Professional Development Opportunities for Muslim women teachers in Canadian Islamic Schools

A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research explored the professional development experiences of six Canadian Muslim educators within Canadian Islamic schools. A gap in the literature exists concerning teacher education and professional development within Canadian Islamic Schools, and effective methods for integrating an Islamic Canadian curriculum. My research questions sought to explore the professional development opportunities available to Canadian Muslim teachers in Islamic Canadian schools, exploring their effectiveness in meeting teachers' needs and how or whether they addressed the challenges teachers encountered.

The conceptual framework combined Vygotsky's educational approach with Social Identity Theory, along with the Fogarty Integrated Curriculum Model in tandem with the Integrative and Holistic Education Model, to grasp the importance of creating an environment, and having access to a curriculum, in which to nurture Muslim-Canadian identity among teachers and students. The participating teachers brought diverse backgrounds in terms of experience, school settings, grade levels, and geographic locations across Canada. This diversity added depth to the research. Through semi-structured interviews, light was shed on the professional development opportunities for Muslim teachers in Canadian Islamic schools.

Thematic Analysis revealed three key themes. Firstly, teachers emphasized the importance of bridging theoretical knowledge with practical experience to better address their challenges. Secondly, science and religion need to be balanced in Canadian Islamic schools; presently, integrating secular subjects with Islamic teachings comes with difficulties. Finally, the research highlights the importance of implementing holistic educational strategies to nurture a cohesive Muslim-Canadian identity and facilitate students' smooth integration into Canadian society.

Despite limitations including limited literature on professional development in Canadian Islamic schools and the exclusive contribution of Muslim female educators in the study, the research provided valuable insights and recommendations for future research and practice to enhance effective PD programs to better meet the needs of Muslim educators and students.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette recherche qualitative a exploré les expériences de développement professionnel de six éducateurs musulmans canadiens, au sein d'écoles islamiques canadiennes. Il existe un manque dans la littérature concernant la formation des enseignants et le développement professionnel au sein des écoles islamiques canadiennes, ainsi que les méthodes efficaces pour intégrer un programme d'études islamique canadien. Mes questions de recherche visaient à explorer les opportunités de développement professionnel disponibles pour les enseignants musulmans canadiens dans les écoles islamiques canadiennes, en explorant leur efficacité à répondre aux besoins des enseignants et comment, ou si, elles répondaient aux défis rencontrés par les enseignants.

Le cadre conceptuel combinait l'approche éducative de Vygotsky avec la théorie de l'identité sociale, ainsi que le modèle de programme intégré de Fogarty en tandem avec le modèle d'éducation intégrative et holistique, pour saisir l'importance de créer un environnement et d'avoir accès à un programme dans lequel on développe l'identités musulmane canadienne chez les enseignants et les étudiants. Les enseignants participants venaient d'horizons divers en termes d'expérience, de contextes et de niveaux scolaires, ainsi que d'emplacements géographiques à travers le Canada. Cette diversité a ajouté de la profondeur à la recherche. Grâce à des entrevues semi-structurés, la lumière a été faite sur les opportunités de développement professionnel pour les enseignants musulmans dans les écoles islamiques canadiennes.

L'analyse thématique a révélé trois thèmes clés. Premièrement, les enseignants ont souligné l'importance de relier les connaissances théoriques à l'expérience pratique pour mieux relever leurs défis. Deuxièmement, la science et la religion doivent être équilibrées dans les écoles islamiques canadiennes ; à l'heure actuelle, l'intégration des matières laïques aux enseignements islamiques se heurte à des difficultés. Enfin, la recherche souligne l'importance de mettre en œuvre

des stratégies éducatives holistiques pour développer une identité musulmane-canadienne cohérente et faciliter l'intégration harmonieuse des étudiants dans la société canadienne. Malgré les défis, notamment une littérature limitée sur le développement professionnel dans les écoles islamiques canadiennes et la contribution exclusive des éducatrices musulmanes à l'étude, la recherche a fourni des informations et des recommandations précieuses pour la recherche et la pratique futures, afin d'améliorer les programmes de perfectionnement professionnel efficaces, pour ainsi mieux répondre aux besoins des éducateurs musulmans et étudiants.

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CHAPTER ONE
Islamic Perspective of Education

Literacy is of paramount importance in the religion of Islam. According to Islamic belief, the proof for this claim is found in the first verse (and, by extension, the first commandment) of the Qur'an, the Muslim holy book, revealed to the Prophet Muhammed wherein he is exhorted to read. *Iqr'a* إقرأ, a divine command translated as "read" in Arabic, was the first divine word spoken to the Prophet Muhammed, not once, but twice in the verses below to emphasize the importance of literacy. To wit, Surah[1] 99:1-5 of the Qur'an states:

> *Read! In the Name of your Lord who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not.*

The Arabic etymology of the word "read" in the above verse also implies the concepts of "learning" along with "exploring" and "seeking enlightenment" (Abuarqub, 2009). In general, reading is a pathway for acquiring knowledge, the foundation of education, but in the Islamic context, knowledge has two dimensions: the temporal (the seen, or physical, world) and the spiritual world (the unseen world, the world of the grave, heaven, hell, the angels, the devils, the throne of God, and, most importantly, of God Himself). In verse 9 of Surah 39, named *Az-Zumar,* the superiority of possessing knowledge is recognized: "Are those who have knowledge equal to those who do not have knowledge?"

The theme of education, we note, is emphasized repeatedly throughout the Qur'an, the first and primary source of knowledge to Muslims (M. Abdalla et al., 2018). Education and the value

[1] Surah is an Arabic word meaning 'chapter' in the Quran

of knowledge is also highlighted in the hadiths[2] (the corpus of the traditions and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad), the second most important source to Muslims (M. Abdalla et al., 2018). A few hadiths narrated by the Prophet Muhammed substantiate this point:

> *The search for knowledge is an obligation laid on every Muslim*. (Book 2, Hadith 20)
>
> *Allah makes the way to Jannah easy for him[3] who treads the path in search of knowledge*. (Book 12, Hadith 17)
>
> *Envy is permitted only in two cases: A man[3] whom Allah gives wealth, and he disposes of it rightfully, and a man to whom Allah gives knowledge which he applies and teaches it*. (Book 12, Hadith 2)

There is a prominent emphasis placed on education in both the Qur'an and the hadiths of Islam, as shown above. In light of this, Muslims consider seeking knowledge to be an integral part of their lives and a lifelong pursuit.

From the Islamic perspective, we can aver then that a person is considered fully educated if one possesses knowledge of the sensory realm (that is, the world apprehended by the five senses) and of the spiritual realm (that is, the unseen world revealed by divine revelation). In this respect, Canadian Muslim parents face a dilemma when trying to provide their children with the best educational opportunities, especially practicing Muslim parents who value Islamic cultural and religious education (Tiflati, 2021). Tiflati (2021) discusses the dilemma of choosing between Islamic and public schools that many Muslim parents confront. Since most Islamic schools in

[2] Hadith is a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad; it includes his sayings and deeds, and his tacit approval of what was said or done in his presence

[3] In Islamic terminology (in Hadiths or verses of the Quran) the words 'him' or 'a man' in most cases is gender neutral (referring to man or woman) unless stated otherwise

Canada lack government funding, many parents worry about not only about the quality of education provided but also the lack of religious–oriented curriculum.

Islamic schools rely solely on the Muslim community's financial help to fund their scholastic endeavors. Public schools, on the other hand, are fully funded by the government; however, these public institutions fail to provide in their curriculum the Islamic cultural and educational values many devout Muslim parents desire for their children. In Islamic schools, language, culture, and religion are preserved, while in public schools, while education is most likely superior, education referring to supplementary educational programs and material, as well as providing additional specialised staff for special needs cases, language, culture and religion are lacking. This is the struggle many Muslim parents experience.

When we speak of Islamic beliefs and cultural values, we refer to varying practices inclusive of daily recited prayers, modest outerwear, gender segregation during certain activities, respect for oneself and for others (especially for teachers and elders), halal[4] meals, celebration of Islamic holidays[5] or special times such as the birth date of the Prophet Muhammad or the month of Ramadan, and much more. Islamic beliefs and values also entail explicit references to Islamic teachings. Such lessons would be based on the guiding resources for Muslims: the Qur'an, God's divine revelation, and the Sunnah, which is the Prophet Muhammad's way of life and legal precedents (Brown, 2009). The Qur'an alone provides a plethora of stories and lessons, prophetic stories, sayings about individual responsibility to oneself and to society, worship and belief systems, spiritual values, laws, moral teachings, and so on (Rahman, 2009). All together these curricular components make Islamic schools unique, distinct from public schools. Moreover,

[4] Halal is Arabic for permissible. Halal food is that which adheres to Islamic law, as defined in the Qur'an. The Islamic form of slaughtering animals or poultry

[5] Islam has two official holidays: Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha.

Islamic schools often implement dual-curriculum programs as they include additional subjects, such as Qur'an, Islamic Studies, and Arabic (Douglass, 2004); Dual-curriculum refers to the integration of Islamic studies courses (including Arabic, Qur'an and Islamic history and ethics) along with the standard provincial academic curriculum (Memon, 2019). This education system has been developed to support the holistic growth of Canadian Muslims through academic, spiritual and moral teachings.

Strengthening Islamic school systems and finding a balance between the Canadian curriculum and Muslim identity, has always been a passion of this Islamic educator. I am a Muslim Canadian woman who has lived in Canada her entire life and who loves teaching in Islamic schools. The lack of material support to Islamic schools is not a problem I can fix alone, however working to improve the Islamic education system is something to which I know I can contribute, in the hope of helping parents choose the best school option for their children. But to make a difference in Canadian Islamic schools, it is essential to explore and understand the history and current situation of these schools and the Muslim community in Canada.

A Brief History: The Muslim Community in Canada

Canada prides itself on being the land of immigrants, "known for its ethnocultural and religious diversity" (Statistics Canada, 2022). Millions of people choose, and continue to choose, Canada as their new beginning. Statistics Canada (2022) has reported that, in 2021, "almost one quarter (23%) of the population" was made up of immigrants. This means, almost one in every four people has been a landed immigrant or has acquired permanent residency in Canada.

Canada is a diverse country that is home to numerous public and private schools, including faith-based institutions. According to Statistics Canada (2022), in 2020, over 5.7 million students were enrolled in Canadian public schools, private schools, or were being homeschooled. While

most students attend public schools, over 7.6% of students choose private schools, and this percentage continues to grow. Between 2018 and 2020, private school enrollment alone increased by 1.7%.

After Christianity, Islam is the most practiced religion in Canada. Adherents comprise a cohort of 1.8 million practitioners, that is, 1 in every 20 people (Statistics Canada, 2022). Between 2001 and 2021, the percentage of Muslims in Canada more than doubled, from 2.0% to 4.9%. Parallel to the growth of the Muslim population has been the significant increase in Islamic schooling, especially in the past two decades.

Islamic Schools in North America

For the many Muslim families who settled in Canada, preservation of their children's Islamic identity was a key concern (Zine, 2007). Muslim parents/guardians often collaborated with one another, arranging opportunities for their children to attend supplementary Islamic schooling to help preserve their children's Islamic and cultural identity, practices, values, and mother language (Momen, 2010; Zine, 2007). "These schools attempt to create a 'safe' environment that protects students from the 'de-Islamizing' forces in public schools and society at large," Zine, (2007) explains (p. 39). In 1978, the first Islamic school was established in Toronto. The number of Islamic schools then began to increase exponentially following each wave of immigration during the mid-1990s, after 9/11, and during the Iraq and Syrian wars (Muhammad, 1998). Islamic schooling includes evening and weekend schools and traditional full-time day schools. In the 1970s and early 1980s, this schooling consisted mainly of evening and weekend classes. In 1982, the first Islamic school was established in Mississauga, Ontario (under the tutelage of the Islamic Schools of North America; hereafter referred to as ISNA). Several schools were later established, including the BC Islamic schools in 1983 and the Maritime Muslim Academy in 1984, followed by Quebec's first Islamic school in 1985, Les écoles musulmanes de Montréal (Memon, 2009).

The most popular form of Islamic schooling in North America is private Islamic schools. These private institutions in Western countries are still experimenting and trying to find the best system of education possible for their children (Mabud, 2018). Abdul Mabud (2018) discusses the kinds of environments fostered in Islamic schools in North America. He notes that Islamic values are respected, that students' self-confidence as Western Muslims is strengthened, that there are opportunities to appreciate their own faith, traditions and cultures and that they learn the basics of their religion, while learning everything else public schools offer. Mabud notes that this dual-curriculum approach represents an admirable step towards integrating two sources of knowledge: religious and Canadian. There appears to be, however, a disconnect between the theory and practice of this dual-curriculum approach in many Islamic schools (Memon et al., 2021). Additionally, a lack of research on teacher education, specifically best practices to implement a dual-curriculum approach unique to the Islamic schools context, continues to be a problem (Memon et al., 2021).

Before turning to that problem, it is important to understand various Arabic concepts and beliefs with respect to education. Amzat (2002) identifies two derived from the Qur'an that are directly related to education. The first concept is *tarbiyah*[6], referring to organized activity that focuses on the holistic development of students; this includes physical, psychological, emotional and intellectual development. The second concept is *ta'leem*[7], which refers to general knowledge that can be gained through non-formal, direct or indirect methods. Islamic pedagogies emphasize the roles of educators and the importance of their training to allow them to become caring and loving teachers to their students (Abidin, 2018). The term *rubban*[8] in the Arabic terminology refers

[6] Tarbiyah: *an Arabic term which focuses on the holistic development of students; the physical, psychological, emotional and intellectual development*
[7] Ta'leem: *an Arabic term referring to general knowledge gained directly through structure or indirectly through non-formal methods*
[8] Rubban*: an individual who is responsible over younger students; considered a role model and a mentor*

to educators, those who take care of young learners. They are expected to be mentors and roles models for their students, contributing to their *tarbiyah* and *ta'leem* (Amzat, 2022). Muslim students in Canadian Islamic schools should be taught by *rubban* (educators) who have undergone teacher education, post-graduate programs, school-based training and have access to ongoing professional development opportunities that cater to students' needs, both individual and collective (Memon et al., 2021).

This thesis will focus on Canadian Islamic schools where academics (the secular aspect) and religious studies are taught synergistically to provide Muslim students with a holistic education. However, one major problem is lack of support for teachers teaching in Islamic schools in Canada.

The Void

Despite the growth of Islamic day schools, there is a lack of teacher training opportunities for Muslim educators in Islamic schools. Faith-based teacher education programs already exist for other religions in several regions of Canada. For example, York University in Toronto, Ontario, has a Jewish Teacher Education Program, which is a joint Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor Education program. This program was created to prepare teachers to gain insight into the teaching of Jewish language and traditions while maintaining the Ontario curriculum so they can successfully balance and integrate both (n.d., 1998). A Jewish Teacher Training Program has also long existed in the Faculty of Education at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, since 1973 (McGill University, n.d). King's University College at Western University in London, Ontario, offers a CST Program (Catholic Studies for Teachers), giving their future teachers a solid foundation for becoming educators within Catholic educational institutions (Kings UWO, n.d.). The University of Toronto also offers a course that is a requirement for all teachers applying to Catholic school teaching

positions; the course prepares teachers by exploring Catholic worldviews using "foundational pedagogical documents in the Ontario Catholic educational community" (OISE, n.d.).

These are just a sample of faith-based teacher education programs in Canada. We can state with certainty that precedents exist for non-Islamic faith-based teacher training programs across Canada. It is important to note that Muslim teacher training programs exist outside of North America. For example, at the University of South Australia, a Graduate Certificate in Islamic Education is offered, which strives to study Islamic education while supporting national education priorities (UNISA, 2023). Warwick University in the UK offers a master's degree in "Islamic Education: Theory and Practice," a program that merges Western with Islamic approaches to education, enabling Muslim educators to become reflective research-based experts (Warwick, 2023). However, no such programs exist in Canada for Muslim teachers aspiring to teach at Islamic schools, thus creating a void for their training and professional development.

Unlike other faith-based schools, Muslim educators teaching at Islamic schools in Canada hold a Bachelor of Education degree, which is generic to all teachers, but which (as noted) lacks the specific training they require to teach effectively and holistically in Islamic schools. A one-year professional certificate, Islamic Teacher Education Program (ITEP) once existed between the University of Toronto OISE and Razi Education for several years, specifically 2011 to 2017 (Memon et al. 2021). However, it was discontinued for unknown reasons.

Focus of My Research

Significance of This Study

I am a Syrian-Canadian English as a Second Language (ESL) educator. I have taught English at various academic levels in Islamic schools across Ontario and Quebec. These teaching experiences were personally enriching and informative. I had the pleasure of working with

amazing colleagues from whom I learned a great deal and built professional relationships. These experiences also helped me gain insight into Canadian Islamic schools and shaped my future goals in the professional and academic field of teaching

However, my experiences were not without challenges, which included a definite lack of preparation and support in terms of professional development opportunities as a Muslim teacher. Despite teaching for several years, I did not receive any professional training to help fulfill my role as a Muslim teacher in an Islamic school. I wondered if this professional shortcoming was unique to me, or if other Muslim teachers have faced similar challenges. My research thus focuses on one aspect of Canadian Islamic schools: the professional development opportunities in Canadian Islamic schools for Muslim teachers, or the lack thereof. This thesis explores what kind of professional development opportunities are offered to the Muslim teachers in these schools and the extent of each teacher's professional development experience, particularly *as* Muslim teachers. This research thus aims to paint a picture of the teachers' professional needs along with their challenges, this so as to best support their teaching practices.

After an extensive search of germane literature (literature was not easy to locate), it became clear that an important gap exists in professional development for Muslim teachers in Islamic schools. Alkouatli et al (2021) note that very limited research has been done on the embedding of teaching and learning models unique to Islamic schools within teacher education programs. By acknowledging the gap and opening a conversation in this direction, I aspire to create opportunities and deeper conversation among Islamic schoolteachers, administrators, Ministry or Education policy-makers and researchers regarding the structure of Islamic schools and the professional support offered to teachers. First and foremost, my research intends to open a dialogue between Muslim teachers and policy-makers. My goal is to contribute to the creation of a specifically designed professional development program for Muslim teachers in Islamic schools. More ways

to include this area of research in teacher education programs in Canadian universities also need to be sought.

Research Questions

The research questions that have guided this research are:

1. *What opportunities in professional development are presently available to Muslim teachers at Canadian Islamic Schools?*
2. *What professional assistance do Muslim teachers in Canadian Islamic Schools need to best support their teaching practices?*
3. *What are the challenges Muslim teachers in Islamic Schools experience?*

Thesis Layout

Chapter One provides a brief introduction to the research focus, outlining the research questions that steer the study, highlighting the urgency of this research.

Chapter Two provides an overview of my personal narrative, sharing autobiographical details. Incorporating autobiographical narratives into my research posed a challenge, as it required revisiting and recollecting memories from my past. Nevertheless, given that the origin of this study stemmed from my personal, professional, and educational encounters, it was imperative to share these memories, as they served as the spark for this research.

Chapter Three explains the conceptual framework underpinning this study, describing its two constituent areas: professional development and curriculum. The professional development foundation is supported by two theories: The Social Identity Theory and Vygotskian theories. The curriculum foundation draws support from two curriculum models: Robin Fogarty's Integrated Curriculum Model and the Integrative and Holistic Education Model.

Chapter Four outlines the methodology of this study. It explains research design decisions, which included opting for a qualitative research approach, applying semi-structured interviews as the

data collection method, and describing the data analysis process. Furthermore, it provides insights into the study group, offering descriptions of participants and the setting in which the research took place.

Chapter Five describes the thematic analysis that was applied to this research. It begins with an overview of each participant's professional development background; subsequently, it discusses the three themes identified during the data analysis process: (a) professional development opportunities, (b) the balanced equation, and (c) the Muslim bubble.

Chapter Six engages in discussion of the structural framework of this study, including the research questions, thematic analysis, conceptual framework and interpretation of the data in light of these. Additionally, my concluding reflections on this study will be presented, along with research limitations and future implications.

CHAPTER TWO
My Story

People's interest in research can be sparked by a number of factors, one of which is personal experience (Merriam, 1988). By sharing our stories, we can see the distinctiveness of our experiences, yet we are also able to make connections to other people's experiences and make meaning of it all. As Zahra (2001) says,

> A direct contact with our own life stories is for us a way to self-knowledge and, beyond that, an entry to wisdom. Thus, any event is contingent on a narrative, and any single narrative is contingent on a wider narrative context (p. 4).

I am also aware that my experiences, beliefs, and assumptions may influence my research, therefore, the sharing of my story is part of maintaining transparency.

The Beginning

Born to Syrian Muslim parents, the only place I can recall as my childhood home is a small town in Hamilton, Ontario. In 1998, my parents made the tough decision to move to a new country where they were compelled to adopt a new language and culture and an entirely different lifestyle. As Muslims, we were an identifiable minority in Canada. I rarely saw other women wearing the hijab[9] on the streets of my town. Adapting to these changes was a significant challenge for our entire family.

I loved the earlier years in my public schools. Despite being the 'kid from another planet,' everyone was amicable and did their best to be inclusive. In grade six, however, my computer teacher found it amusing to call me "Bra" the entire year. Even though I continued to correct him,

[9] Hijab: a head covering worn by some Muslim women in public

his rudeness permitted other kids to also mock my name. I had never been so conscious of my being different. I wished I was in a place where everyone was like me, with Arabic names, the same head covering, and similar backgrounds. The only Islamic school in the city was too costly for my father to afford. It was also known to have poor quality education. For these reasons, my parents did not find this option worthwhile for me.

I pushed through middle school, anxious to move on to the next stage of my academic life. Islamic high schools did not exist at that time in Hamilton and still do not exist. I had dreams of attending the ISNA Secondary School, a top-rated Islamic high school in Mississauga, Ontario. Unfortunately, due to its distance from our home, I had to settle for a public high school instead. Every week day, it took me 45 minutes to travel to a high school in downtown Hamilton, one which was known to have a vast Muslim population. I hoped I would feel at home there. For the most part this school was great, despite a few teachers who persisted in making religious and cultural remarks.

At this school, many Muslim girls wore the hijab and abaya[10], while a dedicated room was set aside every Friday for prayer and a sermon, drawing over a hundred students. The halls were filled with Muslims, and for me, it was an immensely gratifying feeling to finally be in an environment where students looked, spoke, and behaved like myself.

Despite the dominant culture of our new homeland, my parents made sure our household maintained a Muslim identity. We practiced speaking Arabic at home, read the Qur'an and Islamic books together, watched Arabic TV, read Arabic novels, and stayed close to the Muslim community. Concurrent to these activities, I was becoming active in Canadian society. It was important for my parents that we became successful Canadian Muslims, balancing the tensions of

[10] Abaya: a loose dress worn to cover the entire body (head to toe) by some Muslim women

the hybrid culture in which we lived. Moving to a different country and facing many difficulties, my parents, like many other immigrants to Canada, dreamt of better futures and more significant opportunities for their children, all the while maintaining their Muslim identity. As a young Muslim woman, my parents always supported me and pushed me to achieve my dreams.

"Innocence"

That is the meaning of "Bara'ah" "براءة" (ba.ra:.ʔa), my name. It is a unique name even for Muslims. Unfortunately, after the first incident I encountered in grade six, the worst question you could ask me was, "What is your name?" I dreaded this question throughout my school years. In university, during Introduction to Sociology, the professor was known to ask students their names if they raised their hands and wanted to participate. Countless times I remember wanting to raise my hand; however, I never did. I did not want to face the humiliation of repeating my name repeatedly for the professor to learn how to pronounce it. Despite the linguistic challenges my peers and elders had with my name, I loved my name. I knew the beauty behind its meaning and the importance of it in the Qur'an. Yet, I hated having to teach it to others and having no one pronounce it correctly. It was not until two incidents at McGill University that I uncovered many hidden feelings. The first incident occurred with Professor Strong-Wilson in the *Autobiographical Approaches to Education* course.

During one of Strong-Wilson's writing prompts, I had written about the grade six incident with the computer teacher. As I read my story to my group, I began crying, realizing how much I hid from that day, just so I could ignore the question, "What is your name?" Another incident that made a considerable impact on me was with Professor Blane Harvey. On the first day of class, he called out our names and when he came across my name, he struggled; I answered him. He asked me if he had pronounced my name correctly. I told him hastily, "No one says it right, so pronounce

it however you please." He refused and demanded I pronounce it the way it should be pronounced. "Ba – ra – ah" I answered, and he repeated it perfectly. The joy and excitement I felt were unimaginable at something so small and simple and yet so grand and important. From that day forward, I decided to stop hiding and demanded that people pronounce my name correctly.

As a Teacher

After completing my university studies, I decided to apply to Islamic schools. Public schools all over Canada have countless applicants seeking teaching positions. In contrast, Islamic schools have a much smaller pool of applicants. Coming from an Islamic household, I knew I could be an asset to the Islamic school system and so I applied for a teaching position. I wanted to be the incredible Muslim Canadian teacher to whom kids could relate and by whom they would be inspired. And I succeeded!

Every Islamic school I have taught at has had a similar ambiance of becoming one extended family. Islamic schools are usually relatively small compared to public schools. Everyone knows each other. In many instances, teachers and the parents of their students are family friends. From personal observations and experiences, Canadian Islamic schools foster a congenial and culturally sensitive learning environment for most teachers and students, like one big happy family, and many pride themselves on maintaining such an atmosphere. It was an atmosphere within which I was comfortable and happy. It was such a nice feeling to be amongst *a family* that understood you, allowed you to be who you are, and with whom you could connect.

As noted in Chapter One, parents mainly put their children in Islamic schools to maintain an Islamic identity while also merging them into Canadian society. Islamic identity is defined and developed through ritual daily prayers, culture, language, and values. Despite my positive experiences as an educator, there were many situations where I felt professional development (PD)

was necessary for myself and my colleagues; examples of these situations will be shared throughout my thesis. Throughout my several years of teaching in Ontario Islamic schools and Quebec Islamic schools, I did not attend a single PD session to better my skills as an educator; more specifically, none as a Muslim educator in an Islamic school.

Memories as a Teacher

In 2015, I was the ESL teacher at an Islamic elementary school in Ontario, and I was expected to assess every student's reading level at the beginning of the school year. To my surprise, there was no preparation or training to complete such an assessment. I was given a sample that had been prepared by another teacher, and I was instructed to reach out to her if I had any questions. Despite the lack of institutional guidance, I was determined to understand and learn how to tackle such an assessment. Although I completed the task successfully, professional training would have eased the execution of my task and reduced the time required to accomplish it.

From 2015 until 2023, I witnessed other incidents that could have been avoided through appropriate PD. Islamic schools seek teachers with teaching certifications and Islamic backgrounds that suit the position at the Islamic school. However, it is often the case where many teachers are recent immigrants, or older immigrants, they may still be practicing outdated teaching techniques by, for example, having misbehaving students stand in the hallway outside the classroom. This form of correction may lead to several students standing in the hallway. Moreover, such teachers tend to adhere to a teacher-centered model or direct teaching, using paper and pencil, instead of integrating technology or employing newer hands-on or student-centered teaching techniques. Witnessing these practices led me to conclude that if immigrant teachers who did not attend university in Canada were provided with proper PD to serve their needs including modern

teaching techniques and assistance in classroom management, many such problems could be avoided.

At the Islamic elementary schools I taught at in Ontario, teachers referred to Islamic teachings throughout all subjects. They would often discuss the curriculum with one another and share many ideas and suggestions to improve it. On the other side of the spectrum, I saw this happen rarely in the Islamic schools I taught at in Quebec, whether in elementary or secondary schools. At one school, teachers relied primarily on the given curriculum, and seldom made references to Islamic teachings such as Quranic teachings, hadiths, and other prophetic stories. Even when they made mention of them, teachers often failed to grasp their significance or how to apply them in a meaningful way. They believed that Islamic references should be limited to Qur'an and Islamic Studies classes. However, the few teachers who truly understood Islamic teachings recognized the value of incorporating them into other subjects and would do so in their classrooms, but they were in the minority. Incorporating an Islamic perspective into various subjects is an important teaching tool because it speaks to the culture and values of the student body. Neglecting this tool in teaching certification programs or professional development opportunities offered to Islamic schools, creates a significant gap in the Islamic education system.

In 2017, during a family visit to the Greater Toronto Area, I was present at a mosque when a young lady approached me. I soon realized she was a student from the Islamic elementary school where I had previously taught. After catching up with one another, she began to share with me her experiences of culture shock in high school. Even though Canadian-born, she attended a private Islamic school throughout her primary years. She later attended a public high school, and it was then that she experienced culture shock. She made critical statements such as, "I did not feel like I belonged," "I did not know how to make friends and build relationships at first," and other

hardships along the same line. I heard similar problems in 2021 when I met with a previous student in Montreal. She had graduated from secondary school and moved on to Cegep[11] . She was experiencing the same issues: difficulty developing rapport and making friends, fitting in, and feeling a sense of belonging. Initially, I didn't give much thought to these issues. However, when multiple people brought up similar experiences, I realized they were prevalent in Islamic schools.

As an educator within the Muslim community, I feel it should be mandatory for teachers to teach strategies that will ease the integration of the Muslim-Canadian identity for students. This would enable us to effectively convey knowledge to our students, providing them with the necessary resources and experiences to transition into the next stage of their lives successfully.

As a Researcher

After only my third year of teaching in two Islamic schools, I realized I wanted to see a change in teacher training, and that I wanted to be at the forefront of this pedagogical transformation as a change-maker. During the course of my employment, I observed a significant gap was causing severe problems for Muslim teachers and students. Some of these problems included an inability to prepare and teach the curriculum in an Islamically-friendly manner, lack of communication strategies with students and parents, and no Islamic knowledge for many important matters.

I had not attended a single PD after three years of teaching. Why not? No tailored PDs were offered to Muslim teachers. Why not? I began wondering about this gap. I wanted to learn if other Muslim teachers shared the same feelings and experiences. Had they received adequate professional development opportunities that catered to their unique needs? Were they provided with *any* PD? The only way to make a change is to start somewhere, and that is when I decided to

[11] Cegep: Quebec College of General and Professional Teaching

apply for a master's program in educational leadership. Within any school organization or company, decision-makers lead change. I wanted to be one of them. After having begun my journey into this research, I found myself asking: do I want to focus on leading an Islamic school or joining PD policymakers? This is a discussion for a later place; I return to it in my Conclusion.

For change or improvement to occur, I first needed to understand what other Muslim teachers experienced. To this end, I conducted semi-structured interviews with Muslim teachers. I discovered other teachers were having similar thoughts, experiencing comparable situations, and facing similar challenges and needs. In her recent work, Samina Malik (2022) advocates for teacher recruitment procedures to be grounded in clear qualifications. She emphasizes the necessity of implementing a well-structured and guided system for teacher training and professional development. This highlights the importance of offering a tailored teacher education program that supports the needs of Muslim teachers, enabling them to navigate and thrive within Canadian Islamic schools, prior to beginning their teaching roles in these schools.

As a Canadian Muslim Mother

I have been blessed with three beautiful children. As a mother who has lived her entire life in Canada and values her religion and culture, my husband and I have decided to place our children in Islamic schools. At the same time, it is essential that our children experience proper exposure to both the Canadian lifestyle and to Islamic values. I dream of big things for my children and hope they can be successful Canadian Muslims who confidently navigate between both identities. A large part of this responsibility falls on their teachers and their teachers' ability to work with and guide them effectively. A key factor influencing this issue is the quality and suitability of teacher training, which is essential for enabling Muslim teachers to effectively fulfill their roles in Canadian Islamic schools.

Like many Muslim mothers, I am deeply invested in providing my children with the best education possible. Recognizing the pivotal role of Muslim educators in Canadian Islamic schools in shaping our children's identities and guiding their educational journey is essential for their success. This requires acknowledging the intertwined relationship between our children's educational achievements and the quality of teachers' education and professional support, tailored to meet their needs. The conceptual framework (described next, in Chapter 3) is specifically created to address these needs and reinforce the relationship between student success and effective teaching practices, fostering an enriched learning environment for both educators and students within Canadian Islamic schools.

CHAPTER THREE
Conceptual Framework

Islamic schools or Muslim schools

It is imperative to clarify, once again, the semantic differences between "Islamic school" and "Muslim school" prior to discussing the conceptual framework for this research. In many instances, these two terms are used interchangeably in contemporary literature. Memon (2020) has defined Islamic schools (after Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005) as follows, distinguishing them from Muslim schools:

> [Islamic schools are] institutions that strive to define school ethos, curriculum, and pedagogy through the traditional sources of Islamic knowledge: the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition. Muslim schools are institutions where a learning environment conducive to Muslim dress, diet, and observance is made possible, but where no actual restructuring of the educational philosophy or curriculum of the school is considered. (p. ix)

Douglas and Shaikh (2004) further elaborate on the term "Islamic school" as a place where Muslim students are educated about both forms of academic knowledge, that is, the secular aspect of study and religious teachings. They further explain Islamic schools through four components, which include secular and religious knowledge: education *of* Muslims in their Islamic faith, education *for* Muslims, which includes the secular and religious disciplines, education *about* Islam for non-Muslims and education *in* the Islamic spirit and tradition. Another form of schooling is the traditional "madrasa" (singular) or "madaris" (plural). These are schools which focus solely on

Islamic knowledge, and which work towards educating Muslims to becoming Muslim scholars or theologians (Memon, 2020).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK BREAKDOWN

Three research questions inform my study:

- *What opportunities in professional development are presently available to Muslim teachers at Canadian Islamic Schools?*
- *What professional assistance do Muslim teachers in Canadian Islamic Schools need to best support their teaching practices?*
- *What are the challenges Muslim teachers in Islamic Schools experience?*

The conceptual framework that I developed in response to these questions focuses on Vygotskian theories on development and social identity theory. These theories will be tailored towards educators in Islamic schools for the purpose of supporting their professional development. Robin Fogarty's interdisciplinary Integrated Curriculum Model and the Integrative and Holistic Education Model will be the curriculum models that I will turn to, this to incorporate curricular integration and holistic education in Canadian Islamic Schools. Combining these theories and models to create a foundation that integrates religion and science in Canadian Islamic schools has been my goal. This chapter discusses the reasons behind choosing this conceptual framework and explains how it will support this research. By applying these theories and more, and by building a relationship between them, the needs and challenges faced by Muslim teachers in Canadian Islamic schools may be met, and educational outcomes for both teacher and student at Canadian Islamic schools may be improved. Below is a visual representation of the conceptual framework of this thesis.

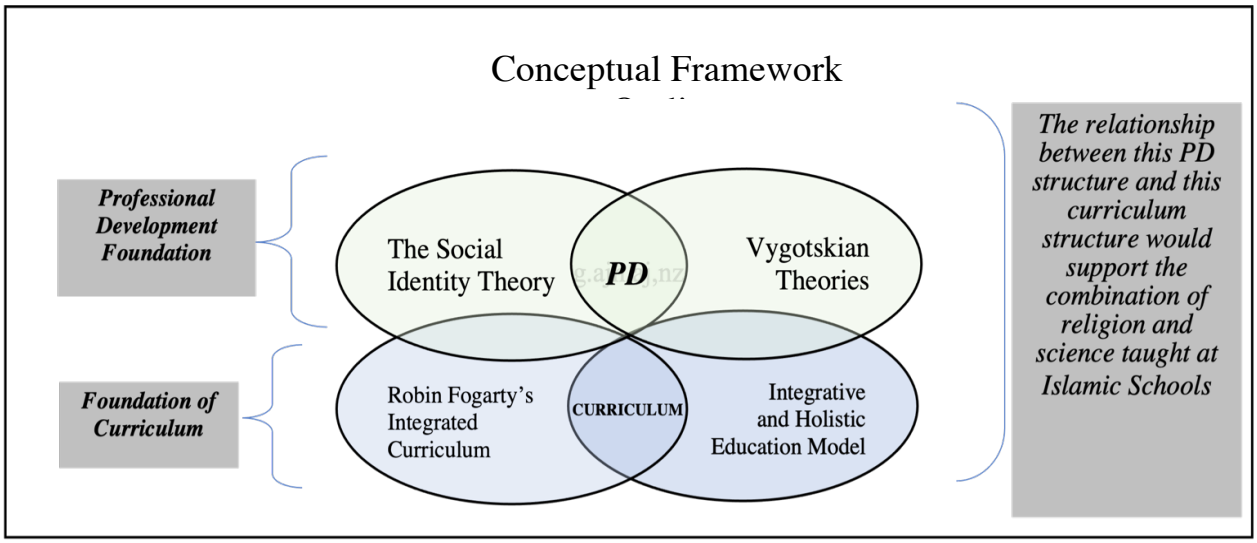

Figure 1: Visual representation of thesis conceptual framework

I. SECTION ONE

Supporting Professional Development

A successful teacher education program plays a key role in preparing future teachers who can provide quality instruction (Hadar & Broady, 2017), this because professional development is believed to be the most effective way to achieve quality education, and as a result, improve student learning (Alton-Lee & Timperley, 2008; Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003; Ingvson & Meiers, 2005). Research suggests that when professional development is specific, catering to particular practices rather than general, PD is more effective (Stanulis, Little, & Wibbens, 2012). PD must be carefully created to support the needs, concerns, and interests of the educators, in addition to the school in which they teach (Hunzicker, 2011).

Educators need to build expertise in creating a positive environment in which their students can flourish, achieve and grow (Stronge, 2018). Professional development needs to be focused on

positive outcomes for all learners (Gilchrist, 2018; Stronge, 2018). Furthermore, cultural, social and, here, religious, factors influence the development of teachers' perceptions of their role "within different cultures and societies, including the geographic environment" (Danijela, 2018, p. 33). Danijela identifies internal and external factors. External factors include learners, parents, colleagues, school leaders and the public. Internal factors, "created by the teachers themselves," include teachers' own beliefs about what is important and what is expected of them (p. 33). Hunzicker adds that teacher considerations also include their personal and professional needs along with individual learning preferences and input on what and how they will best learn. She also suggests that the effectiveness of professional development depends on its relevancy and authenticity in connecting the teacher to their daily responsibilities; there ought to be opportunities for seamless integration of professional development into teaching. Efforts to reform and re-orient teacher education based on varying theoretical paradigms has been ongoing (Van Huizen et al., 2005). Within Islamic educational institutions, the establishment of programs that nurture the faith and academic growth of both teachers and students remains a project yet to be universally institutionalized.

Valencic Zuljan (2001) has usefully defined teachers' professional development as

> ...the process of meaningful and life-long learning, in which teachers develop their conceptions and change their teaching practice; it is a process that involves the teacher's personal, professional and social dimension and represents the teacher's progress towards critical independent, responsible decision making and behavior. (p. 131)

Meaningful professional development is thus very important for teachers and their own growth; it is also vital for schools serving specific communities, when the school's academic,

cultural, or religious goals are set in a particular direction such as is the present case in this thesis. Canadian Islamic schools merge two key disciplines, science and religion, into the curriculum. Before focusing on the learners and how they are to receive such an education, it is important to the educators, who have to teach and follow the given curriculum, that they have access to professional development that allows them to accomplish this dual-discipline merger.

Because a Vygotskian paradigm focuses on the social practices of a given environment, it can provide a framework within which to ensure that the values, goals and culture of an institution align with the needs of Canadian Islamic schools. In the following section, I elaborate on this relation.

A. Vygotskian Paradigm

From a Vygotskian perspective, teachers best learn and develop through evolving participation in a social practice (Van Huizen et al., 2006). Their professional educational needs are best met in a setting where a program is developed based on social interaction and collaborative learning, shared values and goals and the use of cultural resources (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2012). Vygotsky proposes that teacher education principles be grounded on central cultural meanings, like values and goals attached to a particular setting and to be reflective of the primary activities in a school system (Van Huizan et al., 2006). Unlike Canadian public schools, Canadian Islamic schools practice Islamic values and beliefs within their school system. Their social setting is particular to their cultural and religious needs.

In teacher education, having well-defined principles outlining educators' roles, responsibilities, and skills within a school system is called for. Thus, establishing Islamic-Canadian principles that define the Islamic teacher education system can assist Muslim educators

in understanding their roles and capabilities in fulfilling their responsibilities. Educators in Islamic schools may use values and goals rooted in Islamic teachings to rationalize their purpose and abilities to fulfill their responsibilities. These values and goals can fall under four categories of principles: ta'leem[12] (direct and indirect instruction), tarbiyah[13] (fostering holistic development, tazkiyah[14] (personal growth) and ta'dib[15] (behaviour) (Memon et al., 2021).

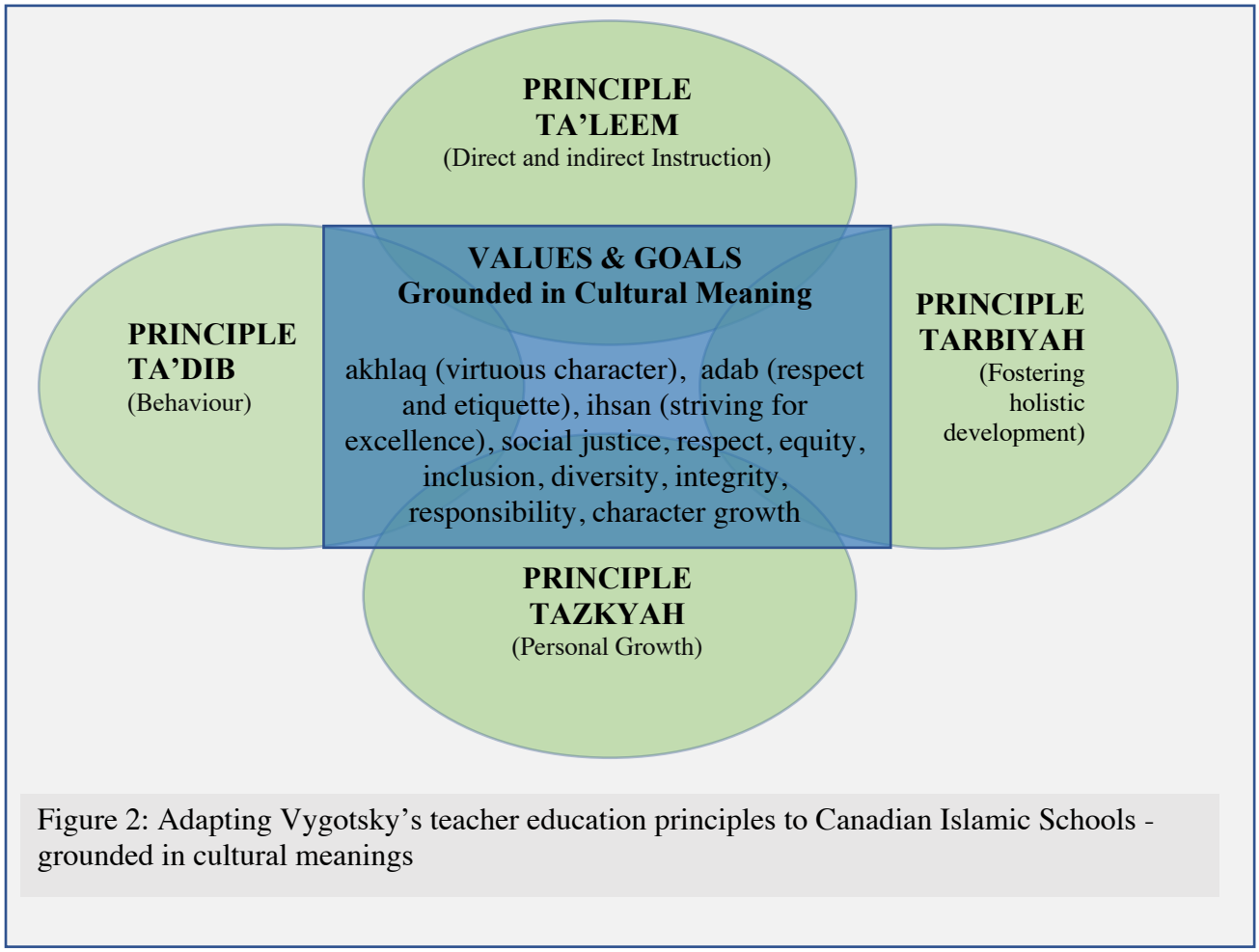

Figure 2: Adapting Vygotsky's teacher education principles to Canadian Islamic Schools - grounded in cultural meanings

[12] Ta'leem: *an Arabic term referring to general knowledge gained directly through structure or indirectly through non-formal methods*
[13] Tarbiyah: *an Arabic term which focuses on the holistic development of students; the physical, psychological, emotional and intellectual development*
[14] Tazkyah's literal meaning is purification, though the extended sense means intellectual development.
[15] Ta'dib refers to disciplining oneself to being cultured, refined, disciplined, well-mannered and trained for good behavior and manners.

Figure 2 provides a visual representation of Vygotsky's teacher education principles grounded in cultural meaning, adapted to Canadian Islamic schools. As shown above, some examples of values and goals may include: *akhlaq*[16] (virtuous character/moral conduct), *adab*[17] (respect and etiquette), *ihsan*[18] (striving for excellence), social justice, equity and inclusion, and diversity. Educators in Islamic schools can foster a positive school environment by promoting healthy behaviour through compassion, honesty, mutual respect and good manners among their students. This not only aligns with the Islamic values of *akhlaq* and *adab* but also aligns with Canadian values of respect, integrity, responsibility, and character growth. As noted in Chapter One, the significance of *tarbiyah (the nurturing of students' holistic development)* and *ta'leem (direct and indirect education)* are key concepts to education in Islam, as stated in the Quran. Additionally, as discussed before, the concept of *rubban*[19] *(educators of young learners)* in Islamic pedagogies is very important, emphasizing the crucial role of educators and their training to be able to nurture a holistic development of students (Abidin, 2018), focusing on the *tarbiyah* and *ta'leem* of the learners (Amzat, 2022). This also aligns with Canadian principles on holistic student development. Through *ihsan*, teachers are expected to strive for excellence, as in any other professions. Values such as social justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity are all common ground morals, reflected in Canadian as well as Islamic values. Islamic educators in Canadian schools can fulfill their responsibilities effectively while nurturing students to support a holistic development, grounded in Islamic values, and prepared to contribute positively to Canadian society.

[16] Akhlaq refers to disposition, nature, temper, ethics, morals, or manners, or in general a person who has good manners and behaves well. It is the plural of the word *khulq* which means disposition.
[17] Adab refers to Islamic etiquette and entails good manners, morals, and appropriate actions.
[18] Ihsan refers to the act of doing good or performing one's duties or any lawful/productive task in the best possible way.
[19] Rubban*: an individual who is responsible over younger students; considered a role model and a mentor*

Vygotsky also discusses the importance of the relationship between a particular action and its educational significance. He proposes that design, planning and evaluation of actions and performances are all guided by goals and values. According to Vygotsky's (1994) theory, the sociocultural environment is the context in which meaningful human development takes place. The term 'social' in 'sociocultural' refers to people's interactions, relationships, and activities. Cole (1996) further clarified that for Vygotsky human social practices are influenced by the psychological function at multiple levels. Vygotsky (1986) explained consciousness (which is both psychological and social) is the outcome of an internal, unified system, which includes dispositions and needs, interests and impulses, feelings and affects; consciousness also encompasses intellect and emotion.

Education involves guiding, empowering, and involving children in meaningful activities that are relevant to their cultural contexts. Through designing and implementing such activities, educators can better understand human development as a social interaction within culture. Cultural resources for Vygotsky include material objects, instruments, and tools, as well as psychological concepts, such as ideas, ways of thinking, signs, symbols, and texts (Vågan, 2011). Each learner may engage with tools differently, according to their experience with the educator, the tool, and themselves as learner. It is through the development of social relationships that individuals can engage with cultural resources and participate in social practices (Vadeboncoeur, 2017); one of those social relationships is that between educators and learners. Educators guide learners, providing cultural resources for inclusion.

B. The Social Identity Theory

Schools all over the world strive to achieve effective education and one of the main ways to achieve this goal is through teachers' developing positive relationships with students (Allen et al., 2013; Baker 1999; Roorda et al., 2011; Van Uden et al., 2014). To further understand the implications of this relationship within Canadian Islamic schools, it is important to understand social identity theory.

As already acknowledged, Canadian Muslim identity is just one of many possible identities within the Canadian landscape. In Canadian Islamic schools, Muslims practice their religion and culture freely, incorporating their beliefs into the Canadian curriculum. Teachers and students will feel a common sense of belonging to their community in an environment where an entire teacher-student body, as an ethnoreligious minority in Canada, practices one religion, the Islamic religion in this case.

Students in Islamic schools can identify one another as they are all from similar religious and cultural households and share many other personal and general characteristics. In many Canadian Islamic schools, the number of second- and third-generation immigrant students is growing. According to Canada Census Mappers, in 2022, 56.9% of students were made up of third generation immigrants and 17.6% came from second-generation immigrants, hence, the importance of a uniquely designed PD program for the Muslim teachers.

Tajfel and his colleagues proposed social identity theory (SIT) in 1978, and since then, much has evolved, with individuals categorizing themselves and others into a variety of social groups based on their identity within those groups, such as age, gender, religious affiliation, and

organizational affiliation (Tajfel, H. 1978 & Turner, J., 1978). In SIT, three principles are at its core: (1) individuals are shaped by their affiliations with social groups; (2) the collective self is defined in terms of the group and in relation to other members; (3) social identification leads to intragroup and intergroup behavior (Turner & Oakes, 1986). The term "identity" refers to how individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others (Gee, 2003). A sense of identification revolves around the concept of belonging, whereby a person is able to identify certain characteristics that help them determine where they belong and which make up membership in a particular group (Urrieta, L. & Noblit, G., 2018). As Turner (1978) has pointed out, different categories can be defined according to characteristics found in their members.

One of the ways in which the relation between culture and teacher identity has been explored is through studying the emotional and social dynamics of a classroom (Good et al., 2009). A teacher's identity is dynamic: constantly growing, changing and evolving, including in response to interpersonal relationships with others (Golzar, 2020; Leigh, 2019). Teacher identity is influenced by a number of factors, including demographics (age, gender, education) as well as sociocultural, economic, and institutional dynamics (Danielewicz, 2014; Li, 2020); too, discrimination; discrimination within close or formal relationships can affect a teacher's identity (Kachru, 1986; Jenkins, 2006). A teacher's identity plays a key role in developing teachers' professional learning (Buchanan, 2015). The concept of identity functions as a bridge between individual learning, social experiences, and their relationship with one another (Farnsworth, 2010). As identities are relational, people negotiate them through their interactions with others and the environments in which they occur (Pishghadam et al., 2022), which varies according to the students with whom they are working (Carter & Mireles, 2015). Whitaker (2019) has explained how the teacher-student dynamic works:

> Teachers should enter the profession with a keen understanding of who they are, why they are, and how they are. This is a prerequisite for understanding the who, why, and how of their students, and of implementing a pedagogy through which they can effectively educate all students, regardless of cultural or social background. (p. 13)

Teacher identity (which can be understood through the lens of social identity theory) is thus an important factor to be considered in planning successful professional development.

II. SECTION TWO

Curriculum Models

Muslim students need to be provided with practical and authentic lessons and projects they can relate to and apply, spiritually and intellectually; lessons and projects that correspond and support their Islamic and Canadian backgrounds. Canadian Islamic schools need to develop students' ability to think, reason, make decisions and relate knowledge to daily situations. It is critical that Muslim students learn how to integrate Islamic principles and Canadian culture since Islamic schools teach two components of learning: science and religion. The *Robin Fogarty Integrated Curriculum Model* and the *Integrative and Holistic Education Model* would be two suitable curriculum model options for integrating religion and science into Islamic Canadian education as these models are successfully practiced in several schools in Malaysia (Rashed & Tamuri, 2022). Each model is explained in turn.

A. Robin Fogarty Integrated Curriculum Model

The Robin Fogarty Integrated Curriculum Model, introduced in 1991 by Fogarty, a Western scholar, provides adaptable guidelines for educators who strive to integrate a knowledge base within the teaching and learning process. This integration is accomplished through similarities found in concepts, skills, values, themes or topics between different subjects. Integration in this

case means: blended, combined, or unified. Curriculum integration encourages active participation between educators and learners, thus ensuring meaningful and applicable learning. Fogarty's model can be applicable to any school, including Islamic schools. Islamic schools can benefit from this model as they are in the constant process of integrating religion with science as well as with Canadian culture.

Fogarty discusses ten models for integrating curriculum and groups them into three categories. These models are labeled: fragmented, connected, nested, shared, webbed, threaded, immersed, networked, integrated, and sequence. The first category encompasses the integration of curriculum in one discipline (models: fragmented, connected, and nested). The second category embraces the integration of curriculum across several disciplines (models: shared, webbed, threaded, integrated, and sequence). The third category refers to the integration of curriculum that works by combining the first and second categories, focusing on students' holistic development (models: immersed and networked).

These models are introduced by Fogarty under the view that, as elaborated by Rashed and Tamuri (2022):

> A curriculum is a network of teaching and learning process with the basis of student-centered approach in education philosophy. Therefore, these models clearly promote the effort to develop students' potentials through the teaching and learning of a certain content of a subject by relating it with other content in the form of integration. (p. 215)

Table 1 below, taken from Rashed and Tamuri (2022), lists the application of all ten models to an Islamic Education Curriculum in Malaysia. Table 1 provides one example of how the Fogarty Model can be applied within an Islamic school.

No.	Model	Description	Application
1	**Fragmented**	One field of knowledge discipline which is not connected with one another and separated.	*Aqidah* unit based on the Islamic pillars in the field of *aqida*h with the focus on students without relating to other topics or other fields in Islamic education to ensure students are clear on the gist of the Islamic pillars and their role as caliphs and as Allah's servants to prosper the environment.
2	**Connected**	Topics are connected in one field of knowledge or discipline.	Under the unit of purification as basic cleanliness in Islamic Education, the topic for purification concept is linked to the topic of ablution, which is under a similar field, which is *ibadah*. The concept of purification which has been learned by students is linked with the concept of being careful and economical in using water for ablution to ensure sustainability of the environment.
3	**Nested**	Learning skills is the focus in one unit or a topic of a content subject as an effort to comprehend the content of the discipline fully. In this model, the content of the curriculum is maintained as the main focus of the lesson.	Focus on a topic about the existence and the greatness of Allah in the field of *aqidah* and link to a few learning and thinking skills. Teacher inculcates problem-solving skills among students, as thinking skill is important in relating to the existence of creations in this world as an evidence of Allah existence. However, the environment is still being exploited greatly by humans.
4	**Shared**	Unit or topic is reorganized in the curriculum content of a discipline. One subject is linked to another subject with similar concepts in that specific topic or unit. The role of two teachers from different fields or disciplines should be stressed so as to organize the series of lessons of each field simultaneously.	Topic of *adab* towards animals in Islamic Education as well as the topic on living and non-living things in Science are taught in the same week so that students can connect both concepts through a few learned skills. Science and Islamic education: teachers should discuss the organization of topics that are related in the yearly lesson plan.
5	**Webbed**	Thematic approach as the basic teaching for specification of concept or idea based on the targeted theme.	The theme of environment is taught in Islamic education. Therefore, the teacher will link any information under Islamic education to elaborate the relation of the concept of environment with Islam specifically.
6	**Threaded**	Thinking skills, social skills, multiple intelligences and learning skills are similar needs of all networks for a variety of knowledge disciplines, without the need for separating among skills.	Students' skills are re-developed using a variety of approaches in Islamic education about ways which are encouraged by Islam in maintaining and sustaining environment including technology and alternative considerations.
7	**Immersed**	Students are responsible towards the integration of field knowledge of their interest. Students will filter information based on their own thinking.	Students will feel the importance in connecting the component of environment with Islamic education subject based on suitable strategy. They will share information with others to comprehend the connection of concepts.

8	**Networked**	Student' direct own integration process by being exposed to variety of sources and networks as well as become experts about different field dimensions or about a knowledge discipline.	Students are exposed to a variety of sources during the teaching of Islamic education integration with environmental education holistically in school. Students will obtain accurate problem-solving skills, positive behavior and attitude about environment and involvement in sustaining the environment with the inculcated values.
9	**Integrated**	A group of teachers cooperates in their own fields to find overlapping concepts and ideas in their teaching subjects. This is to ensure that planning of teaching unit can be done and implemented in the class.	Islamic education teachers in collaboration with teachers of different options discuss any concepts or Islamic eco-ethical values in their subjects. This is to expose students to ways to maintain the environment in all aspects of life.
10	**Sequence**	Two knowledge disciplines of two subjects are connected with one another in the terminology of concepts, ideas and skills , although the subjects are separate.	Islamic education teachers will link the gist in all fields of Islamic education with other subjects such as science to explain concepts about the environment from Islamic perspectives.

Table 1: Example of Fogarty Model applied to Islamic school from Rashed and Tamuri, 2022.

A main objective of Fogarty's Curriculum Model is to provide opportunities for meaningful teaching and for practical and applicable learning between educators and learners (Robin Fogarty Curriculum Integration Model, 1991). By organizing the curriculum of multiple knowledge disciplines in an integrated manner, skills such as metacognition and problem-solving can be reinforced with cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development (Rashed & Tamuri, 2022). Coming from Islamic households while living within the non-Islamic Canadian society, it is important that Muslim students be able to effectively navigate Canadian culture. By applying this structure, students will be able to "structure knowledge and ideas…. based on their own experience and participation in the process of teaching and learning" (Rashed & Tamuri, 2022, p. 220).

B. The Integrative and Holistic Education Model

A second possibility for an integration curriculum model is the Integration and Holistic Education System (IHES). This system was adopted in several Islamic countries, including Malaysia and Indonesia. It was developed by the Selangor State Religious Department in Malaysia to help advance their Islamic education schooling. This system is built on the educational philosophy of the Quran and Sunnah alongside all other academic subjects, where ongoing teaching and learning are a crucial core to the religion of Islam, as stated numerous times in the Qur'an.

Multiple school districts, including in Malaysia and Indonesia, have adopted this holistic and integrated approach to Islamic education, wherein each school has tailored the model to its unique academic cultural and religious needs. Each school has demonstrated great success in meeting the needs of its students and their families. Due to a growing demand for Islamic schools, their number has increased as well. Every district that has chosen to adopt this system, approached it from a particular ethnocentric angle, depending on the multiple ethnic groups that attend the school, the schedules of other schools in the area and other factors affected by their lifestyles.

The IHES was adopted in Selangor; in the Malaysian language, they called these primary schools *Seholah Rendah Agama Integrasi* (SRAI). A study was conducted on these schools by Ikhsan Othman and Norila Md. Salleh (2016). In Malaysia, common primary schools included the National Primary schools, National Type Chinese Primary Schools and National Type Tamil Schools. Islamic schools are under the governance of the State Islamic Department. The SRAI schools began in the year 2000. Starting out with just one school in 2000, by 2016, eleven schools were active. The goal of SRAI schools is to "produce pupils who are fully knowledgeable, who have stronger morals and Islamic values to achieve the righteous and to get the love from Allah"

(Othman & Salleh, 2016, p. 2). As opposed to having students attend a school which teaches only academic subjects during the day and attend another school in the evening for religious studies, which is one practice often followed, school administrators merged these two streams of learning and created their SRAI system, covering 21 subjects, both academic and religious. They found that students in the SRAI program performed better than those students who attended morning and evening schools.

Othman and Salleh (2016) from the Sultan Idris Education University in Malaysia conducted a study asking teachers, administrators, and pupils for their perspectives on various issues concerning the SRAI system and most feedback was positive. Teachers and administrators found that the co-curriculum method was proceeding smoothly. One of the issues they addressed was funding, which is an obstacle to establishing and maintaining these types of schools. Local communities all provided very positive perceptions towards the system, staff and co-curriculum. Students also provided very positive feedback towards the SRAI system, encouraging their friends to attend. Researchers of this study found that the SRAI was effective and was meeting the intended goal of the program; hence, the reason for the increase of SRAI schools.

Another district in Malaysia used the IHES model, the *Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor* (JAIS) system. They applied it using three types of approaches: instructional, investigational, and immersion. Additionally, five educational processes were practiced: teaching and learning, guidance and learning, practice and learning, advise and learning and lastly, consultation and learning. The JAIS system focused on integration and balancing life through Quranic teachings. Some teachings include: appreciation of knowledge, good character, competence and skills enhancement, academic performance and actively applying these to daily tasks (Rashed & Tamuri, 2022).

The IHES was also applied in Indonesia. The IHES was practiced in schools they called *Muhammadiyahs*. These schools have been discussed by Tasman Hamami and Zalik Nuryana (2022). Due to Indonesia's high ethnic diversity (1331 ethnic groups), every region requires a different education based on its unique characteristics, needs, and challenges. The main objective of Muhammadiyah schools is to create a curriculum that balances religious education and science subjects by integrating science and Islam. Through an interdisciplinary holistic-integrative modern Islamic education system (integrating Islamic religious sciences and general sciences), Muhammadiyah schools meet the needs of their community. Abdullah, one of their study participants, believes complex social problems can be solved by integrating religion, science, and culture. It is also possible, according to Chowdury (2018), that this integration would help educational institutions foster noble character in their students. Muhammdiyah schools believe in the following practices as core curriculum competencies (see Figure 3).

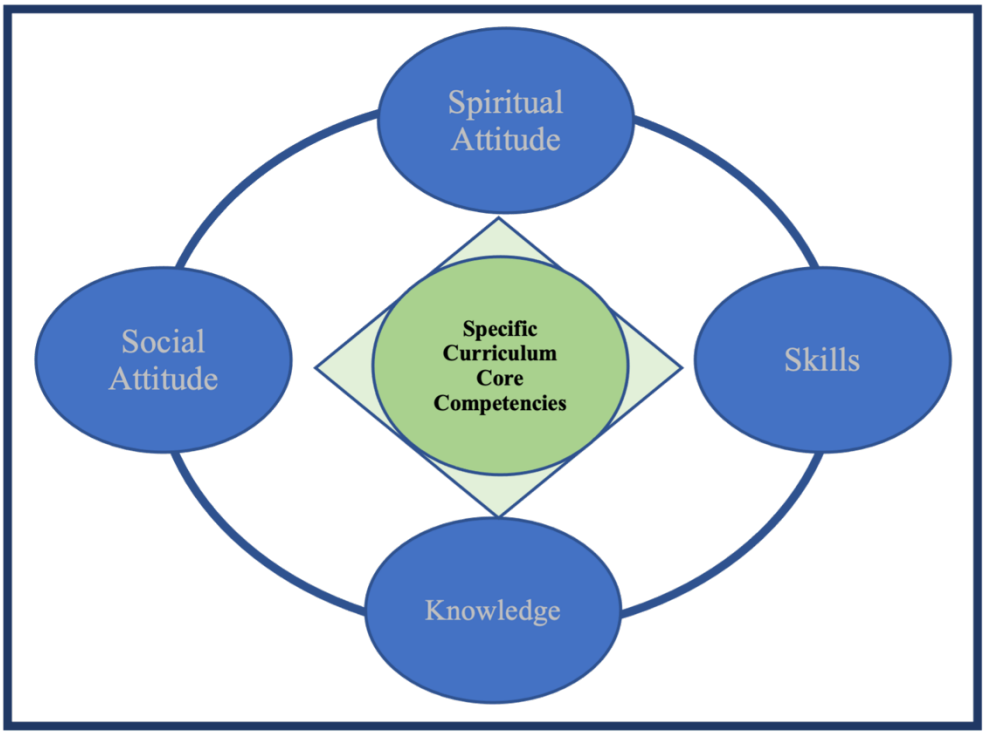

Figure 3: Special curriculum core competencies of Muhammadiyah schools

To apply the IHES approach to their curriculum, Muhammdiyah schools use an interactive-interconnected pattern between subjects, school activities, positive habits, and culture. All lessons under sciences and religion are interconnected through the materials, methods, and values taught, reinforcing their content during the learning process. To ensure goals are met, continuous monitoring and evaluation take place. Participants shared that attending Muhammadiyah schools assisted the graduates to achieve their objectives and the skills to become successful members of society with clear principles, strong determination, exemplary moral and professional traits, and the ability to advocate and contribute to the society" (Hamami & Nuryana, 2022)

The Muhammadiyah schools emphasize the importance of developing students' full potential by setting the standard for Holistic-Integrative Islamic education models to help develop good, pious, noble, and well-rounded communities. Adaptable to every school, the

IHES model has been used and tailored for each school that applied it, meeting the needs and challenges of that community. The Integrative and Holistic Education Model practiced in Islamic schools shows great promise for Canadian Islamic schools.

To conclude, a dual conceptual framework that combines the theories of professional development (the SIT and Vygotskian theories) with two curriculum models (Robin Fogarty's Integrated Curriculum and the Integrative and Holistic Education Model) is proposed to support the professional development of teachers for teaching in Canadian Islamic schools. Through tying professional development to curriculum reform, this educator aspires to improve the current academic model of Islamic schools in Canada and the education provided to Muslim educators and students alike.

CHAPTER FOUR
Research Methodology

Research Design: Qualitative Research

The qualitative research methodology was chosen to help understand the experiences of seven Canadian Muslim women educators. Through semi-structured interviews, I explored teachers' reflections on their day-to-day encounters and perceptions of professional development within Canadian Islamic schools. Mulhall (2007) underlines the significance of qualitative research in comprehending human experiences, emphasizing its role in understanding the complexities of our world. Qualitative research allows for our social life to be captured and understood. A notable characteristic of qualitative research is its flexibility, allowing for a reflexive process that enables researchers to adapt their approach based on emerging insights (Maxwell, 2012). To understand the social world, qualitative researchers stress the importance of the social context. Through qualitative methods, this study seeks to understand the experiences of six Muslim women educators in the social context of Canadian Islamic schools and render them meaningful to both the academic community and broader society.

Numerous studies surrounding related topics also used qualitative methods, including through interview-based data collection. For example, Amjad (2018) completed a study involving seven Muslim students in Western Canada. Through pre-interview activities and open-ended interviews, she strove to understand their experiences as Muslim immigrant students living in Alberta. Similarly, Salma (2016) focused on Muslim educators teaching in Canadian public schools, with a particular emphasis on their religious identities and experiences within the public education system. Another relevant study conducted by Anila Asghar (2013) involved 25 Muslim high school teachers, using qualitative interviews and group discussion to investigate the

connections between science, religion, and education within Muslim science classrooms. In her research, she examined how these educators connected scientific theories with religious beliefs.

As with many researchers working in similar areas of research, I found a qualitative approach to be most appropriate for this study. My goal was to develop a rapport with teachers so as to gain insight into their experiences. Consequently, I applied Maxwell's interactive model, using semi-structured interviews to engage in open-ended conversations. As described by Maxwell (2012), this interactive characteristic of a qualitative study allowed for a reflexive process; construction and reconstruction of the interview questioning, as was considered fit for the study and the direction it took.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The most widespread form of interviewing in human and social sciences is semi-structured interviews (Flick, 2002). Semi-structured interviews provide researchers (and participants) with more flexibility in conversation, allowing the interviewers to guide the conversation towards topics which are considered most significant for their research (Leavy, 2020).

The interview process in the present research project consisted of three interviews with each teacher-participant. Although the participating educators were former colleagues, the nature of our relationship was professional and work-related. Establishing rapport and fostering a sense of comfort and ease nevertheless became essential during the first interview. The nature of the questions covered their upbringing, past and current household environment, academic achievements, dreams and ambitions, and their role as educators. (Please refer to Appendix B for the first interview questions.) Every interview concluded with prompts aimed at encouraging storytelling and experiences related to the research topic, such as in the first interview with inquiring about their professional development (PD) experience, this, not only to introduce the

focal point of the research, but to prompt participants to think about their PD encounters for subsequent interviews. On average, the duration of the first interview ranged from 25 to 35 minutes.

The interview questions underwent frequent revision throughout the data collection process. At times, it became evident that certain questions were not effectively guiding the conversation towards the intended topics. For example, following the initial interview, it became apparent that questions regarding PD did not elicit as detailed responses as desired for the purpose of this research. Thus, I sought out guidance and discussed the questions with my supervising professor. I modified and refined the questions for the second and third interviews, ensuring they were more specific and aligned with the research questions. The flexibility in adapting and refining the interview questions proved to be a key advantage of using a qualitative approach.

Additionally, I perceived every participant to be distinct, bringing unique experiences and perspectives, therefore some questions were more relevant to them than others; some visibly inapplicable. I endeavored to ask questions that could accommodate the diverse professional backgrounds of the participants, for example, in the area of teaching experience; some did not teach at Islamic schools for long periods of time, while for others, their main, and even only, experience was at Islamic schools. This required adjustments to the interview questions to suit the teachers' varied professional experiences. Similarly, differences in PD exposure, such as participants who had not attended any PD sessions despite years of teaching experience, prompted modifications in the questions to ensure relevance and applicability. These adjustments were crucial to ensuring that the interview questions effectively captured the uniqueness of each participant's professional journey.

During the second interview, there was a noticeable change in the attitude of the participants, with many expressing greater comfort, ease, and engagement. Some participants shared their enjoyment of the discussions by further reflecting on the topics discussed after the interview concluded. The focus of the second interview was centered on exploring the participants' experiences with professional development within both Islamic school systems and public schools. Specific areas of inquiry included:

1. the availability and extent of PD opportunities accessible to them
2. their subjective experiences within these PD opportunities
3. the evident impact of PD on their professional practice within the workspace and in their interactions with Muslim students
4. the challenges they encountered, the needs they experienced, and their hopes for future PD endeavors

Some participants had prior experiences as students in both Canadian Islamic schools and public schools, providing valuable insights brought from a dual perspective. Recognizing this, I modified the interview questions to include questions that would capture their perspectives on themselves as former students, thus enriching the study. The second interview lasted between 30 to 55 minutes.

The third and final interview was conducted to address any further questions left unanswered and to tie up loose ends. The final interview lasted between 19 to 43 minutes. Throughout all three interviews, participants showed great cooperation and enthusiasm, actively contributing to the research.

Ethics

This research aimed to enrich comprehension through the lens of participating educators by exploring their perspectives and experiences (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Following ethical

approval from the McGill Ethics Review Board of the Faculty of Education, I proceeded to contact numerous teachers within my network, providing them with a general overview of the research. I sent everyone a copy of the consent form after receiving initial approval. Given my background as an educator predominantly within Canadian Islamic schools, it was clear that potential participants would likely be colleagues, acquaintances, or individuals within my social network.

Participants were informed that the study consisted of three interviews, were assured of their anonymity, and were explained the voluntary nature of their participation, with the option to withdraw at any point. Ultimately, seven Muslim female educators agreed to participate in the research study.

The Setting

Initially, the plan entailed conducting interviews in a comfortable location, specifically a room in a library, to ensure an atmosphere of comfort and privacy. However, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, a shift to virtual interviews became imperative. Initially, this transition was somewhat discomfiting, as it denied me the full experience of face-to-face interactions. Nonverbal signs of communication, such as body language, gestures and facial expressions, provide an additional layer of richness to the dialogue (Leavy, 2020). This was no longer an option.

Despite my initial uncertainties about this change, the virtual format provided several advantages. It allowed for participation from participants across Canada, offering convenience and flexibility for individuals from diverse geographical locations and given busy schedules.

In accordance with McGill protocol, Microsoft Teams was the only acceptable platform for online interviews. This platform was selected due to its capability to record interviews comprehensively and its compatibility with McGill's monitoring requirements. Consequently, all

interviews were conducted and recorded via Teams, followed by transcription, using the Descript program to ensure accuracy and fidelity of data.

The Participants

After contacting numerous colleagues and friends, seven Canadian Muslim women who were certified educators responded and agreed to participate. They lived and worked across varying regions of Canada. Every participant was unique in her academic, personal, and professional background. All experiences and perspectives provided richness, uniqueness and informative contributions to this study. Additionally, it was interesting to note that all participating educators were second-generation immigrants, reflecting a multicultural heritage stemming from diverse geographical origins worldwide.

Anonymity

To protect the identity and ensure confidentiality of each participant involved in this study, pseudonyms were used. This not only upheld ethical standards but also created an environment of trust and confidentiality with participants. Additionally, this encouraged honesty and open conversation without any fear of professional reprisal. Pseudonyms were chosen carefully to ensure no true identities will be revealed. All identifying information that could possibly compromise anonymity was omitted.

Participant A

Henceforth, we will refer to Participant A pseudonymously as Amal. Amal is a Canadian-Moroccan woman, 28 years of age. She was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec. Despite her Moroccan heritage, she predominantly identifies with her Canadian upbringing, characterizing herself as more aligned with Canadian culture than Moroccan. Her entire family is bilingual in both French and Arabic. Amal began her post-secondary education at McGill University, where

she obtained a B.Ed (Bachelor of Education) in Kindergarten and Elementary Education. She later completed her master's degree in educational leadership, also at McGill University.

Amal began her journey as an educator during university when she was involved with volunteering services at a weekend Arabic school. Upon completing her teaching certification, Amal embarked on her professional career at an Islamic elementary school in Montreal. Her first position was a kindergarten teacher. Amal dedicated three years to this position before transitioning to teaching fifth-grade students for the following two years. She is now a grade four teacher in another country. For ethical purposes, we will only be focusing on her Canadian experience. Amal's pedagogical goals are rooted in building practical life skills in her students, aiming to equip them with the necessary tools for a successful future. She explained: “I want to teach the kids skills that will be useful for them later in their life…life skills.”

Participant B

We will refer to Participant B pseudonymously as Basma. Basma is a Canadian-Palestinian woman, 26 years of age, born in Saudi Arabia. She relocated to Toronto, Ontario, in 1997 and later moved to Montreal, Quebec, in 2004. Although growing up in a Palestinian household, she identifies as being “a mix of both cultures.” Raised in a Palestinian household, Basma identifies with both her Palestinian heritage and Canadian upbringing, “I am a mix of both cultures.” Her entire family speaks Arabic and English fluently. She attended public elementary and secondary schools. She completed a B.Ed. in Kindergarten and Elementary Education at McGill University. She later moved to Ontario and completed a French as a Second Language (FSL) certificate.

She began her professional journey as an educator within the Montreal public school system, as a substitute teacher. Later, she moved to Ontario and worked across two different school boards, teaching French and English in public elementary schools. After a year of living in Ontario,

she returned to Quebec and worked at an Islamic elementary school. The following year, she took a grade three French teacher position at a public school. Basma later began teaching grades five and six in another Montreal public school. She aspires to have a positive influence on younger generations and to have empathy, "to feel for them and understand them more."

Participant C

Participant C will be identified pseudonymously as Chams. Chams is a 28-year-old Iraqi-Turkman woman who relocated to Canada from Iraq in 1998. She identifies as part of a minority group, the Turkman: "we're not Arab, we're not Kurdish, we're different, a minority, within a minority," she explained. Raised in Hamilton, Ontario, Chams was immersed in a predominantly Turkman household environment. Her parents worked hard to uphold their cultural heritage and language at home. Her entire family speaks Turkman and English fluently. However, they are keen on speaking only Turkman at home. Chams attended public elementary and public secondary school. She also attended Islamic Turkish weekend school. She pursued a B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) in Political Science and Religious Studies at McMaster University, focusing on the Abrahamic religions. She later completed a M.Ed. (master's degree) in Education from New York, specialising in diversity in education.

Chams began her career in education during her internships while pursuing her master's degree. She taught a grade six classroom for a duration of six months, followed by another internship with a grade two classroom for five months. Upon completing her degree, she took a teaching position at an Islamic elementary school in Ontario, where she is currently working with the younger grades, now in her second year at the institution. Her aspiration as an educator is "to be a nurturing teacher who is kind and guides you...not just teach you lessons, but also teach life

lessons," offering kindness and guidance to her students beyond academic instruction, imparting valuable life lessons along the way.

Participant D

We will refer to Participant D pseudonymously as Dalia. Dalia is a 26 year old Canadian-Pakistani woman. She was born in Pakistan and relocated to Canada in 1999. She resided in Ontario for the majority of her life. Her family speaks Urdu and English fluently, however, they are keen on speaking only Urdu at home. Dalia attended public elementary and secondary school. She completed her certification in early childhood education at Ryerson University in Toronto. She is now a kindergarten teacher at an Islamic elementary school in Ontario. She has worked there for the past two years. Her joy for working with young children drives her motivation to be an educator.

Participant E

Participant E will be identified pseudonymously as Eva. Eva is a Canadian-Pakistani woman, 33 years of age. She was born and raised in Laval, Quebec. Her upbringing reflects a blend of French and English Canadian cultures alongside her Pakistani heritage, contributing to a sense of integration within her household. Eva and her siblings speak Urdu, English, and French fluently, her father speaks Urdu and some English and French, while her mother only speaks Urdu. Eva initially attended Islamic elementary school for grades one and two before switching to a French public elementary and secondary school for the remainder of her education. She completed a bachelor's in education with a specialization in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) from McGill University. She is currently pursuing a grade certificate in mental health and addictions at Dalhousie University.

Eva began her career as an educator with several short-term contracts across Quebec. Her first official contract was at an Islamic secondary school in Montreal. She taught English to grades seven and eight. Additionally, she held the role of student services coordinator during this contract, which spanned approximately three years. Eva's ambition as an educator is centered on empowering youth by equipping them with the necessary skills for holistic success in their future: "I want to work with youth and give them the tools they need to be successful in everything they do in their lives…fully-rounded individuals."

Participant F

Participant F will be identified pseudonymously as Fatema. Fatema is a 31 year old Canadian-Pakistani woman. She was born in Pakistan and moved to Canada in the year 2006. She lived in Hamilton, Ontario, for the first few years of her life in Canada, completing her high school studies in a Canadian public school. Subsequently, she moved to Alberta to complete her BSc combined degree (Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Education), majoring in mathematical sciences, at the University of Alberta. Having arrived in Canada at an older age, Fatema was immersed in a more Islamic Pakistani household and spoke Urdu more comfortably with her family.

Fatema initially aspired to become a secondary teacher, however, after her first teaching position at an Islamic elementary school in Edmonton, Alberta, she discovered her teaching passion with younger students. Over the course of nearly four years, she served as a grade three teacher within this elementary school. After her maternity leave, she accepted a substitute position for the Edmonton public school board, a role she fulfilled for one year. Since 2018, Fatema has been an educator within the Edmonton public school board, instructing various elementary grades, primarily within the Cogito program. This program is structured to foster a high level of academic

excellence through mainly teacher-direction instruction. Fatema is currently teaching a grade five Cogito class. Her passion for helping others and teaching them the simplicity of mathematics and sciences is what drove her to become an educator.

Research Positionality

The interviews were both enjoyable and engaging, eased by a sense of rapport established between myself and the participants. Wilson (2000) suggests that researchers cannot maintain neutrality when interacting with participants, given the natural nature of human interaction. In interviews, both the researcher and participant are influenced by the interpretation of shared information during the dialogue (Wilson, 2000). Given my own background as a teacher within similar education settings, I found it effortless to establish connections with the participants, as our experiences often mirrored one another. Much of what was shared by the participants resonated with this researcher on a personal level, eliciting feelings of familiarity and mutual understanding. In many instances, participants would express sentiments such as "you understand where I am coming from" or "you know how it is," underscoring the shared understanding and common ground between us.

As a fellow Muslim educator who had previously worked in Islamic schools, I found myself positioned as an insider during many segments of the interviews, fostering a sense of solidarity and empathy among the participants. This insider perspective enabled me to empathize with the challenges faced by the participants, such as the need to self-teach certain programs or resources due to insufficient professional development opportunities. Additionally, I could relate to the expectations imposed by schools to integrate Islamic teachings into varying lessons, despite lacking formal training in this area, a challenge that resonated with several participants and formed

a basis for shared experiences and understanding. Please refer to Chapter Two for shared experiences I encountered.

Nonetheless, in semi-structured interviews, researchers need to recognize their responsibility as contributors to creating knowledge, understanding their influence on and vulnerability to the interaction (Wilson, 2000). In completing this research, it was essential to maintain awareness of my own positionality while grounding myself in research findings. It was necessary for me to take a step back and look critically at the research findings that were emerging through the themes.

Data-Analysis Process

I carried out a total of 18 interviews over a span of four months, from September to December 2022, resulting in approximately eight hours of audio recordings. After completing all interviews, the transcription process began. Using the program Descript, the first rough transcription of each recording was completed. Subsequently, these transcriptions underwent further review and refinement, resulting in the completion of transcripts for all interviews, totaling approximately 100 pages. Additionally, a continuous verification of data accuracy of participant and researcher comprehension took place throughout all interviews.

The qualitative analytic method of thematic analysis conducted in this study followed Braun and Clarke's (2008) proposed steps, chosen for its suitability in analyzing qualitative data. Firstly, I immersed myself in the transcripts, reading them multiple times to gain familiarity with the interviews. Next, I organized responses into categories encompassing personal, academic, and professional development (PD) aspects. The PD category underwent further sectioning into components such as individual definitions, experiences, and challenges, as demonstrated in Figure 4.

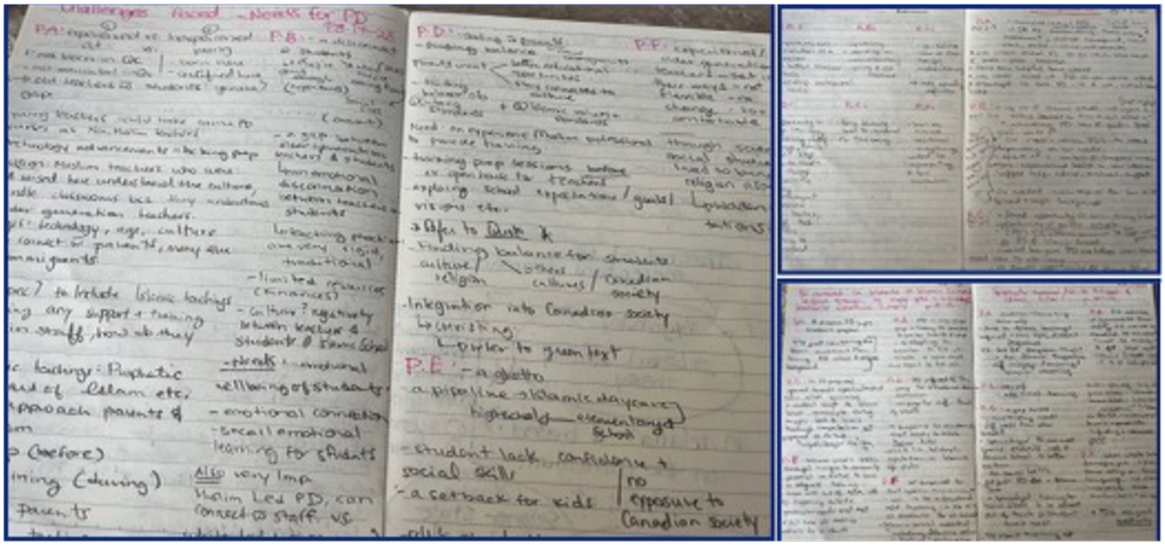

Figure 4: Journal entries for PD charting

This method of charting allowed for a more transparent comparison among participants, resulting in initial themes suitable for further investigation. Referring back to the research questions, I opted for a theoretical thematic analysis approach, jotting down broad codes derived from the initial categorization and subsequently revisiting all interviews to chart relevant quotes and pieces of information under each code. As a result, five distinct themes emerged, which were further refined through color-coded quote pairing to their corresponding themes, as demonstrated in Figure 5.

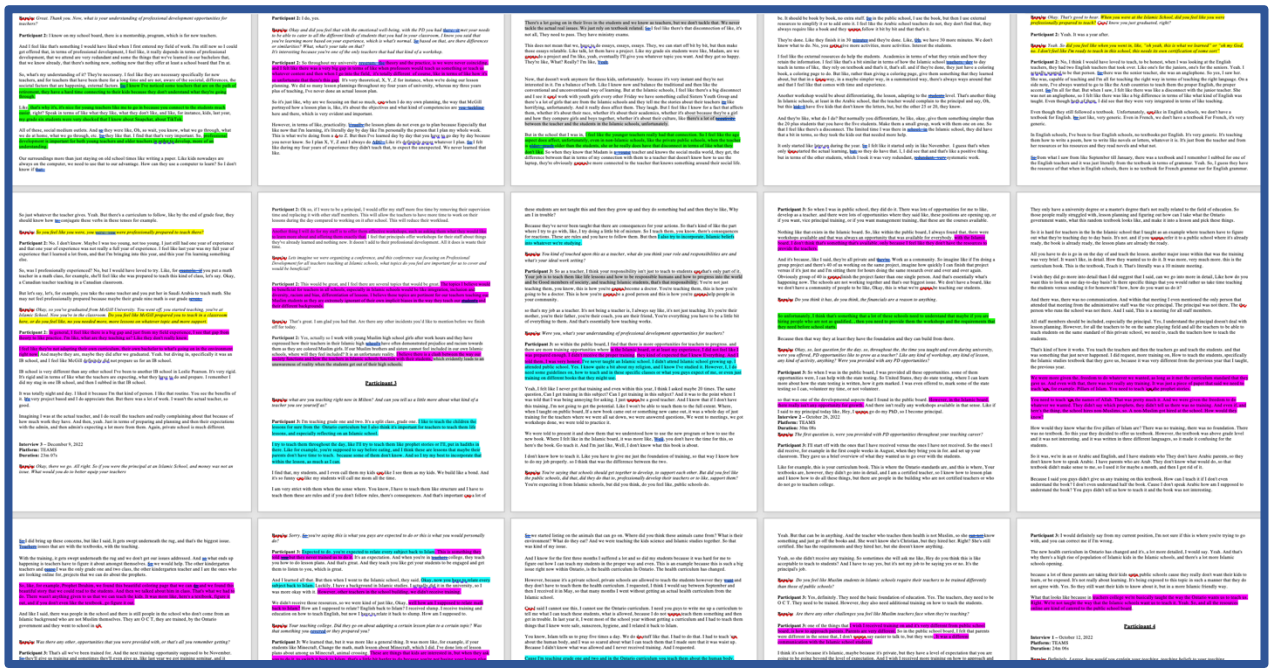

Figure 5: Sample of colour coding interviews with relevant codes and themes

Subsequently, I compiled all findings, including themes, descriptions, objectives, codes, and supporting quotes, as illustrated in Figure 6.

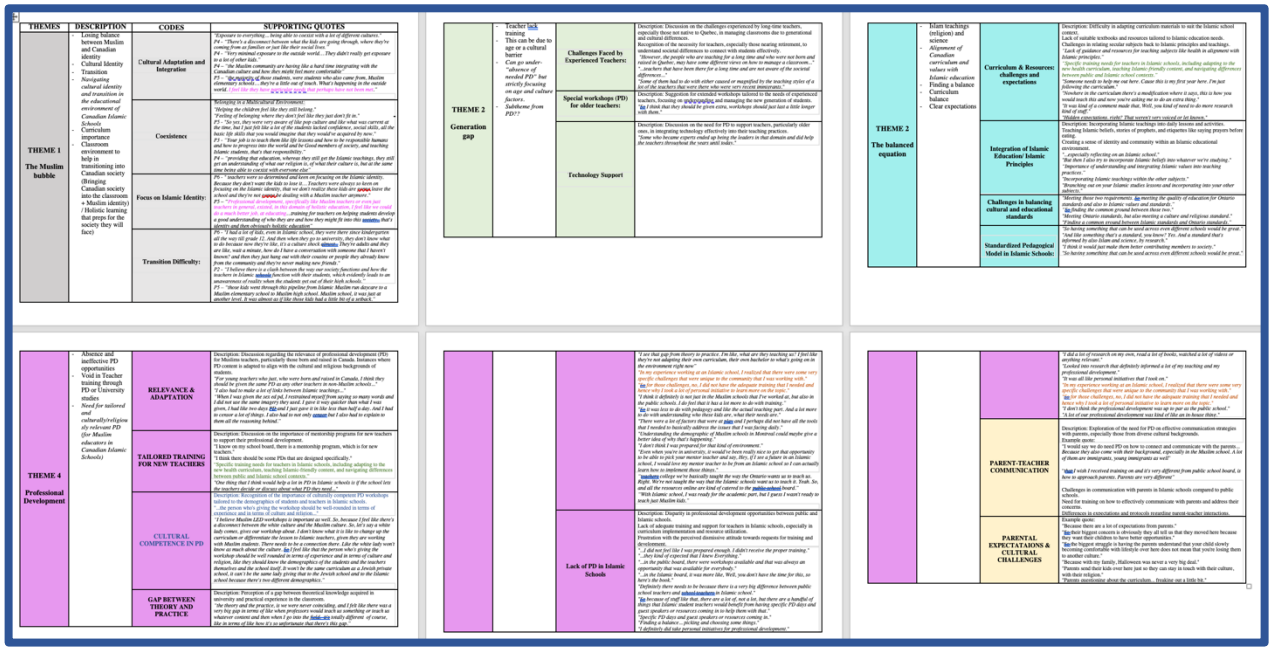

Figure 6: Sample of charting all colour-coded information and organising findings

Following careful review, refinement, and finalization of themes, I began the research analysis report to make sense of my findings and present them effectively.

Trustworthiness

In addition to the scholarly objectives outlined for this research, I aspired to provide a platform for Muslim educators currently or previously engaged in teaching at Islamic institutions to share their narratives and perspectives in a supportive environment. As a fellow Muslim educator with experience in Canadian Islamic schools, I endeavored to foster a sense of rapport and understanding among participants. This approach aligns with Richardson's (2000) notion of effective ethnography, to express a reality through a sincere, true picture, emphasizing the portrayal of authentic cultural, social, and individual realities. Through transparent and honest conversations, I sought to establish a connection with participants, creating an atmosphere of trust and authenticity. On many occasions, the interviews would evolve in a different direction than planned because of participants' unique and enriching experiences, creating genuine conversation, thereby enhancing the study's credibility. It has been suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) that sound qualitative research is based on credible reports that readers feel comfortable acting upon and making decisions according to.

Tracey (2010) underscores the importance of a researcher's sincerity, which is exhibited by honesty and transparency regarding biases, objectives, limitations and flaws. Throughout the interviews, I refrained from any form of interference with participants' viewpoints, avoiding injecting my personal perspectives into discussions. Despite possessing my own experiences and opinions, the primary objective of the interviews was to capture and understand the diverse perspectives and experiences of the participants. I was very self-reflective, transparent to myself, and mindful of my assumptions, values, and biases to ensure objectivity in data interpretation.

Throughout this study, I used a research journal for purposes of self-reflection, data analysis, brainstorming ideas, and monitoring progress. Additionally, regular discussions with my thesis supervisor provided an additional layer of scrutiny, allowing for constructive dialogue on potential biases and contrasting viewpoints between my own experiences and those of participants. With transparency in mind, every aspect of the research process was planned, documented, recorded, transcribed, discussed, and analyzed with my supervisor.

Credibility

In this study, triangulation was accomplished by gathering data from the six diverse participants, in addition to my own interpretive insights through my lens as a researcher and a Muslim educator. Denzin (1978) explains that one of the ways to achieve triangulation in qualitative research occurs when multiple data sources agree on a shared conclusion.

In this study, all participants' perspectives came from different cultural and academic backgrounds, as well as varying experiences in teaching. This not only added richness to the study but also, credibility, as most conclusions were aligned with similar if not the same conclusions. This demonstrated consistency, as well as provided confidence in the findings and highlighted their reliability.

Several factors supported the validity of this study. Participants underwent multiple interviews conducted over an extended duration and gaps or ambiguities were addressed in a follow-up interview. With guidance from my supervisor, questions were modified to accommodate the diverse academic, personal, and professional backgrounds of the participants.

For example, individuals with exclusive experience in Islamic schools had different questions than those who had minimal professional experience in Islamic schools. Furthermore, some participants had prior exposure to Islamic schooling as students, demanding adjustments to

the interview repertoire of questions to capture their perspectives effectively. As Golafshani (2003) shares, qualitative research is credible when it is accurate, consistent, reliable, and replicable, many of which were shown in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE
Thematic Analysis

Professional Development Through the Lenses of the Participants

Prior to discussing the thematic analysis of this study, it is imperative to understand the focal subject of the research: the professional development (PD) encounters of Canadian Muslim educators. This study was focused on comprehending the different viewpoints of each participant regarding PD within the educational environment, specifically within Canadian Islamic Schools. Subsequently, in the second and third interviews, participants were engaged in targeted inquiries to elucidate their personal experiences, insights, and interpretations pertaining to PD. The following results were distilled from the data analysis and are organized by participant.

Amal

Definition: Amal explained professional development as "anything that will help me improve … that would benefit me throughout my evolution as a teacher…an opportunity to be a better teacher, to develop my professional skills and give better tools to students to learn." **Experience:** Amal was among the fortunate individuals who was provided with numerous PD opportunities. These included sessions specifically geared towards readiness for teaching within an International Baccalaureate (IB) school. Additionally, Amal participated in various other PD sessions covering diverse topics such as integrating problem-solving methodologies across pedagogical practices, evaluating French writing, classroom management strategies, as well as sessions addressing issues of sexual abuse prevention and Sex Education. Notably, the leadership of the institution actively encouraged educators to engage in PDs, particularly those aligned with the principles and requirements of the IB curriculum, specifically because the school had a registered license on a website hosting an array of relevant Professional Development Opportunities (PDOs).

One potential drawback was that Amal reported attending various PDOs without having the chance to select or decline participation. In several instances, she was designated as a representative to attend PDOs and subsequently tasked with delivering the acquired content to fellow educators. Reflecting on her experiences, she noted: “some were helpful, others useless.” Particularly as a recent graduate of teacher training, she expressed a sentiment of redundancy in certain PDOs, advocating for tailored sessions aligned with her specific needs. For instance, she perceived a classroom management PDO as duplicative of her prior education at McGill University, regarding it as an inefficient allocation of resources for the Islamic school. On the other hand, she acknowledged the relevance and efficacy of PDOs addressing critical issues such as sexual abuse prevention and problem-solving implementation.

While content pertaining to academic subjects was generally satisfactory, Amal expressed a desire for PDOs facilitating the integration of Islamic teachings into pedagogical practices, thus offering alternative perspectives on conventional topics. One shortfall, too, was in addressing the preserving of the integrity of an Islamic educational environment with respect to cultural and religious practices. By way of illustration, she cited her experience with a Sex Education PDO, which necessitated substantial adaptations to align with Islamic principles, underscoring the preference for workshops tailored to address her specific instructional challenges. “I would’ve preferred having workshops that [were] specific to my own issues” she concluded.

Basma

Definition: Basma explained the professional development is necessary for both inexperienced and experienced teachers “in order to develop an understanding…of the societal differences, societal factors, external factors” that are constantly changing.

Experience: Basma was among the unfortunate educators who regrettably did not engage in any Professional Development Opportunities (PDOs) at the Islamic schools where she was employed. This absence of participation might be attributed to her status as a part-time teacher within the institution. Conversely, in her roles at non-Islamic educational establishments, she actively participated in diverse PDO sessions, selecting those that most aligned with her professional requirements. These sessions notably encompassed themes such as creating safe spaces, social-emotional learning, integrating Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum, and addressing the emotional well-being of students with autism spectrum disorder.

Presently, Basma is involved in a mentorship program, whereby beginner educators (with less than five years of experience) are paired with experienced mentors. This structured program aims to provide beginners with guidance, assistance, innovative ideas, and strategies, thereby establishing a robust support network. The first session with her mentor was to take place the week after I had interviewed her.

Chams

Definition: Chams explained professional development as continuing education for teachers, to enhance their skills so they may apply them within their classrooms, and as a result helping their students progress in their education.

Experience: Chams's engagement with Professional Developments (PDs) within her Islamic school was limited, and she found the few sessions she attended to be lacking in applicability to her teaching context. One such PD was facilitated by a Montessori representative, an initiative deemed irrelevant given Chams's role as a grade three educator at the time. “I am sure it was very helpful for younger grades, but I didn’t see any benefit for my classroom since most strategies were targeted at younger students,” she explained. Additionally, she participated in a PD

conducted by a child behavior specialist, though the effectiveness of this was very limited. Chams expressed significant disappointment regarding the PDOs available within the Islamic school; “there really isn’t any opportunity or growth,” she explained in frustration. Despite this, she actively sought to support her colleagues in their classroom. She initiated instructional workshops on the applications of Canva, a graphic design platform with many free and paid tools, in response to fellow teachers' requests, underscoring her proactive approach to professional development.

Chams compared her professional development (PD) experiences in public schools with those in the Islamic school where she was employed, highlighting significant deficiencies in both. She frequently found herself advocating for training and growth opportunities concerning instructional materials, alignment with Islamic teachings, and other related aspects. Notably, the school mandated the integration of Islamic principles across all subject areas, yet Chams felt unequipped to fulfill this expectation. For instance, she illustrated her pedagogical approach to teaching the story of Prophet Noah by weaving it into science and geography lessons, elucidating concepts of gender balance and life sustainability. Another instance entailed integrating mathematical principles through the construction of Noah's ark. Despite her background in religious studies, which provided her with insights and the ability to adapt instructional content, she observed a pervasive lack of preparedness among her colleagues in this regard. Consequently, she frequently found herself sharing her instructional strategies with peers to facilitate their classroom practice. Chams noted an obvious void in the professional development opportunities within Islamic educational systems, attributing it to unreasonable expectations fueled by inadequate preparation.

Dalia

Definition: Dalia explained professional development as opportunities for teachers to continue learning: “education does not just stop” so they should “receive refreshers… for development.” She elaborated that pedagogical approaches must remain adaptable to accommodate the evolving dynamics of the classroom, as educators are tasked with addressing diverse challenges, necessitating acquisition of various instructional strategies.

Experience: Dalia had participated in a limited yet enriching array of Professional Development (PD) sessions within the Islamic school where she was employed. Beginning with her in-person teaching experience post-COVID closures, particularly as a recent graduate, she had engaged in PD opportunities focused on topics such as: strategies for managing challenging behaviors among children, integrating Montessori methodologies, and sessions facilitated by a child specialist. It was noteworthy that all PD sessions were conducted by professionals of Muslim background.

Dalia consistently expressed satisfaction with the quality of PD she received, describing it as “very beneficial,” “a nice refresher course,” and “very helpful.” While acknowledging that much of the content covered in these sessions paralleled her prior academic training, she regarded the occasion as a valuable opportunity for reinforcement and enhancement of her pedagogical knowledge. Of particular significance was the session facilitated by the child specialist, who offered insights and techniques tailored to the needs of Muslim families integrating into Canadian society. Dalia observed tangible positive changes in children's behavior and development upon implementation of these strategies, emphasizing their efficacy.

Eva

Definition: Eva explained professional development as bringing the level of teaching to an expected standard in education, instead of “sticking to old ways,” she added.

Experience: Eva, similar to the other teachers, did not have the opportunity to engage in any Professional Development Opportunities (PDOs) at the Islamic secondary school where she was employed. Nonetheless, she explained a mentor figure was present within the institution: an experienced individual who played a pivotal role in providing guidance on curriculum-related inquiries, pedagogical techniques, instructional resources, technology integration, and emotional support. This mentorship resource proved to be a valuable asset, offering substantial assistance to numerous teachers within the school. Additionally, Eva pursued personal initiatives to help and advance her professional development learning.

It is understandable that Eva did not believe what she received at the Islamic school to be sufficient as she did not get the chance to attend any PDOs. She highlighted the importance for educators in Islamic schools to be provided with effective PD opportunities, emphasizing specific challenges unique to the community. As she later assumed a teaching position in a public school, Eva realised the valuable support provided by the mentor figure in the Islamic school setting, recognizing it as a resource not readily available in many educational institutions. Furthermore, she emphasized the distinct needs of Islamic school students and the corresponding necessity for educators to receive proper training to address these unique challenges effectively.

Fatema

Definition: Fatema explained professional development as essential opportunities that allowed educators to engage in: career learning through an ongoing critical reflection that allows for improvement in teaching strategies, resources, and learning; a way to actively seek and apply relevant educational research to improve in teaching practices, enhancing an understanding of current events; maintaining an awareness of advancements in technology, teaching techniques and

anything else relevant to the job. These could be important opportunities for teachers to better themselves for the sake of their students' education.

Experience: Fatema explained her professional development experience in the Islamic school system as an "in-house thing," where presenters were either teachers in the school or administrative personnel. The focus of these PD sessions predominantly revolved around literacy or reading-related topics, with instances of teachers explaining newly acquired knowledge gathered from personal initiatives or experiential learning. While acknowledging that these fell short of ideal standards, Fatema described the experiences as marginally beneficial. In contrast, her experience in Canadian public schools provided her with exposure to a diverse array of PD opportunities, often centered on the implementation of new curriculum applications.

Fatema did not feel prepared for teaching at an Islamic school as her first teaching job. She shared an incident that took place during her first-year evaluation:

Admin Personnel: How are you including Islamic values into this [position]?

Fatema: I don't know. How would I put Islamic values to this? Someone needs to help me out here, this is my first year. Nowhere in the curriculum did they include a modification, and now you're asking me to do an extra thing. [continues to express frustration]

Admin Personnel: You need to do more research.

Fatema frequently engaged in collaborative research initiatives with her colleagues, investigating diverse tools and resources to enhance their teaching practices. Subsequently, she conducted informal presentations to share acquired knowledge among fellow educators. For instance, she familiarized herself with a standardized reading assessment system, later sharing her expertise with her peers. Moreover, she diligently explored various Islamic topics, looking for ways to integrate

them into her lesson plans across different subject areas. Despite her very humble experience with PD in Canadian Islamic schools, Fatema smoothly dealt with the constraints, utilizing whichever resources were available to assist her in her classroom.

In sum, the participating teachers' interviews shed light on their professional development encounters and their diverse perspectives and experiences, particularly on PD in Canadian Islamic Schools. This opened the discussion to the many-sided nature of PD participation, ranging from active engagement to notable absences. The participants' narratives highlighted challenges and opportunities associated with PD within the Islamic school environment. While some educators benefited from targeted PD sessions and mentorship programs, others encountered limitations in accessing relevant opportunities tailored to their specific needs. Moving forward, the interviews will be explored for further analysis, as the focus on this research is the content and the experiences of individual participants (Riessman, 2008).

Thematic Analysis

This section explores the results of thematic analysis, which were derived from the process of coding the interviews, grouping codes based on shared characteristics, and identifying emergent patterns in the data (Kirby, Greaves & Reid, 2006). The process of coding was based mainly on the research questions, and thus was more analyst-driven (Braun and Clark, 2006). Presented below is a thematic map analysis, providing a visual representation to enhance comprehension (Braun & Clark, 2013) and showing the principal themes derived from the 18 interviews.

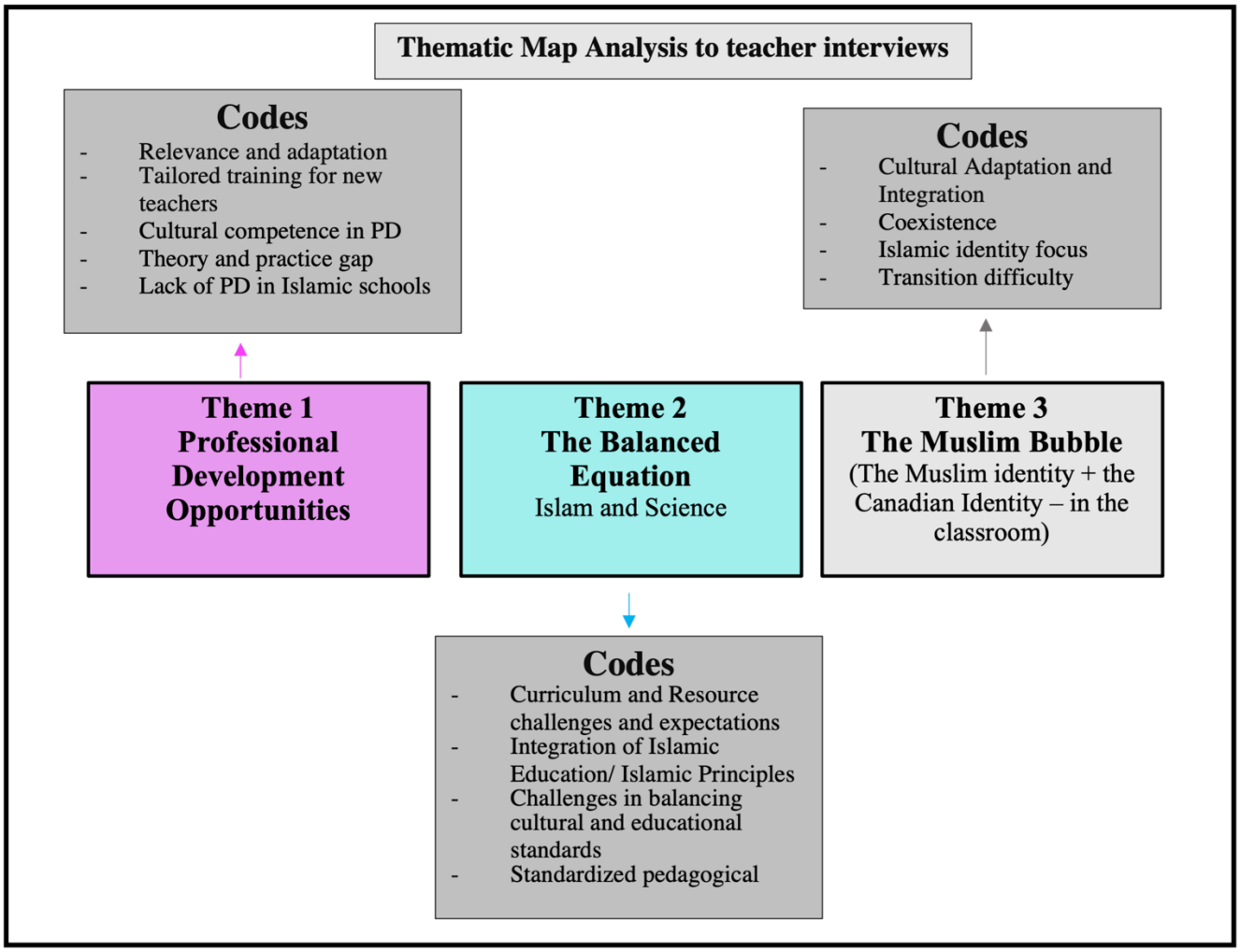

Figure 7: Thematic Map Analysis showing main themes of teacher interviews

During the analytical phase, three predominant themes emerged from the participants' narratives, encompassing their experiences, encountered challenges, and aspirations for the future. As shown in the thematic map analysis, the recurring ideas developed the following themes: Theme 1 - the Muslim bubble, Theme 2 - the balanced equation, and Theme 3 - professional development opportunities. These themes will be explained in the following discussion. Drawing upon insights gathered from the interviews and supplementary literature, this analysis will endeavor to provide a comprehensive understanding of these themes. It is important to acknowledge, however, the limited extant research pertaining to certain aspects of these topics.

Theme 1: Professional Development Opportunities

Professional development serves as the overarching theme of this research, interconnecting various aspects explored within its scope. Themes two and three exhibit a degree of interconnectedness; nevertheless, they each target and present distinct perspectives on the research findings. Therefore, they will each be presented individually. This theme, of professional development opportunities, captures a range of insights from the shared experiences, challenges, needs, and recommendations concerning professional development for educators in Canadian Islamic schools.

There was an emphasis on bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experience, advocating for professional development that directly addresses the unique challenges encountered in Islamic educational settings. Each participant's professional development background has been explained above, offering a comprehensive introduction to this theme. Through the process of coding, I was able to target findings specific to professional development in Canadian Islamic schools.

First, it is important to note the obvious: numerous participants recognized the funding challenges present in their respective Islamic schools. Given that most private Islamic schools operate without government funding, financial constraints are a recurring issue. Consequently, it seems that professional development often ranks low on their list of funding priorities, as discussed by all participants. As a result, the scarcity of professional development opportunities in certain Islamic schools can be largely attributed to this financial limitation.

The professional development opportunities that were offered were often depicted as “in-house” opportunities, as described by Fatema. There were two forms of in-house sessions: first, where the presenter conducted research on a specific topic and then shared their findings with

colleagues, and second, where a teacher attended an external PDO and later shared the acquired knowledge with co-workers. Chams and Fatema both partook in researching and creating PD sessions and presenting them to coworkers. Amal often represented her school in PDO sessions, attending lectures with a colleague and then disseminating the information to the staff. However, most participants found these sessions inadequate for their needs: "academically it's the same thing as public schools," Amal said. "We need additional training," Chams added. Basma explained that the PDs she received were "not adaptable to each school because it's very generic information" and needed to adapt the content she learned to her own classroom and personal requirements. Basma also described the PDs as "a disconnection."

Dalia's appreciation for the limited PDOs she attended was notable. Her PD experiences were unique in two aspects: firstly, the presenters were Muslim professionals, and secondly, these professionals had direct experience working within the Muslim community. This advantage in PD was unique to Dalia, with no other participant sharing a similar experience. Recognizing the significance of culturally competent facilitators and presenters was a point expressed by several educators, that a need for workshops led by individuals with a comprehensive understanding of the environment they are addressing, in addition to being well-rounded in both experience and cultural awareness. Amal shared her opinion regarding this matter:

> I believe Muslim-led workshops [are] important. I feel like there's a disconnect between the white culture and the Muslim culture. So, let's say a white lady comes, gives a workshop about, I don't know, what it is like to change up the curriculum or differentiate the lesson to Islamic teachers, given they are working with Muslim students. There needs to be a connection there. Like the white lady won't know as much about the culture. So I feel like that the person who's giving the workshop should be well-rounded in terms of experience

> and in terms of culture and religion. They should know the demographics of the students and the teachers and the school itself.

Cultural competence in PD was expressed, though for the purpose of this study, this topic was not put under the microscope during these interviews. For future research, it would be interesting to explore this topic in more depth.

The most dominant code observed across all 18 interviews was the "gap between theory and practice." This code covered the participants' perception of the disparity between theoretical knowledge acquired in universities or colleges and the practical experience encountered in the classrooms of Canadian Islamic schools. Participants expressed frustration with the disconnect between what is taught in academic settings and the realities of teaching in a culturally-specific environment, Canadian Islamic schools in this case. Several participants shared their desire to have had the chance to complete a placement at an Islamic school during their teacher education programs or to have experienced a mentorship program tailored to Muslim teachers during their studies. Chams described the situation as: "In Teachers College we're basically taught the way [the province] wants us to teach. We're not taught the way that the Islamic schools want us to teach. So all the resources online are kind of catered to the public school board." The lack of specialised resources for Islamic schools is noted, creating a greater gap between theory and practice. This gap is highlighted as a significant challenge, and Eva shared about this point:

> In my experience working at an Islamic school, I realized that there were some very specific challenges that were unique to the community that I was working with. So, for those challenges, no, I did not have the adequate training that I needed and hence why I took a lot of personal initiative to learn more on the topic.

They all found unique challenges present in Islamic school settings, suggesting standard training is not sufficient to address the specific needs of their students. One example several participants shared was adapting the new health curriculum to align with the cultural and religious backgrounds of their students. “I restrained myself from saying so many words and I did not use the same imagery they used. I had to censor a lot of things. I also had to not only censor but I also had to explain to them all the reasoning behind [them],” Amal shared. Despite efforts to bridge this gap through personal initiative and adaptation, participants expressed a sense of unpreparedness for teaching in Islamic schools, highlighting the necessity for enhanced professional development opportunities that align more closely with the realities of Islamic school expectations. “With Islamic school, I was ready for the academic part, but I guess I wasn't ready to teach just Muslim kids,” Dalia added.

Two popular codes were “lack of PD” and “relevance and adaptation of PD;” however, an evident issue observed was the discrepancy between the expectations of Islamic schools for teachers to align their instructional practices with an Islamic adjustment and the absence of adequate preparation, explanation, professional development (PD), and resources. This gap suggested a potential lack of readiness on the part of the school administration to address this challenge adequately. A telling observation we can extract from the interviews was the participants' difficulty to explain specific instances of this problem with detailed examples. While they collectively acknowledged the necessity for specialized PD and indicated facing daily challenges such as adapting to curriculum requirements, incorporating Islamic-friendly content, and navigating differences between public and Islamic school contexts, many struggled to provide detailed examples of these situations. During interviews one through three, the participants were repeatedly prompted to share specific experiences showing their struggles with PD. The majority

were unable to recount applicable experiences during these discussions. The presence of a visible gap or problem is evident, but there appears to be a notable level of confusion and uncertainty regarding how to effectively address this situation.

Theme 2: The Balanced Equation: Religion and Science

A distinguishing feature of Islamic schools compared to public schools is the Islamic environment and community they try to build within those academic institutions. This environment is characterized by religious and cultural practices such as communal prayer, dressing modestly, celebrating Muslim holidays, and other practices. Another distinct feature that makes Islamic schools different is the "hidden expectation" as Fatema titles it, "not voiced or let known," she added. Dalia described this expectation as "finding the common ground between the two standards: Ontario standards and Islamic standards."

Thus, the second theme that emerged through this research analysis was balancing science and religion in Canadian Islamic schools. This theme encompassed the challenge of integrating secular subjects with Islamic teachings, which are often incompatible with secular ideology in the context of education. It addresses the necessity to adapt the Canadian curriculum to align with the contexts of Islamic schools through emphasizing the obstacles encountered by teachers, the requirement for suitable resources, and the need for specialized professional development to effectively implement adjustments.

The interviews exposed the struggles teachers faced to incorporate Islamic teachings into daily lessons and to adapt curriculum materials to suit Islamic school contexts, "Nowhere in the curriculum is there a modification where it says, this is how you would teach this and now you're asking me to do an extra thing," Fatema explained. Chams also shared similar remarks: "You're expected to relate every subject back to Islam. This is something they told you but they never

trained us to do it." The participants shared their struggles and needs, attributing the main cause to the challenges of: the absence of resources, including textbooks or other instructional materials, specialized programs, curriculums or PD, and comprehensive guidelines specifically designed to facilitate the balance of science and religion within Canadian Islamic schools. Several participants proposed the solution of a standardized curriculum model applied throughout Canadian Islamic schools.

Chams to Fatema emphasized the significance of achieving a balance between science and religion to foster the development of a Canadian-Muslim identity among students, a concept that will be elaborated upon in the subsequent theme. They discussed the need for this balance to not only be applied to their environment but to develop skills essential for leading balanced lives. As explained by Dalia and pointed out by most teachers, this balance would "give the children the exposure that they need for the community that they live in. Because it's not an Islamic school in a Muslim country… [it will] create an environment where they learn how to balance their lives." Such an approach would acknowledge the reality of Islamic schools operating within non-Muslim societies, thereby creating an environment conducive to the harmonious integration of religious and cultural identities.

From these teachers' testimonies we can understand there is a need for resources and guidelines informed by both Islamic teachings and educational research to facilitate the integration of Islamic values into secular subjects effectively. By addressing this need, educators can navigate the delicate balance between science and religion in the classroom, thereby enhancing the quality of education and instilling a deeper understanding of Islamic principles in students. In essence, balancing science and religion in Canadian Islamic schools can promote a comprehensive educational experience that nurtures students' intellectual, spiritual, and moral development in

accordance with Islamic principles and contemporary knowledge. A result of such changes would be to acknowledge the reality of Islamic schools in non-Muslim societies and encourage a healthy environment, promoting harmonious integration of the intellect, the spirit, and the morality of the individual Muslim student.

Theme 3 – The Muslim Bubble

The last recurring theme to surface was the Muslim bubble, which refers to the experience of Muslim students being insulated from the dominant culture. This theme underscores the significance of implementing a well-rounded educational strategy that fosters the development of a cohesive Muslim-Canadian identity within the Canadian Islamic school environment. Moreover, it highlights the significance of equipping learners with the necessary mindset and resources to facilitate a seamless and successful transition into Canadian society. Discussions with educators revealed the concentrated efforts of Muslim educators toward fortifying Muslim identity, incorporating Islamic principles, and fostering an Islamic atmosphere. Participating educators recognized the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students and prioritized fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion, while also acknowledging the importance of maintaining and nurturing Islamic identity within the educational framework.

In the prevailing circumstances, it is commonly acknowledged that Muslim families choose to enroll their children in Islamic schools with the aspiration of cultivating an environment steeped in Islamic principles. The primary objective is to nurture and reinforce a resilient Muslim identity through the active engagement with religious rituals and cultural traditions. However, one of the notable disadvantages that several participants discussed was the unintentional Muslim bubble wherein students attending Islamic elementary schools and Islamic secondary schools are insulated from the dominant culture. Consequently, as they progress to higher education

institutions such as colleges or universities or work environments, these individuals often encounter culture shock. This creates the potential deficiency in preparing Muslim students for successfully transitioning and engaging with diverse settings after completing their studies in Canadian Islamic schools.

THEMES	DESCRIPTION	CODES	SUPPORTING QUOTES
THEME 3 **The Muslim bubble**	- Losing balance between Muslim and Canadian identity - Cultural Identity - Transition - *Navigating cultural identity and transition in the educational environment of Canadian Islamic Schools* - Curriculum importance - Classroom environment to help in transitioning into Canadian society (Bringing Canadian society into the classroom + Muslim identity) / Holistic learning that preps for the society they will face)	**Cultural Adaptation and Integration**	*"Exposure to everything… being able to coexist with a lot of different cultures."* *P4 - "There's a disconnect between what the kids are going through, where they're coming from as families or just like their social lives."* *P4 - "Very minimal exposure to the outside world…They didn't really get exposure to a lot of other kids."* *P4 – "the Muslim community are having like a hard time integrating with the Canadian culture and how they might feel more comfortable"* *P5 – "the majority of those students, were students who also came from, Muslim elementary schools…they're a little out of touch. What's happening in the outside world. I feel like they have particular needs that perhaps have not been met."*
		Coexistence	*Belonging in a Multicultural Environment:* *"Helping the children feel like they still belong."* *"Feeling of belonging where they don't feel like they just don't fit in."* *P5 - "So yes, they were very aware of like pop culture and like what was current at the time, but I just felt like a lot of the students lacked confidence, social skills, all the basic life skills that you would imagine that they would've acquired by now."* *P3 - "Your job is to teach them like life lessons and how to be responsible humans and how to progress into the world and be Good members of society, and teaching Islamic students, that's that responsibility."* *P4 – "providing that education, whereas they still get the Islamic teachings, they still get an understanding of what our religion is, of what their culture is, but at the same time being able to coexist with everyone else"*
		Focus on Islamic Identity:	*P6 - " teachers were so determined and keen on focusing on the Islamic identity. Because they don't want the kids to lose it…Teachers were always so keen on focusing on the Islamic identity, that we don't realize these kids are gonna leave the school and they're not gonna be dealing with a Muslim teacher anymore."* *P5 – "Professional development, specifically like Muslim teachers or even just teachers in general, existed, in this domain of holistic education, I feel like we could do a much better job, at educating…training for teachers on helping students develop a good understanding of who they are and how they might fit into this society.. that's identity and then obviously holistic education"*
		Transition Difficulty:	*P6 - "I had a lot of kids, even in Islamic school, they were there since kindergarten all the way till grade 12. And then when they go to university, they don't know what to do because now they're like, it's a culture shock almost.. They're adults and they are like, wait a minute, how do I have a conversation with someone that I haven't known? and then they just hang out with their cousins or people they already know from the community and they're never making new friends."* *P2 - "I believe there is a clash between the way our society functions and how the teachers in Islamic schools function with their students, which evidently leads to an unawareness of reality when the students get out of their high schools."* *P5 – "those kids went through this pipeline from Islamic Muslim run daycare to a Muslim elementary school to Muslim high school. Muslim school, it was just at another level. It was almost as if like those kids had a little bit of a setback."*

Figure 8: Theme 3: The Muslim Bubble Coding Sample

The codes and supporting quotes underscored the need for a balanced educational approach, that is, holistic learning, which integrates Islamic identity with preparation for broader societal contexts. Supporting this theme, the first interesting observation is how certain vocabulary and phrases were used by participants in regards to this topic: disconnect, out of touch, minimal exposure, culture shock, and setback. Additionally, five out of six participating educators discussed similar observations and, despite many students being Canadian-born, many

demonstrated limited familiarity with Canadian cultural norms and practices. Both Eva and Fatema experienced situations where students spoke to them after they had graduated, describing the suffering they endured due to the bubble of cultural segregation they experienced within the private school sector. Eva provided an example of "a pipeline, from Islamic Muslim-run daycare to a Muslim elementary school to a Muslim high school" later adding "a lot of students lacked the confidence and social skills…almost like a setback." Fatema also shared similar remarks: "The teachers were so determined and keen on focusing on the Islamic identity, we don't realize these kids are gonna leave the school and they're not gonna be dealing with a Muslim teacher anymore." The difficulties students face in navigating these transitions, highlight the complexities of adjusting to different social and cultural norms and expectations outside the protected environment of Islamic schools, their Muslim bubble. Basma described this situation as "a clash between the way our society functions and how the teachers in Islamic schools function with their students, which evidently leads to an unawareness of reality when the students get out of their high schools."

This is a phenomenon that I have personally encountered among graduates, and I believe it is an ongoing challenge. Numerous insights shared by participating teachers in discussions about the Muslim bubble echoed my own encounters, as previously shared in Chapter Two of this thesis, within the section titled "Memories as a Teacher." The frustration was evident through many discussions surrounding this topic, as educators explained their students' struggles to fit in. Consequently, this situation affected the teachers and their sense of adequacy to properly prepare their students for future novel encounters. Chams and Eva both discussed the importance of the teacher's role in this phenomenon and the challenges they are facing. They discussed the burden that lies on the educator to properly prepare their students (in Chams' words), "to progress into the world and be good members of society." Eva further added the need for "professional development

for teachers in helping students develop a good understanding of who they are and how they might fit into this society."

Despite the emphasis on social and cultural integration, concerns persist about ensuring Islamic teachings and values remain integrated into the curriculum to prepare students for interactions beyond the Islamic school environment. In conclusion, achieving a harmonious blend of the Canadian-Muslim identity is imperative for facilitating a smooth transition to a secular setting. However, this requires teachers to be well-trained and prepared to handle this environment.

Themes 1, 2 and 3

The thematic analysis of this research has revealed three recurring themes that interconnect and provide comprehensive insights into the landscape of professional development and education within Canadian Islamic schools. The first theme of professional development opportunities explores the diverse perspectives and experiences of educators within Canadian Islamic schools. It highlights the necessity of bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experience through tailored professional development initiatives that address the unique challenges and needs encountered by educators in these schools. The second theme, the balance of science and religion, addresses the challenges of integrating secular subjects with Islamic teachings, highlighting the necessity for adapted curriculum materials, specialized professional development, and standardized curriculum models to facilitate this balance effectively. Finally, the third theme, the Muslim bubble, highlights the importance of fostering a balanced Muslim-Canadian identity within the educational environment of Canadian Islamic schools, preparing students for successful integration into Canadian society. Together, these themes offer valuable insights and recommendations for enhancing professional development practices and educational

outcomes within Canadian Islamic schools, emphasizing the importance of tailored support, resources, and strategies to meet the diverse needs of their educators.

CHAPTER SIX
Conclusion

This research closely investigated the professional development experiences of six Canadian Muslim educators within Canadian Islamic schools. The main aim of this study was to offer insights into their experiences, highlight the challenges encountered by these teachers, identify their needs, and ultimately, propose solutions to enhance their pedagogical skills within the classroom setting.

REVIEW OF FINDINGS
Research Questions - Conceptual Framework - Analysis

A discussion responding to all three research questions will draw upon connections to the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Three and the research analysis presented in Chapter Five. Figure 9 outlines the structural framework of this study, beginning with the research questions, proceeded by the conceptual framework, and concluding with the themes discovered through the research analysis.

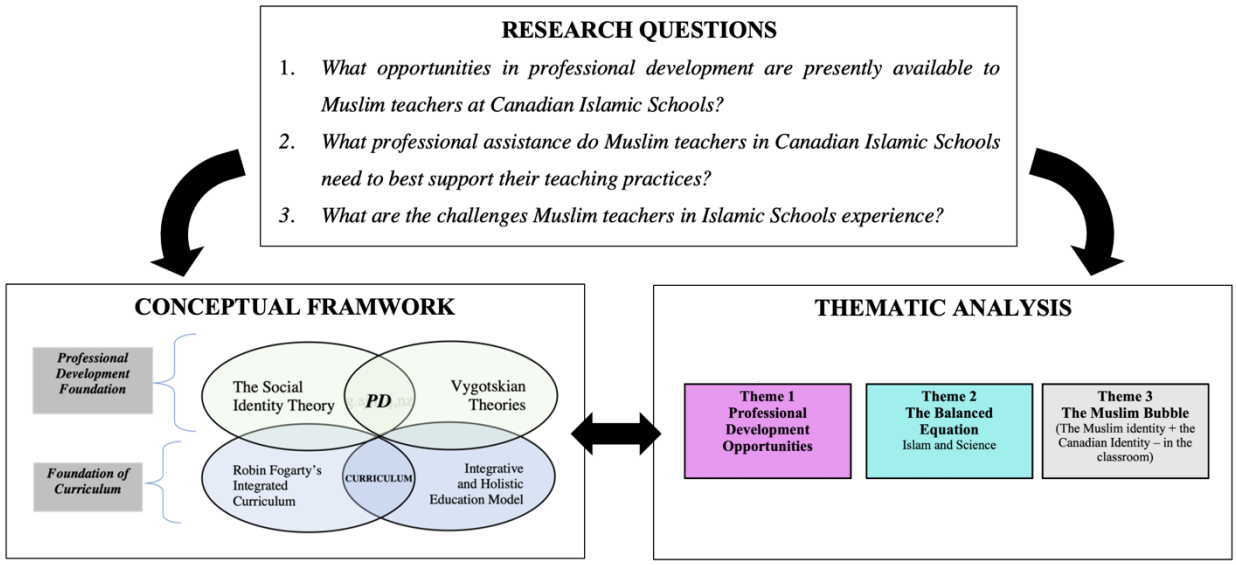

Figure 9: Research Questions - Conceptual Framework - Thematic Analysis

This discussion will begin with the research questions that underpinned this research:

1. ***What opportunities in professional development are presently available to Muslim teachers at Canadian Islamic Schools?***
2. ***What professional assistance do Muslim teachers in Canadian Islamic Schools need to best support their teaching practices?***
3. ***What are the challenges Muslim teachers in Islamic Schools experience?***

Dividing the discussion per question is challenging due to the interconnectedness of the findings and the conceptual framework. Each element intertwines with one another, collectively contributing to the support of all three research questions simultaneously.

The first theme under the thematic analysis of Professional Development Opportunities revealed the diverse experiences and opportunities among educators regarding their engagement in professional development (PD) activities. Comprehensive discussions regarding the details of each participant have been thoroughly presented in Chapter Five. While some participants reported benefiting from targeted PD sessions, others encountered difficulties accessing pertinent opportunities. Nevertheless, the overarching consensus underlined the importance of PD in shaping teaching methodologies and equipping educators to address the multidimensional requirements of Canadian Islamic schools, as explored in this study.

The professional development findings showed alignment with the conceptual framework, particularly concerning Vygotsky's educational theories and the importance of cultural context in teaching practices. The PD findings underscore the importance of bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, emphasizing the need for customized PD initiatives that specifically address the distinct challenges encountered in Islamic educational

settings. This need aligns with Vygotsky's assertion that principles of teacher education should be anchored in the central cultural principles, including values and objectives that are particular to a given context (Van Huizan et al., 2006).

Furthermore, the inconsistency and disconnect between the reality of PD observed in Canadian Islamic schools and the actual demand within these classrooms resonates with Vygotsky's emphasis on the correlation between actions and their educational significance (Vygotsky, 1994). The participants' comments regarding their inadequate skills to align and adjust content to meet classroom requirements highlight the significance of integrating cultural tools into instructional approaches, as proposed by Vygotsky. Additionally, the conceptual framework includes the concept of teacher identity, an essential component in designing effective professional development opportunities. The findings regarding the disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application in PD programs highlight the significance of considering teacher identity, as it serves as a bridge between individual learning and social experiences, and their relationship with one another (Farnsworth, 2010). Furthermore, the correlation extends to the third theme identified in the research analysis, designated as the "Muslim bubble."

The Muslim bubble theme highlights the challenges faced by Muslim students who may find themselves isolated from the broader Canadian culture, leading to potential culture shock upon transitioning to higher education or professional environments. By integrating principles from the social identity theory, educators can better understand the complexities of identity formation within the Muslim community and tailor educational strategies to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion while also nurturing Islamic identity (Pishghadam et al., 2022). Thus, the concept of teacher identity, grounded in social identity theory, informs the development of professional

development programs that address the unique needs of educators in Canadian Islamic schools, facilitating their role in promoting a balanced Muslim-Canadian identity among students.

The PD findings from the study correspond with Vygotsky's educational theories and the importance of cultural context in teaching practices, emphasising the need for tailored professional development programs that align with the unique challenges encountered in Canadian Islamic schools. Also, the social identity theory provides valuable guidance for structuring an educational approach aimed at fostering a cohesive Muslim-Canadian identity. The Muslim bubble aligns with the conceptual framework's emphasis on holistic learning, advocating for a comprehensive educational strategy that integrates various aspects of identity formation. By incorporating these principles into educational practices, Canadian Islamic schools can effectively nurture a balanced and inclusive environment that inculcates a unified Muslim-Canadian identity in students.

Another challenge that emerged from the research analysis highlights an additional area requiring professional development assistance: the importance of finding a delicate balance and creating a harmonious relationship between science and religion within the curriculum structure and educational setting of Canadian Islamic schools. Integrating secular subjects with Islamic teachings fortifies the holistic learning aspect of the conceptual framework, but the limited resources available for such integration underlines the necessity of curriculum models that facilitate such an endeavor. All of these challenges were discovered and discussed within the theme "the balanced equation," correlating with the conceptual framework which outlines the Robin Fogarty Integrated Curriculum Model and the Integrative and Holistic Education Model.

To reflect their staff and students' needs, Canadian Islamic schools can create a comprehensive educational environment that integrates both secular and religious content, reflecting Islamic principles, scientific knowledge, and Canadian cultural values. As shown in

Table 1: An Example of the Fogarty Model, details and examples illustrate how secular and religious content can be balanced within the same subject, across two different subjects, and among multiple subjects. These examples, derived from successful applications in Malaysian schools, demonstrate effective integration strategies (Rashed & Tamuri, 2022). Additionally, Muhammadiyah schools in Indonesia exemplify another approach to integrating secular and religious knowledge through the IHES curriculum model. These schools utilize an interactive and interconnected approach, weaving together subjects, school activities, positive habits, and cultural elements (Hamami & Nuryana, 2022). Lessons in science and religion are seamlessly interconnected, reinforcing their content throughout the learning process through the use of materials, methods, and values taught (Hamami & Nuryana, 2022). The Muhammadiyah schools stand out as a notable example of successful integration within the education context.

Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of integrating science and religion in Canadian Islamic schools, offering insights and recommendations to support meaningful educational experiences for students that encompass both Islamic teachings and scientific understanding.

All participants emphasized the necessity of offering culturally tailored and inclusive training opportunities for Muslim teachers, recognizing the unique context of Islamic education and the need for ongoing support and mentorship. Moreover, they highlighted the importance of clear guidelines from school administration and PD sessions, comprehensive training, and addressing specific challenges within the community to ensure effective teacher preparation. Participating Muslim teachers also stressed the importance of aligning professional development content with the cultural and religious backgrounds of students, advocating for relevance and applicability within their educational environment.

MY FINAL REFLECTION

My initial teaching contract was as an ESL instructor within the Greater Toronto Area, employed at an Islamic private elementary school catering to students from junior kindergarten to grade eight. Subsequently, I relocated to Montreal, Quebec, taking on the role of an English teacher with a private French Islamic secondary school, responsible for teaching students from grades seven to eleven. Throughout my experiences at these Islamic institutions, I encountered a lack of structured guidance and support in my professional role as an educator. As a result, this hindered my opportunities for personal growth and skill development, which supports Hattie's (2003) emphasis on the significance of ongoing professional development for educators and for improving the education system. Furthermore, Hunziker (2012) acknowledges the importance of effective school leadership and collaborative efforts between teachers and school administrators in fostering a culture of improvement and professionalism within educational institutions.

Initially, I had my own concerns regarding the insufficient emphasis placed on professional development within Islamic schools, along with the observed ineffectiveness of existing professional development programs for Islamic schools. However, through the process of accumulating data, discussions with colleagues in similar teaching positions and completing this research, I came to recognize that my concerns were also shared by other Muslim educators. It became evident that these concerns are widespread and, therefore, must be addressed.

Compared to other Muslim households, I consider my family a Muslim-practicing Canadian household. We frequently have discussions integrating Islamic teachings into various aspects of our lives, encompassing literature, current events (geographical and political), technology, daily interactions or experiences, and societal norms. My parents consistently linked daily experiences to Quranic principles, Hadiths, prophetic stories and other narratives from

Islamic history. Initially, I thought most Muslim households engaged in similar discussions. As I began my career as a Muslim teacher at Islamic schools, I found it relatively seamless to integrate the Canadian curriculum with Islamic principles in most situations. However, upon hearing the experiences of this study's participants, it became apparent that many educators struggled to establish this connection, despite its being a fundamental expectation within Islamic educational institutions. Some emphasized the Islamic perspective exclusively, while others focused solely on the Canadian context, resulting in a lack of consistency. This inconsistency potentially led to identity confusion among many students and affected their ability to navigate seamlessly between Islamic and Canadian societal norms.

Based on my observations and discussions with participants in this study, there is a consensus that Islamic schools prioritize the cultivation of Muslim identity to the detriment of a unified Muslim-Canadian identity. Islamic values are applied daily through various aspects of school life to reinforce this prioritization: prayer, special events and programs, class discussions and other practices. Addressing this imbalance is imperative for the success of students and teachers, as it impacts students' integration into Canadian society and their development of a balanced identity. It is my belief that resolving this challenge is essential to ensuring all students have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully and become prominent members in Canadian society.

Through this research, I have come to recognize my passion and commitment to improving educational structures within Islamic schools. This involves refining teacher education programs and customizing professional development initiatives to effectively address the specific needs of Muslim educators. Consequently, the anticipated results would be to provide improved educational outcomes for students in Canadian Islamic schools and better equip them for future pursuits.

LIMITATIONS

This study had three limitations. First, the literature concerning professional development (PD) in Canadian Islamic schools was notably scarce, if not entirely absent. This dearth of available resources posed significant challenges in exploring deeper into various aspects of this research. Specifically, there was an absence of practical and applicable programs designed to offer guidelines for educators in Canadian Islamic schools on effectively balancing the Islamic nature of these institutions with Canadian cultural norms. Thus, implemented programs from other countries were incorporated into the conceptual framework to offset this limitation.

The second limitation was the change in the interview setting due to the COVID Pandemic. This caused a major shift from in-person interviews to virtual interviews. While this change did provide some beneficial outcomes, as described in Chapter Four, it also diminished the face-to-face interaction characteristic of in-person discussions.

The final limitation is the exclusive participation of female volunteers in this study. Therefore, the analysis and conclusions derived from this study only represent the perspectives of Muslim female educators. To enhance future research, it would be necessary and insightful to incorporate the perspectives of Muslim male educators teaching in Canadian Islamic schools.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

One prospective direction for this research would involve the development of comprehensive programs (balancing the Canadian-Muslim identity) tailored to address the professional development requirements, curriculum standards, and other essential developments necessary for educators in Canadian Islamic schools. Such programs and related initiatives would aim to address educators' needs, tackle challenges, and promote institutional advancement,

ultimately enhancing the quality of education provided to students within Canadian Islamic schools.

The second future direction this research could take involves providing a variety of teacher practicum opportunities for student teachers in Islamic schools, each offering diverse and enriching social and cultural encounters. Whitaker (2019) recommends:

> Teaching practicums should facilitate the development of diverse pedagogical tools, as well as the desire and willingness to utilize them. By the end of their training, preservice teachers should not only know themselves, their students and their practice, but also have a firm understanding of who they are as a teacher in relation to who their students are as people. (p. 14)

It is essential for all student educators to engage with educational settings that significantly differ from their own experiences and anticipated future classrooms. Although this may pose challenges for many teachers, such exposure will effectively equip them to become adept educators, capable of effectively managing diverse student populations and classroom environments. Additionally, students who aspire to teach in Canadian Muslim educational institutions should have the opportunity to experience teaching practicums in such settings prior to graduation.

This research study has barely scratched the surface of professional development within Canadian Islamic schools; however, it has made a significant contribution to the scarce literature on PD in Canadian Islamic schools. Through the lens of six Canadian Muslim educators, whose valuable testimonies informed this research, impactful insights have been clarified and

documented to lay the foundation for the design of an professional development program that meets the pedagogical skills and needs required of Muslim educators—and ultimately, their students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Muslim Teachers Professional Development Opportunities in Canadian Islamic Schools
Dear Participant,

My name is Bara'a Al-Shawarghi and I am currently carrying out my study as part of my Master of Arts in Educational Leadership thesis, at the Faculty of Education at McGill University in Quebec, Canada. I am in the process of working on my research project with Professor Strong-Wilson, my research Supervisor. For additional information, feel free to contact her at teresa.strong-wilson@mcgill.ca.

I hope to learn more about Muslim teacher's professional development opportunities in Canadian Islamic Schools. By understanding what is being offered, the teachers experiences; their needs and challenges, we can look into ways to modify the PDO to better suit their needs.

Your participation will involve completing 3 online meeting sessions. The first and second meetings will be interviews about your academic and professional experiences. The third meeting will be to discuss autobiographical short stories that apply to this study.

These interviews will be carried out using the Teams Platform. Only audio is required. Video is not required therefore you can keep your camera function off if you wish. Although all reasonable precautions are taken, there is always the possibility of third-party interception when using communications through the internet.

Memories and experiences are what make us who we are. Sharing real life experiences will help clarify and further elaborate on your responses. The autobiographical component will be very beneficial to the study as it will put your responses into applicable real-life situations.

This will be the breakdown of all three sessions:

FIRST INTERVIEW: 45 - 60 MINUTES

INTRODUCTION INTERVIEW

The interview will be divided into three sections:

(1) Getting to know the participant

(2) Learning more about the participants professional development experiences

(3) Possible memories/short stories that come to mind

SECOND INTERVIEW: 45 - 60 MINUTES

(1) Discussing any challenges that may be faced

(2) Discussing the individual professional needs of each participant

(3) Possible memories/short stories that come to mind

THIRD INTERVIEW: 45 - 60 MINUTES
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SHORT STORIES

Every teacher participant will be asked to share stories that best describe their professional development experiences. Prompts will be provided if participant needs them.

All meeting sessions will take place online. Every effort will be made to ensure your confidentiality and privacy is protected. Your name, personal, and institutional information will be kept confidential. Your real name will not be disclosed in our research reports and published articles. We will also need your permission to record your interview via Teams for accuracy. Interview recordings will be erased after careful transcription, and your identity will not be associated with the interview transcripts. There are two AI transcription services that will be used. Both require uploading original recordings to the cloud first. Once transcription is complete, files will be immediately downloaded and stored on the PI's password protected computer.
They are Descript https://www.descript.com/ and/or Sonix https://sonix.ai/

All identifiable study materials will be stored in password protected files/folders on my password protected computer.

We do not foresee any potential risks or discomfort to participants as a result of participating in this study. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You will always have the right to withdraw from this study. We will be more than happy to share our findings with our participants.

Our results will be submitted for peer review and publication in professional journal(s) and/or newsletters. Secondary purposes may also include presentations created to share with Islamic School Boards, Education Policy Makers or other School Management teams to better or modify PDO for Muslim teachers. We may also use data from this study in future related studies for which we also need your permission.

If you have any questions about this study or future studies, please contact me via phone at 514-569-9551 or e-mail at baraa.al-shawarghi@mail.mcgill.ca
Thank you for considering this request. We would greatly appreciate your cooperation in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Bara'a Al-Shawarghi
Mcgill University
Masters in Educational Leadership
Tel: (514) 569 – 9551

I have read all the details concerning this study and understand the above conditions. I freely give consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

The researcher may use data from this study in future related studies. Yes ____ No ____

The researcher may use data. Yes ____ No ____

You consent for your de-identified data to be used by other researchers for future, unspecified uses. Recordings will never be shared. Yes ____ No ____

Name (Please Print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Any questions or concerns about your rights or welfare as a participant in this study should be referred to Lynda McNeil of the McGill Ethics Board at (514) 389-6831 or via email: lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Project Title: Muslim Teachers Professional Development Opportunities in Canadian Islamic Schools

Research ethics board file number: 22 – 01 - 034

Thank you for considering this request.

APPENDIX B

First Interview Questions

The introduction

1. Please tell me about yourself

- ***a.*** *Your age*
- ***b.*** *Where were you born and brought up*
- ***c.*** *Your cultural background and cultural environment at home*

2. What is your academic background?

- ***a.*** *Your bachelor's degree*
- ***b.*** *Teaching certification*
- ***c.*** *Post-graduate certifications or degrees*

3. Why this specific profession? Your motivations.

4. Tell me about your work/professional experience in the field of teaching.

1. *Where did/do you (previously) teach?*
2. *What did/do you (previously) teach?*
3. *Where and what do you teach (now)?*

5. Please tell me a little more about what kind of a teacher you see yourself

- ***a.*** *your teaching beliefs, approaches you use to teach, pedagogies*

6. As a teacher, what do you think your role and responsibilities are?

7. What is your ideal work setting?

8. What is your understanding of "Professional Development Opportunities" for teachers?

9. Do any memories or stories come to mind when we bring up the topic professional development?

- *This can be something you learned in school*
- *Something you experienced during a PDO*
- *An incident in class*
- *Something you saw in a textbook or any material you came across*
- *A moment when you felt like the lightbulb lit*
- *Something someone said, etc.*

APPENDIX C

Second and Third Interview Questions

Focus – Professional Development

1. Were you provided with PD opportunities throughout your teaching career?

Please elaborate and explain your experiences in Professional Development (school specific)

2. Do you feel that these opportunities were sufficient? Did they help you in your teaching career?

Were you able to use them at work? Why or why not. (school specific)

3. Do you feel you were professionally prepared to teach Muslim students in the teaching settings you were put in, let it be at an Islamic schools or Muslims at a non-Islamic school?

4. Please explain the different PD's offered at the Muslim schools vs. Non-Muslim schools

Did you find a difference between the two environments? Were the PD's offered to you environment specific? (TEACHERS WHO TAUGHT AT ISLAMIC AND NON-ISLAMIC)

5. Do you feel the PDO's offered to you are applicable to Muslim and Non-Muslim students)

6. Do you feel that your Muslim students require you to be better equipped to teach and work with them?

7. Do you think Muslim students in Islamic schools vs. Muslim students in public schools require different needs from you? Can this be covered through PD do you think?

8. Do you think there needs to be specifically designed PDO's for Teachers teaching in Islamic **Schools**?

How so?

- **a.** If yes, what kinds of PD's would you suggest?
- **b.** If no, please provide examples with how you see the current PD's sufficient for the teachers needs in their schools (Islamic schools)

9. What do you look and hope for in your PD opportunities as a Muslim teacher?

10. If you were the principle at an Islamic School and money was not a problem. What would you do for your teachers to better equip them? Please be as specific as possible.

Challenges:

11. Do you face challenges in your teaching profession with Muslim students due to Professional Development in Canadian Schools? If yes/no, please explain

Please provide specific experiences or situations that made you feel this way

If yes, how do you think these challenges could be addressed? Using what methods? Workshops? Courses? Certifications? etc.

What do you think is the source of these challenges?

If no, what challenges do you feel were avoided? Please explain how they were avoided. What was the cause?

Needs:

12. Throughout your teaching profession, do you feel there were specific needs that you would like to speak about?

13. How do you think they can be met?

14. What do you think is the source of these needs?

Research Questions:

2. *What opportunities in Professional Development are available to Muslim teachers at Canadian Islamic Schools?*
4. *What professional support do Muslim teachers in Canadian Islamic Schools need to best support their teaching practices?*
5. *What are the challenges Muslim teachers in Islamic Schools face?*

APPENDIX D

PROMPTS

Prompts for Stories

Do any memories or stories come to mind when we bring up the topic of professional development in relation to Islamic Schools and Muslims students?

This can be something you learned in school
Something you experienced during a PDO
An incident in class
Something you saw in a textbook or any material you came across
A moment when you felt like the lightbulb lit
Something someone said
A gap you experienced
Moments you felt 'not prepared'
Topics you wished you received training in