformity through the foregrounding of 'essence', and social beliefs are disembodied of their human agency and hypostatized as totalistic, metonymic abstractions. Where a discipline is required to cover plural cultures, it may be forced to resort to a feat of 'super-condensation' through skeletal and parallelizing portrayals. Locked into a specific discipline, cultures will don on the epistemological frame the particular language game affords, and where disciplinary boundaries are

insulated, there is little possibility of employing multiple viewpoints which an intelligent reading of culture demands.

Virtual cultures tend to be frozen in time, either in the past or as they exist today, with little movement between the two. Tracing the motion of societies over historical periods means examining the unwieldy play of social continuity and change, a perspective which does not lend itself too well within the mono-dimensional flatland of classroom representation, other than perhaps in the subject of history itself. The essentializing of cultures, the need to define their boundaries and to package them into manageable pedagogic topics, may also lead to an avoidance or overlooking of the 'grey' areas – the intersecting, overlapping, hybridized manifestations that have emerged out of social exchanges since groups of human beings first started to engage with one another. Virtual constructions may incorporate the story of encounter but without fully exploiting the points at which cultures have been altered or at times fused to produce new symbolic forms.

Subjects form subjectivities. School knowledge shapes attitudes, outlooks and social relations. Virtual culture risks producing virtual subjects and relationships. Condensed, diluted and superficial constructions of culture projected onto societies and communities may jar or clash severely with real life encounters and engagements outside the ambit of the classroom. At best, this form of education will produce an anodyne 'multiculturalism' where unique identities and multiple diversities are perceived as an inconsequential potpourri, the flurry of a plural society. At worst, it can engender stereotyping, bigotry and demonizing of cultures which have not been understood as fully fledged 'webs of significance', to borrow Clifford Geertz's expression here. Mono-dimensional and curtailed renderings of the 'other' may accentuate their alterity, rather than reveal insights into their humanity.

Under the emerging conditions, policymakers, specialists and educational practitioners are beholden to ask how best the young can be prepared to live in a world where cultures manifest themselves as intersecting, dynamic complexes constituted by multiple, contextual identities. Among other things, it requires reviewing the defining of identities and cultures in the framework of the nation-state, a political concept which continues to be central but is becoming increasingly problematic in serving as the sole base in which to embed cultural perceptions and orientations. National attachment in the global age may be more appropriately approached in the matrix of the multiple allegiances individuals express in diverse settings, which include gender, ethnicity, class, religion and sexual orientation, nationality being one of these signifiers. Patriotic nationalism, especially if expressed

as an exclusivist and jingoistic demand, needs to take into account the changing position of the state in its new location within wider boundaries being recast by regionalization and global linkages, leading to growing encounters and interactions between people of diverse backgrounds in every sphere of life.

National education, then, has a choice between perpetuating the insular, parochial and hypostatized constructions of culture which were particularly suited for the age of confrontations, or fostering outlooks informed by sophisticated cultural literacies that can read intelligently into the changing political and socio-economic realities and the cultural diversities reflected in the complex self-representations of individuals and collectivities today. National education can also engender greater cultural understanding through a more open approach to history through which the role of the nation-state is critically examined as a modern construct, including its impact on societies and communities across the globe. Diversities and identities cannot be locked into citizenship education without a frontal discussion of issues which divide or bind people as a result of historical and contemporary interactions between civilizations, states, religions, cultures and other social complexes.

At the least, education attuned to a plural world requires equipping youngsters with skills to deconstruct the crude stereotypes engendered by deficient forms of school knowledge, whether these are presented through history, geography, religious education or other social study disciplines. If stereotypes are products of the homogenizing tendencies in the curriculum which project 'essences' on entire masses of people, they need to be challenged through deconstructive strategies which provoke students to question the assumptions on which their perceptions of societies and communities are built. It is by no means being argued here that the world be reduced to atomized and individualized self-representations and that commonalities be facilely dismissed. Rather, cultural intelligence has the capacity to approach unities as susceptible to multiple and transformative expressions, whether approached historically or in contemporary terms. More significantly, cultural literacy requires the self-questioning of biases, and what factors within the social and political environments, in the domestic, communal and public spheres, are engendering these colourings.

Cultural sensibility can foster an informed understanding of a pluralistic world through dialogical encounters and engagements with the 'other'. Here, the tendency has been towards a contrived 'empathetic' understanding of cultures different from one's own, leading to the retention of unexamined views on alterity that feed into hidden biases. Cultural education

must be robust enough to engage students in a critical study of their own and other people's experiences if greater trust is to be built between social groups. Unquestioned histories, traditions, practices and encounters treated as 'no-go' areas have a tendency to feed into inflammatory situations when instead a safe channel for expression of views can be created in the pedagogic space. This suggestion may appear to be controversial and sensitive in dealing with subjects such as religion, but teachers can draw here upon the self-critique that exists in each tradition to generate discussion.

The practitioner's approach is crucial to the reform of cultural pedagogy, but much also depends on the way the school curriculum is defined. Disciplines are configured in ways which determine how the world becomes framed. Rigidly compartmentalized subjects may tend to produce 'boxed' subjectivities which approach the world from static, ossified and divisive viewpoints. The solution is not an integrated curriculum in which little justice is done to the specialized competencies afforded by each discipline, but nor is it a series of bounded subjects which pretend to have little to do with one another. If the curriculum as a whole leads to constituting the epistemological foundation by means of which the world is perceived, this epistemic framework needs to be responsive to the changing realities and relationships emerging in the globalizing context. One way in which it can become more relevant is through a greater dynamic between subjects to allow for a multi-dimensional treatment of cultures, instead of the bounded study that currently dominates the school curriculum. Interdisciplinary perspectives invite the development of viewpoints which are reflective of the complex nature of cultures as they interface with multiple facets of social endeavour. In addition, dedicated subjects such as civilizational, global and cultural studies stand to make a valuable contribution to the curriculum if their aims and content are soundly identified.

Perhaps the most significant of factors that needs to be reviewed is the process through which policies on culture in the curriculum are formulated. Past policy implementations related to plurality have been more reactive than responsive to issues of cultural diversity, ranging from strategies of assimilation and integration to the co-opting of communitarian support. The recent attempt to address issues of identity and diversity through citizenship education has been provoked more by an assumed social crisis than the need for a long-term vision of British society. Constructive measures on cultural education need to be initiated and consolidated on an ongoing basis, backed by the furnishing of quality resources and training, rather than one-off interventions introduced in the peripheral niches of the curriculum.

It is equally crucial to take into account how the different forces which have a stake in cultural representation can be channelled into constructive purposes, a critical need which this enquiry has illustrated. Past attempts at the reform of cultural categories in the curriculum reveal the struggle by various agencies, whether governmental, academic or communal, to exert a controlling determination on symbolic content in the curriculum. Ventures based on greater dialogue and debate between various stakeholders offer better prospects for balanced and enriched treatments of symbolic identities presented through school knowledge. Much depends, however, on the degree of openness and critique brought to bear within these platforms when the cultural content of the curriculum is under review, as it does upon the inclusion of voices representing differing views among stakeholders.

The study on school-based Islam in England reveals that the journey from the 'unthinkable' to the 'thinkable' in the curriculum is a long and torturous one, but this leap from 'us' to the 'other' has never been so necessary in modern education as it is now required, in an age when the forces of extremism at both ends of the spectrum need to be overcome through more penetrating ways of understanding unities and pluralities.

Glossary

adhan	The call to the daily ritual prayer.
akhira	The life to come after physical existence.
akhlaq	Character, morals and innate dispositions; more generally, ethics or the science of virtues and vices.
akhlaqiyat	See akhlaq.
alhamdulillah	'All praise is due to Allah'; an expression of praise and gratitude.
anbiya'Allah	The prophets of Allah.
ayat	'Signs'; verses of the Qur'an.
Barelwis	Followers of a Sufi influenced Sunni movement that arose in India in the nineteenth century under the leadership of Ahmad Riza Khan, emphasizing the pre-eminence of the prophet Muhammad.
Bohra Isma'ilis	Adherents of a branch of Shi'a Isma'ilis upholding the claim of al-Musta'li, the younger son of the Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Mustansir (d. 1094), as his successor.
dar al-'ulum	Literally, 'abode of knowledge'; a higher institution or college for religious sciences and other subjects.
da'wa	Call, invitation or summons to the practice of Islam; the mission of proselytizing the faith to Muslims and non-Muslims.
Deobandis	Sunni Muslims belonging to a revivalist movement originating in colonial India, with its centre in Deoband, emphasizing the observance of the sunna and the shari'a.
derveshis	Sufis; Muslim mystics or ascetics.
din	Religion; way of life.
du'a	Prayer of appeal, invocation or supplication, offered on behalf of oneself or others.
fatwa	In Islamic jurisprudence, a formal opinion on a religious, social or legal issue rendered by a Muslim jurist or scholar with appropriate training and status.

fiqh	Jurisprudence; the science of religious law in Islam.
hadith	Account or report; traditions of the prophet Muhammad, based on his sayings and deeds.
hajj	Annual pilgrimage to Mecca; one of the five pillars of Islam.
halal	In Muslim law, anything which is lawful or permitted.
Hanafi	A Muslim belonging to a school of Sunni law based on the teachings of Abu Hanifa (d. 767).
Hanbali	A Muslim belonging to a school of Sunni law based on the teachings of Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855).
haram	In Muslim law, anything which is forbidden.
hasanat	Good or commendable deeds.
hijab	Women's head cover or body garment worn to observe the principle of modesty.
hijra	The migration of the prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE.
hujjat al-wida	The final pilgrimage to Mecca performed by Muhammad in 632 CE.
ibada	Act of worship, service or devotion to God; legal prescriptions dealing with practices of the faith.
ijma	The consensus of the learned community of religious scholars on a legal matter; the third source of Sunni law, after the Qur'an and the sunna.
imam	A religious leader or a leader of congregational prayer; an honorific for a religious scholar; in Shi'a Islam, a spiritual leader descended from the hereditary line of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law.
imama	Office and function of an imam; the institution of hereditary spiritual leadership in Shi'a Islam.
iman	Faith in God.
al-insan	The human being.
in sha'Allah	An expression meaning 'If it is God's will'.
Islamiyat	The subject of Islam or Islamic studies in a curriculum or syllabus; a term used in Pakistan and other Muslim contexts.
Isma'ilis	Adherents of a branch of Shi'a Muslims who consider Isma'il, the eldest son of the Shi'a imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765), as his successor.

Ithna 'asharis	Literally, 'Twelvers', the majority branch of the Shi'a Islam; Shi'a Muslims who acknowledge 12 imams in linear succession from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.
Ja'fari	A Muslim belonging to a Shi'a school of law originating in the teachings of the imam Ja'far al-Sadiq.
Jamaat-i Islami	Political party and revivalist organization founded in Lahore in 1941 by Abu'l-a'la Mawdudi (d. 1979).
jihad	Literally, 'exertion' or 'striving'; just war and other forms of striving to safeguard the practice of Islam and the safety of Muslims; inner struggle for moral and spiritual purification.
Ka'ba	A cube-shaped building in Mecca considered by Muslims as the foremost sanctuary for the worship of Allah. It is also a focal point of pilgrimage, as well as representing the direction in which Muslims turn in prayer.
khilafa	Caliphate; a form of governance under the political leadership of a caliph.
khutba	A sermon or address in a mosque, generally given during the Friday service or on special occasions.
madhahib	Plural of madhhab.
madhhab	A school of religious law; more generally, a doctrine or creed.
madrasa	Institution of higher learning for the study of religious law and ancillary sciences; Qur'anic school; institution imparting Islamic education on a formal or supplementary basis.
al-mahdi	'The rightly guided one'; a term applied in Muslim eschatology to the restorer of true religion and justice expected at the end of time.
maktab	Elementary school for children, traditionally delivering basic education in Muslim contexts.
mala'ika	Angels.
Maliki	A Muslim belonging to a school of Sunni law based on the teachings of Malik ibn Anas (d. 796).
Mariam	Arabic equivalent of Mary.
masjid al-nabi	The mosque of the prophet Muhammad in Medina.
maulvi	Title given to religious scholars.
mi'raj	'Ascent'; the ascension of the prophet Muhammad to heaven.

mu'amalat	Matters in Muslim law regarding social and communal relations, commercial and financial transactions, and other contractual exchanges.
Mughal	Muslim dynasty in India established in 1526.
Nizamiyya	A type of madrasa introduced in the Seljuk period by Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1092).
Nizari Isma'ilis	Isma'ilis who give allegiance to Nizar, the eldest son of the Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Mustansir (d. 1094), as his successor.
nubuwwa	The concept of prophethood or prophecy.
nuqta	Dot, point.
pir	'Elder'; Sufi master or sage.
qadar	Destiny, fate or predestination.
qiyas	Judicial reasoning by analogy; the fourth source of Sunni law after the Qur'an, sunna and ijma.
Ramadan	Ninth month in the Muslim calendar; the month of annual fasting.
riba	Usury or interest.
risala	Message, mission; the sending of messengers by God.
Rusulullah	The messenger of God; a title of the prophet Muhammad.
sadaqa	Voluntary alms or charitable giving.
Salafi	A follower of a reformist movement originating in Egypt in the late nineteenth century aiming to revive Muslims through a return to the tradition of the pious and exemplary figures of early Islam.
salat	The prescribed ritual prayer; one of the five pillars of Islam.
sawm	Fasting; one of the five pillars of Islam.
sayyi'at	Evil or condemned deeds.
Shafi'i	A Muslim belonging to a school of Sunni law based on the teachings of Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad al-Shafi'i (d. 820).
shahada	'There is no deity except God, Muhammad is the messenger of God'; Islamic confession of faith.
shari'a	A way or a path; a prophetic religion in its totality; a body of legal opinions and pronouncements on religious, moral and social matters in Muslim traditions; more narrowly, rules and regulations governing Muslim life.

Shi'as	Muslims belonging to Shi'a Islam, the second largest denomination of Islam after Sunnism; Muslims who follow the imams descended from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib as hereditary religious leaders.
shirk	The ascribing of partners to God; polytheism or idolatry.
shura	A consultative or advisory body.
sifat	Attributes of God.
sira	Biography; traditional account of the prophet Muhammad's life and background.
siyam	Another term for sawm or fasting.
Sufis	Muslims who follow the path of mystical understanding and devotion to God.
sunna	Custom or practice, particularly as associated with the life of Muhammad, comprising his words and deeds as recorded in the hadith.
Sunnis	Muslims belonging to the majority branch of Islam; followers of the sunna of the prophet Muhammad.
sura	A chapter of the Qur'an.
Surat al-fatiha	The opening chapter of the Qur'an.
Surat al-hijr	The fifteenth chapter of the Qur'an.
Tabligh-i Jamaat	A Muslim proselytizing and revivalist movement founded in India in the 1920s.
tafsir	Exegetic interpretation; explanation or commentary on the Qur'an.
tariqa	Path, spiritual discipline; religious order or brotherhood.
tawhid	The foundational belief in the oneness and uniqueness of God; monotheism.
ulama	Scholars of religious law, theology and other traditional sciences.
umma	Community; the concept of the Muslim community as a whole.
Wahhabis	The dominant group of ultra-conservative Sunni Muslims in Saudi Arabia, whose interpretation of Islam is based on the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1791).
yawm al-akhir	The final day of judgement.
zakat	Obligatory alms-giving; one of the five pillars of Islam.

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