Corporatisation of Education: Performativity and its Impact on Saudi Female ELT Teachers' Performance and Identity

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Signature: ....

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Abstract

This thesis offers an examination of the introduction of performance management systems and other audit mechanisms imported from the business world to monitor and control teachers and teaching in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In this paper, I attempt to explain the phenomenon of performativity as one of the manifestations of neoliberal ideology at a macro level. I trace its origins back to the 1970s and link it to other major international economies such as WTO, IMF, and the World Bank. Adopting a critical qualitative research model (CQR), I examine the demands of performativity, how Saudi female English language teaching (ELT) teachers perceive them, and their impact on performance and identity. I took a qualitative approach, deriving data largely from epistemic interviews, participants' classroom observations and field notes. The examination of existing scholarship, which assimilates performative mechanisms into a narrative of efficiency and productivity, reveals a mismatch within the reality of Saudi public schools. Sociopolitical theories are used in the analysis stage as an analytical tool to position the issue in a wider sociopolitical context. The findings provide compelling evidence that ELT teachers have a tendency to fabricate results to satisfy higher management and avoid being held accountable for negative outcomes. I argue that the excessive use of audit culture and performance indicators implicitly dehumanises teachers and turns them into robots or machines that passively execute orders. There are, of course, other teachers who hold their views of performativity as a useful tool for managing schools efficiently. Still, it is necessary to explore its negative impact on their professional identities, performance, and teaching practices. Teachers' resistance to the practices and discourses of performativity emerged as a major finding. The question of resistance here is approached through the fact that neoliberal reforms in education are producing new forms of teaching subjectivity that should be the terrain of struggle

and resistance. The study concludes with practical and theoretical recommendations for policymakers, teachers, and teachers' development programmes that seek to promote an enlightened attitude towards the excessive culture of performativity. I hope this study can play a part in the formulation of policy pertaining to skills and training for ELT teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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List of Abbreviations

CALx Critical applied linguistics

CQR Critical Qualitative Research

EFL English as a Foreign Language

EL English Language

ELT English Language Teaching

IEA The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement

KSA Kingdom of Saudi Arabia/ used interchangeably with Saudi Arabia

MENA Middle East and North Africa

MoE Ministry of Education

NTP National Transformation Programme

OECD The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Ofsted The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

OMT Organisation and Management Theory

PISA The Programme for International Student Assessment

TESOL Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

THC Tatweer Education Holding Company

TIMSS Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

UNESCO The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

WTO World Trade Organisation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

In the past four decades with the growth of neoliberalism, policy makers and governments in different parts of the world have come to assign an increasingly fundamental role to education, as all initiatives to revitalise different aspects of social life rely heavily on education to achieve their goals. Policy debates about economic growth and national competitiveness, for example, focus on the importance of 'human capital' and a highly educated workforce. This perception of education as a vehicle for economic development has led to governments becoming increasingly interested in educational performance and outputs (Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019). Like private corporations, they attempted to implement a corporate-business model to manage schools and other educational institutions. This entails creating a framework to evaluate the performance of schools based on measurable criteria, such as exam results, and the use of checklists to evaluate teaching 'performance' (Kalikauer, 2013). The results of such policies differ across countries and contexts. This approach to education, known as *performativity*, has created, in some parts of the world, a context in which the idea of accountability has been altered from a concept with real democratic potential to a managerial approach and a set of procedures that have stifled educational practice and curbed opportunities for educators to take responsibility for their actions and activities (Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019).

This study takes a critical approach to the current education reform in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) with its emphasis on performativity and accountability. I attempted to find out how performativity is perceived by female English Language (EL) teachers in public schools and

to what extent it impacted their performance and the construction of their professional identity, by focusing on their everyday practice. As I will explain later, I was also hoping to recover their voices that have been marginalised by the educational elite and help them to reclaim some of the joy, power and meaning they once knew in their teaching.

Performativity is defined by Ball (2003, p.216) as "a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgments, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic)." The introduction of performance management systems and other audit mechanisms to monitor and control teachers and teaching is one of the manifestations of neoliberal ideology in education which necessitates increasing central control of what is taught and how it is taught, coupled with the introduction of centralised testing regimes to continually evaluate the output of teaching by making it visible, calculable and comparable (Lim & Apple, 2016). Many educators consider these educational reforms to be an assault on teachers' knowledge that undermine their autonomy and judgment (e.g., Furlong, 2004; Giroux, 2018; Biesta, 2015a). As Ball (2003, p. 215) puts it "the novelty of this epidemic of reform is that it does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who they are".

A culture of performativity now exists with a powerful policy to hold pupils, teachers and schools responsible for their 'performance'. In this culture, performance-based activity, encouraged by a market-based approach to education with a significant emphasis on auditing and accountability, is seen by policy makers and education authorities as an efficient approach to raise standards in schools and achievement levels of the mass of the population to compete in a new global industry – the knowledge economy (Rasmussen et al, 2014).

Much of what has been happening recently in educational policy and reform in many countries worldwide is having a profound impact not only on educational practice but also on the position of teachers, their professional identities and their sense of themselves. Many voices from across the educational spectrum now assert that the teacher is central to the effectiveness of any educational system (Hay McBer, 2000; Sammons & Bakkum, 2012; Stéger, 2014). Such claims about the importance of the teacher are all too often linked to certain predetermined educational 'outcomes' that need to be measured and assessed (Biesta, 2015a). The performances of teachers serve as a measure of their productivity or output and represent their quality, value or worth, not only to their schools but also to the educational system as a whole (Perryman, 2006). In this sense, teachers are subject to a limitless number of measures, comparisons and targets. The excessive significance placed on teachers' performance can reduce them to a set of numbers and made them to be seen as 'factors' rather than human beings or, more importantly educational professionals who should have a space for judgment and discretion (Wilkins, 2011).

The language of measurement, performativity and constant evaluation of performance has increasingly saturated the discourse of educational reform. Its widespread nature and its ability to become part of our common sense may cause any critical intuitions that question such practices to slowly disappear (Apple, 2006). Drawing on a critical inquiry, the current research critically examines the consequences and effects of the global spread of the culture of measurement and performativity on English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers' performance, professional identities and the continuing ambiguous role the systems of performativity play in shaping public education language policy and practice in the context of the Kingdome of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The study, therefore, is best seen as part of the current debate over the hegemony of neoliberal ideology on education with all its emphasis on evidence, numbers and classifications and how

neoliberal education policies shape teachers' performance and identities.

In this paragraph, I will explain my own feelings and thoughts of performativity. First, performativity is a powerful system of shaping the way teachers value themselves and others. It encourages teachers to take on board the systems of recognition it offers them in a deep and profound sense in terms of thinking about who they are and how they value themselves and others. Second, getting immersed in practices of performativity produces rigid performative minds with arrogant assertions of opinions as truths. Performativity allows individuals to ignore evidence that does not support their line of thinking. Performativity produces minds that are unable to tolerate conflicting perspectives. They engage in confirmatory bias and filter out evidence that goes against their beliefs. The common norms and conventions have to be strictly followed, which can harm creativity and imagination, because breaking the mould becomes impossible. Attempting to approach things differently becomes unacceptable as what is important is adhering to the mandates of performativity.

The aim of this chapter is to set the scene and provide the reader with an overview of the research project. It aims also to frame the research problem, which is discussed in the following section. Subsequently the purpose of the study will be explained, research focus and questions will be presented, the significance of the study and its contribution to knowledge will be addressed. Finally, the structure of the thesis will be provided.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Today, in the Gulf States and particularly in the KSA, all educational reform discourses acknowledge the place of English as the 'language of globalisation' (Tayan, 2017) and as a crucial component in public and higher education, academia, international communications, the job market and all the domains related to science and technology. This has made English Language policies and practices central to the reform of education in the KSA.

This reform however has, in the majority of Gulf countries, resulted in neoliberal education policies with all their dominant techno-rational discourses of teaching (Le Ha & Barnawi, 2015). These neoliberal policies require constant production of evidence that teachers are doing things 'efficiently' and in the 'correct' way (Apple, 2006). They are represented, for example, in discourses of professional teacher 'standards' or 'competencies' that reduce teaching to matters of technical efficiency (Clarke, 2013). Such policies require teachers "to organize themselves as a response to targets, indicators and evaluations… to set aside personal beliefs and commitments and live an existence of calculation"(Ball, 2003, p. 215). This situation has given rise to what Lyotard et al. (1984) calls the *terrors of performativity*. The new performative technologies, policies and strategies of neoliberal managerialism have a considerable impact on teachers' psyche, souls, identities and self-image as their performance encapsulates their value to the educational organisation or institution. The teachers, whose behaviour is now controlled mostly by non-practitioners, have lost autonomy and any space for their professional judgment has been nearly diminished (Dadds, 2014). Performativity may prevent ELT teachers from adding their informed agency or having meaningful influence on the issues that affect them and their ability to exercise judgment, make decisions, determine outcomes and shape change (Meng, 2009). The identity of some teachers could become virtually empty and soulless (Elliot, 2001; Englund &

Gerdin, 2019). It becomes something almost responsive to external demands, to the ticking of boxes, to the establishment and subsequent of “standards” and to narrow assessment methodologies dictating pedagogy (Biesta, 2007). The result of this process, according to Ball (2003, p. 215), is that “the policy technologies of market, management and performativity leave no space for an autonomous or collective ethical self ”. Teachers, therefore, find their values challenged and now a soaring number of them are leaving the profession. According to the Saudi Public Pension Agency official website, teachers make up the largest group of public sector employees taking early retirement for the year 2016, at a rate of 87% (Public Pension Agency, 2016).

Another problem for teachers working within a culture of performativity is that they find themselves continually inclined to create *fabrications* of the “evidence” (Clarke, 2013) to make their performance tangible, visible and more importantly measurable. By systems of recording and reporting on practice, teachers sometimes have to work to exclude what does not ‘fit’ into what is supposed to be presented, so as to render their organisation into “a recognizable rationality” with all its systems of numeration and classification (Elliot, 2001).

For some teachers, performativity is an opportunity to make a success of themselves, for others it causes inner conflicts, tensions and resistance (Ball, 2013). Tensions can occur between belief and representation. Put simply, teachers are concerned that what they do will not be represented by or valued within the system of performativity and measurement and that this system will distort their authentic and purposeful practice (Ball, 2013). In this sense, such technologies and calculations, which seem to make public sector organisations more transparent, may actually result in making them more opaque (Apple, 2006).

In more general terms, a culture of performativity is an attempt to align public sector organisations with the culture, systems and values of the private sector, which eventually creates the pre-conditions for core public services to be opened to commodification and profit-making (Apple, 2006). The proliferation of these performative and evaluative systems to measure and evaluate performance encourage teachers to think about themselves in their terms as 'outstanding', 'average' or 'satisfactory' in their performance (Apple, 2006). The governmental control embedded in systems of measurement and performativity tend to be presented simply as a way of representing quality. However, the way these systems operate, through observation of teachers, annual reviews, self-reviews, school ranking and league tables, shows how they come with a flow of changing demands that make teachers accountable and responsible to monitor and discipline themselves (Lim & Apple, 2016). In this sense, teachers are likely to think about themselves as merely producers of performance and feel compelled to improve it (Meng, 2009). These systems represent a powerful technique "to produce bodies that are docile and capable" (Foucault 1979, p. 294).

In light of these issues, there is a need to take serious steps to explore what Pennycook (2001, p.8) calls a "preferred future" for ELT teachers, to raise awareness of the profound consequences of systems of performativity and other market-driven policies on their performance, professional identities and the nature of teaching and learning in the Saudi context.

1.2 Purpose and Rationale of the Study

Various reasons triggered my interest in the topic of this study. In this section, I will explain the personal purposes as well as the rationale for carrying out this research project. Before doing so, a personal profile of my experience in teaching might be of some help to the reader to understand the underpinnings of my aims and intentions.

1.2.1 Personal Profile

My previous experience as an English teacher in Saudi public schools makes me eligible for carrying out this study. This brief account of my personal profile might help the reader understand the underpinnings of dealing with the topic from its current perspective. I will attempt to present reflections related to the focus of the study within the description of my personal teaching experience.

I worked as an EL teacher in Saudi public schools from 1998 to 2006. I taught subsequently in various schools, secondary, intermediate and primary, never really settling. In a centralised education system as in Saudi Arabia, educational authorities have responsibility for setting policies and making decisions on the kinds of curriculum, materials, teaching practices and professional development that will be supported and implemented. All such policies and decisions are delivered in a linear way from the *centre* to teachers for implementation in classrooms, without taking into consideration the views of the teachers and practitioners in the field. In other words, expertise in judgment and decision-making is seen to reside outside schools, to be delivered in a hierarchical way to those inside schools with no account of teachers' own expertise, understanding and judgment, which I believe lie at the heart of reform or good practice. The *delivery* model of educational reform, in which the teacher is positioned as a

technician and uncritical implementer of outside policies, is inappropriate for developing a well-educated teaching force (Dadds, 2014). This is particularly true when such a model is accompanied by a rigorous accountability system that leaves no space for teachers' responsibility and confidence to cultivate inner expertise as a basis for teaching and for judging outsider initiatives. I disliked intensely the politics of the classroom, especially the prohibition on engaging students in controversial issues, but the classroom itself I thrived in and enjoyed. I was an enthusiastic teacher who relished the challenge and soon realised that I had a way of communicating with students that seemed to work, particularly when giving them a voice and letting them act in accordance with their impulse. Nevertheless, I tried to become the prototype of a teacher who I felt met the standards of *true* teaching. The harder I tried to fit in and to be someone I wasn't, the less worthy I felt being in any teaching position at all. I finally stopped trying to be the ideal teacher once I realised the arbitrary educational standards set by a hierarchal system. Knowing this information, however, did not change the situation, as I remained invisible at all the schools where I used to work. I, like so many other teachers, had no voice in the design of the curriculum and teaching practices, amongst other teaching related issues.

From 2008 to 2012, I took the position of an educational supervisor, a chance that I considered a golden opportunity to have my voice heard, but here the challenges were even worse. Contrary to the principles of teacher education and professional development, classroom observations were usually more evaluative and less developmental in nature (Farmer, 2006), leading to teacher burnout and less-effective performance in classrooms (Papastylianou, Kaila, & Polychronopoulos, 2009), and the Saudi context is no exception. Similar to various other contexts in the Arab World, classroom observations in Saudi schools are regarded as threatening

and ineffectual due to their subjective, judgmental and impressionistic nature (Mercer, 2020). Furthermore, there is a strong perception among Saudi teachers of the element of threat and coercion in the whole observation process (Shah, 2014). Lacking autonomy, teachers often resent the process of observation and consider the observers as powerful personnel whose role is to pass verdicts and judgment on their teaching practices.

In 2012, I was offered a position with a higher wage and additional benefits by a private university of medicine to be the head of a preparatory year programme, and managed to obtain a letter of endorsement from the Ministry of Education to start what I thought would be my *dream job*. It must be noted, however, that public and private universities and colleges in Saudi Arabia started implementing preparatory year programmes to bridge the gap between secondary school and the first year at university (Alnasser & Dow, 2013). Rote and didactic learning, traditional pedagogy and the emphasis on memorisation rather than problem solving and critical thinking are believed to be major hurdles for quality teaching in secondary schools; thus, the preparatory year was established as a remedial educational programme for beginning students whose English language low proficiency levels and lack of study skills require them to take special foundation courses as prerequisites for taking university-level courses.

In order to bridge this gap and to run the preparatory programme properly, well-trained staff with proper academic qualification was needed. As a newly established university implementing the corporate business model and trying to reduce labour costs, the shortage of faculty members to the number of students was a prominent problem. Faculty members were required to have approximately nineteen contact hours or more per week to make up for the shortage of faculty and the influx of students. This profoundly affected the quality of teaching and learning.

Furthermore, the imported syllabus from Western countries was not culturally appropriate and was irrelevant to Muslim culture and needed to be reviewed and adjusted by local teaching staff (Mohrman, 2013). This would entail granting faculty members a great deal of time, freedom and autonomy, which could not be offered due to the excessive bureaucracy in that university.

Students have become *clients* or customers and since customer satisfaction is a well-established marketing principle, it has therefore become a target of education. I and fellow faculty members, all facing managerial pressure to satisfy fee-paying students, have realised that to think of the student as a customer damages quality and academic standards, and degrades students learning. A sizable body of research has been compiled to show the role consumerism plays as an underlying contributor to the issue of diminished student learning in colleges and universities (e.g., Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005; Harrison & Risler, 2015). This is not an argument against students' satisfaction but this is to assert that consumerism will definitely produce citizens with focus on self-gratification and no sense of obligation to society (Giroux, 2013). Parents and students, by taking on the role of the consumers of educational provision, may have a feeling of power that may be difficult to resist (Brooks, Byford, & Sela, 2015). This is not to indicate, of course, that parents and students should simply be subject to the judgments of educational professionals or to the bureaucracy of educational institutions. This is just to show how relationships between students/parents and educators have become difficult within a market-driven system of education. Teachers, therefore, should play a significant role in dealing with this inadequate approach to education, and if they are to do so "their passion, enthusiasm, sense of social justice and intellectualism must not be curbed by managerial leadership and mercantile aspirations" (Troudi, Coombe & Al-Hamliy, 2009, p.63). However, managerial control and the culture of accountability exert central control over education and educational practices, leaving

parents and students out of all substantive decisions (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005).

In most Saudi universities, preparatory programmes are still considered as service programmes, preparing students for the *real* academic departments. In fact, in different parts of the world, and especially in contexts where English is in a transitional process of becoming a medium of instruction, such as in the Gulf countries, many teachers suffer from workforce casualisation (Senior, 2006). Teachers are therefore hired as per demand and according to student numbers, with a duty to equip students with a set of well-defined language skills. Contracts vary in length but they are rarely permanent and teachers can be dismissed on economic grounds, especially in private institutions. This heavy reliance on adjunct faculty has contributed to the excessive teaching staff turnover rates in the preparatory year department, which has affected the quality of teaching and contributed to the unresolved problem of the "lack of rootedness" (Noori & Anderson, 2013, p.10) in the department. Because students are seen as merely a source of income, these issues have become the least important to consider in the private university where I used to work.

1.2.2 Personal Purpose

My professional experience as a teacher and as an educational supervisor made me feel inclined to investigate how Saudi female ELT teachers perceive the culture of performativity. I also wanted to examine its impact on their teaching practices from the perspective of those who are supposed to be key players in the current educational reform. By working in a highly performative workplace, I also sought self-development for myself, as I pursued an understanding of the process of the neoliberal approach to education in the Saudi context and how the increased reliance upon technologies of performativity is currently transforming the very foundations from which our subjectivities are constructed. This made me feel that the need to attend to the influence of performativity was pressing. Against this background, I identified my topic and formed my research questions around these three areas: perceptions, performance, and identity construction.

I also attempted to find out if there is a way of resisting the culture of performativity or even mediating managerial control and exerting our autonomy under contemporary educational change, to create a conducive environment in which to achieve educational humanitarian relations between all stakeholders: teachers, students and parents.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

This study was stimulated by the concern, mentioned above, that the rigours and disciplines of performativity have become central to the discourse of educational reform and are unconditionally embraced in the Saudi context. This research aims to critically interrogate the taken-for-granted practices of performativity, question the philosophical underpinnings surrounding them to position the study within the broader socio-political and socio-economic

context. It also focuses on understanding the ways in which the increasing drive towards the culture of performativity has impacted the performance and identities of ELT female teachers in the Saudi public schools. Moreover, this study aims to seek new possibilities where teachers who work in public institutions can withstand the constant pressure to "perform" according to imposed and often reductive "standards" (Apple, 2006, p.100) and resist constructing a version of themselves that is fabricated against a set of measurable criteria (Biesta, 2015a). It is a new possibility where teachers can fight back for more humane treatment and argue for a greater awareness that market-driven solutions with their excessive demands on performativity and measurability do not deal with the complexities that they encounter in the real world of schools.

Moskovsky & Picard (2018) provided a comprehensive review of the ELT related research conducted by Saudi scholars over 25 years and pointed out that after the introduction of the Saudi Government's Scholarship programme in the early 2000s, a strong growth and a bulk of journal publications have been devoted to reporting Saudi ELT research. They argued that the major topic area concerning ELT in the KSA includes issues of pedagogy and the curriculum, teaching methodology, teachers' teaching style and techniques, teachers' competence, EFL teachers pre and in-service training and myriad studies have examined how pedagogy benefits from using the new technologies as a means of language delivery. However, they stressed the need for further research regarding the status of TESOL as a commercial entity in neoliberal times and the complex process of teachers' identity formation and power relation in TESOL knowledge construction as such vital issues have been subjected to little attention within the field of TESOL in the Saudi context.

The central tone of this study is critical by definition of its purpose. However, it may be easy for

a reader to misapprehend the critical nature of this study as a negative judgment on the performativity and measurement culture as a whole. Since that would be far from my actual judgment, I want to state firmly at the outset that this study does not undervalue the importance of scientific data, nor it detracts from the vital role of accountability and audit culture to manage schools. This study is devoted to uncover the way neoliberal agenda can appropriate the discourse of performativity and competition in education to consolidate wealth and power in the hands of political and economic elites.

1.4 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following three questions:

1. How do Saudi (primary-intermediate-secondary) ELT female teachers perceive the culture of performativity in Saudi public schools?
2. How do the practices of performativity affect Saudi (primary-intermediate-secondary) ELT female teachers' performance?
3. How do the practices of performativity affect Saudi (primary-intermediate-secondary) ELT female teachers' professional identities?

1.5 Significance of the Study and Contribution to Knowledge

Little empirical research, if any, has been conducted so far to examine the consequences of the increased use of performativity in public schools on ELT teachers' performance and professional identities and the role of these performative regimes in shaping public education language policy in the Saudi context.

Although considerable research has been devoted to addressing challenges of Saudi ELT teachers in Saudi public schools (e.g., Al-Seghayer, 2014a; Rahman &Alhaisoni, 2013), such studies, as is argued later, have relatively failed to offer systematic information on the impact of performativity on teachers and educational policies and practices of English language education in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, these studies fell short of scrutinising the repercussions of the spread of systems of performativity. At their best, these studies tend to approach the issue of the excessive drive towards systems of performativity in education unproblematically as a neutral managerial activity, detaching it from the wider socio-political and socio-economic issues. The current research, informed by the tenets of critical theory, presents a new perspective for

understanding and analysing the current drive towards performativity and its implications on teachers' performance and professional identity and on educational language policies and practices in the Saudi context. This study, to the best of my knowledge, is the first of its kind conducted on such a broad level of analysis to the excessive use of systems of performativity in the Saudi context. It is hoped that the findings of this study will generate useful data to guide the decision-making of policy makers in the country with regard to public language education. This study will, it is believed; pave the way for other researchers towards broader social, political and economic analyses of educational issues in Saudi Arabia, beyond the micro-level concerns. Finally, it is hoped that the study will contribute to the ongoing debate about the hegemony of neoliberal ideology on education.

Equally vital, and all too often overlooked in language education research, is the teacher as a central element of any educational reform. As Troudi (2007, p.6) states "teachers are often excluded from educational policy and play an insignificant role in decision-making". By the same token, James Gee (1994) offers English teachers a choice: either to participate in their own marginalisation by seeing themselves as "language teachers" detached from social and political issues, or accept the fact that they "stand at the very heart of the most crucial educational, cultural and political issues of our time" (p. 190). Therefore, the current research seeks not only to understand EL teachers' perceptions of the proliferation of systems of performativity in Saudi public schools, the role these systems play in their professional lives and the consequences of these assumptions on their teaching performance. But more significantly, to raise their awareness and suggest possible ways for them to resist such hegemony of neoliberal ideology manifested in systems of performativity that reduce them into passive spectators, disconnected from one another and alienated from decision-making (Mathison & Ross, 2002). To help them realise that

these systems “are not simply instruments but a frame in which questions of who we are or what we would like to become emerge” (Dean 1995, p. 581).

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organised into seven chapters, as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces the study and explains the purpose and significance of the study and how it is structured.

Chapter 2 provides the key background information necessary to familiarise the reader with the context in which the study was carried out.

Chapter 3 sets out my own paradigmatic stance, which shapes the theoretical framework upon which this study is based. It also offers a critical engagement with literature relevant to the focus of the study.

Chapter 4 explains the methodology of the study, its design, and the philosophical standpoints that underpin the choice of methods. It also outlines the ethical issues and guidelines followed rigorously throughout the different stages of the research and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 5 reports the findings of the study.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings in light of the published literature and related sociopolitical theories.

Chapter 7 summarises the main findings and recommendations of the study. It also indicates areas for further research.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2. Introduction

This chapter presents background information on the context in which this study was carried out to help the reader understand contextual issues related to the topic under investigation and appreciate the uniqueness of the Saudi context with regard to its strict adherence to Islamic and cultural traditions. It is divided into four parts. The first part provides a brief exploration of the country's location, language, culture and the position of women in the country, as the study participants are females only. The second part presents a brief historical overview of the educational system in the country. The third part places a special focus on English language education in the KSA. The fourth section is devoted to the current educational reforms and the introduction of performative technology systems in the Saudi educational system that is the focus of this study.

2.1 General Background

2.1.1 Background of the Study: Saudi Arabia

Constituting the bulk of the Arabian Peninsula, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an Arab country located in West Asia and occupies a land area of approximately 2,149,690 square kilometres (World Atlas, n.d.). With a great devotion and commitment to Islamic theocracy as the birthplace of Islam and the site of Islam's two Holy mosques in Mecca and Madinah, it is respected by Muslims all over the world. According to the 2020 census by the Saudi General Authority of Statistics, the total number of the population of Saudi Arabia is 34,218,169 million, of whom 67 percent were Saudi nationals; around a third of the population (33%) comprised Arab and non-

Arab expatriates (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2020). Saudi people are all Muslims and speak different colloquial dialects of modern standard Arabic that is derived from Classical Arabic, the language of the Quran.

As for the government and constitutional framework, Saudi Arabia is a monarchy without parliament or political parties (Bowen, 2014). The primary source of legislation is Islamic law – *Shari-ah*. The *Majlis al-Shura*, or Consultative Council is a legislative body that advises the King on issues that are important to Saudi Arabia. However, factors such as the influence of intertribal politics remain strong in the modern kingdom (Bowen, 2014).

With regard to its economic position, Saudi Arabia has become the single biggest oil producer and exporter since the discovery of oil in the late 1930s, which has opened up the door to multi-billion-dollar investments with the giant economies of the West and Asia, particularly Britain, United States of America and China (Bowen, 2014). Despite the claims presented by mainstream Western observers that the Saudi tribal society was not prepared for the economic transformation and lacked the necessary institutions and legal system, Saudi Arabia managed to adopt Western technology and a market economy while rigorously maintaining its Arab and Islamic values, in a mixture of tradition and modernity that is unique to the Saudi context (Vassiliev, 2015).

While women in most Islamic countries face significant restrictions on their lives, Saudi Arabia's extreme version of Islam coupled with Arab traditions place these restrictions at the far end of the spectrum. Exclusion of women from public life, the ban on women driving (they were recently granted the right to drive in June 2018) and the need for a male guardian's permission to travel or work are visible elements of the status of women in Saudi Arabia (Le Renard, 2014; Hoza, 2019). According to the 2020 Global Gender Gap report, Saudi Arabia has a very high

gender gap index, ranked at 148 out of 153 countries. This is clear evidence of Saudi women's subordinate status and how they lag behind in economic and political participation.

However, the KSA is now slowly moving towards a modern state with limited religious influences. The Saudi government has taken several initiatives to push the country towards modernity by appointing moderate scholars in the Council of Senior Scholars, curtailing the powers of the country's religious police, trying to ease the sex segregation rules in public places, and most recently allowing women to drive. In 2015, Saudi women were given the right to run as candidates in the municipal election and to vote. They were also allowed to take part in the Shura council, a governing body that supervises legislation. King Salman, however, has pushed a series of economic and social reforms aimed at transforming Saudi Arabia, where women joining the workforce is now a top priority. These initiatives are also driven by the crown prince's Vision 2030, which seeks to reduce the country's dependence on oil revenue, as I will explain under the subheading (2.5.3 Vision 2030).

2.2 The Educational System in The KSA

2.2.1 Historical Overview

Since the foundation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, commonly known as Saudi Arabia, in 1932 by King Abdul-Aziz Bin Saud, Islamic law is considered the building block upon which the Saudi Government's policy is based. Saudi education is perceived accordingly as it bases itself on the study of the Holy Quran and the Islamic heritage founded fourteen centuries ago. This may explain the significant role the mosque has played in the expansion of education, as it was a place for both religious schooling and worship (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Soon afterwards, the so-called "Kuttab", a new type of informal education, was introduced to satisfy the increased

demand for Islamic and Arabic studies in the Islamic World. The *Kuttab* school focuses on basic literacy skills such as arithmetic and grammar, along with Islamic teachings of the Holy Quran and other religious texts through memorisation (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

Even today, rote memorisation of basic texts seems to be a prominent feature that characterises the educational system in Saudi Arabia and has its roots in the Kuttab school (Alrabai, 2016). According to Smith & Abouammoh (2013), a government regulated curriculum, the extensive study of religion, and rote memorisation are key features of the Saudi education system. This approach imposes extrinsic controls on learning processes that may undermine the autonomy of both the learner and the teacher (Shukri, 2014).

The first public schools were established in 1930 for male students only (Wiseman, 2010). Thirty years later, in 1960, female students were able to receive formal education, despite strong opposition by people who viewed non-religious education as worthless for girls. Female students, however, were segregated from boys in separate schools (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). The notion that women are only able to study and work in segregated spheres where strange men cannot see them is still dominant. The patriarchal and male-controlled nature of Arab society in general and Saudi society in particular, has led to the exclusion of women from public life and constraining their educational, political, and career choices which I believe an important piece of information to consider when describing the context of the current study as the participants of this study are only female Saudi ELT teachers.

Women's schooling at all levels – elementary, secondary, high school and university – continued to be under the Department of Religious Guidance, known as The General Presidency for Girls' Education until 2002, while the Ministry of Education oversaw the education of boys. This was

to ensure that women's education did not deviate from the original purpose of female education, which was to make women obedient wives and good mothers, and to prepare them for 'acceptable' jobs such as teaching that were believed to suit their nature. Religious conservative scholars heavily influenced The General Presidency for Girls' Education, which has not enjoyed the same prestigious status as the Ministry of Education. Many Saudi women and men consider women's nature to be different from that of men; therefore, they are not allowed to work in the same jobs as men. That is why only certain jobs (e.g., teaching but not engineering) are open to women.

2.2.2 Education Policy

The Supreme Committee for Education, formed in 2004 by merging The Higher Committee for Education Policy and the Higher Education Council, has become the highest authority responsible for all educational policies, including the setting of standards for all types of education that reflect the vision of the Saudi Government. This emphasises furnishing students with Islamic values, teachings and ideals (Barnawi & AL-Hawsawi, 2016). Additionally, a governing principle of education is to equip students with various skills and knowledge in order to develop their society economically, socially and culturally (Barnawi & AL-Hawsawi, 2016).

In recent times, public education received the largest share of attention. In 2008, Tatweer Education Holding Company (THC) was established in accordance with a Royal Decree from King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz as a strategic investment company responsible for the implementation of the King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz Project for Developing Public Education and the provision of core and support educational services (Alharthi & Woollard, 2014).

These major reforms, it is believed, were the result of the so-called "War on Terror" after the

events of 11 September to counterbalance the extremist ideology encouraged by the intensive religious education as discussed later in this chapter (Karmani, 2005). Another vital reason was the Saudi Government's realisation of the strong association between education and economic growth. Thus, shaping Saudi nationals into a workforce of international standards is a central goal of the current Saudi education policy (Barnawi & AL-Hawsawi, 2016).

2.3 Public Education English Language Policy

2.3.1 Historical Overview of English Language Education in Saudi Arabia

The discovery of oil in the late 1930s paved the way for a long-term relationship between Saudi Arabia and Western countries, mainly Great Britain and the USA (Bowen, 2014). Since then the country has been an advantageous target for the British and American sphere of influence. Military, economic and technological cooperation between Saudi Arabia and these two countries, as well as other developed countries that operate in English, drew attention to the need for the use of English (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014).

English, however, was not introduced as an educational subject until the late 1950s, when it became the only foreign language taught in Saudi schools (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). It was a compulsory subject taught only in intermediate and secondary schools. However, with the education system reform in 2010, English is now taught in primary stage (4th-6th grades) (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014).

Teaching English as an educational subject faced some resistance throughout the early history of education in Saudi Arabia. There was fear that "more English" would mean "less Islam" (Azuri, 2006, p. 1). Despite anti-English sentiments expressed by religious segments of the Saudi society and the denouncement of English as "the language of the infidels" (Al-Brashi, 2003), others

indicate that the teaching of English or any other foreign language is compatible with Islamic teaching, using the prophet's saying: "He whoever learns other people's language will be secured from their cunning" as a motto to position their view on a religious basis (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). This anti-English attitude has been altered by the new wave to modernise the country introduced by Saudi Arabia's national vision 2030.

The Ministry of Education, through the Department of Curriculum Design, presented English subject textbooks that are compatible with the beliefs, values and traditions of the Saudi society and are commonly referred to as *English for Saudi Arabia* (Almutairi, 2008). Three materials are usually utilised by teachers: a textbook, a workbook for the students, and a teaching manual known as the teacher's book (Al-Otaibi, 2004). The subject textbooks integrate the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), with special emphasis on grammar and vocabulary. However, most public schools are not well equipped with English learning facilities such as language labs, CDs and other learning aids. These are often out of order due to lack of maintenance and trained teachers, despite the fact that such resources are provided by the Ministry of Education for free (Almutairi, 2008).

2.3.2 English Language Teaching in Mainstream Saudi Education

Today, English in the KSA is taught as an independent subject in intermediate and secondary stages, as well as the 4th, 5th and 6th grades in elementary schools, and there are about 30 students per class. The academic year is divided into two terms of approximately 17 weeks. Students at intermediate and secondary school have four 45-minute English language lessons per week and need to pass the final examinations at the end of each semester as a condition for their academic progression. Teachers teach approximately 20-24 periods per week depending on the number of

classes in school. By contrast, students at elementary schools have only two 45-minute lessons per week and have no examinations, but are assessed continuously throughout the year. In private schools, students are exposed to English earlier as English is taught as early as kindergarten level. Moreover, private schools are obliged to teach the syllabus designed by the MoE alongside their own ELT textbooks.

The collaborative method is the prevalent teaching method used by ELT teachers, as it is assumed to impact learning positively through pairing students with different learning capabilities or putting students into small groups, where they learn how to resolve problems. Such an approach works on the premise that people are naturally social creatures and constructs learning activities around the notion that students learn more easily from peers or a group of peers. This approach capitalises on the idea that enhancing social interaction skills and developing the ability to make critical judgments on learning problems is more important than just learning content or knowledge (Alharbi, 2015).

2.3.3 English Language Teacher Education

Over the last four decades, most of the English Language teaching staff in Saudi Arabia were expatriates from neighbouring Arab countries, mainly Egypt, Sudan and Jordan, brought in to solve the long-term shortage of ELT teachers in public intermediate and secondary schools (Al-Hazmi, 2015). Al-Awad, (2002) has contended that in the academic year 2002, the MOE recruited 1,300 non-Saudi English language teachers. However, the majority of non-Saudi teachers were insufficiently trained to teach, which hindered any efforts to improve the outcomes of ELT hoped for in the country (Al-Hazmi, 2015). Likewise, many Saudi ELT teachers in public schools have been graduates of colleges of education and colleges of arts. While the four-

year bachelor degree by colleges of education offers practical teacher training, colleges of arts prepare students to be linguists or English-Arabic translators, with no emphasis on educational practice (Al-Hazmi, 2015). Al-Saadat (2004) rightly points out that graduates of faculties of arts have had no training in teaching methodology or educational psychology or measurement of any kind and thus may not be well prepared to be language teachers. In fact, many graduates lack basic language skills, such as the ability to speak the language (Barnawi and Hawsawi, 2016). According to Al-Hazmi (2003) the English programme is neither adequate nor systematic for EFL teachers' preparation in Saudi Arabia and he has called for a well-defined approach to pre- and in-service education for EFL teachers. In 2016, the MoE introduced a year-long teacher-training programme in Western Universities called *Khebrat*. It aims to "equip Saudi teachers and school leaders to play an active role in the modernisation of the country's education system as part of the Saudi Vision 2030. However, it is a one-off training opportunity and may not be sufficient to sustain teachers' professional development. The criteria to join the training programme are strict and competitive and a very limited number can be granted this chance.

As for teachers' evaluation, EL teachers are observed twice in their classrooms, once by the school principal and once by the English language supervisor, each semester (i.e. four times a year). However, the school principal evaluates teachers annually, whereas the role of the supervisor is to help teachers understand their performance targets and goals and provide feedback on their performance. The teachers' performance evaluation form is divided into three sections: teaching performance (72 points), personal characteristics (16 points), and relationships with management team, colleagues and parents (12 points).

2.4. Educational Reform

2.4.1 External Pressures for Change

In recent years, the Saudi education system has faced remarkable international and local pressures for change. These pressures are partially due to the dramatic events of September 11 2001 in New York City, and their consequences on the global political climate. After revealing that fifteen of the nineteen hijackers who attacked the United States on September 11 2001 were from Saudi Arabia, presumably the biggest ally of the United States in the Middle East (Chomsky, 2016), American politicians, the American public eye and the media tried to figure out the reasons behind this terrorist attack. Many pointed accusing fingers at the Saudi education system and its role in supporting Islamic extremism. Consequently, the USA exerted pressure on Saudi Arabia to transform the whole educational system and review the entire educational curriculum to remove materials that were deemed intolerant towards people of other faiths (Davies, 2009). As Karmani (2005, p. 262) puts it, "an extraordinary unparalleled degree of pressure has been escalating on Muslim government [by the United States of America] to reform its educational curricula, the underlying belief being that current system of education in place in the Muslim world was partly responsible for motivating the terrorist attacks".

2.4.2 Internal Pressures for Change

Internal pressures came as a result of a national standards debate that concentrated on the issue of employability and concerns about the ability of Saudi graduates to compete in the global economy (Bosbait & Wilson, 2005). Within this debate, many were concerned that the rote learning and teacher-based pedagogy of traditional Arab educational culture were not sufficient for the current economic development in the region (Rugh, 2002). In 2013, the Saudi Ministry of Education implemented a long-term strategic plan to make the education system a major driving

force behind the transformation from entirely oil-dependent economy to a diversified knowledge-based economy (Badry & Willoughby, 2015). In other words, the current educational reform is a response to economic and political imperatives. Kirdar (2002, p. 15) cited a famous Arab businessman who stated that the region would not fulfil its economic potential "unless we revolutionize our educational system and make a total change to our *mindsets* [italics added]".

English language is perceived as a means for economic development, as it is used as the *lingua franca* in large multi-national oil and gas companies. As early as 1978, expatriates comprised 90 per cent of the workforce in public service establishments such as hospitals and restaurants, whereas Arab nationals with a good command of English comprised only 10 per cent (Al-Braik 2007). Increased efforts towards Saudisation, coupled with strict communicative competency standards required by companies and general dissatisfaction with English language educational outcomes, have led the Saudi government to rethink its English language educational policy and to introduce a large-scale curricular reform project (Raddawi, 2014). Barnawi and Hawsawi (2016) argue that in order for the new policy to be implemented successfully, a strategic plan guided by local intellectuals needs to be designed, so as to maintain the status of classical Arabic language and national cultural identity. By the same token, Elyas (2008) pointed out the difficulty of implementing a radically different English pedagogy in a context where the rest of the subjects are still taught following traditional methods. Moreover, there is a content rather than pedagogical emphasis in teacher training in general (Elyas, 2008). Al-Seghayer (2014a) contends that students' beliefs, aspects of curriculum, pedagogy, and administrative processes are persistent constraints facing English education in Saudi Arabia and should be incentives for corrective actions to bring about much-needed curriculum reform. However, the abovementioned external and internal incentives for reform will be discussed in detail with reference to the

Tatweer Project that guides the Saudi education system reform.

2.4.3 Introduction of Performative Technology in Saudi Education and the Evolution of Tatweer

In 2007, the Saudi MoE implemented the $2.4 billion King Abdullah Public Education Development Project, commonly referred to as Tatweer, literally meaning *development*, to improve the educational competence of the Saudi population and create a productive and efficient workforce within a dynamic and innovative economy (Tatweer, 2008). The Tatweer education reforms were based on neoliberal principles and led to a new context of education delivery in Saudi Arabia (Wiseman, Astiz, & Baker, 2013). In neoliberal philosophy, literacy is connected to a number of values, comprising social cohesion, social capital and political participation (Niblock, 2006). Such values are seen as a point of reference to a successful and effective education system within a universally competitive dynamic knowledge-based society (Niblock, 2006).

Saudi Arabia sought to reform its education system to promote economic prosperity and position itself in the global marketplace; to increase literacy and numeracy levels in schools to create a more educated and competent workforce than previous generations; to generate economic prosperity within the nation, and to meet global labour market needs. These drivers are not only the result of state power and authority but also the result of international agencies of power and influence. These agencies include the World Bank (2008), which highlighted guiding principles for education development for Saudi Arabia to prepare its population for the labour market, within an innovative modern education system that catered for a global knowledge economy. They also include Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) administered by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and the

Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) administered through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Put another way, Tatweer was introduced as an educational policy to create a well-trained workforce that would meet the needs of the labour market and attain economic prosperity. In this sense, it can be argued, that Tatweer, which was built on the foundations of education as a market commodity, is the result of globalisation pushed by international comparative testing and international agents that function mainly via an agenda setting strategy. At this point, the market-orientated reform of Tatweer becomes evident from the introductory commentary on the official state website: "the primary objective of this program will be to focus on the quality of education to ensure that students of public education in the Saudi Kingdom are equipped with the necessary skills to participate in an increasingly globalised society and engage with the complex and myriad problems that globalisation brings" (Tatweer, 2010).

2.4.3.1 The Evolution of Tatweer

As mentioned above, Tatweer appeared as a result of a number of events. The increasing crisis in the Saudi education system (with its inability to develop a dynamic knowledge society that fosters economic development, coupled with its failure to produce its own work force and depend less on expatriates), the aftermath of 9/11, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) membership and labour market needs were all drivers that highlighted the need for reform. Thus, I believe that the role of the regional context, WTO membership and the TIMSS & PISA measurements are vital for an understanding of the development of Tatweer.

2.4.3.2 The Regional Context

During the late 20th century, discussions in the Middle East and North African countries (MENA) emphasised the shortcomings of the Arab education system, at a time that witnessed an exponential growth in the population and early signs of growing unemployment (Tayan, 2017). Throughout this period, precisely in 1953, UNESCO estimated that "more than 90 percent of the Saudi Arabian population was illiterate" (Wiseman, Sadaawi, & Alromi, 2008, p.3). This early recognition that there is a crucial need to reform the education systems in the MENA countries has placed educating an incompetent workforce, who would fill labour market jobs, especially in the growing Saudi oil industry, as a priority in reforming its educational system (IMF, 2013; World Bank, 2008). Although concepts of teaching in Saudi Arabia are predicated on the conservative principles of Islamic philosophical thought, or the so-called *Wahabbism*, it was the disastrous incident of 9/11 that positioned neoliberal Western ideologies into the core of Saudi education policy reform (Elyas, 2013). The influence of the attacks on symbolic locations in the United States was felt as a political disaster that shocked the whole world. The level and degree of the attacks on Western territory produced rage and hostility towards Saudi Arabia, particularly because 15 of the 19 terrorists were Saudi nationals, as mentioned previously in this chapter. Consequently, the Saudi system of education was immediately accused of being an establishment that worked to isolate, and not recognise or appreciate Western values, freedoms and norms (Niblock, 2006). Consequently, a space was created with power struggles between the Saudi and American governments. This conflict became intense, with Washington accusing Riyadh, in part, of creating the circumstances for extremism to grow (Elyas, 2013).

By late 2005, the Saudi labour market was still "ill-suited to a competitive environment" (Niblock, 2006, p. 173-177). Nonetheless, published literature, working papers and consultations

from the United Nations Development Fund (2003) and the World Bank (2008) were working to set the agenda for much reform in the Middle East. The awareness of rebuilding a modern and radical education system that would utilise hegemonic liberal values, including human capital growth, in terms of skills and knowledge development for economic goals, was cautiously directing Saudi education policy and seen to be essential in reform (Al-Essa, 2009). Hence, the discourse of knowledge creation, knowledge sharing and skills development began to present itself as central to any form of development in the Saudi education system, in order to create the conditions in which human capital is managed and developed in such a way that works to stimulate financial growth and create social cohesion. Within the Saudi context, reform started on the notions of tackling underperforming students who lacked enthusiasm and productivity. This was thought to be achieved through extensive teacher professional development programmes, with the aim of creating a future labour-force that had the skills to meet the market demands of the 21st century.

2.4.3.3 The World Trade Organisation (WTO)

Additionally, the Kingdom's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2005 has influenced the education policy and the development of Tatweer in the KSA. Niblock (2006, p.164) argues that Saudi Arabia needs to distance itself "from ostracism in, and isolation from the Western world" in the aftermath of 9/11 and this need would be met, in part, through obtaining WTO membership. Saudi Arabia's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) can be seen as a major and necessary step forward in order to join the hoop of economic reforms accrued from globalisation and WTO support. WTO membership embodied both Saudi Arabia's assimilation into the consented framework of international cooperation and a way of tackling material policy change, including the Saudi education Tatweer reforms.

In 2006, the document of the Saudi government's Cultural Mission placed preparing and educating a national workforce that would meet global trends in economic development at the center of the desired economic reform (Tatweer, 2008). This reference with such discourse evidently reflects the state's favour towards a kind of neoliberalism that is moulded according to the sociopolitical characteristics of the KSA as a means to highlight the need for reform. The account of crisis in the Saudi education system justified the urgency for reform, coupled with the World Bank (2008) guiding principles for education development. It also addressed the dire need for Saudi Arabia to prepare its youth for the global market, which demands transforming the education system into an innovative modern system capable of catering for a global knowledge economy. Therefore, reform was partially developed on the demands of the World Bank's participatory approach to membership of a global culture that would promote the efficiency and competitiveness of a global knowledge-based economy through a programme of increasing literacy and numeracy and also by supporting teacher development (Dale, 1999).

2.4.3.4 The Introduction of Performative Technology in Saudi Education

Tatweer (2014a, p.18) documents state that the information communication technology (ICT) programs to assist learning and teaching that were used in Saudi classrooms prior to Tatweer implementation were small and limited in scope. They did not help failing students to improve cognitively, nor facilitate practical skills application in the class. They also did not provide extra-curricular programmes to enhance learning. A published research report by the UNESCO (2008) stressed the importance of advancing greater ICT use as part of any future Saudi state reform plans. The report accentuated the advantages of ICT in creating "new vistas for learning". Framed by neoliberal thought, Tatweer worked to implement ICT resources in the classroom, creating a revolutionary new approach to teaching and learning to meet the needs of a global

knowledge-economy.

Many policy makers considered these technology-oriented reforms as an innovative approach to a new education system. These systems acknowledged the importance of globalisation and the significance of technologies in producing a workforce that met the needs of the global market and had the potential to push the Saudi education system into a new era that would create learners fit for a 21st century labour market needs (Wiseman et al., 2013).

However, Tatweer (2014b) reforms tried to delegate accountability to the school level, arguing that "managing student performance is a core leadership function at the school level, data about student performance is captured, stored, and analyzed on a continuous basis" (Tatweer, 2014b, p. 17). This process reduced teachers to measurable variables related to the educational performance of their students, while being held to account on their own performance and the performance of their school. This approach to reform has resulted in a performative technique that embodies the changing relationships between power, knowledge, government and education.

Performative educational technologies were introduced to the Saudi educational system in 2010 with the introduction of "Noor Project". *Noor* is an educational management system that is considered one of the largest education projects in the region, serving all education stakeholders (schools, students, teachers, parents, educational directorates and policy makers) with over 2,700 functions and e-services (Ministry of Education, 2017). The project provides a comprehensive Educational Management Information System and is implemented countrywide. It covers all schools affiliated to the Ministry of Education and educational directorates and general departments at the MOE and the ministry itself. It is considered an important source of required reports that provide information on the educational process, through a central database linked

with other systems.

After the *Noor* Project won the WSIS (World Summit on the Information Society) Award in 2012, a number of systems of performativity were introduced, such as *Faris* that reports on the absence of teachers and administrators of the MOE, *Safeer* that links MOE with cultural missions and students who hold scholarship worldwide, and the newly introduced system *Makken,* literally meaning *enable,* which is devoted to ranking teachers, school principals, supervisors, heads of educational offices according to their performance indicators.

Upon receiving the award, the Minister of Education, then Prince Faisal Bin Abdullah Al-Saud stated: “The project provided a solid information infrastructure and key services for schools, students, teachers and parents". He also expressed his future vision by adding: “We are planning to cover other education areas, including supervision and guidance, counseling and training, school transportation and teachers affairs, thereby expanding the scope of functions and beneficiaries.”

Within this context of education reform in Saudi Arabia, a new performative system of standardisation of education and application of accountability was introduced in 2014, whereby teachers and schools were given more responsibility for the performance of their teaching and schools. The Saudi MoE introduced the fifth and new version of the performative system in 2017. Teachers’ performance indicators are assessed according to six areas including: academic attainment; students’ values and behaviours; teaching techniques and strategies (e.g., cooperative learning and active learning); professional development; attendance; and level of organisational commitment and loyalty. The weight given to each performance indicator is different and each indicator has sub-indicators as shown in the diagram below (1). ELT teachers are assessed

according to each indicator separately, and the sum of each indicator is entered in an educational technological system called *Makken* in which teachers and schools are ranked according to their scores.

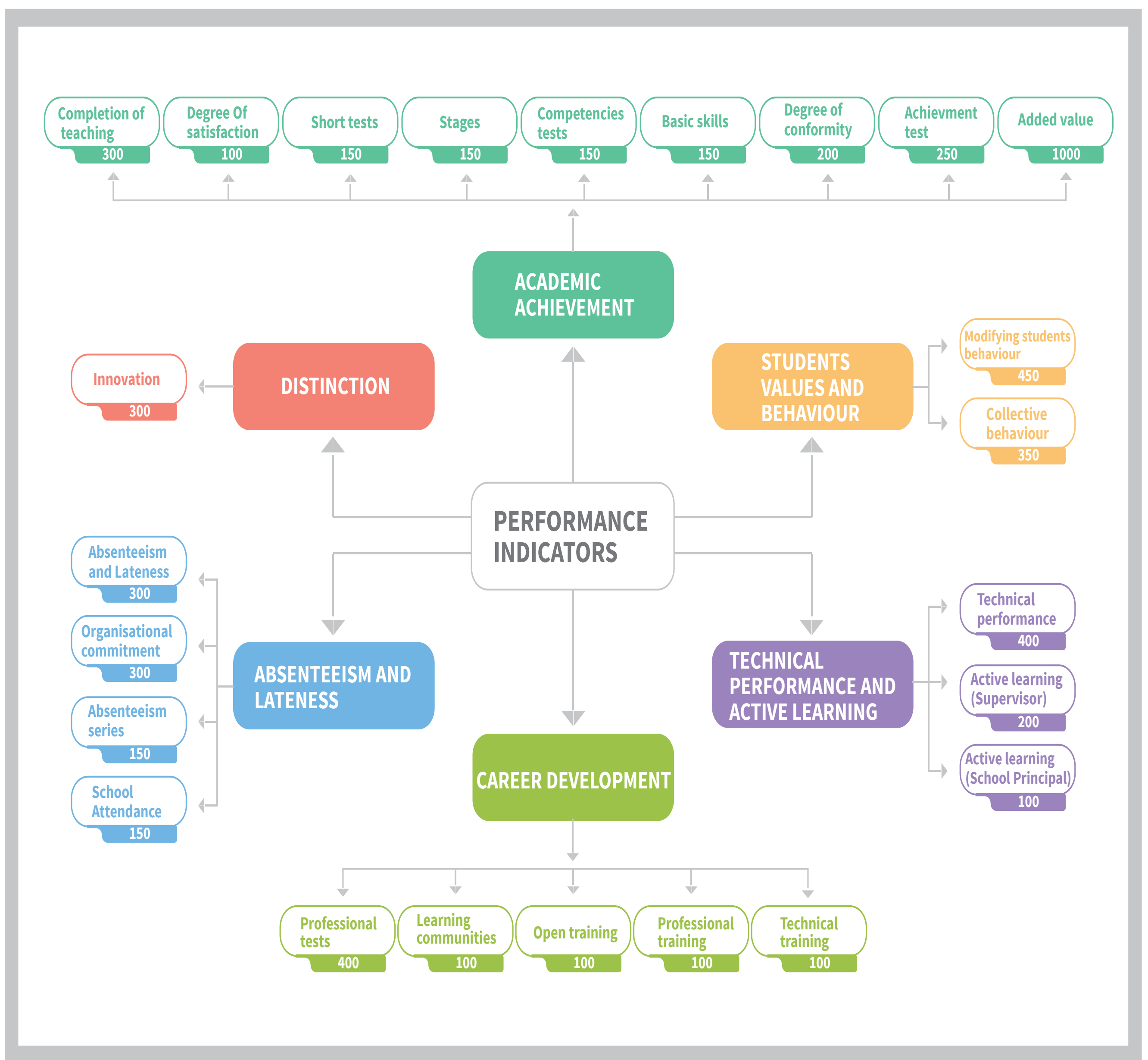

Diagram 1: Performance Indicators

In a nutshell, these systems of technology used to gauge school performativity and outcomes can be seen as a product of power domination and influence through governance. The prevalent discourse of human capital and technical efficiency, with its emphasis on logic, rationality, numeration, competition and classification, was used to legitimise the use of performative technological systems and the excessive audit culture. This guarantees a control and governance approach without considering the ethical concerns that, if this control is extended to employees' behaviour, it might rob employees of their individuality and dissociate them from critical and moral decision-making (Sinha & Arena, 2018).

2.4.4 Vision 2030: Towards a new neoliberalism?

In April 2016, Saudi Arabia captured the world's attention with the declaration of its ambitious agenda, called Vision 2030. This vision, designed and promoted by Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has been touted by the press as the most radical and comprehensive economic change in the history of Saudi Arabia, as the country is long known for its caution and gradualism when it comes to economic and institutional changes. The vision aimed at reducing the kingdom's high dependence on oil by transforming how it generates and manages its vast resources (Khashan, 2017).

While the impact of the sharp fall in international oil prices was the immediate drive for overhauling the structure of the economy, other reasons for these reforms have been evident for much longer. Unemployment has been a significant issue in Saudi Arabia. According to the CIA's World Factbook (2020), About 70% of the Saudi population is under the age of 30, with a 30.4% unemployment rate for Saudis between ages 18 and 24. With the public sector being the predominant employer, Saudi Arabia has long worried about youth unemployment and the

kingdom's lack of economic diversity, which could risk its long-term financial security (El-Erian, 2017). The Kingdom's workforce continues to be intensely segmented into an overstaffed public sector and an extremely underdeveloped private one. According to Amirat & Zaidi (2019), more than two-thirds of employed Saudis work in the public sector, while expatriate labourers make up more than 80% of the private sector. The vision suggests a cutback in public sector jobs, when it states an aim to reduce government expenditure generally and to cut tedious bureaucracy. Bearing in mind that well-paid government jobs have become the norm for many Saudi citizens and reducing their availability could increase unemployment among nationals. Considerably, the vision recognises the need to create jobs in new sectors, such as military manufacturing, industrial equipment and information technology, in addition to recruiting citizens into the oil and gas sector. As such sectors are so specialised, a special and advanced kind of training would be needed for these sectors to be localised. Nonetheless, the oil and gas sector would only provide a fraction of the new jobs necessary to keep pace with population growth and to reduce unemployment rates in the KSA.

For this vision to achieve its ends, reform of the educational system is crucial to generate a better basis for employment of young Saudis. To reform the economy in a maintainable way, Saudi citizens will need to receive a type of education both appropriate for the available private sector positions and of sufficiently high quality to enable them to compete against the existing large number of expatriates currently employed in these specialised positions. Therefore, an ambitious roadmap for educational reform has been set out by the National Transformation Programme (NTP), which flows from the vision. The following excerpt from the website of the recently published (NTP) (http://vision2030.gov.sa/sites/default/files/NTP_En.pdf) sets the tone for most of the vision:

We will continue to improve and reform our regulations, paving the way for investors and the private sector to acquire and deliver services – such as…education – that are currently provided by the public sector. We will seek to shift the government's role from providing services to one that focuses on regulating and monitoring them and we will build the capability to monitor this transition.

The emphasis on the involvement of the private sector in the financing and construction of education infrastructure is quite evident in the (NTP) as a key strategic objective, coupled with a high demand being placed on accountability and internal audit systems within the Ministry of Education (MoE) so as to secure the delivery of the plan and scrutinise it carefully.

As for ELT, a growing body of research that has attempted to examine the feasibility of the vision, showed that the overall evaluation of the majority of the English teachers in the KSA does not reveal optimal levels, which is reflected in the very low performance of a large proportion of intermediate and secondary stage students (Alrabai, 2016; Saidi, 2009). In order to succeed in achieving its ultimate goals, the Saudi vision aims to achieve a comprehensive advancement and improvement of the education and training environment at Saudi government schools and universities in particular. This includes the development of ELT, which is considered as a stumbling block in achieving these goals. For ELT to be in line with the Kingdom's vision of 2030, Al-Zahrani (2017) listed a number of steps that must first be taken. These steps include implementing a specific mechanism of effective and continuous training of the various educational cadres for teaching English language. Academic processing and effective training are two vital and essential elements for teachers in general and not only for ELT teachers, in order to raise teachers' efficiency levels inside the classrooms and produce learning

outcomes in line with the new transformational plan. However, this study did not offer any suggestions or propose a model for the desired systematic training scheme for ELT teachers.

Other studies attempted to explore ELT teachers' attitudes towards the current reform plans. Most of these studies revealed that, although there are certain barriers that may influence the implementation of the vision 2030 successfully in the Saudi context, the release of the National Transformation Plan 2020 and the Vision 2030 for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the expressed future goals have provided both motivation and enthusiasm for a radical change and improved educational outcomes and opportunities for Saudis in general (e.g., Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2017; Yusuf, 2017).

In conclusion, the vision could be seen as a neoliberal attempt to privatise entire sectors, raising non-oil revenues by cutting subsidies, attracting local and foreign investors and shrinking government services. The current reform is a scenario that resembles the Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan era in the eighties with its privatisation, outsourcing and competition in public services to transform the economic power into private hands (Smith, 1991) and, most importantly, to increase focus on measurable results and central control over important decisions, with special emphasis on internal auditing and accountability that comes in the form of performative technological systems (Apple, 2006).

2.4.5 Summary of Chapter 2

This chapter has presented key aspects related to the context in which the present study is carried out. The chapter has also discussed socio-economic and socio-political factors pertinent to the Saudi context. The next chapter reviews relevant research literature and the theoretical framework of the current study.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide my own stance that will form the theoretical framework of the topic under investigation. It aims also at positioning the study within the broader socio-political and socio-economic context with an attempt to cut through the distortions of much mainstream thought. The literature pertinent to the spread of performativity and performative technological systems in education and its potential influence on ELT teachers' performance and identity is reviewed and, in addition, the different perspectives arising from the literature on such a controversial issue in the field are addressed.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

An extensive review of literature relevant to performativity in education has revealed the complexity of the phenomenon of systems of performativity in education and other issues connected to it. The study I report here was conceived within the critical paradigm not only to develop an understanding of the culture of measurement and performativity in the ELT scene in the Saudi context but also to suggest a "preferred future" (Pennycook, 2001, p.8).

The current study is better seen as part of the continuous debate about the hegemony of neoliberal ideology on education, in which the spread of the culture of measurement, with its performative technological systems, is not seen as a neutral mechanical activity that has happened in a vacuum; but rather as an activity that is inextricably connected to wider economic, political and power relations. Central to the debate of the neoliberal assault on education is that

the rapid growth of the current regimes of performativity and evidence-based practice in education has been, and continues to be deliberate and systematic (Keddie, 2017). Therefore, performativity in ELT should not be viewed as a value-free activity but is shaped by ideological and political forces. The phenomenon of performative technology systems is thus seen as a political initiative that disguises power and control and that is always valorized by discourses of targets, standards, achievements and competitiveness (Rasmussen et al, 2014). In a critique of the transformation of public education and the major components of educational reform that center around auditing and accountability, Ball (2013) argues that when the government defines educational issues and presents solutions imported from the business world, in the language of targets, performance and mechanism of accountability, such solutions become a political means for effective governance and public control. Biesta (2012) alerts against falling into the trap of valuing what can be measured instead of measuring what we value.

A number of scholars (e.g., Ball, 2009; Apple 2006, Biesta, 2012) have asserted that the current proliferation of performative technologies in education has been a result of neoliberal economic reform and the increased use of market approaches to education. For this reason, the stance invoked by purist advocates, in which performativity is favoured for its neutrality and rationality that contribute to a better sense of education in terms of providing evidence-base for decision makers in order to raise educational outcomes and standards (Dann, 2016) is not supported in the current study. In fact, such a stance has been under harsh critique for both its perceived transparency and objectiveness through 'depersonalised judgment' and its alienation of teachers from their professional lives. That is to say, on the one hand, 'governing data' through systems of performativity as the source of reliable information resulted in the treatment of teachers and their pedagogies as "technical resources to be managed in the delivery of information to the

knowledge-economy" (Walsh, 2006, p. 101) which has led consequently to the marginalisation of their professional judgment and knowledge in preference for measurement (Biesta, 2009). On the other hand, there are real political factors underpinning the current performative technologies introduced to the Saudi educational system that should not be ignored. These technologies, apart from being a subtle device to monitor, control and sustain power relations in society, they also provide inroads toward a large agenda of corporatisation and privatisation of education in Saudi Arabia.

For the reasons mentioned above, a deeper analysis is needed in order to understand the complexity of the educational performative technologies in the Saudi context. This critical agenda is an important insight for the purpose of the current study insofar as it analyses the dominance of such systems of performativity and their role in shaping English language teachers' practice and identities in Saudi Arabia. Tollefson (2002, p.10) asserts that "language policies in education must be understood in connection with broad social, political, and economic forces that shape not only education, but social life generally" [emphasis added].

This study also adopts a critical sensitivity to performative practice and its effect on EL teachers' performance and identities in the context of Saudi Arabia through the employment of questioning the taken-for-granted as an analytical tool (Briggs, Morrison & Coleman, 2012) in order to seek a socially and politically situated understanding of performativity and their impact on EL teachers' identities. This critical sensitivity rejects ideas that the identity is fixed drawing attention to the shifting and dynamic nature of identity (Deters et al., 2014).

The study also espouses elements of critical applied linguistics (CALx) that go beyond relating language contexts to wider social contexts, "but rather does so from a point of view that views

social relations as problematic" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 5). It also orientates towards the notion that identities are not reflected in the language but rather performed through language (Pennycook, 2001).

The current study departs from a perspective that explicitly acknowledges the importance of performative technologies in education, however with scepticism. According to Pennycook (2004a, p. 803) scepticism entails "a way of thinking and doing that is always problematizing" and thus suggesting "a need to develop both a critical political stance and a critical epistemological stance, so that both inform each other, leaving neither the political nor the applied linguistic as static" (Pennycook, 2004a, p.779). Therefore, questions such as "how we come to think as we do, why we construct particular visions of reality, in whose interests supposed norms, values, and givens operate" (Pennycook, 2004a, p. 62) are raised by the study. Finally, conceiving performativity in education as a social and political activity draws attention to its potential as a site of enquiry (Elliott & Stead, 2015).

3.2 Performativity: Definitions/ meanings

In this section I shall briefly locate the notion of performativity within a longer intellectual history illustrating how performativity and other related concepts have been conceived and interpreted in several ways by social scientists and philosophers such as Austin, Butler, Darrida and Lyotard leading to the coexistence of numerous interpretations of the notion of performativity.

Performativity is a term commonly associated with the work of the philosopher John. L. Austin and subsequently incorporated into speech act theory. In his 1955 lecture series, *How to Do Things With Words*, J. L. Austin defined Performativity in terms of a performative utterance, "the

uttering of the words is, indeed, usually a, or even the, leading incident in the performance of the act… , the performance of which is also the object of the utterance…" (p. 8). Sentences like "I sentence you to 10 years in prison" "I name this ship" and so on are typical examples of performative utterances. Austin listed two conditions for performative utterances to do things: the context must be felicitous and the speaker's intention must be serious. 'I pronounce you husband and wife', for instance, needs to be said by a person with authority in a wedding ceremony, and by someone with the authority to say the words.

Austin's initial work on how words 'do' things has paved the way for other scholars to expose his ideas to new settings to see how language can do things in the world. The most notable is probably the work of Judith Butler (1990a, 1990b) in which she developed the notion of performativity as a way to explain how gender is constructed. Centre to Butler's argument is that gender is socially constructed through ongoing series of performative acts. Butler (1990a) argues, "gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed" (p. 25). Performativity, following Butler, is the process of subject construction via linguistic means and other social and cultural practices rather than as the expression of a prior identity. In this sense, Butler's notion of performativity has been widely associated with studies of gender and sexuality and the most influential in queer studies (Pennycook, 2004b).

Commenting on Butler's notion of performativity, Pennycook (2004b) pointed out key important points. First, it is crucial to understand not only that performativity is a productive act that constitutes identity; but rather is involved in a form of circular, self-producing activity because what it constitutes is what it is purported to be. Second, Pennycook (2004b) goes on to point out

that this process of identity construction is not a free choice but in fact occurs within a "highly rigid regulatory frame." Put simply, we are not free to choose our identities or the way they are formed. Rather, they are constructed within a largely prescribed frame that is set by social forces. Butler's conception has been understood in a number of ways, some of which suggest that gender could be performed in a theatrical and elective way (i.e. performed socially). Butler in her 1993 book, *Bodies that Matter*, rejected this stance deliberately stating, "performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it simply be equated with performance" (p. 95). In fact, Butler's development of the concept of performativity provides the ground for thinking about the relationship between language performance and the production of identity.

The notion of performativity has been taken forward by the work of Lyotard (1984). The 'performance' of a company is commonly used to refer to its efficiency or profitability which is, to an extent, similar to Austin's use of his neologism performative. Lyotard (1984, p. 88), thus, wrote in a footnote of The Postmodern Condition:

The term performative has taken on a precise meaning in language theory since Austin. Later in this book, the concept will reappear in association with the term performativity [in particular, of a system] in the new current sense of efficiency measured according to an input/output ratio. The two meanings are not far apart. Austin's performative realizes the optimal performance. [italics in original]

In reusing Austin's concept of performativity, Lyotard distanced himself from performative account of language offered by Austin to questions of the efficient functioning of the organised social system. According to Lyotard (1984, p. 54), a generalised understanding of performativity is illustrated by an "equation between wealth, efficiency and the truth". Lyotard sought to turn

the logic of performativity back to itself as Jones (2003, p. 512) explains: "While performativity merely asks of knowledge, What is it worth? Lyotard turns the logic of performativity back onto itself and asks "What is your what is it worth worth?" Central to Lyotard's argument in questioning performativity is that we should be always suspicious of the effects of the primary importance attached to efficiency especially for education without completely avoiding to contribute to the efficiency of these systems.

Another foundational perspective is found in the work of sociologists such as Michael Callon (1998), Latour (1996) and MacKenzie (2007). These authors have adopted the notion of performativity from Austin and given it new meanings in which the term is used to cover all the ways where the uses of social scientific theories have consequences for the social world (Maki, 2013). They argued that modern finance theory does not describe a pre-existing economy, but rather shapes the social world by performing it (Maki, 2013). That is to say, modern finance theory influences and performs the structure of financial markets and the practice of finance.

Latour (1996) studied the idea of the performative role of scientific statements and theories that was developed later by Michel Callon (1998) in an edited book, The Laws of the Markets. Callon based his argument on the idea that "economics, broadly defined, performs, shapes and formats the economy, rather than observing how it functions" (Callon, 1998, p. 2). Within his thesis, Callon called sociologists to reconsider the performative effects of economic models on economic activities and the multiple processes in which economic variables shape the economy. Callon (2007, p. 330) developed his thesis further by integrating Merton's (1948) concept of self-fulfilling prophecy, legacies of Butler and prior texts on performativity to introduce what he calls performation:

We can agree to call performation the process whereby sociotechnical arrangements are enacted, to constitute so many ecological niches within and between which statements and models circulate and are true or at least enjoy a high degree of verisimilitude. This constantly renewed process of performation encompasses expression, self-fulfilling.

MacKenzie (2007) further differentiates between types of performativity. The first is generic performativity which refers to the actual use of an economic concept. The second is effective performativity that refers to the use of economics that makes a difference. Barnesian is a third type of performativity named after Barnes (1983) and is probably the strongest because: "an effect of the use in practice of an aspect of economics is to make economic processes more like their depiction by economics" (MacKenzie, 2007, p. 56).

The travel of performativity across disciplines with the continuous re-appropriations have contributed to the redefinition of the concept of performativity, and led to the generation of long-standing ideas across disciplines (Denis, 2006). Gond, Cabantous, Harding and Learmonth (2015) illustrated how scholars of organisation and management theory (OMT) have utilised the concept of performativity to discuss rational decision- making as in the work of Cabantous and Gond (2011), organizational routines (Feldman & Pentland, 2003), the functioning of markets (Callon & Muniesa 2005), the gendering of the workplace (Rittenhofer & Gatrell, 2012), the constitution of managerial identities (Harding, 2003; Learmonth, 2005); and the socio-material conditions of valuation (Orlikowski & Scott 2014).

However, the notion of Mobilising performativity as searching for efficiency in OMT is based on Lyotard's arguments mentioned above. The influence of Lyotard's ideas in OMT is also visible in the work of Fournier and Grey (2000) who adopts Lyotard's definition of performativity with

more emphasis on the "anti-performative" stance (p.7) and is completely against the assumption that 'performativity' is of supreme importance in organisations. However, Spicer et al. (2009) have challenged Critical Management Studies (CMS's) anti-performative stance by promoting critical performativity as possible unifying overview for CMS and as a critique of the anti-performativity stance promoted by critical management scholars following Lyotard's definition of performativity as efficiency (Fournier & Grey, 2000; Grey & Willmott, 2005).

The most well-known definition of performativity is offered by Ball (2003, p. 216) who defined performativity as:

a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement.

In this study I adopted Ball's definition as it points towards the way that performativity is used now in OMT and how the professional identity is constituted. Moreover, it opens up several significant ways of thinking about the performative discourse and practice with relation to the construction of teachers' identity and performance, which is the main focus of this study.

Driven by my objective, this section attempted to identify the foundational perspectives on performativity employed by OMT scholars. I presented five conceptualisations of performativity: doing things with words (Austin); performativity as efficiency (Lyotard); constructing the self (Butler, Derrida); bringing theory into being (Callon, MacKenzie). I then presented Ball (2003)

definition of performativity that I adopted in this study.

3.3 Neoliberalism

One of the significant benefits I get from reading extensively around educational reform is the knowledge of how similar the policies affecting education throughout the world. Neoliberal reforms dominate the educational space in most parts of the world. These policies are justified differently but the practice is pretty much the same. This is the result of long-term social/pedagogic policies to change the common sense of the population in regards to what counts as an efficient system of determining success (Gunter, Hall & Apple, 2017).

3.3.1 Neoliberalism: Principles and tenets

Before discussing the neoliberal assault on public education, I will attempt to present the principles upon which the concept of neoliberalism is predicated to provide a better understanding of this concept and its logic. First of all, the term *neoliberalism* refers to a set of principles that are new and based on classical liberal ideas, mainly the work of Adam Smith who is a key figure during the Scottish Enlightenment era in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This system of principles is also known as the *Washington Consensus*, a term coined by Williamson in 1989 who was a close observer of the U.S. Treasury and international financial institutions which aims at creating a kind of global order. The neoliberal Washington Consensus is based on assumptions that are completely different from those that have brought to life the liberal doctrines since the Enlightenment. That is to say, the main principles of the neoliberal Washington Consensus, in a nutshell, are: market liberalisation, macroeconomic stabilisation, privatisation and most importantly the government should step aside as well as the population and authority becomes in the hands of those who impose the *consensus* and who consequently

impact the world order. This shows that the governing institutions reflect the distribution of power in the larger society. This proves to be true at least since Adam Smith who points out in his book (2017) *The Wealth of Nations* that the "principal architects" (p.1137) responsible for policy formation in England were "merchants and manufacturers" (p.146) who used state power to serve their own interest no matter how harmful the effect on people. Adam Smith was concerned about "the wealth of nation" but he realised that within the nation there are conflicting interests and in order to understand policy and its impact on people, we need to understand how power is distributed and exercised or what we call now class analysis. Although Adam Smith is an advocate of the division of labour, he acknowledges its inhuman effects and how it turns working people into "as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to be" (p.1349). A closer look to the doctrines of classical liberalism associated with the work of Adam Smith and other contributors shows that equality of outcome was center to the argument of free market.

In a nutshell, it seems pertinent to borrow economist David Harvey's definition of the roots of neoliberalism lying in "the assumption that individual freedoms are guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade" and that this assumption is "a cardinal feature of such thinking" (Harvey, 2005, p. 7). The state should confine intervention economic matters only in emergency or in matters of national security (Berry, 2016). The domination, or hegemony, of such thinking provides the base for educational policies that along with all social and societal arrangements, allows what was once unacceptable to become the norm.

3.3.2 Neoliberalism and Classical Liberalism

Mark Olssen (1996) explicitly details the crucial differences between neoliberalism and classical liberalism in the following points. First, in neoliberalism, state power is perceived positively especially in its role in providing the conditions necessary for the market to operate whereas in classical liberalism state power is perceived negatively in which the individual is to be liberated from its intervention. Second, the individual in classical liberalism is described as being autonomous and having freedom. Neoliberalism, on the other hand, offers a state in which the individual is an enterprising self. Another subtle difference that Olssen points out is that the theoretical aim of classical liberalism is to limit the role of the state based on the assumption that the interest of the individual is also the interest of the society or what Adam Smith refers to as "the invisible hand" (p.758). In neoliberalism, the individual no longer acts out of self-interest and detached from the state but rather is manipulated by the state and constantly encouraged to be responsive. Neoliberalism has not only replaced the self-interested subject by its own ideals, but also has introduced 'the performance appraisals and sanctions' and other new forms of surveillance as a necessity for the perceived indolence in the age of universal welfare.

In sum, the reason I brought up this argument is to emphasise that while the term *neoliberalism* suggests links to the central tenets of classical liberalism, in particular classical economic liberalism, that flourished in the intellectual environment of empiricism and the trust of the evidence of the senses. It divorces from the ideals of classical liberalism that promote rejection of authoritarian power of the state and having no great divergence among individuals in terms of power distribution. Pointing out the difference between neoliberalism and classical liberalism is crucially important to understand the politics of education and the current educational reform.

In the modern period, liberalism has taken a new sense as a theory of *state capitalism* that describes an economic system in which large enterprises receive publicly funded government bailouts and where private owners reap the profits and this has no relation to the original tenets of classical liberalism. Chomsky (1999) has explained the double standards of free market ideology. That is, the dominant political rhetoric of our time made the working-class to be subjected to market discipline to make it more responsible and the state should not intervene to help out the poor when they struggle or fail. By contrast, the state bails out the wealthy and the corporations to minimise the competitive risks and to maximise their profit.

3.3.3 The GERM That Infected Education

One of the challenges I faced when trying to describe the various changes that have beset education has been to find an appropriate term with which to summarise the situation. In this I am with Berry (2016) to adopt the term GERM used by the Finnish writer and commentator Pasi Sahlberg (2015) who introduced the term into education discussions. This term, which is deliberately chosen for its connotations of ill health, is an acronym for the Global Education Reform Movement, and Sahlberg distinguishes five separate features that contribute to it that I will outline below and a precise discussion about the impact of each of these features will inform much of what follows.

Standardisation of education is the first feature. From the late 1980s the drive towards outcomes-based education took hold in many parts of the world. While it would be unreasonable to claim that any attempt to drive up standards could be bad, the tools used to manage and calculate this such as high-stakes testing, the open publication of results in the form of league tables, punitive inspection regimes and a culture of target setting gradually became the norm in schools in many

parts of the world. To ensure that targets are met, policy makers and schools looked for safe and reliable ways of meeting such targets that led to a homogenisation of policy and practice.

Rigorous testing regimes and the need for measurable outcomes have led to a focus on core subjects and a clear hierarchy of subjects has emerged and become firmly entrenched. Along with this comes the third feature of the search for low-risk ways to reach learning goals; that is teachers seeking the best and quickest ways of generating the sort of results that any given testing regime requires at any given moment.

The fourth strand is the occurrence of test-based accountability policies for schools, which have led to teaching practices that are oriented towards tests outcomes, rather than the actual learning of students.

The final feature is the employment of corporate managing models as a way of achieving school improvement. This copying – often in a clumsy and half-understood way – of the language and practices of the business world and then the cramming of these into the world of schools is a primary feature of the GERM. The language of target-setting, performance and productivity now informs the conduct of many school leaders and their senior teams. It is important, however, to understand that the GERM is a manifestation of wider forces towards the corporatisation of education in many parts of the world. In the following section, I will trace back the origin of the corporate attack on education and the rise of the culture of performativity that provides the seedbed for current educational policies.

3.3.4 The Corporate Attack on Education and the Rise of the Culture of Performativity

The corporate attack on public education can be traced back to the 1970's as a reaction to the activism in the United States of America in the 1960's that has a civilising effect on society in all kinds of ways. It was called "the age of troubles" due to the excess of democracy as illustrated in the *Crisis of Democracy* report that suggests restoring "the prestige and authority of central government institutions" (Crozier *et al.* 1975, p.170). However, the most influential reaction was a confidential memorandum (1971) written by Lewis Franklin Powell (Appendix A) who was an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States for the Chamber of Commerce. This memorandum is considered as a catalyst for the spread of right-wing, neoliberal/neoconservative ideology over the past four decades (Chomsky & Otero, 2003). Powell is a corporate attorney for the tobacco industry who had worked deliberately to protect this industry from government regulation. It is not surprising that his memorandum, *The Attack on American Free Enterprise System*, illustrates how economic liberalism resists any form of regulation even when that regulation occurs on behalf of the public interest.

Powell started his memo by warning against the "dimensions of the attack" against the "American economic system" even admitting that some dissent is safely benign when restricted to "a relatively few extremists or even from the minority socialist cadre." By 1971, however, "the assault on the enterprise system" had, according to Powell, become "broadly based and consistently pursued, … gaining momentum and converts." The memo called for supporting pro-business thinkers in media and educational systems and the creation of organisations dedicated to promoting goals of the corporation. This Memo became a call to arms for businesses to unite and re-shift public opinion and legislation in their favour.

This corporate assault on public education seeks to introduce the corporate culture that has many manifestations. The most prominent probably is the concept of *efficiency* which is a business derived concept that requires the constant production of evidence that we are doing tasks *efficiently* in which seems to be as what Mark Olssen (1996) calls a process of "governing without governing". This has given rise to what came to be known as *the culture of performativity*.

The culture of performativity is underpinned by social and educational policies implemented for improving national economic and social wellbeing (Jeffrey&Troman, 2014). Performativity is a market- based approach which promotes performance-based activities to serve as measures of productivity. In the educational settings, the rationale behind the introduction of the performativity culture is that such culture will help the government in setting targets for itself, raising standards in schools and raising the educational achievements (Ball, 2009). It also aims to develop a highly skillful workforce that can compete in a new global industry—the knowledge economy. The underpinning assumption is that the economic return for the country is highly dependent on the levels of excellence in knowledge acquisition and use (Ball, 2009). Performative technological systems in educational settings operate, in the new current sense of efficiency, according to an input/output ratio to provide objective rational information that is utilised by national governments to inform educational policy (Lyotard, 1984). The current shape of educational policies discourse, much resting on performance and measurement mode as a basic component of the adopted market logic, has made continuous evaluation a priority that imbues the whole education practice (Edgington, 2016). One fundamental aspect of the effects of comparison is a production of academic output to live up to the requirements of national economic competition (Edgington, 2016). The corporate logic defines the values of all social life

and offers the market as a template for all sorts of social relations turning education into a passive performative endeavor placing primacy of scores, indicators, standards and targets over experience and discovery. The latters cannot be measured within means–ends calculation and, thus, are incompatible with the market values.

3.3.5 Performativity for Efficiency: An economic view to policy research in education

As discussed earlier in this chapter, economists have had a profound impact on educational policy and educational policy research. By presenting the economic aspect of education, economists have placed educational policy at the center of the debate on economic development and growth. Their influence on the debate on school development can be summarised in two ways as argued by Martin Carnoy (2016). First, by introducing the notions of educational production, schools, districts and states can make economic decisions to allocate resources to produce educational outcomes. Second, by applying sophisticated statistical techniques, policy makers can estimate the effects of various educational policies quantitatively with special emphasis on cost and returns.

School effectiveness research (SER) has thriven since the 1980s and played an influential role in discussions about educational change and improvement (Luyten, Visscher & Witziers, 2005). The main focus of this research was initially on variables at school level, later work attempted to identify variables that matter in making schooling more effective. This was achieved by placing more attention on the dynamics of teaching and learning that resulted in a shift towards relevant outcomes and outputs to base discussions on factual data rather than impressions or assumptions (Biesta, 2015).

technologies to inform practice. The use of student test performance data may inform teachers about the effectiveness of their lessons (Halverson, Prichett, and Watson 2007), or it can be part of a larger structure of applying school improvement work (Mandinach, 2012). That is, the use of data may promote a culture of evidence-based decision-making that a school is attempting to foster.

However, research has paid less attention on understanding how this data use takes place. Wardrip and Herman (2017) conducted a micro study to explore how teachers make sense of student data collaboratively. They followed an instructional data team (5 teachers) for a school year that met monthly. They tried to identify key components needed for building teachers' capacity for data use. The study reported the highly interpretive nature of data use in practice, as teachers need to make sense of data and decide what data are important to act on. In other words, teachers do not simply act on the data they receive because the instructional implications are not self-evident. Although this study is limited in size and scope, its findings highlighted the importance of understanding the ways teachers apply to infer their student data to inform their practice so as to provide them with the support they may need in order to utilise data properly.

There is no doubt that using data to inform instruction is an important yet challenging task. Teachers have to identify, infer, and assimilate understandings from data with their instruction. Many teachers, nevertheless, are likely unprepared to engage in data-informed decision-making when it comes to ongoing instruction (Mandinach and Gummer 2013). Besides, prior research has offered various reasons why using data is difficult for teachers. For example, Choppin (2002) reported the findings of a study conducted in six public middle schools in the United States of America on using data to inform decision-making. This work was the result of collaboration

between Choppin and teams from each of the six schools over the course of a two-year project. He found that teachers tend not to base decisions that impact students on test data alone. They also draw inferences from their classroom experiences with students that may differ from the inferences drawn from testing data only. When these sources of information about students are inconsistent, teachers may tend to rely on their own interpretations about student competence, learning, and performance. Basesd on data from 46 semi-structured interviews at nine Michigan elementary, middle, and high schools, Cromey (2000) pointed out that there is no clear relationship between much of the performance data and instructional practice, which teachers could act on and he attributed this lack of direct relationship between data and instruction to the summative nature of data. Cromey asserted that rather than being directed by data, teachers in high-performing schools rely more on intuition and personal experience. In a nutshell, what I am trying to say in this argument is that a simplistic approach to data may not significantly alter classroom instructions or build a solid ground of factual evidence to inform educational policy-decision making. Assessment data can be a helpful tool in promoting educational improvements only when appropriately defined and used by highly qualified teachers who have received data analytical training and familiarity with processes for the proper use of data.

However, an additional argument was made that the market competition would make schools more effective and efficient (Hoxby, 2003). Government institutions and public schools were accused of being overtly bureaucratic and slow to make innovations and subject to rapidly high costs without any improvement in academic outcomes. Coupled with a great motivation to provide greater freedom of choice of schools for parents, these twin ideas of efficiency and choice have provided a powerful ideological and political incentive towards educational privatisation (Levin & Belfield, 2016). Like any other educational arrangements, market

approaches face a conflicting set of goals and require a compromise or sacrifice of some goals in order to obtain others.

Generally, the social purpose of schools is to prepare the young for democratic participation in the social, political and economic institutions that unite society and requires citizens to share a common language and goals. More importantly, democratic societies are also concerned with the provision of equality and fairness in access to life's chances so that effort and talent rather than private privilege are the determinants. These goals call for a shared educational experience rather than one based upon private option.

3.3.6 Governance and Control through Performative and Measurement Systems

The past twenty years have witnessed a significant rise in the interest of the measurement of education or the lingo of educational culture of performativity and the measurement of educational "outcomes". This can be seen in international comparative studies such as the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS), *The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS) and the Programme for *International Students Assessment* (PISA) which have resulted in league tables intended to provide information about the performance of the national education systems compared to those of other countries. Proponents of such league tables base the reasoning on accountability, choice and social justice argument that emphasises the right of everyone to have access for education of similar quality. The information produced by these league tables is also used to identify failing schools and, in some cases, failing teachers (Biesta, 2015). A constant need for performativity and the generation of evidence of educational outcomes has not been confined to the creation of league tables. Some advocate the idea that education can witness systematic development only when transformed into

evidence-based profession and this can happen through conducting experimental studies with careful measurement of output/input correlations (Biesta, 2015).

This has resulted in a shift from government to governance (Jeffrey & Geoff, 2014) via new set of regulations based on setting targets, raising standards and performance monitoring through technological systems to control from a distance instead of delivering policy through bureaucratic systems (Ball, 2009). The use of performativity has become the main channel for the governance turn (Ball, 2009). As in all disciplinary systems, within performative technological systems functions a small penal mechanism manifested in teacher grading system, failing school reconstructions, inspection reports that regulate practice. Systems of performativity in this sense are systems of power and attending to the requirement of these systems is perceived by teachers to be the ultimate goal due to the potential of these systems to make judgments about their performance and the quality of teaching (Eacott & Norris, 2014).

For neoliberals, public institutions such as schools are seen as “black holes” into which money is poured and then disappears with no sufficient outcomes (Apple, 2006, p.31). Neoliberals, thus, advocate economic rationality with its focus on efficiency, production and cost-benefit analysis as the only efficient way to control waste economic resources that should go into private hands (Apple, 2006). We are now under a new form of governing as Ozga (2008) correctly puts it “governed by numbers”. Numbers determine our value, rate, compare and classify us to different categories. We have become as Ball (2015, p. 2) points out “subject to numbers and numbered subjects”. Numbers are also basic to the constitution of the modern school in the form of examination as a technology of classification and mechanism of evaluation. The examination is “a mechanism of simultaneous evaluation and comparison… through a constantly repeated ritual

of power" (Foucault, 1979, p.186).

Digital educational governance through technological systems is the contemporary mode of governance used today to monitor and manage educational systems, institutions and individuals. Such technological systems are permeated with political and economic aims to control and shape the actions of human actors and institutions. Monitoring through systems of performativity as techniques for reflection and knowledge production is an effective element in the current relationship between truth, power and the self (Ball, 2015). The neoliberal reform enhances a peculiar mixture of marketised individualism and control through constant and comparative assessment of public institutions through performative technological systems so that we deliberately invest in ourselves and drive up our performance and outputs (Ball, 2015).

Roberts-Holmes (2015) investigates the way in which the increasingly performative demands to produce 'appropriate' data interfere with classroom practice. The study was concerned with early years teachers' perceptions of the effect of the excessive use of datafication and numeration upon their pedagogy. The data gathering took place over one academic year period in the UK by interviewing and observation with a convenience sample of twenty teachers. The findings revealed that the statistical measures framed early years teachers' pedagogy and they found themselves burdened by responsibilities of performativity and reduced to what Ball and Olmedo (2013, p. 92) call a "measureable teaching subject".

Piattoeva (2014) presents a direct link between numbers and governing. She examined how data generated in the compulsory school graduation examination in the Russian Federation is deployed in the practices of control and steering. The findings suggest that governance by numbers relies on and promotes the parallel existence of regimes of regulation. The examination

results are treated as indicators of teachers' pedagogical professionalism and influence their level of payment. Roberts-Holmes (2015) examined how numbers intrude into classroom practice and teacher's work. He argued that the current system of English early years assessment, along with increased inspection and surveillance have encouraged a functional 'datafication' of early years pedagogy so that early years teacher's work is constrained by performativity demands to produce 'appropriate' data. Singh (2015), in a theoretical paper, also investigated the relation between numbers, performativity and pedagogy. He pointed out that performativity with its emphasis on numbers are forms of state control by means of prescribed curriculum, teaching methods and systems of evaluation. These papers, across a wide variety of contexts, give an idea of how numbers bite deep into teachers' performance and subjectivity and how they govern us and make us intelligible and manageable in their terms.

3.3.7 The Role of International Management Consulting Firms in Spreading the Managerialist and Performative Ideology in the Saudi Context

As mentioned earlier in the context chapter, the KSA has established a long-term strategy that seeks to diversify the country's government funding away from oil. To this end, a large cohort of top-tier consulting firms, such as **McKinsey & Company** and The Boston Consulting Group, were hired to help in planning for the country's economic transformation, with education being a key reform target for sustainable development. In this section, I will attempt to describe the significant role such consulting firms played in the spread of a culture of managerialism and performativity within the Saudi context.

One of the reactions towards the current economic transformation in the KSA has focused on criticism of the role of foreign management consulting firms in shaping these transformative plans. A number of justifications have been offered for this criticism. Some opponents view the

role of these firms as a form of imperialism, whereas others consider such firms to be not only influencers but also controllers of decision-making in the country. There is also a criticism that condemns these firms simply for being ‘ foreign’.

Although these views stem from a right intuition that there is a dire need to problematise the seeking of foreign consultations, they failed to point out the core of the problem. It is true that these firms play a key role in maintaining core-periphery relations through false claims to universalism and globalisation, i.e. by elevating particular local cultural standards (usually Anglo-American mode of professional practice) to the status of trans-societal norms. Localisms that do not fit such norms are then described as ‘backward’ and hence in need of reform. They ignore cultural and institutional heterogeneity, and in so doing marginalise local subjectivities and forms of knowledge that do not conform to what is considered to be ‘universal’ (Boussebaa, 2015).

This stance, which rejects seeking foreign consultations as a form of modern imperialism, offers reasonable justifications. However, the essence of imperialism is straightforward: it involves stripping countries of their sovereignty, resources, power and their ability to decide their own fate, whereas these companies would not be able to practice their role in any country without the financial support and consent of the inviting countries which reflects the free will of these inviting countries with regard to their own decision making. Therefore, no matter how we view them, these firms are not entitled or enabled of decision-making and are not to be completely responsible for it. Finally, the stance that resents these firms merely for being ‘foreign’ is based on the assumption that foreign experts, no matter how much knowledge of a certain context they possess, cannot surpass the knowledge of the local experts. While this can be true in some

respects, this final opinion ignores the fact that knowledge is fundamentally linked to one's position in the power structure, more than to one's nationality. That is, a local management consultations company would offer consultations to the government in the same way a foreign company would do it.

Although the above arguments against foreign consultations are not built on solid ground, the feeling that there is a problem with the reliance on these companies is reasonable. In the following, I will attempt to describe this problem and point out its effects on the spread of the culture of performativity. I will argue that the KSA as well as other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries tend to favour products offered by consultation companies from the West, due to the dominance of the *managerialist* ideology or the so called 'New Public Management' among the decision making elites. Despite the fact that this ideology was prevalent since the mid-70s, it is believed that the reason behind the Gulf governments' adaptation of this ideology in the third millennium is the legitimacy crisis these governments face, as Gulf monarchies face a generational transition in leadership which creates new challenges. In 2017, the consulting market in the Gulf monarchies topped $2.8 billion, with Saudi Arabia accounting for almost half of that amount, according to Source Global Research Website (2019).

Managerialism combines management knowledge with ideology to establish itself systematically in organisations and society, while depriving owners, employees and civil society of all decision-making powers (Klikauer, 2013). As managerialism presents itself a non-politicised 'neutral' ideology that is based on statistics and output, it becomes not only a desirable choice but a rational 'scientific' and objective choice to add legitimacy and protect decision-makers, especially when they want or need to make an unpopular decision. Bringing in a consulting firm

will provide ammunition to recommend an unpopular or risky decision to the board. The decision-makers can also distance themselves from a risky decision by blaming the consultants.

The problem with increasingly relying on experts from consulting firms, universities, and think tanks from the West is two-fold. First, the managerialism and performativity that these firms propagate is a system of beliefs that centers on confidence in the ability to design and operate society in accordance with scientific law, or what James Scott (1988) calls " high modernism". Scott argues that the twentieth century has been racked by grand Utopian schemes that have inadvertently brought death and disruption to millions. Scott contends that imposition of schematic visions that are not sensitive to complex interdependencies and are not—and cannot be—fully understood or represented by means of numbers and classifications, can have devastating repercussions. He builds a persuasive case against the attempt to engineer society based on scientific schemes offering an answer to why well-intentioned plans for improving the human condition go tragically awry, supplementing his argument with striking examples such as The Great Leap Forward of China (an economic and social campaign led by Chairman Mao Zedong that aimed to rapidly transform the country from an agricultural society to a socialist society, which led to social and economic disasters). Further, Scott asserts that the success of designs for any social organisation depends upon the recognition that local, practical knowledge is as important as formal, scientific knowledge.

Second, seeking foreign experts and consulting companies is considered by Gulf governments as a better choice over the democratic choice that entails the involvement of a society that is commonly portrayed in the public discourse as tribal, religious, intolerant and ignorant (Bock, 2014). The justification is simple and convincing: knowledge and expertise based on statistics

and numbers are better than parochial narrow interests, tribal mentalities and religious intolerance. This assumption of the importance of bringing in consulting firms to handle huge transformation projects in the country becomes deeply rooted in Gulf bureaucracies.

The concept of New Public Managerialism and its focus on performativity, auditing, outcomes and exercising greater control over professionals across the public sector presents itself as a substitute to old-fashioned styles of public services delivered by centralised hierarchical bureaucratic educational apparatus and characterised by rigidity, slow working and unsatisfactory services. It proposes a public-private partnership and the involvement of the private sector in provision of public services, to replace the dissatisfied citizen with the sovereign consumer. This ideology is the framework through which consultancy firms operate. By presenting their advice as neutral, objective, non-politicised and based on numbers and factual evidence, their products gain material value and credibility.

To conclude, the problem with foreign management consultancy firms is not the fact that they are foreign and less sensitive to local culture and context, as most of them employ local crew or even work with local consultancy firms (e.g., McKinsey & Company has acquired Elixir, a Saudi Arabian consultancy with expertise in change management and implementation in April, 2017). The problem is the fact that these firms are predicated on managerialist ideology, which could be embraced by both foreign and local consultants, and its negative impact on democratic choices and the growth of local expertise. The aim of this section is to challenge the objectivity and neutrality these companies claim as experts seeking to rationalise governmental decision-making and enhance legitimacy (Bock, 2014). That does not necessarily indicate that managerialism is pure evil. The educational infrastructure in the KSA needs to be reformed and the reform needs

to be political rather than managerial; hiring experts would not yield substantial change. The involvement of the local Saudi citizens to decide what to privatise and what priorities need to be taken in consideration in such process is a purely political decision. This section emphasises that educational expertise provided to the KSA and other developing countries by foreign consulting firms must be understood as politicised. Failing to acknowledge this means neglecting a whole dimension of the educational policy-making that results from those experts' advice.

3.4 ELT Teachers' Performance

3.4.1 ELT Teachers' Performance under Systems of Performativity

"Evidence-based reporting" or the need to gather evidence to get more insight about something and draw conclusions is basic to the scientific method. The concept of "accountability" is also a crucial component of a fair and just society to hold people to account for their actions. However, these two concepts have been merged together to form what we call now *performativity*. In this part I'll try to explain to what extent performativity has impacted ELT teachers' teaching practice. Before that, I will discuss how the constant emphasis on performance and measurable criteria gained its popularity in educational reform.

As I have mentioned earlier, knowledge today is considered as a commodity. As Joseph Stiglitz, the well-known economist, asserts: "Knowledge and information is being produced today like cars and steel were produced a hundred years ago" (Stiglitz 1999, p. 1). This commodification of knowledge and information turns educational institutions into factories of producing a workforce equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to develop their nations' economic growth. Little (2003, p. 438*)* explains this clearly in her definition of Human Capital Theory: "the skills that people acquire are a form of capital, human capital... these are acquired through deliberate

investments in education... skills are the capacities that contribute to economic production". The understanding of education as a means for economic growth has resulted in governments increasing interest in monitoring educational performance and outputs as mentioned previously.

Governments, like private sector, they want to ensure they are investing their money properly, so they design a framework with measurable criteria such as exam results and the use of checklists to evaluate teachers performance to pass judgment on educational institutions, individual teachers and other educational operations for the purpose of improving educational outcomes. This process may risk reducing teaching to a series of limited, externally imposed measures and criteria. Teachers', therefore, may suffer the constant pressure to 'perform' according to these reductive standards. Teachers in the KSA are evaluated four times per year (twice in each term, one by the school principal and the other by the educational supervisor). Since 2017, teachers are required to take a competency and professional growth test every year.

In 2018, the Saudi MoE and the Ministry of Civil Service released a bylaw to relate teachers' pay with their performance. It will come into effect in July 2020 according to their official websites.

Anyone who works in those public institutions is seen as ineffective. The discourse of competition and classification becomes needed to get people work harder and better. This can be seen as an attempt to devaluing of public good and services so as to make people see whatever is public is *bad* and whatever is private is *good* (Apple, 2006). Although this statement may sound a little extreme, it rings true as it captures the standard technique for privatisation. The technique of privatisation is simple and straightforward. The first step to privatise a public good is to defund it and make sure nothing works properly. People get angry and complain. Then, it is handed over to a private enterprise that is funded by the government. A good example is the

privatisation of the British rail in 1993 (Bowman, 2015). Forde et al (2006, p. 25) described this clearly as " the perception that teachers and the teaching profession are unable to deliver the required standards of schooling " to justify the need for the government to intervene which Ball (1990) has named a "discourse of derision."

The discourse of derision suggests that *schools* are the causes of all social and economic problems and the emphasis on *effectiveness* and measurable outcomes provides the scientific basis for blaming schools and teachers. That is to say, the standards used are carefully designed to make educational professionals look inadequate which feeds into systems of incentives and performance related pay.

Another important point is that within the culture of performativity " we laud that which can be measured and ignore what cannot be measured, even though it might be as important in the educative process." (Forde et al, 2006, p. 25). Likewise, Biesta (2015) points out that we need to measure what we value instead of valuing what we can measure.

Teachers become aware of the need to perform according to the various demands of inspection criteria and reports that are imposed on them which start to outweigh and take priority over the more important, genuine needs of students. Generating evidence can be time-consuming to the point that the quality of teaching might be affected. This process of evidence-gathering "consumes so much energy that it drastically reduces the energy available for making improvement inputs." (Elliot 1996, p. 15).

Moore and Clarke (2016) conducted an ongoing interview- and observation-based study of thirty teachers across five UK state schools to explore the ways in which teachers respond to and enact mandated education policy. Participants were asked what brought them primarily into teaching,

what tensions, if any, they may have experienced between their own beliefs and the different mandated demands of their job, and how teachers have experienced and managed them. The findings reported that while many teachers find their own classroom practices compatible with those embedded within central policy, a considerable number (12 teachers) do experience what they described as serious tensions. These tensions relate mainly to mismatch between content and design and the difficulties in reconciling the different understandings of the purpose of learning. Similarly, Day, Elliot and Kington (2005) conducted a small-scale, exploratory study of 20 experienced Australian and English teachers, aged between 45 and 55 to explore their realities of sustaining commitment within the teaching profession. The findings suggest that teachers' convictions and motivations are challenged or undermined by central policy directives.

A recent qualitative study conducted by Hardy and Lewis (2017) investigated the way in which performativity intrude into classroom life and reorient teachers' work. This research examined the accountability practices in a primary school in Australia in response to a wider focus upon performance data. The study revealed how teachers' data-driven practice entails teachers' engagement with these practices for purposes of compliance but without valuing them. Performative practice, therefore, turns teacher to become "knowable, calculable and administrable object[s]" (Miller and Rose 2008, p. 30) by *fabrication* or representing themselves and the complexities of their practice to the school management team. I will develop this last point in a little more detail in the following section.

3.4.2 Fabrications

Acts of fabrication reproduced by systems of recording on performance are, in fact, selections among different possible representations. That is to say, the versions produced by organisations and individuals tend to exclude things that do not fit into what we need to report (Ball, 2003). Complex institutions like schools and universities are diverse and sometimes contradictory and, hence, groups and individuals will be able to advantage a certain version. These choices or representations, however, are not made in a political vacuum but informed by political restrictions set by the policy guidelines. These fabrications are versions of us that are produced purposefully not for the sake of truthfulness but for the purpose of their effectiveness in making organisations and individuals accountable (Eliott, 2001). Apart from the main function of these fabrications, which is to respond to accountability, educational performativity and comparison, they are linked to the provision of 'information' within the education market for both customers and policy-makers. Educational organisations in this way appear to be more responsive to their consumers. It is in these ways of fabrications that we learn how to maximise ourselves and become more than we were. Fabrications can be also reductive as we can be more than what we present (Ball, 2000).

However, the paradox in such organisational fabrications lies in the fact that fabrications are a subtle means to elude direct surveillance through the provision of a facade of numbers and calculation in a competitive environment and fabricating the educational institutions requires adherence to the rigours of performativity (Butler, 1990). In this sense, fabrications are both resistance and submission (Perryman, 2009). Fabrication is resistance because it is a way of eluding direct surveillance by providing an inauthentic version of the organisations and ourselves. It is also submission because the act of fabrication requires the submission to the

rigours of performativity and competition. Put in a different way, the call upon objectivity and rationality through factual data is incompatible with acts of fabrication as they produce a distorted version of reality due to the submission to the requirement of performativity.

Another problem that arises with the use of performative technologies and calculations is that they hide as much as they reveal. Although these technologies seem to make schools and other institutions more transparent, they may, in fact, make them more opaque as reports increasingly written with deliberation and sophistication and teachers find themselves under pressure to misrepresent or 'cheat' in a competitive environment. Acts of fabrication are in fact "a betrayal even, a giving up of claims to authenticity and commitment, an investment in plasticity" (Ball, 2003, p. 225).

Within this culture of performativity that prevails in most educational institutions, schools will become whatever it seems necessary to become so as to thrive in the education market. The values of the educational enterprise are easily overlooked and plasticity takes over authenticity and the disciplines of competition encourage schools and teachers to manage and manipulate their performances in particular ways that are heavily designed (Ball, 2000, Clarke, 2012).

The term *post-fabrication* echoes what Perryman (2009, p. 627) describes as schools running a "completely Panoptic regime internally", No-notice inspections suggest that what inspectors see during their visit is what happens day-to-day in a school. Clapham (2015) argues that this No-notice inspection results in a state of post-fabrication as inspection readiness was ubiquitous to such an extent that it was not a fabricated version of events. The teachers in Clapham's study were perceived as wanting to be inspected and to put on a show not just for the inspectors. They wanted the inspectors to see the shows they put on everyday. This implies that the technology of

performativity had worked on the teachers to such an extent that they were fully governed. The surveillance discipline was capable of producing a neoliberal subject (teacher) that performs, not just for the school inspection regime but also on a daily basis (Clapham, 2015. p.13). While the concept of post- fabrication offers some opportunities to reframe 'fabrication', Clapham bases his study on just two teachers from two different schools in the UK. One school was deemed 'good' by the school inspection regime and the other was deemed 'satisfactory'. One teacher is described as a 'beginning teacher' and the other a 'veteran teacher'. This limitation makes the study difficult to generalise in terms of understanding the impact of the school inspection regime in relation to notions of post-fabrication.

3.4.3 ELT Teachers Struggle over Visibility

A set of dualisms or tensions between teachers' beliefs and representation is embedded in almost all regimes of performativity (Ball, 2015). Teachers are concerned that their work will not be visible or valued within the accountability metrics and, on the other hand, their performance will be vulnerable to misrepresentation and distortion by the requirements of these metrics. However, teachers now operate within an arena of performance indicators and competitions that keeps them in a constant state of struggle. Not only for stability in an educational context full of contradictions in terms of purposes, but also for visibility because teachers need to know which judgments may be in play that all comparisons have to be attended to (Ball, 2015).

Employing a critical auto-ethnographic approach, Warren (2017) explores the way technologies of performance management work to produce academics and academic managers as certain types of neoliberal subject. He reflects on his personal story in a university in the Republic of Ireland as an academic who lives in a modern academic life that is shaped by internal and external

dynamics. He argues that the struggle to make oneself visible usually occurs under the gaze of academic normativity (i.e. the norms of academic practice that include both locally negotiated practices and the performative demands of auditing and metrics that characterise the neoliberal educational institutions). The paper concludes by showing how the dual process of being worked upon and working upon oneself to be visible to the educational institutions can produce personally harmful effects as such process can be seen as a process of systemic violence. Derrington and Martinez (2019) examined teachers' perceptions and attitudes about the evaluation instrument used after 5 years of implementing evaluation protocols that were initiated under Race to the Top. The study surveyed middle and high school teachers in nine Eastern Tennessee school districts. Data revealed unintended consequences as a result of their evaluations, including negative impacts on relationships with principals. Findings also implied that the reformed evaluation system is not effectively providing learning opportunities for secondary teachers who had previously been judged as competent as such system does not reflect their authentic performance.

3.5 ELT Teachers' Identities

3.5.1 Identities: Theories/ Concepts

Teachers' professional identity is seen as a vital element of the sociocultural and sociopolitical space of the classroom and in teachers' professional development (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). In this section, I will provide an overview of some of the notions and theories related to identity construction.

It has been widely acknowledged that identities are not something stable and unitary but constantly reconstructed as "a life-long process of negotiation in response to changes in our

immediate contexts, our relationships with others, and our personal circumstances, as we attempt to make sense of who we are" (Bilgen & Richards, 2015, p. 61). Varghese *et al.* (2005) offered a concise summary of this relatively recent shift of the views of identities by pointing out that structurally deterministic perspectives of identity have resulted in approaches that attempt to understand individuals as intentional beings. That is, seeking to capture the processes of identity formation should take into account the complexity of relation between different aspects and how identity construction process is not necessarily neutral but rather structured and designed to perform predetermined intentions. To put it in Foucauldian terms, it is possible to say that identities are materialisations of discursively structured power relations. Also, Foucault (1980) asserts that there is always a possibility for resistance from teachers within every productive network. It is crucial, thus, to explore the participants' construction of their identities so as to understand potential contradictions and possible resistance in teacher identities. Central to Althusser's (1971) theorisation of identity formation is misrecognition and alienation through ideological interpellation. For Althusser, ideology is not just a set of beliefs about the world; it involves getting people immersed into material practices within specific institutions that result in subject formation and to the reproduction of social relationships. It is from this standpoint the current study approaches the concept of identity. In fact, my approach to identity construction is neither Althusserian nor Foucauldian. An eclectic approach that brings together a rich mix of perspectives drawn from the different theories mentioned above was adopted based on the belief that relying on one perspective of a theory or approach opens up certain possibilities and closes others especially in educational context that is dynamic, multifaceted and characterised by massive complexity.

I believe it is crucial here to point out that while some theorists (e.g., Baumeister, 1998; Schwartz *et al.* 2011) have made a distinction between *identity* and *self*, it is obvious that identity is more suitable in research contexts where the focus falls on the ways in which this identity is discursively constructed and how the real social and institutional pressures construct teachers identities. However, I have chosen not to draw a clear-cut boundary between the two because both concepts are aspects of social/personality psychology and "identity" is considered as a developmental "self". I am also aware of the effect of identity formation processes on individuals' minds and selves. Moreover, I have also chosen to focus on aspects of teachers' professional identity while acknowledging that these aspects are embedded in a broader socio-political context. Neither self nor identity consists in any distinctive material, neural, component of the brain. In fact, both self and identity as simple constructions of our embodied minds are used as philosophical, psychological and sociological tools to help define and understand human behaviour as epiphenomena or emergent properties of brain activity (Gibbs, 2018).

3.5.2 Professional Identity as a Concept

The concept of professional identity is defined in different ways in the literature. This concept is also used in various ways in the area of teaching and teacher education. In some studies, the concept of professional identity was related to teachers' concept or image of self (e.g., Mannes, 2020; Slay & Smith, 2010). It was argued that these concepts or images of self strongly determine the way teachers teach, the way they develop as teachers, and their attitudes toward educational changes. Other studies of professional identity placed the focus on teachers' roles and what teachers themselves find important in their professional work and lives based on both their experiences in practice and their personal backgrounds (e.g., Li, 2020; Gülerce, 2014). Professional identity remains unclear concept in the sense of what, and to what extent, things are

integrated in such an identity.

As I have discussed above, the viewpoint I take on the concept of ‘identity’ is that it is constructed in the interactions between self and others in context. This viewpoint permits for differently perceived identities in different settings. Hence, one could have (or be considered to have) different identities in different situations (for instance, her/his identity at work is different from her/his identity at home). A general hypothesis is that one feels a sense of oneness with others in the organisation, in which one is employed, if things go well for one’s self. One’s identity is affirmed by the professional identity and public prestige of the organisation and the way that is perceived as different from another organisation (Ashforth, Schinoff, & Rogers, 2016). In the past, professionalism was also perceived as a sign of delivering a service with quality; a professional was considered, in this sense, to be someone who has a combination of competence, confidence and the autonomy to provide such a service (Slay & Smith, 2010). Hence, by permitting more discretion and autonomous agency, a professional role might have better value for one’s self. Although teachers and the larger society in general may want teachers to be considered as professionals, teachers’ space for autonomy and capacity to provide an appropriate quality of service is fatally limited (Slay & Smith, 2010).

3.5.3 Teachers’ professional identities and Why it Matters

Key to my argument about the effects of the current political regime and policies on education are the evident effects on teachers’ beliefs about themselves. As I will argue in this section, the reduction of teachers’ autonomy and the erosion of their professional identities are significant factors in the illness that has perverted education.

In the previous section, I tried to point out how one’s self and identity may be constructed and

construed. In this section, I will not try to provide rationalisation for the 'self' and 'identity' as important constructs but rather I will attempt to do the opposite by trying to say that we should not see the constructs of self or identity as important ends in themselves. So far, drawing from the work of Gibbs (2018), I have tried to suggest that the concepts of 'self ' and 'identity' are best considered as mentalisations of our experience of existence in itself and for our existence with others. However, all other conceptualisations of 'self ' and 'identity' are similarly abstract, and some may be more misleading than others. Whether we envisage ourselves to be psychologically similar or different from others, there is no impartial evidence of either hypothesis. In fact, we compose narratives about ourselves in order to protect our vulnerabilities (Gülerce, 2014). This is, I believe, as true for teachers as it is for any public service professional. There is a significant social reality in the way teachers are publically perceived. The construction of reality and the beliefs held about teachers and teachers' own beliefs about themselves are culturally and socially salient (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004). The representation of teachers often suggests that teaching not only in the KSA but also in many parts of the world is a threatened and unhealthy profession. The implications that the culture of performativity introduced to education in the latter part of the twentieth century has been related to a devaluation of teaching as a profession and the alienation of teachers (Brown & Manktelow, 2016). However, as I have noted in the introduction chapter of this thesis, attrition from the profession in the KSA is high and at an unsustainable rate. There are also signs that teachers may experience a greater risk of mental illness than is found in the general working population. Consequently, there are grounds for concern about perceptions of teachers' professional identities and wellbeing that deserve further investigation and understanding.

Striving for greater understanding of how teachers and others perceive the status and role of

teachers should enable us to more effectively support good practice and greater retention of teachers. Moreover, a big 'gap' between the personal (how teachers see themselves, their personal values and motivations) and the professional (their professional role and the restrictions of their job) may generate strong and potentially undefeatable dissonances and disagreements (Pillen, Beijaard & den Brok, 2013). Thus, considering the nature of teachers' professional identities and their conceptual and professional vulnerabilities is vital in order to reach greater consistency of values, motivation, role and professional agency.

I am interested in the concept of ELT professional identity formation because I believe that studying teacher professional identity can offer a discussion for teachers on how to take ownership of their professional identity and how to adjust it to the human and emotional dimensions of the teaching profession. It will also help teachers relate their professional identity to the current policy climate in education (Barkhuizen, 2017). Put simply, when teachers understand and become fully aware of all sorts of personal, social and professional, past and present influences that shape their teaching self, they can actively participate in the process of their professional identity formation. This can be achieved by helping teachers to have a conscious control of the multiple influences that are going to shape their identities as teachers. Helping teachers view themselves through a teacher-identity lens may give them new ways to frame and improve their teaching practice. Identities, in this sense, are a form of praxis. Connecting praxis with identity research allows for thinking of identity as agency, and critical self-reflection as a form of social critique (Barkhuizen, 2017).

3.5.4 Studies on ELT Teachers' Professional Identities

In this section, I will present a review of selected studies that I found related to ELT teachers' identities. This section is divided into three subsections. The first part is a review of international published research on teachers' professional identity. Studies from the Saudi context are presented in the second subsection with a critical account of the methods of investigation used in the reviewed empirical works. The focus on studies of performativity and EL teachers' professional identity construction will be addressed in details in a separate section.

3.5.4.1 International Studies on ELT Teachers' Professional Identity

A review of the International literature in the field of TESOL shows that in the last decade, a wide range of research has focused on teacher professional identity albeit from different perspectives of dealing with the topic. These studies can be grouped according to the theme they cover in the area of teachers' professional identity. There are studies that paid attention to the multidimensionality nature of EL teachers' professional identity, the personal, social and political aspects of identity construction. I shall address these themes briefly and represent the most important findings.

Many researchers have addressed the multidimensionality nature of ELT professional identity and how these different dimensions interact. Although it seems that there is a general consensus among researchers that professional identities are multidimensional, some hold opposing views to whether what Mishler (1999, p.8) calls "sub-identities" can achieve equilibrium and balance or will continue to be a "site of struggle" between conflicting identities (MacLure, 1993, p. 313).

The second issue revolves around the personal and emotional aspects of identity construction. A number of researchers have stressed the personal dimensions, emphasising the role of self-

reflection on who we are as teachers and what we want to become. A growing research on language teacher identity attempts to highlight the intertwined nature of teacher learning and identity in shaping the outlines of teacher identity negotiation. For example, a recent study by Yazan (2017) investigated three English to Speaker of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher candidates' identity negotiation as they learned to work with English language learners through coursework and internship experiences in a 13-month programme. The findings indicated that the participants negotiated their emerging teacher identities through this programme in three different ways: (a) they negotiated who they aspire to become as an ESOL practitioner as they set and revised their priorities in becoming ESOL teachers, (b) they use guided reflective practices to test their imagined identities and (c) they acquired the professional discourse which helps them make sense of and engage in the practices of the community of ESOL teachers. Ursin, Vähäsantanen, McAlpine & Hökkä (2018) examined the relationship between academic identity, agency and emotions, amongst what they described as an under-researched academic group – those without PhDs with primary responsibility for teaching and doing research in a research-intensive university in Finland. They employed semi- structured interviews with eight participants and then narrative approaches were used. The findings showed both balanced and tensioned relations with regard to academic identity. The study also highlights the need for future research to explore identity and agency as emotionally imbued phenomena.

Other researchers, however, have shifted their focus on the professional context pointing out its significance as an important component of the wider sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts in forming teacher identity (e.g. Li, 2020; Aneja, 2016). The relationship between agency and social structure in shaping teacher identity is another main issue. Some researchers (e.g. Wallen & Tormey, 2019) argue that the decisions the teachers make compose their professional

identities. Others assert that educational policies that require conformity could marginalise teachers and undermine their active participation in social space. Fejes and Dahlstedt (2019), for example, asserted that when teachers experience crossfire of internal and external demands, they no longer feel any connection between their professional ideal and the work they actually do. This can result in altering their professional identities as professionalism is no longer from within but rather is tied to organisation and administration. Miller, Morgan & Medina (2017) conducted a case study of an elementary reading and language arts male teacher who worked in a multilingual inclusion classroom (i.e., learning disabled and mainstreamed students), using a qualitative methodology mainly interviews. The findings suggest that the teacher's struggle within power relations that shape educational practices and discourse hinders his self-awareness of himself as ethical subject "acting on others" (Foucault, 1997a, p. 262). However, though the researchers adopted a longitudinal case study over nine years, using interviews as the only data collection method with only one participant makes the findings less generalisable. Likewise, Morgan (2009) investigates how different roles of identities (teachers as technicians, reflective practitioners and transformative practitioners) inform teachers' practices as they relate to teaching English for Academic Purposes. Teachers who see themselves in a transformative role are far more aware of the macro sociopolitical and economic influences on their practice and tried to seek a possibility for transformative work at the micro level of the classroom (Morgan, 2009).

3.5.4.2 Studies on ELT Teachers' Professional Identity in the Saudi Context

In the Saudi context, some research has been conducted on ELT teachers' identities (e.g. Barnawi, 2009; Alshammari, 2008); however, most of the studies have placed considerable emphasis on the role of the personal dimensions and self-reflection when dealing with the notion of ELT teacher identity detaching it from a broader socio-political context. Alnahhas (2016) conducted a study using a narrative approach to describe what she called "a shift and a movement" in her identity as an English language teacher and learner who came from Saudi Arabia to Canada to do her master's degree in the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) program. Although she was successfully engaged in ongoing negotiations and constructions of her identity, yet her analysis lacks connection to a broader socio-political context and other related issue such as class and power. In fact, social discourse and interaction, in her analysis of her identity formation process, is presented as a neutral activity devoid of political influence. Elyas (2011) conducted a case study of two university English classes (including both teachers and students) in Saudi Arabia, employing aspects of identity theory, narrative theory, motivation theory and Critical Discourse Analysis in order to address the various influences on teachers' professional identities, and students' learning identities. This study shows that opposing cultural forces caused conflict in the teaching and learning environment and therefore, in the teachers and students identities. In the same vein, Elyas and Picard (2012) took a rather unique look into issues of Saudi ELT teacher identity as they stress the problematic aspect of developing a professional identity when it involves a paradigm struggle, simply because the actions that the professional needs to take become unclear. They describe in their paper how Saudi ELT teachers in Saudi Arabia experience a complex conflict between Western and Eastern identities as these teachers are required as English teachers to

venture a positive attitude towards English, which is considered by many in the region as a vessel for Western or foreign ideologies. In addition, Elyas and Picard (2012) continue to argue that most Saudi ELT teachers have been educated in a conservative moral tradition based on a well-described role as Islamic educators and participants in giving space for Saudi nationalism to take root. Yet as some English teachers educated at Western universities, they have been exposed to a variety of western ideologies and thoughts.

However, the study of teacher identity in the mid-career lives of teachers is still an under-researched area (Bilgen & Richards, 2015). Investigating how teachers deal with their identities formation and the challenges they face in their professional life offers a good opportunity for comprehending the complex relationship between identity and context. Alsalahi (2015) conducted a small-scale study that aimed to gain an in-depth insight about the practitioner teachers' beliefs and roles in the programmes provided to them for their professional development. He interviewed three Saudi male teachers from three different intermediate stage schools with bachelor degree in English. The participants have been working and still teaching English in Saudi Arabia for more than five years. Semi-structured interviews conducted over Skype in order to gain a better perspective over the changes with regards to their professional identity development. The findings revealed that ELT teachers feel neglected by the Saudi MoE, which definitely had an effect on their sense of professional identity and their overall professional development and also affecting the quality of their teaching.

3.5.5 The Effect of Systems of performativity on ELT Teachers' Identities

Performative technologies are increasingly utilised as a means of evaluating and controlling the work and performance of teachers. These technologies are spreading at different levels: the transnational/supra-national, the national level and also at the individual level (Biesta, 2009), where teachers are evaluated according to their individual performances (Katsuno, 2016). In this part, I will focus on how various technologies for assessing teachers' performance have constructed their identities.

When discussing the effects of the ongoing trend of performativity and its technologies on teachers' identities, two major types of reasoning may be found in the literature. One suggests that these performative technologies will encounter scepticism and resistance in educational settings (e.g. Ball, 2015). Such reasoning is based on a premise that the market-driven underpinnings of many performative technologies tend to cause a kind of conflict with traditional teacher values (Tang, 2011). This conflict can re-orient the teaching profession and deprofessionalise teachers (Page, 2015).

A second type of reasoning downplays this conflict and suggests that performative technologies will dominate over time due to their ability to reduce the subjective elements and the uncertainties of being a teacher (e.g. Forrester, 2011; Moller, 2009). Put differently, the heavy reliance upon performative technologies and accepting them unquestionably would structure a professional context characterised by more certainty where practice in general and output in particular are observed, controlled and evaluated according to a set of criteria that are, presumably, accurate and able to represent teachers' performance. Englund and Frostenson (2017) explored 25 teachers identities construction in an immensely culture of performativity in

a Swedish upper secondary school where teachers expressed their need and desire to perform and submit to the performative logic. They used qualitative instruments including interviews and classroom observation. The findings suggest that teachers despite their willingness to submit to the requirements of the performative technologies, have faced some performance uncertainties and tensions due to the way these systems recognise their performance using subjective judgment translated into numbers. However, it must be mentioned that this study has been conducted in only one school and it is obviously desirable for other schools to be similarly examined to see whether the findings presented in this study are more widespread.

In fact, when performativity and other market machinery are allowed to prevail in education, teachers are encouraged to undertake certain forms of practice regardless of their values or professional judgment. This will not only change teachers' performance, but also their *identities* (Ball, 2003). The pressures and demands of performativity, thus, colonise teachers, to be *performers* not teachers (Anderson & Cohen, 2015). This resulted in a teacher identity that requires the internalisation of a performative logic.

It may be argued that both these lines of reasoning acknowledge that performative technologies, predicated upon neoliberal ideology, establish a kind of antithesis to more traditional teacher values. A considerable amount of literature has been devoted towards the negative impact of these technologies on teachers' performance and identities. However, less attention has been paid to what happens when the teacher's performative identity has already been developed and teachers attempt to perform whatever practices the performative technologies impose. This is the reason I chose my participants in their mid-career professional lives as some of them might have been already developed the performative identity.

The other issue of concern is that performativity coupled with accountability and the act of surveillance has caused teachers to feel a sense of being constantly evaluated through multiple evaluation criteria. Bulach, *Boothe and Pickett* (2006) argued that the implementation of a performance-orientated model of teaching has resulted in teachers struggle with the wider educational goals. This drive towards a culture of performativity, accountability, standards and assessments in education has alienated teachers and created a school environment that is not attractive for teachers creativity and has built up communication gaps due to lack of trust. Dewey (1986) pointed out that imposing a uniform method for everyone breeds mediocrity in all. Consequently, teachers often have their values displaced by the “terrors of performativity” (Ball, 2003, p. 216).

Performativity has an outside and inside effect. With regards to the latter, performativity aims at culture-building that is centered on the articulation and reinforcement of objectivity and rationality and involves the instilling of pride, self-respect, and faith in the quality of the services provided. On the other hand, performativity has an emotional dimension; competition between groups within institutions can generate feelings of pride, guilt, shame and envy and can create an environment that lacks collegiality and professionalism (Willmott, 1992).

In the Saudi context, performativity is an under-researched topic. While a bulk of research has been directed to the study of challenges of ELT teachers in Saudi public schools (eg. Al-Seghayer, 2014a; urRahman & Alhaisoni, 2013), such studies have relatively failed to demonstrate an association between performativity, its impact on teachers and educational policies and practices of English language education in Saudi Arabia. These studies often tend to approach the issue of the excessive drive towards systems of performativity in education

unproblematically as a neutral managerial activity, detaching it from the wider socio-political and socio-economic context. In fact, when I started this project in 2016, I have not come across the word *performativity* or *systems of performativity* in most of the studies I have reviewed in the Saudi context and performativity is commonly referred to as "strong centralization mechanism" or "fixed guidelines" (eg. Al-Seghayer, 2014 a, p.23).

3.5.6 The Formation of Teachers' Performative Identities

In general, teacher identity is about teachers' attempts to make sense of who they are and how teachers identify themselves as teachers. It concerns mainly of conceptualising the 'self' in an educational context (Izadinia, 2013). Such self-examining processes are constantly changing and influenced by a number of contextual factors (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). I will direct my main focus on how performative technologies shape ELT teacher identity. Several authors have pointed out that the heavy reliance on performative technologies in educational contexts will result in a new construction of teacher identity that came to be known as the *performative* teacher (Jeffrey, 2002; Jeffrey and Troman, 2011; Troman, 2008).

Relatively, little attention has been given to understanding the processes of ELT teachers' identity formation in the Saudi context. To the best of my knowledge, this study is the first to address performative technologies in regards to the teachers' identities, performance and how the various discourses interplay in the teaching/learning environment to shape ELT teachers' identities and practice.

Tsui (2007) conducted a narrative inquiry to investigate the complex processes of an EFL teacher professional identity formation throughout his 6-year teaching career in China. Drawing on Wenger's (1998) social theory of identity formation, the findings showed that the interplay of

identification and the negotiability of meanings could generate identity conflicts and could lead to identities of marginality, disengagement, and nonparticipation. Another important finding is that the process of EFL teacher identity formation is often shaped by power relations in social structures that cannot be separated from the broader sociopolitical context. The latter point is a discussion to which I will return shortly.

A frequent argument in the literature seems to be the idea that both teachers' performance and subjectivity are profoundly changed by performative technologies, with their associated discourse of efficiency, quality, excellence and competition. That is, in order to obtain a sense of self, teachers have to acquire certain qualities that enable them to perform. Performance means "not the pursuit of educational ideals, like personal autonomy, or emancipation but, instead, the subsumption of education under the demands of efficiency for the total social system" (Marshall, 1999, p. 310). Teachers are thus obliged to displace their individual qualities and professional judgment by submission to the external demands of performativity. Table 1 below, which I adopted from Englund and Frostenson (2017), sums up the qualities of performative teacher identity that have been indicated in related literature with their underlying logic.

Identity quality in existing literature	Underlying logic
Outcome orientation	You are not who you are but what you perform
Entrepreneurial	You have to be energetic and enterprising in order to perform
Individualistic	You are individually accountable for your own performances
Workable object	You can always do more in order to improve your performances

Table 1. Qualities of Performative Teacher Identities (Englund and Frostenson, 2017)

The first quality relates to outcomes. A performative teacher is one who is able to prove the ability to achieve improved outcomes or expected results and always willing to go for 'what works' (Collinson, 2003). It is this ability that determines teachers' success in a performative educational landscape. The enterprising self is a second quality, which stresses the need to be enterprising and strive for excellence to validate oneself in a competitive educational enterprise (Anderson and Cohen, 2015). Neoliberal professionals in this sense are enterprising subjects who live their professional life as an as an enterprise of the self (Down, 2009). A third quality is based on the premise that the neoliberal performative discourse provides teachers with autonomy and individual choice. A performative society, with its defined criteria for success, restricts teachers and makes them more accountable (Clarke, 2013). Being workable and manageable is the final quality; a performer needs to show the ability to adapt to the performative demands and presents a particular version of the self even through fabricating (Jeffrey, 2002). In sum, performative system is designed to "make individuals responsible for monitoring and disciplining themselves, to make them responsive and flexible." (Ball, 2013, p. 58).

Ball (2003, p. 215) has relied on Lyotard's notion of performativity to make the point that 'performativity' in Lyotard's sense can be a resource in the construction of the self. In the following passage, Ball explicitly explains how performativity shapes our identities. It is worth quoting in its entirety:

Performativity… is a new mode of state regulation which makes it possible to govern in an 'advanced liberal' way. It requires individual practitioners to organize themselves as a response to targets, indicators and evaluations, to set aside personal beliefs and commitments and live an existence of calculation. The new performative worker is a promiscuous self, an enterprising self, with a passion for excellence. For some, this is an opportunity to make a success of themselves; for others it portends inner conflicts, inauthenticity and resistance. It is also suggested that performativity produces opacity rather than transparency, as individuals and organizations take ever greater care in the construction and maintenance of fabrications.

Ball here places teachers and their work in the center of politics and educational policy and positions their values in opposition to prevailing techno-rational discourses of teaching expressed, for example, in discourses of 'standards' or 'measurement' that reduce teaching to matters of technical efficiency.

The development of performative qualities cannot be understood without taking into account the issues of power as mentioned above in Tsui (2007) narrative study. The development process seems to be a process of "governing without governing" (Olssen, 1996, p. 340). Possessing the performative qualities requires constant production of evidence that we are doing what we have to do in the right way. It also requires constant enterprising of the self and subjecting one's work to judgment and scrutiny. The Foucauldian (1991) approach of relating practices that have

relevance to the construction of the self to forms of power avoids considering power as dominating or oppressive but "as the creation, shaping, and utilization of human beings as subjects" (p. 151). The question of governance according to Foucault is not a political philosophy or economic ideology; it is all about how power is exercised (Foucault, 1991). To understand how ELT teachers' performative selves and power are interrelated from this point of view, it is vital to describe and analyse the various ways in which ELT teachers have been constructed as subjects through different forms of governmental regulation.

3.6 The Resistance: Theories/ Concepts

Much of the literature on teachers' resistance and struggles against or with the practices of performativity shows that these acts of resistance are "daily experiences and practices of freedom of individual teachers"(Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 86). In some cases, the tensions between the demands of the school system and teachers' particular sense of responsibility ignite different forms of actions and reactions from some teachers to cope with and manage the performative mandates and their perceived inadequacies and injustices of the system. Some recent studies demonstrate the ways in which teachers can actively take a role in their own self-definition as a "teaching subject", to think in terms of what they do not want to become, or, in other words, begin to care for themselves (e.g., Valoyes-Chávez, 2019; Bannister, 2020). In this study, I adopted Foucault's notion of the 'care of the self' to approach the concepts of teachers' resistance to performativity as an everyday form of resistance. These notions (care of the self / everyday resistance) will be discussed further in separate sections below.

One of the central challenges teachers face to sustain their wellbeing under neoliberal ideology is the recurrent discord between the underlying values of each area. The disjuncture between the

corporate ethos that is validated in policy and the requirements of the system, with the integrated social, emotional, professional and personal focus of wellbeing is difficult to reconcile (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). Teachers value their work holistically. They are likely to be committed to the social and moral purposes of schooling which is perhaps their main reason for entering the profession (Le Cornu, 2013). Teachers aim to work with students to make a difference in their lives and help them achieve beyond what was previously possible – academically, socially and emotionally. Teachers, therefore, need to value their students as whole beings and stress the emotional side of teaching. Trying to negotiate how to honour their value for students while also fulfilling the imposed requirements of the role results in a 'values schizophrenia' (Ball, 2003), which may need to be harmonised and consistent in order to ensure teachers are able to enact their deeper purposes, values and beliefs in their work and flourish professionally (Mockler, 2011). This continued compromising of professional identity and values may be a factor in ongoing teacher attrition (Acton & Glasgow, 2015).

In a recently conducted qualitative study in Canada employing a hermeneutic approach to interview data, Janzen and Phelan (2019) explored one veteran teacher's experience of obligation and commitment to helping a student with extreme and complex needs. The school principal and other professional colleagues denied the support she needed. Her frustration at the lack of support for her and her student, and feeling dismissed and abandoned by the experts whom she called on for help, made her resign. She retired early from the profession she loved because she could no longer tolerate what it had become and who it forced her to be. This study illustrates how such obligations are complicated within the matrix of relationships with professional colleagues and the possibilities for professional disengagement to be considered an act of moral resistance. The findings illustrate how a teacher's obligation to respond ethically to her students

becomes the impetus for teacher resistance, when needs are denied by the school principal and other colleagues. This provokes a reconsideration of teacher disengagement, not as a failure of the teacher, but as an effect of good teaching. In other words, while obligation requires the teacher to act on behalf of the child, at times it might also mean acting against the profession itself.

Approaches to research in the field of teachers' resistance are diverse. Methodologies and topic foci are disparate, with a changing focus on interpersonal behaviour (e.g., Valoyes-Chávez, 2019), others on coping and managing mechanisms (e.g., Oplatka & Iglan, 2020), attitudes towards workplace challenges or leadership styles (e.g., Smith, 2020), or relationships with students and colleagues (e.g., Janzen & Phelan, 2019). Key findings in the literature set related to emotions and sustaining wellbeing for teachers through resisting unhealthy workplace environment include that teachers with higher reported rates of emotional intelligence allows them to think positively about the demands of the job and apply realistic coping strategies to effectively manage demanding emotional situations that may arise in working closely with children and adults (e.g., Vesely, Saklofske, & Nordstokke, 2014).

Research focusing on the external causes of wellbeing indicates that the major sources of poor wellbeing include student motivation and behavioural problems, role conflict, time and workload, evaluative environments, and managing change (Keddie, Mills & Pendergast, 2011). While extensive research has been carried out into the context of teacher burnout and attrition, Parker, Martin, Colmar & Liem (2012) suggest that a major research priority is the study of process variables such as coping patterns that explain individual differences in teachers' responses to these external stressors.

3.6.1 Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

It is important to provide an account of the ways teachers assess demands associated with their wellbeing, and the impacts and effects of individual coping strategies in meeting appraised demands. Much research is based on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping. This model is a framework that emphasises appraisal to evaluate harm, threat and challenges, which result in the process of coping with stressful events that can result in workplace wellbeing outcomes. This model has been effective in describing the importance of meaning, appraisal and coping in this process. However, Coyne & Racioppo (2000) have suggested that this model suffers from a focus on the stress process as event-specific, which is largely incompatible with the considerable variance in outcomes associated with individual differences. While some coping behaviors differ from situation to situation, given a specific context such as the day-to-day stressors of teaching, there is a tendency for individuals to draw from a "stable hierarchy of preferred coping strategies" (Frydenberg, 1997, p. 40). This, in fact, explains the reason why I opted to employ Care of the Self as a form of everyday resistance, as it can address this deficit.

The space teachers can create to deal with performativity pressures in their school may include different coping strategies, such as avoiding conflict and showing absolute compliance while enjoying autonomy in the classroom (Angus, 2012), building a strong relationship with colleagues to avoid competitive environment (Mockler, 2011). Some scholars stressed the role of teachers' moral values and concerns on their understanding, appreciation, and implementation of the reform effort, especially when teachers' purposes were at odds with those of the reform effort (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). Nevertheless, having opportunities to discuss these differences between such values can make an impact.

3.6.2 Theories of Everyday Resistance

Since the 1970s, scholars from different disciplines, mostly sociology and anthropology have shared their distinct perspectives on the notion of the everyday resistance, trying to identify both the location and quality of transformative agency (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977; de Certeau, 1984). In contrast to conflict transformation literature, which only very lately paid attention to ordinary people's everyday struggles, ethnographic studies of everyday social and political practices can play a significant role in questioning universalist conceptualisations of resistance and change by exposing alternative forms of political struggle. To acknowledge and consider the everyday as a political site, offers other dimensions and avenues to understand the functioning of power and resistance. As explained by Scott (1997, p. 323) in the following:

So long as we confine our conception of the political to activity that is openly declared we are driven to conclude that subordinate groups essentially lack a political life, or that what political life they do have is restricted to those exceptional moments of popular explosion. To do so is to miss the immense political terrain that lies between quiescence and revolt, and that, for better or worse, is the political environment of subject classes.

Some scholars argue over which actions should be regarded as resistance and which should be labelled otherwise. Resistance scholars unite ideas derived from a structural Marxism approach and a poststructuralist theorisation of power as decentralised and operating not only at the material, but also at the cultural and discursive level through the writings of norms, values and social patterns. There are three basic elements of resistance most scholars seem to agree on: 1) it refers to some form of action (verbally, physically or cognitive), 2) it functions (challenge, subversion or circumvention) in opposition to all forms of domination, and 3) is interdependent

with power (Einwohner & Hollaender, 2004). Foucault's (1978, p. 95-6) famous observation of resistance being conditioned by power is by now well established, not only in poststructuralist literature: "[w]here there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power." Systems of power set the possibilities for different forms of resistance to appear. Understanding this inter-dependence between resistance and power (or agency and structure) should guide one to "use resistance as a diagnostic of power" (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 42). That is, as a means to better understand the material and ideational structural context in which and against which performers strategise.

Scholarly debates revolve around the question of whether the use of the term resistance should be confined to the description of acts that are recognised by others and are conscious by the actors themselves. Some use the term to describe a wide variety of small-scale acts – conscious and unconscious, individual and collective, recognised and unrecognised, at the material and ideational level, etc., and assign to them transformative power, whereas others would prefer to "limit the term resistance to actions that have some degree of consciousness and collectivity about them, as well as some explicit attention to broad structures of domination" (Rubin, 1996, p. 239; Gutmann, 1993). Scott (1990, p. xii), among those who have been criticised for using the term too broadly, understood that:

rumours, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures, jokes, and theatre of the powerless as vehicles by which, among other things, they insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct. These patterns of disguising ideological insubordination are somewhat analogous to the patterns by which, in my experience, peasants and slaves have disguised their efforts to thwart material appropriation of their labour, their

production and their property: for example, poaching, foot-dragging, pilfering, dissimulation, flight. Together, these forms of insubordination might suitably be called the infrapolitics of the powerless. (Scott, 1990, p. xii)

Unlike overt collective nonviolent resistance, everyday resistance is deliberately obscured and covered. The invisibility of everyday resistance has little to say about its transformative potential because it simply stems from the different goals and context of the resisters (Scott, 2005). Put simply, while collective nonviolent resistance seeks to bring to public notice discriminatory assumptions and normalised alternative political prejudices, covert everyday resistance maintains itself through exactly the opposite; it conceals itself from public sight in order to protect the powerless resisters from suppression and sustain the usefulness of their actions.

The connection between covert and overt resistance is open to discussion. Some critics stress the need for a more nuanced approach to recognition of everyday resistance especially when studying its functioning and effectiveness (e.g. Rubin, 1996). One needs to assess carefully to whom these small-scale acts are intentionally made visible or invisible, and how their visibility/invisibility controls the act's successfulness (Einwohner and Hollaender, 2004, p. 541). The second point of contention looks at the resister's own intent/consciousness to transform structures of power and control. Do actors have to be aware of their acts as confronting domination, or should acts that unintentionally initiate changes also count as resistance? Scott (2008), for instance, insists that resistance must be an intentional act, and he even considers that intent as a better marker of resistance than outcome. Other resistance scholars have loosened the relation between consciousness, action and effect of resistance to also include actions that are not directed immediately against repressive structures or that might prompt spontaneous

transformations (e.g. Starr, 2011). To argue that even acts where the actor is not aware of challenging structures of domination constitute a form of resistance (e.g., Einwohner & Hollaender, 2004) might weaken the analytical acquisition of the concept and deny agency despite its aim to stress the significance of individual agency (Bayat, 2010). It is important to acknowledge the several levels that one single act of resistance can target simultaneously, some of which might be consciously confronted, while others might undergo transformations without the explicit intention of the actor.

3.6.3 Care of the Self as a Form of Resistance

This section will be devoted to the discussion of Foucault's notion of the 'care of the self' that is often perceived as a major challenge to the understanding of ethics. The way this concept is employed and how it relates to the aims of this study will be dicussed later in chapter V under the section (5.4 Teachers' Resistance). With the tendency of ethics to focus on the 'other' and how one relates to that other, the turn to consider the construction of the subject seems to be radical. This will also discuss how this notion of self-care can be a powerful means of resistance.

"Care of the self" is the principal theme of Foucault's The Hermeneutics of the Subject, a course of lectures he delivered at the Collège de France in the school year of 1981/1982. In his course, drawing from Socrates and Plato, Foucault sought to explore the idea of influencing oneself, in which subjects seek to cultivate themselves, transform themselves, and reach a certain mode of being by exploring the relationship between subjectivity and truth from a new perspective – that of "the care of the self". Foucault does not offer substantial discussion of the care of self in its broad sense, but he emphasises the fundamental relation between the care of self and the concern for truth, referring to the ancient conception of the care of the self and its connection to the

ambiguous prescription to know oneself, famously observed by Socrates. Foucault wishes to diagnose the exclusion of the care of the self by modern thought and consider whether the care of the self might remain viable in modern ethics.

Foucault thinks the exclusion of the care of the self is the result of a reconception of two ancient commands: to care for oneself and to know oneself. These two notions were initially expressed by Socrates who asserted that the care of the self serves as the justification for the prescription to know oneself. Caring for oneself, according to Foucault, was understood by Socrates and other ancient ethicists as an exhibition of attitude not only toward oneself but also toward others and the world; by attending to one's own thoughts and attitudes in self-reflection and meditation, and engaging in ascetic practices aimed at realising an ideal state of being through the means of knowing oneself.

Socrates understands taking care of oneself as a life-long effort of self-creation. The Socratic-Platonic care of oneself is characterised by dialogical examination, which not only combines taking care of oneself with taking care of others, but also serves as an encouragement for others. The way-of-life principle of taking care of the self is used to refer to a purposeful and systematic practice. The notion of taking care of oneself focuses on two questions: What is this "oneself" that we are to take care of? What does this taking care of oneself involve? Socrates shows that one ought to take care of his or her soul because "oneself" cannot be reduced to one's body, a tool, or a property. Taking care is a matter of the soul, which is defined as a principle of activity and an intersection of several relationships (with regard to oneself, others, and the world), not a timeless substance. For Socrates the care for his own soul and the souls of others is fulfilled through the practice of dialectic, to enable the examination of the truth of his own thought and

conduct and that of his interlocutors. What was central to Foucault's argument is that Socrates did not practice philosophy only as a way of reaching at propositions or suggestions. Rather, his approach was to use philosophy as a means for examining and testing the consistency of the rational discourse he and his interlocutors employed to justify their lives and conduct. Foucault sees this philosophical activity as essential to one's ethical development.

The genealogic study of care reveals that the significance of taking care of the self in recent culture is different compared to the ancient times or the early Middle Ages. In recent times, for example, we have been continuously urged to search for ourselves, to liberate ourselves, and to become who we are. At the same time, however, we see that these slogans are devoid of genuine meaning. This absence of meaning is a consequence of our inability to establish an effective ethics of the subject. Foucault considers this task to be necessary and politically unavoidable because no resistance against politics is feasible or achievable unless subjects have some sort of relationship to themselves.

By looking at different practices based on care of the self, Foucault approached ethics from a new angle based on the issue of care. This new approach requires the following imperative, "take care of yourself!" Being concerned with oneself, working on oneself, or striving to control and maintain one's life, have become a major part of moral reflections. The key task is to understand the modes of refining our relationship to ourselves that entails trying to know what enables, defines, activates or represses it in the first place. It is worthy to note that Foucault sought to find out when exactly this self-interest became questionable and problematic and understood as a form of moral egoism.

Foucault's care of the self is similar to Patočka's care of the soul. According to Patočka truth is to be considered as man's life-long effort to experience reality. That is, truth must be understood as working on oneself on a constant basis. Truth is also considered to be substantial by Foucault, who links it with the constitution of the ethical subject. Similar to Foucault's analysis, Patočka's work on oneself is considerably reflexive: truth is thoroughly connected with intellectual activity – the awareness of one's own thinking activity that becomes unified with itself. Care of the soul involves changing one's way of thinking, which is governed by truth:

Care of the self is the ripe fruit of reflection. It is the expression of the insight that being in this world consciously and relating to the world as something real mean that man has to radically and fundamentally change his understanding of his being and himself to the extent that is determined by the same, existing truth in the first place. (Patočka, 2002, p. 246)

A new form of knowledge and learning, which was defined by Francis Bacon's claim that "knowledge is power" gradually replaced taking care of the soul. The modern change in the understanding of self-knowledge as self-evidence required changes in moral rationality. Modern philosophy views moral self-examination as the act of determining whether one's intentions or acts are consistent with moral obligations. Our moral existence in this sense is reduced to this consistency between acts and one's moral obligations, which resulted in perceiving the care of the self as either amoral egoism (because it neglects the fundamentals of moral obligation) or melancholic withdrawal (because one cannot determine one's moral obligations). But this is predicated upon a total misconception of the care of the self.

In short, Foucault's analysis of taking care of the self draws our attention to the significance of the concept in the Western tradition of thought as a way of a spiritual commitment to the truth

that requires self-disciplined attention to the character of one's thinking. Our ways of establishing links with ourselves are a prerequisite to any political activity. Foucault claims that the care of the self is the foundational principle of all moral rationality. The care of the self is the ethical transformation of the self in light of the truth or in other words, the alteration of the self into a truthful existence. Foucault (1997b, p.252) took the position that the relation to the self, and the decision to actively care for oneself, is "neither narcissism nor self-indulgence", but "the first or final point of resistance to political power", reflective of his saying "where there is power, there is resistance." He characterises the care of the self not as a way to live better or more rationally, nor as a form of self-government, but to form the best possible relationship to oneself as self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.

3.7 Summary of Chapter 3

In summary, this chapter started with a discussion of the theoretical framework of the present study, which led to a review of literature relevant to the spread of the performativity and audit culture. The chapter also addressed the impact of the current educational reform on teachers' performance and identity. Previous research related to the spread of performativity and its impact on teachers was presented as an integrated part of the sections in this chapter. The discussion also included the concept of resistance and the notion of taking care of the self as a form of everyday resistance. The next chapter will examine the methodology of this research, methodological assumptions that guide it and their underpinning paradigmatic and epistemological nature.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4. Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed description of the adopted research methodology. It explains the ontological and epistemological assumptions that guide the current study and their underpinning paradigmatic nature. Then it provides a detailed report of the research design and the different methods used for data collection and data analysis. I shall also be citing evidence of the trustworthiness and credibility of this study, as well as the ethical considerations adhered to throughout the different stages of this inquiry. I shall conclude with the limitations of the study and the challenges that surrounded it.

4.1 Research Approach

4.1.1 Critical Theory

It is important to present a brief account of the basic tenets of critical theory that informs this study. Critical theory is concerned with social critique, social reformation and social justice (Bronner, 2017). That reality is shaped by social, cultural, political and ethical values is the essence of critical ontology, and critical inquiry is committed to the ability to produce praxis or action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Thus, people in society are central to critical theory (Crotty, 2003). Its ultimate aim is to reveal the system of power relations and unmask the ideology and hidden agendas that help in perpetuating different forms of inequality in society, so as to bring about social justice (Brookfield, 2005). Unlike the interpretive tradition, critical theory does not merely aim to describe and understand a particular social phenomenon; rather, it seeks to deconstruct status quo concepts and to expose the underlying struggle between opposing forces

and reveal the reasons that cause the status quo to exist, in order to explore better alternatives. The area of this study is therefore best located within the critical rather than the interpretive world-view. Though understanding the socially constructed realities about performativity and its technological systems by participants in the Saudi context is crucial for the current study, it is not the central endeavour. The ultimate goal underpinning this research is to suggest a preferred future for participants. As Habermas (1972) points out, critical theory goes beyond the understanding of the interpretive paradigm with the aim of improving or even emancipating.

As this study is best seen as part of the current debate over the hegemony of neoliberal ideology on education, it is important to discuss how critical theory considers the structure of capitalism. Critical theory assumes a considerable tension between capitalism and democracy. Capitalism as seen by critical theorists is a way to limit the possibility for collective self-determination and this is a main cause of injustice and domination (Browne, 2016). Capitalism is an economic system based on private appropriation and an unequal distribution of wealth and power, whereas political orders try to present themselves as a manifestation of public opinion (Browne, 2016). However, this is not to say that the existing institutions of democracy meet the conditions of collective self-determination (Blokker, 2014). Critical theory attempts to discover the conditions that would help society to freely act upon itself, such as effective participation and social solidarity (Honneth, 2014). Moreover, critical theory considers that the existing collective self-determination has been distorted by regressive ideological expression, and thus needs to be critiqued (Browne, 2016).

Critical educational research has emerged as a response to the apparent deficiency of research in dealing with what Kozol (1993) called "savage inequalities" that have plagued not only schools

but also the whole of society. The interpretive approach to educational research has been criticised for offering incomplete accounts of social phenomena by disregarding the political, ideological and economic contexts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). While interpretive research strives to understand and interpret the social world in terms of its actors, critical educational research strives to offer a vision of what behaviour in a democratic society should entail by interrogating common assumptions (Cohen et al. 2017). Critical researchers in this sense assume that "knowledge is not neutral but is influenced by human interests, that all knowledge reflects the power and social relationships within society, and that an important purpose of knowledge construction is to help people improve society" (Banks, 2012, p.1306).

The current study has a political agenda with the aim of empowering the participants by helping them question the taken-for-granted issues related to performativity in English language education in the Saudi context. It also sought to identify the distorted or fragmented consciousness (Eagleton, 1994) that brought the participants to relative powerlessness or even power. It also aimed at interrogating the legitimacy of the knowledge the systems of performativity produce in an attempt to point out how power permeates the legitimation of knowledge.

In mainstream TESOL and applied linguistics research, performativity and its potential impact on teachers' performance and identities are often depoliticised. Research as such is more concerned to offer answers to technical questions related to performativity and language teaching and learning. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, p. xxii) clearly explains how staying with technical micro-level questions has narrowed the field at the level of research:

In several ways, not asking why-questions is part of ESL tradition... . This is a dangerous

narrowing of the field, staying within technical micro-level questions of the best methodologies and materials, in the best positive tradition. One part of it is excluding the broader power issues from discussions about the language. (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, p. xxii)

As I have mentioned earlier, research conducted in the Saudi context often tends to treat the issue of performativity as separate from larger social and political matters. This might be due partly to the fact that educational research in Saudi Arabia has been dominated by the scientific orientation of the positivist paradigm. Berliner (2002, p. 19-20) has pointed out:

Educational researchers have to accept the embeddedness of educational phenomena in social life, which results in the myriad interactions that complicate our science. As Cronbach once noted, if you acknowledge these kinds of interactions, you have entered into a hall of mirrors, making social science in general, and education in particular, more difficult than some other sciences. (Berliner, 2002, p. 19-20)

For this reason, scientific models could not solve questions of language policy, and critical theory rejects the existence of an objective reality in favour of the view that the world is constructed via multiple individual realities influenced by specific contexts.

4.2 Research Design and Methodology

4.2.1 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following three questions:

1. How do Saudi (primary-intermediate-secondary) ELT female teachers perceive the culture of performativity in Saudi public schools?

2. How do the practices of performativity affect Saudi (primary-intermediate-secondary) ELT female teachers' performance?

3. How do the practices of performativity affect Saudi (primary-intermediate-secondary) ELT female teachers' professional identities?

These questions stressed aspects of research that lended themselves to critical inquiry since I aimed not only to understand and explore teachers' perceptions of performativity, its impact on their performance and identities from their own perspectives, but also to suggest what is changeable. Epistemologically, critical research sufficiently separates itself from the neutrality of positivism, which seeks to describe a fixed objective "reality" of a particular group, and the multiple realities of constructivism, which do not offer an analysis of the social reproduction of inequalities. Critical epistemology is tightly linked to a social ontology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). That is, human interactions and relations occur within the economic, cultural, political context of the particular social site. Therefore, these questions were not designed to investigate ELT teachers' perceptions of performativity, its impact on their performance and professional identity construction by seeking teachers' responses to self-report measures and then subjecting them to correlational analysis for theory verification; nor did they seek to construct the multiple

meanings of performativity that ELT teachers hold in a particular context. These questions aimed to situate the meanings ELT teachers generated about performativity within broader social structures, to examine cultural forms of oppression and engage ELT teachers to address them. To this end, Carpecken's comprehensive five stages approach to critical research was adopted as explained below.

Carspecken's (1996) five-stage critical qualitative research (CQR) has been adopted. I believe this approach is an appropriate framework for the current study of performativity and its impact on ELT teachers because this approach, based on the tenets of critical theory, suggests a connection between social phenomena and broader socio-political events to expose prevailing ideologies, discourses and taken-for-granted assumptions, so that social situations under investigation can be redefined. This approach offers the researcher a critical philosophical position to adopt an agenda to address patterns of power and domination (Palmer & Caldas, 2016), with the purpose of trying to challenge or even transform political and social realities (Bronner, 2017) or suggesting a preferred future for the participants (Pennycook, 2001). Moreover, Carspecken's CQR utilises simultaneous data collection and analysis to identify cultural structures by applying hermeneutic-reconstructive techniques of dialogue and reflexivity (Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002).

Another subtle point to consider is that Carspecken's model of critical research is not based on a fixed set of linear stages. It is often described as a circular process whereby new data are continually being analysed, as they are collected. The current research design is one that enables researchers to adjust their research plans in accordance with their learning as their studies unfold, and offers a powerful method of data analysis that can be applied to analyse cultural products of

any type (Duke, Pillay, Tones, Nickerson, Carrington & Ioelu, 2016). In this type of design, data collection and analysis procedures can evolve over the course of a research project, in response to what is learned in earlier stages of the study (Morse, 2015). If, for example, the research questions and goals change according to new information and insight, the research design may need to change accordingly. This flexible approach to data collection and analysis allows for ongoing changes and alteration in the original research design as a function of both what has been learned so far and the ultimate goal of the study (Carspecken, 1996). Within the broader framework of qualitative research, flexible use of research methods is closely associated with the broad goal of induction, because success in generating hypotheses and theories is often based on a flexible use of research methods (Given, 2008). Finally, the goal of this approach is critical in nature. Carspecken's methodology offers a potentially productive, flexible approach to problematise systems of thought and fixed notions of identity or social relations to rethink subjectivity itself as a constant engagement of text and context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Carspecken draws on a wide variety of theoretical orientations, in particular, philosophical pragmatism, critical social theory, phenomenology, and the expressivism of J. G. Herder, and charges his pragmatist attitude with the task of justification (Holmes & Smyth, 2011). To avoid problems raised by his eclecticism, and theoretical anomalies which may cause contradictions at certain points, I adhered to what is in line with the critical social theory that forms the overarching philosophy for his work.

4.2.2 The Sample

I applied two sampling techniques when selecting my sample: purposiveness and accessibility. Silverman (2016) asserts that it is acceptable for qualitative researchers to combine more than one technique when selecting a sample when both serve the objectives of the researcher. These two sampling techniques are not inconsistent: both are nonprobability sampling and are widely used together in qualitative research (e.g., Troudi & Alwan, 2010).

According to Patton (1990, p. 196), 'The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research'. I applied the following criteria when choosing my purposive sample:

I selected three schools from different districts in Riyadh to represent schools from different economic backgrounds. I selected Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, because it would be the first to apply the new policies of the Saudi Ministry of Education. I used my personal contacts to contact school principals, as I have been working in the Saudi Ministry of Education for several years. I contacted those who had postgraduate degrees because they tend to be more responsive to research needs.

Another purposive criterion is that the research participants in this study comprised 15 female ELT teachers in their mid-career professional lives in the KSA. I selected five participants from each educational level (elementary, intermediate, and secondary) in order to achieve variability in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and to inform an understanding of the social phenomenon under study from different perspectives (Creswell, 2013). This helped me to compare and contrast the impact of performativity across the three educational levels. I chose ELT teachers in

their mid-career professional life (approximately five to 15 years in their career), as some of them might have already developed their performative identity. Pseudonyms were used to refer to participants when quoting them.

Accessible sampling was chosen because female teachers are more approachable due to gender segregation in the context studied. Shaw (1994) stated that it is possible to modify methodologies to be sensitive to the culture in which the study takes place.

Carspecken (1996) suggested that key informants within the study take a role in analysing the data during the fourth and fifth stages of his model (the last two stages). The possibility of conducting this participatory analysis depends largely on the informants' understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, the nature of the study, and the time available to conduct this kind of analysis. Information on their qualifications, experiences, and what they currently teach was added to a table (Appendix B).

4.2.3 Methods of Data Collection

In line with Carspecken's (1996) framework, the initial data collection method applied in this research includes field notes, researcher reflections and classroom observation, in which concentrated and thick description of ELT teachers' social interactions and daily routines were constructed to help building preliminary analysis of existing cultural themes. Semi-structured interviews are the main data collection method. Through the use of these data collection methods, the aim was to build a synchronic view "that provides an overview of material and conceptual relationships through which the everyday is structured by power" (Schostak & Schostak, 2007, p. 239).

4.2.3.1 Field Notes

It is currently acknowledged that qualitative field notes are an important component of rigorous interpretive and critical research. Field notes are no longer merely researchers' private, personal thoughts, ideas and queries regarding their research observations and interviews; they are a significant layer of data to be interpreted and analysed (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2017). Critical researchers are encouraged to take field notes to enhance data and provide rich context to inform data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) listed many functions that field notes can serve. These functions include prompting the researcher to closely observe environment and interactions, help the researcher to reflect and identify bias, facilitate preliminary coding and enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of qualitative research.

Since field notes depend largely on recording complete and detailed description of the setting and the interactions among school members, I strove to record them as comprehensively as possible. I recorded field notes immediately after each observation, as well as after casual encounters with informants or even listening to a short telephone conversation in the principal's office. I started by jotting sketchy summaries of the situation and the interactions, trying to ensure that I did not omit or forget any important details by jotting down reminder notes immediately after the observation and then expanding on them later on. Although this process of recording field notes is time consuming and required a tremendous amount of self-discipline and commitment, yet it can offer rich and detailed data. It was not uncommon for me to spend more than three hours for every hour of observation. As data collection and data analysis are carried out simultaneously, a common experience for me when analysing my data was to go back to my initial notes to look for something that I unclearly remember being said or done. This made me sustain my motivation for writing field notes and realise how valuable paying attention to details

and writing these details down. The field notes included description of people, events and conversations and the sequence and duration of them. In sum, I attempted to record the fabric of the setting in detail and to represent in a written form every detail that can be remembered from the observation, guided by the rule that if it is not recorded, it never happened. Of course, as I got used to this method of recording, I became more selective of what to record and I also found out that I spent relatively less time in recording my notes in the later stages compared to the early ones.

In addition to detailed descriptions, I used the margin to record my own feelings, interpretations and even my preconceptions. It may be difficult for those who are trained to think that research is objective to accept the researcher's personal feelings and interpretations as an important source of data, but the researcher is a participant in the setting and a member of the general society and culture, and trying to distance her or his feelings and emotions is to refuse to take the role of others and see the world from their perspectives (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). What the researcher feels might be similar to what the participants of the study feel or have felt in the past. Thus, I used my own feelings, preconceptions, beliefs, understandings and assumptions to develop potential insight into participants' perspectives.

4.2.3.2 Classroom Observation

Since I sought to answer the question of how performativity impacts teachers' performance, this question can be best answered by observing how EL teachers perform in the classroom. I conducted 15 classroom observations. I could only interview teachers about how they performed in the classroom, but a more accurate indication of their performance would perhaps be obtained by actually observing them in the classroom. What teachers say they do and what they actually do can be quite different. For example, observing participants across the three educational levels revealed that they had a space for their autonomy and they were able to use their professional judgement, which is in contrast with the findings from the interviews.

I opted to adopt *overt* participant observation, whereby subjects are aware that they are being observed and the researcher is easily identified. While *covert* participant observation has more potential to generate more valid data, as the researcher's identity is not recognised, it is severely criticised on ethical grounds (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013). I used a flexible, unstructured classroom observation schedule to prevent the likelihood of unintended biases shaping the composition of the primary record (Appendix C).

In general, 'observation' as a research instrument is commonly used in the field of teacher development and offers the researcher a chance to gather 'live' data from "naturally occurring situations" where the researcher can directly observe what is happening in the classroom rather than depending on second-hand data sources (Cohen, Manion & Morrisson, 2017, p. 349). Classroom observation is an important tool to understand and be aware of the complexities of the social and psychological processes of the classroom, and is central to educational research concerned with teaching practices (Wright & Irwin, 2018). The structure I used to observe the

teachers' classrooms is divided into three phases as explained below:

a. Pre-observation Phase

My main intention during this pre-observation phase was to inform the participant teacher about the aim of the meeting and observation and, therefore, prepare her for being observed without any sign of discomfort or uneasiness. I communicated the purpose of the observation explicitly, telling the participant that the observation was mainly for research rather than evaluation purposes. I also used this phase to build good rapport to make sure that the teachers were in the state of welcoming me as the observer of their classroom teaching.

Throughout the meeting with the participants in this phase, I discussed the lesson plan they had, the teaching/learning materials and the teaching/learning activities to be used in the classroom teaching. I tried also to elicit additional information from the participants about the syllabus and other classroom activities they had been conducting.

b. While/during Observation Phase

This is the second phase of observation in which I mainly concentrated on classroom interactions, management, instructions of the teacher, language use, lesson delivery, activities conducted and the participation of the students in the activities and tasks. The number of students in each class ranges from 29 to 45 in the classes I observed. In my observation to the fifteen teachers who participated in the study, I also paid considerable attention to classroom emotions and attitudes, not only how the teachers behaved towards the students, but also what the students' reactions were, because classroom interactions are taking place in a social context and are influenced by reciprocal interactions (Pennings, van Tartwijk, Wubbels, Claessens, van der Want & Brekelmans, 2014). Moreover, emotions and attitudes are valued as essential to the

learning process, as they are involved in almost every aspect of the teaching and learning processes; therefore, an understanding of the nature of emotions within the school context becomes vital (Schutz & Lanehart, 2002, p. 67).

c. Post-observation Phase

During this phase, I managed some time to meet with the teachers to discuss how the classroom went, how she felt about the classroom teaching, what she felt went well, what she would have to change, what was typical or atypical about the class. I would mainly elicit responses from the participant teachers and would give them cathartic and supportive feedback. However, the main purpose for this session was to understand the motives or reasons for opting certain behaviour or applying a certain strategy. This stage, in fact, was essential to help me explore the participants' hidden self, identity and creative potentiality, which is central to this study.

4.2.3.3 Interviews

a. Pilot Interviews

In the autumn of 2017 and before starting the data collection process, I conducted pilot interviews with two of my colleagues, one from the TESOL department who was selected on the basis that she was, as a PhD student in the final stage of her research journey, well-informed in the interviewing process as well as in the area under investigation, and the other was a Saudi primary English language teacher who came to the UK to visit her daughter.

The pilot interview helped me practice epistemic interviewing techniques and revealed a number of issues to be addressed. For example, the questions in my interview guide were written in English but during the pilot interview, I faced difficulty in accurately translating the questions into Arabic, which impeded the flow of the conversation. Realising this, I decided to draft the

questions in both languages, which helped me maintain the flow of the conversation and avoid interruption during the interview. The pilot interviews helped refine my interviewing skills. I learned, for example, that silence is not necessarily a bad thing as it gives a participant time to think about answering questions. I learned when and how to probe for further details when I thought the participant could offer more insight about a certain matter. During the pilot, I often attempted to fill blanks and silent moments with some of my own thoughts. When conducting the actual interviews, I was more comfortable with silence to allow the participants reflect on their own thoughts, feelings and what they were saying.

b. Conducting Interviews

15 in-depth semi-structured epistemic interviews (approximately 45 minutes) were employed as the major data collection technique to carry out this investigation. This type of interviewing is a powerful method when the researcher aims at understanding aspects of participants' lives and experiences prior to explanation (Kvale, 2008). Interviewing others can also give a chance to the interviewees to open up and share intimate aspects of their lives to a stranger. I opted to use semi-structured interviews because such interviews are based on an interview guide, which serves the useful purpose of keeping the interview focused on the issue to be investigated, so as to achieve optimum use of interview time but without the restrictions of the structured interviews (Jamshed, 2014). The interviews were guided by the interview schedule rather than dictated by it (Appendix D).

I was also aware that the craft of interviewing and the ability to listen actively and pay attention to details is developed with practice, not just by reading books. Though I had conducted semi-structured interviews twice in the pre-thesis stage, considerable time was given to practice

interviewing (almost two months) before I started the actual data collection. Through pilot testing of the interview guide, many associated questions related to the core questions developed.

For the interview data to be captured more effectively, I audio-recorded the interviews after obtaining participants' consent. Hand written notes during the interview are somewhat unreliable as the researcher might miss some key points. However, I took hand written notes of nonverbal elements such as hand gestures and facial expressions, which are just as important as what is recorded.

As a critical researcher, I adopted *epistemic* interviewing (Brinkmann, 2013). In this type of interviews, the aim of the researcher is neither to passively record participants' opinions and attitudes, nor just to enter their private lives to reveal hidden aspects. The aim of the epistemic interviewers is to use conversations to help them produce knowledge in the sense of episteme (Greek term for knowledge) (Brinkmann, 2013), which has been reached at via a dialectical process of questioning to bring human beings from a state of being opinionated to a state of knowing (Denzin & Giardina, 2016). It is this change that makes this type of interviewing suitable for the methodology adopted for the current study, because conducting a critical study requires a stance that is committed to bringing about change. In this sense, the interview itself becomes "a tool of educational reform" (Tierney & Dilley, 2001, p.457).

Another advantage in choosing this type of interview is that there is no risk of producing trivial research or reproducing common knowledge, because the aim of the researcher when using epistemic interviews is not merely recording opinions and attitudes (Seidman, 2013). Unlike the analysis of conventional research interviews, which is typically carried out after the interview has taken place, the analysis of epistemic interviews entails a co-construction of conversational

reality (Brinkmann, 2015). That is to say, part of the analysis is carried out in the conversation with the involvement of the respondents, since it consists mainly of testing, questioning, and justifying what participants say. This can enhance the validity of the analyses and generate more interesting interviews through use of challenging and confronting questions (Ezzy, 2013). More importantly, qualitative social science research should serve the *Res Publica*, that is, the ethical and political issues for the sake of the public good, which are not constituted by privatised narratives or intimacy (Sennett, 2003).

4.2.4 Procedures of Carspecken's Stages

4.2.4.1 Implementing the Stages and Data Analysis

The following part will explain how the stages were implemented and the data analysis carried out in each stage. It is important to note that, although the stages listed below are somewhat sequential, they do not always (and sometimes should not) occur in isolation from each other as I have explained above. A loosely cyclical use of the stages is strongly recommended by Carspecken (1996), as shown in the following figure:

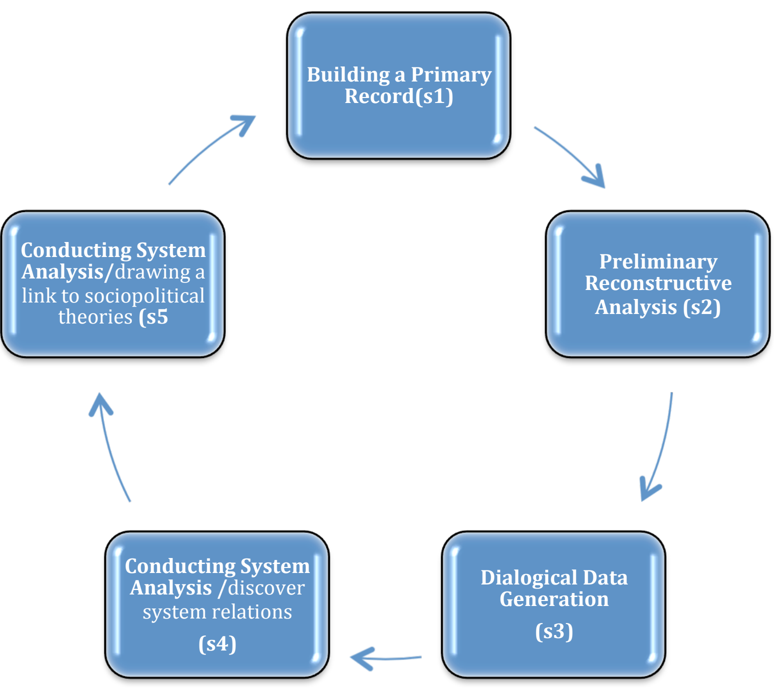

Diagram 2: Carspecken's Stages

Stage 1: Building a Primary Record

According to Carspecken's model, the task of the researcher in this stage is to provide thick descriptions to "sharpen one's awareness of events that may occur routinely" (p. 49); through a data gathering process by the researcher to observe social practice passively in an unobtrusive way as an etic-outsider. However, Cormack (1991) has questioned the researchers' ability to observe subjects from a distance without involvement or interaction, as participants' awareness that their behavior is being monitored may change their social interaction, known in the literature as the *Hawthorne effect* or *observer effect.* According to Carspecken (1996), the "Hawthorne effect is not damaging to a qualitative study," because alterations in participant behavior "usually do not correspond with alterations in the cultural milieu" (p. 52).

In this study, however, this initial position that is restricted to a state of non-involvement is not always possible or ideal, as the critical stance entails active engagement of participants in the research project and a fair amount of subjectivity of the researcher. Carspecken, however, did not explain how researchers can address bias in what they choose to observe and which behaviours they document; nor did he acknowledge a need to defend the purpose of establishing 'researcher neutrality', a notion at odds with the critical researcher's acceptance of 'bias' as an inevitable and potentially positive aspect of the research process. Therefore, I chose to follow Vandenberg & Hall's (2011) advice to include participants in the observation process, as this could allow my decisions to be examined so as to critique more subtle forms of domination through the inclusion of participants to question the preliminary reconstructions. I strove to maintain a balance between involvement and detachment and between an etic and emic stance. Reconciling these opposite concepts helps provide a solid basis for research, without eroding the researcher's ability to adapt to the experiences and the realities of the people researched (Silverman, 2016). To this end, I aimed at describing and critically questioning the way I viewed the world and the social conditions in which data are produced in the research act, while trying to understand and adapt the researched participants' experiences.

The description I presented at this stage aimed to help to compare the preliminary findings with new findings that emerge in subsequent stages. These initial findings I obtained through the use of field notes and classroom observations enabled me to identify meaningful cultural themes such as interaction patterns, power relations, and to analyse them during the second stage.

As in most qualitative research projects, Carspecken (1996) suggests that the researcher should spend a considerable time trying to understand the "patterned activities taking place in areas

surrounding a social site" (p. 38) or the so-called *locales.* Therefore, various performative locales were included such as teachers' performance in classroom and in meeting rooms. Comparing and contrasting variety of locales would provide a better understanding in relation to ELT teachers' performtive practices and identities. Daily practices were observed in terms of how performativity could shape ELT teachers' performance and construct their professional identities. Moreover, noticing deviation from routinised actions could generate different and new meanings (Carspecken, 1996).

Stage 2: Preliminary Reconstructive Analysis

Initial analysis of field notes and classroom observations data began with a description of the cultural context or site of ELT teachers' performative practices, trying to identify their roles, routines, social interactions, and power relations: Who made decisions about what is to be taught and how should it be taught? Why were these decisions made? How ELT teachers handle the tension between their values and the performative practices that might occur? This stage aimed at generating themes and key issues that suggested additional data collection and required further investigation in the following stages.

Stage 3: Dialogical Data Generation

Stage three, unlike the previous two stages, requires an involvement of a dialogical approach to obtain an emic or "an insider's position with respect to culture" (Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002, p. 690). In qualitative research, data collection is collected in its natural setting (Bryman, 2015). Since the researcher's personality and her or his interaction with the research informants determine the description of realities, several theorists consider the qualitative researcher as the data-collecting instrument (Kvale, 2008). Personally, I believe that the critical researcher is the

filter or the catalyst through which the findings are processed. Critical researchers have to tolerate ambiguity and be willing to accept the demands that this kind of research entails. For instance, the amount of data to be collected in critical research has no limit, since it is left to the discretion of the researcher to choose to stop collecting data when reaching a point of saturation (Silverman, 2016). As Maykut and Morehouse (2001, p.62) explain: "to fully understand the phenomenon of interest, ideally, we continue ... to gather information until we reach the saturation point, when newly collected data is redundant with previously collected data".

To achieve "integrity of the study" (Georgiou, Carspecken, et al., 1996, p. 320), the data that emerged from the interviews were checked against themes and patterns arising from previous stages. The researcher's interaction in this stage is vital because it is this involvement that helps the researcher gain an insider's view of the phenomenon under study. This also allows the researcher to find issues that are missed. This stage is considered the main stage to transform social practice through the researcher's engagement.

Inductive data analysis reveals themes that may need to be pursued further. Accordingly, throughout the inquiry, I revised the research questions and conducted additional interviews when the participants focused on issues raised in the analysis or those that were closely related to the topic of the study that I had not thought of before. It is important to point out that data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing, flowing, and recurrent process that takes place throughout the data collection stage and carries over to the analysis stage (Creswell, 2013).

I compared the etic data initially collected in Stage 1 to the data generated during the semi-structured interviews in Stage 3, illustrating practical understandings via discursive means where clarification, justification and reason to what participants say could be provided. "This takes

conditions of action constructed by people at nondiscursive levels to one of awareness and reconstructs them linguistically" (Carspecken, 1996, p 42). Put differently, once practice is spoken about, it has the potential to be transformed.

Stages 4 and 5: Conducting System Analysis

In this stage, the data gathered and analysed during previous Stages (1 to 3) were then directly related to broader sociopolitical issues, shifting from the etic and emic views. For example, the teachers' actions and performative practices were compared with previous literature and sociopolitical theories about performative behaviour as part of the overall analysis. According to Carspecken (1996), the purpose of these final stages is to achieve Giddens's (1984) notion of system integration. Giddens defines integration as "involving reciprocity of practices (of autonomy and dependence) between actors [people] or collectivities" (p. 28). To achieve system integration, patterned relations across time and space within a system need to be established. Human action, however, is separated in time and space, (Carspecken, 1996). Therefore, Stages 4 and 5 require the utilisation of an objective analysis and a level of theorising: "The last two stages of a research project are meant to focus entirely on objectively ascertainable behavioral routines locked into system relations" (Georgiou, Carspecken, et al., 1996, p. 320). The aim in Stage 4 was to discover relations between ELT teachers' identities and performance and the systems of performativity within the Saudi context, linking the social site and locales of performativity to other similar sites and locales within the educational system, including political and economic factors.

In Stage 5, the researcher according to Carspecken's model is advised to interpret the findings by drawing a link to cultural theories that critically address the "reproductive circuits of society"

(Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002, p. 694). If theory is to be interesting or useful, the work it does should not be confined or defined by schools or movements (Nealon & Giroux, 2012). Theory was used in this stage as an approach; an analytical tool to situate the findings in a wider sociopolitical context. Theory here was used to indicate that 'everything is suspicious'. Everything comes from somewhere and functions in a certain context; there is nothing such as 'natural fact' or ' neutral knowledge' and nothing should be accepted at face value. I was not interested in theories per se; nor did I attempt to offer a detailed account of theoretical schools or movements. Rather, I used theory as a toolbox with a hope to provide an avenue for intervening in otherwise inaccessible debates and discourses.

I attempted to analyse my data by drawing a link to sociopolitical theories. I opted to use the term *sociopolitical* because I tried to relate the findings to cultural, social and political economic theories. Society consists of the people who share a common culture. Also, most economic theories I referred to in my analysis are inherently political. They are concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes within a society to examine the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time (Collinson, 2003 b). Therefore, I found the term to be more comprehensive than *cultural.* CQR seeks to answer questions related to reproduction of action, class structures, gender relations, and asymmetric relations (e.g., school manager-teacher) and all relations that are produced by individuals but usually escape their awareness.

4.2.5 Data Management and Analysis Procedures

4.2.5.1 Analysis of Interview Data

This section will give a detailed account of the way I managed and analysed my data, mainly interviews data as the main data resource for this study. Then, a description of field notes and observations data analysis will be presented.

A combination of verbatim transcription and researcher notation of participants' nonverbal behaviour has been cited as being fundamental to the reliability, validity, and veracity of qualitative data collection (MacLean; Meyer & Estable, 2004). I have transcribed the interviews albeit not verbatim. Qualitative research authors, however, advocate the use of verbatim transcription without offering a discussion or definite guidelines of how this should be achieved (Jeppesen, 2016). Authors within the current literature have failed to convincingly demonstrate how creating an exact written record of an interview is superior to other methods of managing interview data or better in bringing researchers closer to their data (Jeppesen, 2016). In pure qualitative research underpinned by critical theoretical frameworks such as the current study, closeness between researchers and the data is critical to the research design and philosophical tenets of the methodology. To this end, I found listening to the original data at this stage to be more useful as this form of closeness offered a living knowledge of the content: the ability to recover the sights, sounds, and experiences of being in the field.

There are also significant costs associated with interview transcription, in terms of time, physical, and human resources. Approximate 6–7 hours of transcription is required for every hour of taped interview (Britten, 1995). Although qualitative data collection is commonly believed to be more time consuming and resource intensive than other methods of data collection

(MacLean et al., 2004), these costs must be assessed against the potential benefits of obtaining a verbatim transcription in the data management and analysis process of interview data. For example, despite the fact that I strove to record all nonverbal elements and emotional aspects (e.g. crying, hesitations, and sighs) while conducting the interviews, I found that other cues such as silences and intonations of speech were sometimes missing when reading the transcripts. Having a background in linguistics made me fully aware that there was a lot of hidden meaning in the melody, the pitch, the rise and fall of participants' voices that could not be neglected. This allowed me to hear more than just the participants' words. Such nonverbal signals could not be reproduced accurately in written text.

A reflexive, iterative process of data management advised by Halcomb and Davidson (2006) was adopted. The steps in this process are described in the subsequent subsections.

Step 1: Audiotaping of interview and concurrent note taking

In this step, I combined processes of audiotaping and making notes during interviews. Although note taking may disrupt the flow of an interview, the emphasis during this phase was on my own impressions of the interaction rather than on recording verbatim sections of the participants' response that I believed were significant to the research questions.

Step 2: Reflective journalising immediately after an interview

As soon after the interview as possible, to ensure that reflections remained fresh, I reviewed my interview notes and expanded on my initial impressions of the interaction with more considered comments and perceptions. Reflections of the way I conducted the interview and extraneous variables particular to the interaction were also noted. Major ideas, concepts, or issues raised by participants were also recorded.

Step 3: Listening to the audiotape and amending/ revising interview notes and observations

After I had completed my interview notes and reflective journalising, the audiotape then was reviewed in consultation with my written notes. The purpose of this step is to ensure that the notes provide an accurate reflection of the interaction. I had to listen to the audiotape several times and compare it with the notes I had taken and amend the notes until they provided a thorough and descriptive representation of the interaction. It was practical and necessary to make these editorial changes in a separate notation to distinguish them from my initial perceptions.

Step 4: Preliminary Thematic Analysis

Once I was confident that my interview notes accurately represented the interactions that had occurred in each interview, I started the process of thematic analysis. At this stage the transcripts were not used, as it is just the initial stage.

I used the six linear phases of thematic analysis as described by Clark and Braun (2017). First, familiarisation with the data. Second, coding. Third, searching for themes. Fourth, reviewing themes. Fifth, defining and naming themes, which requires the researcher to write a detailed analysis of each theme. Finally, writing up to tell the reader a coherent and persuasive story. Thematic analysis is flexible enough to suit inductive as well as theory-based analysis and it allows for pre- and post-coding.

An initial list of codes based on the study's guiding questions was drafted using coloured "post-it" notes as I preferred to be *in touch* with the raw data. To verify the accuracy and internal consistency of the coding, I listened to each interview while reviewing the codes. Then, I merged similar codes together. After that, I combined categories with similar codes in a higher-level "tree node" format (Appendix E). This allowed me to sort through large chunks of data to see

general patterns both within and across the participants. Then, I organised the data into clustered mind maps using Microsoft Words.

Step 5: Secondary Thematic Analysis

This stage involved the following steps:

- I transcribed the 15 interviews using verbatim transcription. I did not hire transcribers or use software (Appendix F).
- I listened to the interviews again to check the accuracy of the transcriptions. Then, I started the process of thematic analysis again. The preliminary thematic analysis described above helped me become familiar with the data.
- I started reading through the transcripts. I highlighted significant segments and assigned code labels on the margin that described the content of that segment. As the participants were code-switching and used both Arabic and English, I translated significant codes into English. Most significant codes were translated in the preliminary stage and sent to participants for verification.
- After that, I wrote codes on sticky notes and listed them according to the three educational levels. I ended up with three groups of coded data. I worked on each group separately.
- I reduced the number of codes in each group by merging them together and looking for redundancy.
- I started searching for themes within each group. I classified codes based on the following five categories: understanding of performativity, perceptions of performativity,

impact of performativity on teachers' performance, impact of performativity on teachers' identity, and resistance. I came up with a set of codes from each group of data.

For example, I grouped all data related to the impact of performativity on teachers' performance in each group of data and came up with 273 codes. I merged similar codes in each group to reduce the number of codes to 105 and created new codes that encapsulated potential themes in each group. In intermediate interviews, for example, participants mentioned the negative impact of performativity on their practice (e.g., lack of autonomy, complete compliance, change of priorities to avoid accountability) and some positive impacts (e.g., development of technological skills, introduction of innovative practice, and new teaching strategies). After grouping the similar codes by topic, I ended up with two broad descriptive themes: conformity of practice and improvement of skills. Sometimes, I used direct words from the participants as subtitles of subsections in the findings chapter. This is to give them a voice, as their words capture their experiences and perceptions.

- I looked across all the codes and explored any causal relationships, similarities, differences, or contradictions across the three educational levels.
- To avoid redundancy and overlapping of themes across the three educational levels, I classified the themes according to the three educational levels, number of codes, and the main idea of each theme in the tables (Appendix G). These tables served three purposes: i) to sort through data to see general patterns both within and across the three educational levels, ii) to avoid unnecessary repetition of themes by listing the core idea of each theme, and iii) to help me compare and contrast codes and themes across the three educational levels. For example, when a theme such as *Lack of Enjoyment* appeared

across the data of the three educational levels (four codes in elementary, two in intermediate, and seven in secondary), I listed it under the secondary stage based on the number of codes.

- The preliminary analysis was reviewed and compared to data generated from secondary thematic analysis, field notes, and classroom observations.
- This final stage involved reviewing the secondary thematic analysis, making any necessary changes to establish themes, and identifying illustrative examples with which to demonstrate the meaning of the themes from the participants' perspectives.
- I organised the themes and sub-themes into clustered mind maps using Microsoft Word (Appendix H).

4.2.5.2 Analysis of Field Notes and Classroom Observation Data

Field notes and classroom observations were analysed thematically using the procedures described above. This analysis takes place in the second stage of the model (Preliminary Reconstructive Analysis). Initially, the preliminary analysis of the field notes and classroom observations raw data aimed at providing a description of the cultural context or site of ELT teachers performative practices; detailed description of classroom setting (space of the classroom, number and arrangement of the students…etc.) as well as trying to identify ELT teachers roles, routines, social interactions, and power relations as mentioned above in stage 2 of the model employed. The analysis aimed at generating themes and key issues that suggested additional data collection and required further examination in subsequent stages. The data were initially coded, and then classified using Microsoft Excell so that I could see themes and patterns emerge around specific items in the data and how these patterns help to shed light on the broader study questions (Appendix I). I carried out data collection and analysis of data simultaneously. I

was able in this way to make decisions with regard to the design of the study and how to move forward and backward between the different stages of the model. Simultaneous data collection and analysis is recommended in critical research (Holliday, 2016; Bryman, 2015). Accordingly, throughout the inquiry, I viewed data as something constructed and not merely out there in the world waiting to be discovered and gathered. After all the notes were completed, I followed the following steps for both the classroom observation notes and the field notes. I analysed each group of notes separately:

- I read all notes from beginning to end to familiarise myself with the data before I began the analysis.
- I classified the notes into three groups according to the three educational levels.
- I highlighted sections that need to be categorised so that the highlighted sections could be easily grouped and compared (Appendix I, Appendix J). At this stage, I reminded myself of my research objectives.
- The grouping was done manually. Notes were cut up, fixed to stickies, and moved around the board until they fell into natural topic groups. I then assigned a pink sticky note with a descriptive code to the grouping.
- I merged similar codes in each group to create potential themes. While doing so, some of the codes were deleted, and new interpretive themes were created.

  For example, when analysing the classroom observation data of secondary teachers, six notes indicated that both teachers and students enjoyed the classroom activities (e.g., interactive class, the expressions on the students' faces show that they are interested in the lesson, students offered connections of the topic to other ideas, they eagerly offer their input during group discussions, they give the teacher genuine smiles, and students

are alert and listening). These notes generated the following codes: interactive class-interested students, connection to other ideas, engaged in group discussion, happy expressions, attentive students). These codes were merged into the following codes: emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, and behavioural engagement. Thus, a new theme about the students' engagement with and enjoyment of the classroom emerged.

- I reviewed the codes across the three educational levels and asked myself the following questions:
    - How are these codes related?
    - How do these relate to my research questions?
    - Do they support or challenge what participants described in the interviews?
- I clustered themes into a mind map according to the three educational levels.

(Appendix K, Appendix L)

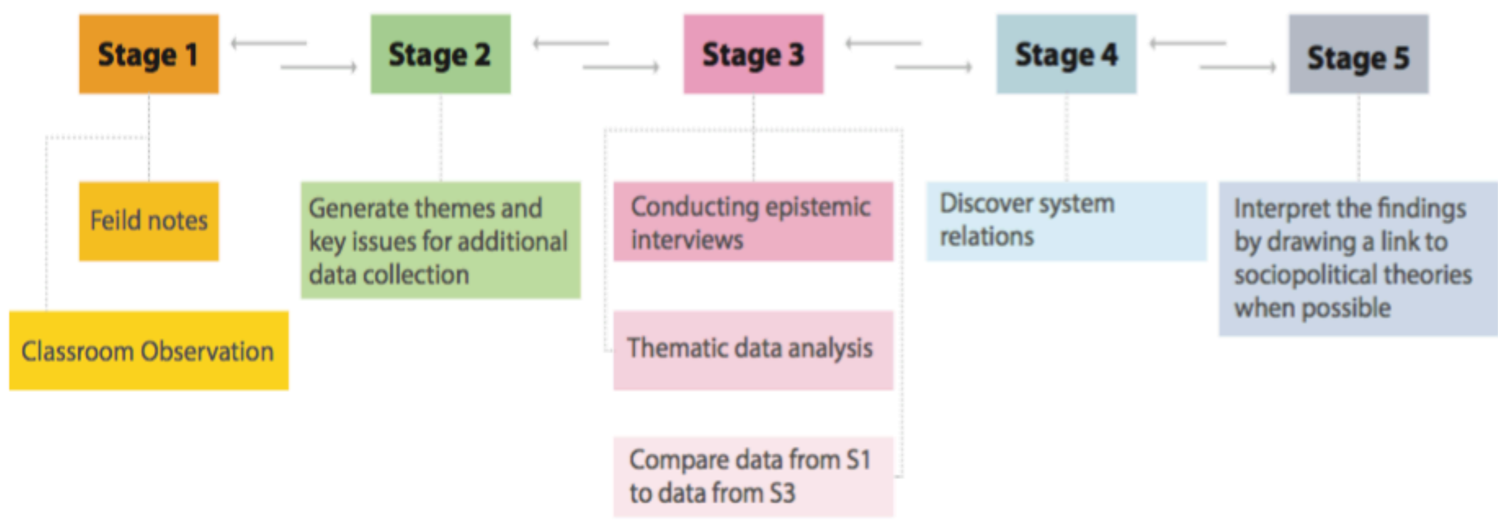

Diagram 3: Stages of data collection and analysis

4.2.6 Reflexivity and Positionality

There are myriad and often uncertain references to reflexivity in the qualitative research literature. Marcus (1994, p. 568) describes it "as a yet-unrealised alternative possibility" that is vital to the realisation that the researchers and their methods are inextricable from the social world they study. However, many researchers see it as "self-critical" (Holliday, 2016). It is important that critical researchers explore their values orientations before entering the field to acknowledge the element of 'reflexivity' in interpretation. Reflexivity is how the researchers reflect on their subjectivity in understanding their role in the research, and that the researcher is a part of the world she or he investigates to acknowledge the influence of their values and beliefs (Punch, 2009). According to Holliday (2016), subjectivity is a feature of strength in qualitative research that researchers should emphasise its ability to make them understand the culture of the studied context. In fact, qualitative research theorists value subjectivity for the reflexivity it adds to the interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Discovering my own biases was a process that started at the very start of my project even before entering the field and continued throughout the research project. For example, I had undergone an intensive interview with a PhD colleague on the things I expected to find, and we went through the recorded interviews together to this end. This process helped me to check my own biases before compiling my data and completing analysis. I also kept a special margin in my fieldnote notebook, in which I wrote down the daily feelings I experienced during fieldwork. It is through what Blackman and Commane (2012) call 'double reflexivity' that I was, as a novice researcher, able to keep a conscious awareness of the practical everyday life of those being researched and myself, both during the fieldwork and during the writing up stage. In so doing, the reader may question the findings and see behind the values that govern the final report.

Critical researchers must develop an ability to be flexible in their research design and also the way they view the world (Burns & Grove, 2001). This suggests that they should also be open and ready to alter their perspectives as new facets of the world are revealed. Therefore, critical research has an agenda of change not only for the researched but also for the researcher (Carspecken, 1996). The notion of reflexivity is vital to the research process; that is, the continuous observation of one's actions and thoughts. Self-reflection can help the researcher maintain the principles of critical theory as its aim is to reveal the researchers' personal values, beliefs and their constructions of the world that shape the choices made throughout the research journey (Burns & Grove, 2001). Moreover, reflexivity increases the plausibility or rigor of critical research (Pellatt, 2003), as it demands that researchers interrogate themselves not only throughout the process of shaping their inquiries but also in the discovery process of writing up their findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Critical researchers recognise that "no research methodology is value free" (Pring, 2000, p. 250). Hence, the critical researcher often departs from a preconceived point. Finding out is the means and change is the desired outcome. This entails making people critically aware of their state and circumstances to realise change through a praxis, which is a repeated action informed by reflection (Freire, 2000). Therefore, there is an emergent, recursive relationship between theory, data, research questions and interpretation (Talmy, 2010).

"Research is a process, not just a product" (England, 1994, p. 82). If this statement is true, then an argument that research does not stop once we complete the findings could be made. Bourke (2014) argues that the value of research must exceed a sense of completion, because research represents a mutual space, shaped by both researcher and participants. Due to this, the identities

of both researcher and participants have the potential to impact the research process. Identities play a significant role through our perceptions, not only of others but also of the ways in which we expect others will perceive us (Bourke, 2014). Via the recognition of our biases that shape the research process, we try to gain insights into how we might approach a research setting, and how we might seek to engage with participants. “Within positionality theory, it is acknowledged that people have multiple overlapping identities. Thus, people make meaning from various aspects of their identity” (Kezar, 2002, p. 96). Therefore, this section is written in an effort to present issues of positionality that I faced throughout the completion of this qualitative research project.

Qualitative research by nature puts the researcher as the data collection instrument. It is therefore sensible to suppose that the researchers’ beliefs, political stance, cultural background (gender, race, class, socioeconomic status, educational background) are important variables that may affect the research process. Just as the participants’ experiences are framed in socio-cultural contexts, so too are those of the researcher. In conducting this research, I tried to be aware of the fact that conducting a critical study that highlights issues of power relations and voice may contribute to an additional marginalisation of the participants of the study. Not only may my own biases influence the participants, their responses, and my own observations and interpretations, but so too may the very nature of this study. A critical researcher recognises the relevance of the human dimension involved in educational critical research because the technicalities of the critical research process are no longer artificially detached from the political, ethical and social arena, but that they include the motives, feelings and experiences of the researcher, which should be declared and explained in a ‘reflexive’ manner. As explained by Hall (1990, p. 18): “There’s no enunciation without positionality. You have to position yourself somewhere in order to say anything at all”. Positionality can be seen as a point in which objectivism and subjectivism meet.

As Freire (2000) proposes, to achieve a pure objectivism is a naive pursuit, and we can never truly dissociate ourselves of subjectivity. Striving to remain objective is important, but researchers must be mindful of their subjectivities by acknowledging who they are as individuals or members of a certain group, and as belonging to specific social and cultural backgrounds.

As a Saudi educational supervisor, I had to be fully aware of the imbalance of status and the resulting asymmetry in the researcher–researched relationship that can lead to distorted data. I also had to be cautious not to attempt to speak to research participants who were teaching in a culture of performativity. For example, I had to terminate the interview whenever I felt that the participant was reluctant to share a negative view about supervisors or how educational supervision was practised in schools. I had to remind them about their confidentiality and the importance of their voices and true opinions for the research before resuming the interview. Following Freire (2000), such attempts on my part would in effect be counter-emancipatory, as my position situates me as an oppressor or someone who enjoys more authority. In order to be a supporter and advocate, my work has to reflect precisely the voices of those who participated in this research. As evidenced by the data that was produced out of epistemic interviews with participants, it was obvious that these participants had no scarcity of experiences to draw upon in our discussions. Some participants, on the other hand, do not experience the same level of pressure and helplessness as the level of accountability and performativity mandates exercised on them vary according to the school context and the way the school principal handles such mandates.

4.2.6.1 My Positionality in Relation to Research Methods

For the purposes of the current study, dialectical epistemic interviews were used as the primary means of data collection. Field notes and classroom observations supplemented epistemic interviews data. Each of these data collection tools provided rich data and insights about the experiences of the participants in Saudi public schools. Reflecting on challenges and opportunities of being cognisant of my positionality while collecting data and analysing them was a crucial step to assess the impact my positionality had on the research process and findings.

As I have explained earlier, epistemic interviews were chosen as the primary means of data collection because the data that comes from dialectical conversations might not otherwise be collected as such interviews offer potential of garnering the depth of individuals' experiences. However, this form of interviewing is not an experience-focused, psychologised type of interviews and does not aim at probing the intimate and private worlds of respondents, but rather; it addresses respondents as accountable, responsible citizens with more emphasis on the socio-political and *civic* context in which the interviews are carried out, and in relation to which the research themes are debated (Brinkmann, 2010). The core of the discussions in such interviews is whether the participants are able to justify their beliefs and what they say. This entails repeatedly trying to challenge and contradict the interviewee's claims. However, trying to conduct such interviews with Saudi teachers was one of the biggest challenges I faced when conducting this research. Despite the fact that I attempted to help participants feel empowered during the interviews by offering them greater opportunity to steer the discussion in different directions based on the conversation flow, some participants felt offended by my attempt to question and challenge what they were saying, as some of them had a solid tendency to see things from one exclusive angle and to think in terms of absolutes. This dialectical approach was perceived by

some participants as a way to disparage their opinions on the topic. Thus, I realised that I needed to inform them about this type of interviewing and make it explicit to them that challenging their views was just an attempt to produce knowledge and gain deeper insight into the issue of performativity and was not an attempt to belittle their viewpoints, beliefs or the way they were thinking. I strove to be friendly and make the interviewing experience pleasant without affecting the way epistemic interviews should be approached.

As for classroom observations, I employed the 'participant observer' strategy which I believed was an ideal strategy as it plays down the role of the researcher to become a 'member' of the group to be studied to be able to get hold of a distinct access to an otherwise locked world (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). This approach helped me to gain the group members' trust and to observe experiences and attitudes from the perspectives of the participants and describe their world in terms of their language. At all times, I was conscious of my biases and my lack of knowledge in terms of the curriculum being taught. Initially, I was there to identify the advantages of the lesson and possible areas for development and try to find out the impact of performativity on the teachers' practices for the purpose of this research but not to reach some form of summary judgement on teacher's quality. I had made this very clear to participants before attending their lessons. Of course, I was also judging when trying to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses, but I was aware of how partial my judgement might be and I had to remind myself that there is no one right way to teach. Also, long-term processes are not fully observable in one-off lessons. Therefore, after each classroom observation, I used to discuss my comments with the participant before reporting back my observations.

As for the field notes, I was probably less confident as I was using this data collection method for the first time. As an ELT educational supervisor, classroom observations have become second nature to me as I have been observing ELT teachers in classrooms for a long period of time (approximately 12 years). However, I was fully aware that sitting at the back of classrooms observing how teachers teach for evaluation and assessment purposes is different from observing them for data collection and research purposes. I have also become acquainted with research interviewing as I have conducted small-scale studies in the pre-thesis phase utilising qualitative interviews, but the case was different when it comes to recording field notes. Despite the fact that I had built up, what seems to me at least, a sufficient theoretical knowledge on how to employ field notes properly, theoretical knowledge is important but never sufficient to master the skill. Thus, I asked two PhD colleagues who were doing ethnographic fieldwork and employing field notes to read some of my notes. Discussing my field notes with them drew my attention to themes that could have escaped my notice.

I was also all too aware my position as an "outsider" and "researcher" and my outsider status was overt in the schools where this research is conducted. I considered the structural aspects of my identity as an educational supervisor and funded doctoral student and how these aspects may impact my research in complex and specific ways. In my field notes, I attempted to be aware of how these structural aspects of my positionality situate the research and the knowledge produced. This awareness was a central analytical tool that informed my analysis. Moreover, I was also aware of the emotional dimension of writing field notes as researchers seek what "feels" important or worthy of writing. Emotion seems fundamental to what happens in the field and how the field is written about in field notes. As an EL teacher and then educational supervisor who had experienced many incidents of asymmetrical power relations, I attempted not to make

the field notes “a place to spew up one’s spleen” (Forge, 1967, p. 223). I was convinced, though, that emotions are somehow an integral part of field notes and can interfere with or even taint them, but attempting to be reflexive and position myself to write field notes without emotions was impossible. Holland (2007, P. 195), on the other hand, values emotion in research and fieldwork and argues that “emotions are important in the production of knowledge and add power in understanding, analysis and interpretation.” My personal feelings about writing field notes are another emotional dimension to this data collection instrument. Admittedly I did not expect recording field notes to be drudgery, but I soon started to love writing them as I enjoyed trying to make sense of my observations and the things I had noticed and felt. Being fully aware of how my critical agenda and my preconceptions about performativity and its technological systems could impact this research, I constantly questioned my approach to field notes. This, in fact, led to a sinking fear about what I might be imposing or even replicating when selecting what to record when observing different locales. Therefore, I followed the golden rule for writing field notes that everything that occurs in the field is a potential source of data. The researcher does not know what is important until she/he has been in the setting for a while and even a short conversation can lend insight to the researcher’s perspective when viewed in context at a later time (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). Although I felt frustrated at the very beginning of writing the field notes, I relished doing so later on and enjoyed the routine and solitary space to reflect. This could be due to the fact that I kept these field notes compiling, or maybe because I am more of a reflective and introverted person. Also, this could be due to the fact that building up the skill of writing field notes helped me process and reflect deeply on the flood of details and emotions I was encountering while observing and recalling my own experience as an EL teacher and then supervisor. My own experience with writing field notes has definitely moved through

moments of struggle, joy and obligation.

4.2.6.2 Validity and Reliability in Critical Research

Guba and Lincoln (1994) have suggested that qualitative research should be evaluated according to quite different criteria from those used in quantitative studies and they have proposed an alternative to validity and reliability used by quantitative researchers. Trustworthiness and authenticity are the two primary criteria proposed for assessing qualitative studies. The key measurement of trustworthiness in a qualitative study is "whether we believe the findings strongly enough to act on them" (Maykut & Morehouse, 2001, p.147). In this sense, critical researchers are advised to explain what precautions they have taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings of their studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I will discuss in the following paragraph the three main trustworthiness criteria: credibility, transferability and dependability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To establish credibility, the *member validation* technique was used by providing each participant with the findings to confirm that I have correctly understood their social reality and to ensure that there was correspondence between the findings and the perspectives of the participants (Bryman, 2015). I tested my interpretations with the research participants throughout the course of the study, as this is an approved informal procedure (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I contacted participants through e-mails and other online platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat according to their preference to follow up with clarifications on the data collected that was deemed necessary. This method is useful not only in confirming the data and collecting additional evidence to clarify certain points (Birt et al., 2016) but also to keep in touch with participants after this project is completed as some participants have asked to be given access to

the results of a study. Also, ignoring participants completely after a research project is completed is considered to be unethical (Smith, 2015, Silverman, 2016)

Credibility can also be achieved when the researcher provides information on the methods used for collecting the data and justifies them (Robson, 2002). As a researcher, I think I fit into the requirement of *prolonged involvement* that theorists suggest to ensure credibility (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) because I have selected the research setting from the wide context which I am already in as an ELT supervisor in the KSA that helped me establish the rapport necessary for uncovering the participants' constructions of reality. Additionally, I took steps to establish credibility through another procedure known as *peer debriefing* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I informed my colleagues, who are doctoral students too or have just got their doctoral degree, of the plan of the research and the initial findings the pilot interviews reveal. This procedure helped me define biases at an early stage of the inquiry, and contributed to exploring certain aspects in the inquiry, which I may had not considered at the beginning (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Other rigour techniques included peer debriefing by colleagues, and member checks, whereby the field notes were shared with participants. This researcher-participant relationship enabled engagement and facilitated researcher integrity and sincerity (Bryman, 2015). Hence, by the described procedures, I hope the study has achieved the required credibility.

Transferability is a consideration that the conclusions reached in a study are transferable to other similar contexts or settings (Punch, 2009). Because qualitative research entails the intensive examination of a small group, qualitative findings tend to be oriented to the uniqueness of the context (Holliday, 2016). Qualitative researchers are encouraged to provide thick description that

works as a database for making decisions about the possible transferability of findings to other contexts (Bryman, 2015). Hence, I did my best to produce rich accounts of the details of the context to help the readers determine the transferability of the findings to other milieux. In this study, I asked EL teachers about performativity and its systems in different contexts, checking what was said against what was done and what was said at one school with what was said at another. This process required constant checking and rechecking the information via linking findings with participants' responses to create a solid foundation on which to build to avoid making what is called "cognitive leaps" (Morse, 2015).

The criterion of dependability in qualitative research is defined by Schwandt (2001, p.258) as "the process of the enquiry and the inquirer's responsibility for ensuring that the process of the inquiry was logical, traceable, and documented". In this study, I have explained any decisions I made during the course of the study. In addition, I consider member validation, and diversity of research settings as a means towards achieving dependability (Robson, 2002).

However, these specific procedures aiming at increasing the validity of qualitative research have been criticised as harking back to realist and positivist roots (Angen, 2000). For example, member checking, returning analysis to informants for confirmation of accuracy, has been criticised for assuming a fixed truth and reflexivity has also been criticised as creating an illusion of objectivity (Sandelowski, 2010). The use of multiple methods, researchers or sources, has faced similar criticisms to member checking (Silverman, 2016) and peer review has been also criticised for downplaying the central engagement of the principle researcher (Morse, 2015). Therefore, establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research cannot be guaranteed but can only be strived for (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Lincoln & Guba (1985) proposed four types of authenticity that should be pursued by the qualitative researcher. Firstly, the researcher should consider *ontological authenticity* of the research conducted so that both the researcher and the participants arrive at a better understanding of their social context. Secondly, the research should have *educative authenticity* and all participants should become more understanding and tolerant of each other's perspectives. Thirdly, feeling motivated enough to act lacks *tactical authenticity* if the participants are not empowered to take the necessary steps to act. Finally, the research conducted should have *catalytic authenticity*, which is, as defined by Lather (1986, p.68) "the degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses and energises participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it" which is the underlying aim of critical research. Thus, responding to catalytic authenticity is an important component for validating the findings of the current study. However, because the current study has a political agenda, what it hopes to achieve is not to resolve the issue of performativity or to draw a fixed direction for language educational policy in Saudi Arabia. Rather, it is carried out with the aim of empowering the researched through the research dialogue to help them question the taken-for-granted and estrange the familiar, to think in alternative terms with the hope of promoting practices to create a positive personal, social and institutional impact.

4.2.7 Ethical Considerations

According to the established codes of ethics, the researcher has responsibilities to the research informants. In keeping with the ethical guidelines for Exeter University (Appendix M), informed consent was obtained from the participants. It is vital to adhere to ethical standards in research that involves human participants in schools (Creswell & Poth, 2017). I took the following initial steps to protect the research participants: First, I communicated the aims of the research in an

information sheet attached to the consent form the participants needed to sign. I also explained the purpose of the research briefly before the first interview with each participant because communicating the aims of the research to those participating in the study is an important code of ethics (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Second, the right of the informants to refuse participation should be respected when doing research (Silverman, 2016). I explained to the participants that their willing agreement to participate is essential and they can avoid answering some questions or having their own work assessed if they want (Ruane, 2005) and they can also withdraw at any point without offering any explanation (Frankael & Wallen, 2000). Third, I conducted the interviews in a convenient place to minimise ‘place threats’ as some places of data collection may influence the responses (Frankael & Wallen, 2000). Fourth, I conducted the interviews on different dates, at a time convenient to each participant to avoid what is known as ‘instrument decay’ (Frankael & Wallen, 2000), because interviews that are rushed or conducted when the interviewer is exhausted may affect the outcome of the study. Fifth, the interview questions were reflected on and possibly changed during the research process due to sensitive nature of some questions. Sixth, confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained by changing their names into pseudonyms. To respect this confidentiality, I sought their full permission to tape the interviews and to use quotes from the interviews in the final report without referring to any information that may reveal their identity or the schools where they work. Moreover, I tried to follow Brinkmann (2013, p. 149) advice not to engage in a “faking of friendship” to quickly establish a rapport but rather I tried to create a balance between my aim of “producing knowledge and ethical respect for the integrity of the interviewee” (Brinkmann, 2013). Richard Sennett in the following extract has clearly explained this conflict between the researcher’s aim of knowledge production and ethical concerns of interviewing about private issues in research,

which I was completely aware of when conducting my interviews:

> In-depth interviewing is a distinctive, often frustrating craft. Unlike a pollster asking questions, the in- depth interviewer wants to probe the responses people give. To probe, the interviewer cannot be stonily impersonal; he or she has to give something of himself or herself in order to merit an open response. Yet the conversation lists in one direction; the point is not to talk the way friends do. The interviewer all too frequently finds that he or she has offended subjects, transgressing a line over which only friends or intimates can cross. The craft consists in calibrating social distances without making the subject feel like an insect under the microscope. (Sennett, 2004, p. 37–38).

However, the unpredictable nature of qualitative research and the complexities of researching private lives may raise multiple ethical issues for qualitative researchers that could not be solved simply by applying a set of abstract rules or principles (Mauthner, 2002). Issues of access, contacting participants, and informed consent, for example, should be ongoing and renegotiated throughout the research process (Bridges et al., 2007). 'Informed' consent is problematic if the researcher does not state clearly what the participants are consenting to and where the consent starts and ends (Miller & Bill, 2012). The fluidity and inductive uncertainty that characterises qualitative research cannot be met by ethical guidelines (Mauthner, 2002). I am not arguing here that ethical guidelines should be neglected, but I am trying to emphasise that the theoretical and practical aspects of ethical dilemmas encountered in qualitative research necessitate a contextual and practice-based approach to ethics and also require the researcher to 'think ethically' throughout the research process to make the right ethical decisions (Miller, Birch, Mauthner, & Jessop, 2012, p. 178).

Researchers should understand that ethical responsibility in qualitative research is an ongoing process, and they are advised to discuss and analyse the incidents and ethical issues encountered in their studies with experienced researchers who have particular knowledge in research ethics to ensure preventing future mistakes (Silverman, 2016).

It is important to mention that the participants and other teachers do not commonly use email in the Saudi context. They preferred other more accessible means such as Twitter and Instagram; e.g., WhatsApp is used for official communication at schools and universities. I found it ethical to conduct four respondents' validation through different online platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, according to their preference, even without mentioning them in my ethical form. By doing so, I showed respect to their will, and I received quicker responses.

4.2.7.1 Gaining Access

Upon gaining the approval of the University's Ethics Committee, I sought to obtain consent for participation from the school principals directly rather than from higher authorities. In my case, it was not necessary to submit an application for an offer from the MoE to carry out this research in public schools in Riyadh, the capital of the KSA because I work as a general supervisor who got scholarship from the MoE to conduct this research. Therefore, to obtain permission for public investigations was left for the discretion of individual schools. A letter of invitation to participate was sent to school principles (Appendix N). I consider myself a participant researcher from the fact that I am a general supervisor in the MoE. This fact can be advantageous in terms of the participants' enthusiasm to talk as supervisors in the KSA function as a proxy for conveying the teacher's views and thoughts to higher authorities in the MoE. Also, involvement with the research participants helped me to build trust and rapport which made them willing to cooperate with the researcher rather than hide or fake information. However, I was fully aware of the limitations of the supervisors' job with regard to authority and its effect on research informants (see limitations below). The following stage, therefore, was ensuring that the individual participants took part in this study with informed consent and were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality within the research.

4.2.7.2 Informed Consent

All participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (Appendix O). A signed consent can mislead some researchers to perceive moral responsibility as something to get done with at the beginning of conducting the research. Viewing informed consent in this way challenges the qualitative side of the research and position moral responsibility as something static similar to positivist-informed epistemology (Silverman, 2016). However, in addition to the initial steps I have mentioned above to seek consent from informants, I will highlight some issues with regard to informed consent in the current research. Initially, I had concerns that the participants might feel coerced to participate because some of them were ex-colleagues, or because they are asked to take part in the research by the school principal, or even may say what they thought I wanted them to say in the interviews being a former supervisor and co-worked with some of them. To address these concerns, I conducted initial meeting with every participant to discuss the information sheet and to explain what the research was about (Appendix P) and also to encourage them to speak freely without reservations. Although the last three stages of Carspecken's model entail a position of involvement from the researcher, I managed to maintain what Holliday (2016, p.175) calls "cautious detachment". In the writing up of the report of how this research was carried out, I had the stance of a stranger who saw the familiar as strange.

4.2.8 Limitations of the Study

It is crucial to avoid or eliminate sources of error throughout the research process. The current study has the following limitations that I did my best to eliminate their effects.

First, this qualitative study aimed at gaining a deeper understanding and insights of the views, beliefs and opinions of the participants and did not aim at generating objective knowledge or generalising findings. Due to this and to the rather limited number of participants, the study is limited to the experiences and opinions of these specific participants. Thus, one of the main limitations of the study is its particularity and specificity. Although the study generated a great richness and variety in the participants' perceptions and views, the findings may not reflect the reality of all Saudi ELT teachers in the KSA as the findings are simply the realities of fifteen participants and do not reflect a fixed reality 'out there'.

Second, the use of questionnaires may provide breadth and can serve to enhance the trustworthiness of the data. Though some theorists believe that the focus on perceptions as constructions of reality cannot take the form of a predetermined set of beliefs as would be required in a questionnaire (e.g. Guba & Lincoln 1989), but should, nonetheless, be recognised as a limitation in terms of breadth. Adopting mixed methods – at the epistemological level – is not a violation of the critical ontology—the virtual reality shaped by social, political and cultural values (Creswell, 2013). I opted to conduct the study using qualitative methods alone because I did not seek to know how the views were distributed across a large number of participants but rather; I aimed to understand in depth how ELT teachers perceived performativity and how it impacted their performance and identities in a specific context to suggest a preferred future. However, the findings of this research could be discussed alongside the results of the research in

this area already conducted quantitatively.

Third, the research was conducted in one city. Its findings may not correspond to perceptions of teachers in other cities. However, transferability of findings to similar situations or individuals is not totally impossible as a result of this limitation. In addition, this research would benefit from including students, school-principals, and parents in the circle of participants for this research project. This would bring in a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study to reach better-informed conclusions. However, as the work of one researcher, the limited time for this research project made it impossible to add participants of different kinds.

The Fourth limitation to be noted is the lack of available and accessible research in both Arabic and English concerning Saudi Arabia related to this topic.

The fifth and final limitation is that the research was conducted with female teachers only. Male teachers' could hold different perceptions about performativity from the ones the female teachers revealed and could enrich the data. Nevertheless, male informants were not included for inherently cultural reasons. Due to strict gender-sagregation in the Saudi MoE, it was almost impossible to gain access to male schools.

4.3 Summary of Chapter 4

To sum up, this chapter started with a discussion of the key aspects of critical theory and its attributes, which distinguish it from the scientific and interpretive paradigms. Attention then shifted to a review of the research design and methodology and the rationale behind the use of qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, methodology in the current study. This was followed by a detailed account of the CQR approach and how its stages were implemented. Thereafter, the argument narrowed down to focus on the methods of data collection and analysis procedures.

Subsequently, a response to the issue of my positionality in relation to research methods, reliability and validity was presented. Since ethics are paramount in any empirical endeavour, they also received careful attention in this discussion. Finally, this chapter closed by acknowledging the limitations of this research. The following chapter will present the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

'Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted.' Albert Einstein

5. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the current study and their interpretation. Findings have been divided into three main sections, which will be presented sequentially, according to the three research questions of this study. Before that, I will present how participants understand the term 'performativity'. The second section presents the perceptions of performativity, and the third section presents the impact of performativity on female ELT teachers' performance. The fourth section presents the impact of performativity on ELT teachers' identity construction. Each section will be divided into three subsections to present the findings across the different educational stages (elementary, intermediate, and secondary) in the KSA. Under each section, I will highlight the similarities and differences among teachers' views, practices, and identities in elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools and settings. The fifth section will shed light on the nature of the various resistance practices teachers adopt in different educational settings.

5.1 ELT Teachers' Understanding of the Term 'Performativity'

In this section, I will report how participants understand and define the term *Peformativity*. To analyse and compare teachers' definitions across the different educational levels, I developed an initial list of 33 codes based on their exact definitions of the term. I divided the list according to the educational stages. Then, I classified all participants' answers based on the consideration of

five dimensions that appeared in the data from which they considered performativity and its technological systems: (a) good performance, (b) achievements of desired outcomes, (c) improvement of teaching and learning, (d) efficiency, and (d) measurement of outcomes.

5.1.1 Elementary Teachers' Understanding of Performativity

The answers of elementary teachers to the question about the meaning and definition of performativity and its systems generated 13 codes. All five participants' definitions of the term seemed to be synonymous with good performance.

Leena, for example, defined the term as follows: *'Performativity, in my opinion, is doing the job that is required from me to the fullest extent possible... how to understand your work and do it perfectly*'. Rana defined systems of performativity as *'systems that help you to do your work smoothly and overcome the challenges'*. Amal defined it as *'having the required skills to do job duties with minimum waste of time and effort'*. For Hala, performativity meant *'good practice and good performance when you like your job and you want to do it'*. Performativity for Salma was *'a constant striving for better work performance'*.

Three participants linked the definition of performativity to the achievement of desired outcomes. Amal defined systems of performativity as '*systems to guarantee the best educational results'*. Hala also said, '*They are systems that are used to improve schools performance and outcomes and students performance and achievments'*. Salma likewise stated, *'They are systems that complement each other to direct schools and other educational institutions to fulfil the MoE desired outcomes'*.

Improvement of teaching and learning appeared in two responses: *'They are technological systems designed to improve educational processes'* (Leena), and *'They are systems for*

improvement of all educational practices and activities' (Amal).

All five participating teachers reported that they had never been introduced to this term, and it was noted that the term performativity was understood to mean 'good performance'. Confining the meaning of the term to denote good practice can influence teachers' expectations of their roles and responsibilities. This definition of the term detaches it from other elements, such as accountability, sanctions, and rewards, which are crucial to understanding how performativity and its systems operate and impact them in different ways.

5.1.2 Intermediate Teachers' Understanding of Performativity

The analysis of intermediate teachers' answers about the meaning and definition of performativity generated 10 codes. Three participants attempted to draw a link between the meaning of performativity in education and students' achievements. Maha, for example, said, *'My students' performance reflects my performativity. If students perform well, that indicates the teacher performs well too*'. Eman likewise said, '*Whatever you learn should reflect in your performance and productivity'*. For Hana, performativity depended on '*the achievements of students and the fulfilment of goals and expectations of the MoE'*.

Reem and Hend understood the term as acquiring the skills needed to perform properly. Reem said, '*Performativity means to develop certain skills and follow certain steps to achieve the desired outcome*'.

Hend, however, defined performativity as '*being skillful in your job and perform[ing] it at the best possible level'*. She also linked systems of performativity to the concept of innovation*: 'new systems of innovation to the education system'*.

Intermediate participants based their definitions of performativity on the premise that it entailed the ability to acquire the skills needed to produce desired outcomes. The focus was not on the performance itself but on its product.

5.1.3 Secondary Teachers' Understanding of Performativity

The analysis of the secondary teachers' understanding of performativity generated 10 codes, and they showed different ways of comprehending the term. Two participants drew a link to efficiency. For example, Manal said, '*Performativity is any educational activity or evaluation required from teachers and students to prove their knowledge and efficiency'*. Nadiah similarly stated, '*Performativity is doing specified roles efficiently to achieve certain goals and outcomes*'.

Nouf, Rawan, and Sara defined performativity in terms of one's ability to measure outcomes. They said, respectively, *'Performativity is to be able to do your job and measure its outcomes and results', 'It means to be able to measure what you have achieved',* and *'to perform specific roles and evaluate the performance'.*

Secondary teachers were able to link performativity to efficiency and the ability to measure outcomes, which are prominent features of the culture of performativity.

5.1.4 Similarities and Differences in Participants' Understanding of Performativity

5.1.4.1 Similarities

Codes from interviews with participants across the three educational levels revealed their uncertainty of what performativity meant. Consider the following excerpts: '*I haven't been introduced to the term*' (Hala). Eman similarly said, *'This term is new for me'*, and Nouf said, '*I haven't heard of it, but I think it has to do with performance*'.

This uncertainty expressed by the participants could justify their failure to link performativity to some of its core features. All 15 participants were successful in linking performativity to some of its principal features, such as good performance (appeared in eight codes across the three different categories of the data), achievements of desired outcomes (appeared in 10 codes of the data), improvement of teaching and learning (appeared in six codes of the data), efficiency (appeared in two codes in secondary teachers' data), and measurement of outcomes (appeared in three codes in secondary teachers' data). However, they failed to link performativity to concepts such as coercion or sanctions and rewards. Also, the use of performativity and its systems as systems of categorisation and classification did not appear in their responses when asked to define the term.

5.1.4.2 Differences

Codes from elementary teachers' interviews showed that teachers understood performativity as good performance (seven codes in elementary teachers data). Intermediate teachers, on the other hand, linked it to productivity and acquiring the needed skills to achieve the desired outcomes (five codes in intermediate teachers data). The concepts of efficiency (two codes) and measurement of outcomes (three codes) appeared only in the secondary teachers' data.

In summary, all participants succeeded in linking performativity to its main features, but they were somewhat unsuccessful in understanding the depth of the meaning of performativity as a powerful tool of coercion through classifications, categorisations, coercion, and accountability.

5.2 ELT Teachers' Perceptions of Performativity

This section attempts to answer the first major research question: How do female English language teachers in public schools in the KSA perceive performativity? I will present the views participants held of performativity across the different educational stages (elementary, intermediate, and secondary) and then highlight the similarities and differences among teachers' views. To answer this question, I highlighted participants' answers related to their perceptions of performativity and its systems (52 codes). I then classified the answers according to the educational level. I reviewed the coding numerous times, refining codes and combining them into potential themes at each educational level, then named and defined the themes in terms of participants' perceptions. Finally, I compared and contrasted various themes across different levels.

5.2.1 Perceptions of Elementary Teachers

The overall interpretation of the data revealed that participants held various perceptions of performativity and its technological systems. Elementary teachers expressed positive sentiments towards performative technologies based on the stance from which they considered them. I will discuss in this section how elementary teachers perceived performative technologies as a way to maintain efficiency and manage schools.

5.2.1.1 The Right Path to Educational Reform

In answer to the first research question, codes related to the perception of elementary teachers revealed that the five elementary teachers had a positive view that performative educational technologies had become a necessity for educational reform. Codes from the five interview respondents (16 codes) generated two sub-themes: a) keeping records and information, and b)

fast communication.

a. Keeping Records and Information

Four interview respondents referred to this topic (seven codes). They expressed different reasons for their positive perceptions of the systems of performativity as an efficient way of keeping records. The first was the ability to have direct access to students' academic records and personal information when needed. As Amal explained:

> *They are a quantum leap in terms of maintaining school data and having access to it…all what you have to do is to type the student national identity number, and you can get access to all important information you may need. (Amal)*

Linked to previous perceptions is the use of students' academic achievement records to keep track of their achievements. Rana said:

> *Very beneficial… especially when they direct me to the areas of weakness that I need to focus on by offering a full record of student achievement.* (Rana)

Salma's view was similar to those of Amal and Rana, but she considered these systems very useful in terms of offering access to her own professional status:

> *All that you need to know about your own professional history is recorded in the Faris system, and you have access to your previous training courses, promotions, and other important info.* (Salma)

Leena, however, saw the main advantage of keeping electronic records as an efficient way of saving the environment. She explained:

> *Obviously, these systems are better than the old paper files in terms of maintaining students' results and other important information, but more importantly, we can save the environment.* (Leena)

The ability of such systems to accomplish the missions, visions, and goals of educational organisations is subject to debate and uncertainty. Yet, they have made a world of difference and opened an entire new world in terms of providing a centralised database that ensures the rapid exchange of information and resources. The Saudi educational technological system *Noor*, for example, offers a wide range of e-services to teachers, students, administrators, school administrators, regulators and parents. One of the most prominent functions of the system is its ability to complete the process of entering and keeping students' degrees. It also supports degree auditing and reviewing, and sending them to school administrations and parents. Additionally, it can monitor and report students' absences and their late morning attendance. It allows students and parents to be familiar with the learning schedule, to follow up on assignments, tests, and academic accomplishments, and to receive school notices. In addition, the platform provides solutions to the problems of moving from one school to another and provides direct communication between the school and teachers. It even supports the school bus subscription service.

b. Fast Communication

There was a general consensus among all five interview respondents that systems of performativity have linked all departments of the ministry and made communication very fast and efficient. This sub-theme generated nine codes.

Hala commented:

> *I used to take my requests to three different buildings in different parts of the city to be signed and most of the time you can't find the person who is responsible, and they will ask you to come another day, and it is not even guaranteed that you will get your requests done… Now it is not an issue to request leave. All that you need to do is to do it online.* (Hala)

Amal expressed her support for the system in a sarcastic way by saying:

> *It would be hard to imagine the MoE without a pile of papers accumulated in boxes under the desks…being able to communicate with different departments of the ministry without the involvement of school principles is a wise decision.* (Amal)

For Leena, this perception of the system is justified:

> *It's a necessity; it is not an option; it's not a choice. It is essential for the educational system to facilitate communications.* (Leena)

While it was recognised that these systems offer various e-services, Salma considered fast communication the most important.

> *I requested leave via the Faris system and received it immediately… what took months in the past can be done very quickly now. Really, the ability to reach the department you need is the most important, regardless of anything else.* (Salma)

This was similar to Rana's perception, who reiterated the need to reach the different departments of the ministry.

> *Actually, the difficulty in the past was how to figure out where to go and who you should contact when you have certain requests… these systems direct you to the right department.* (Rana)

The critical nature of the current study should not obscure or devalue the myriad benefits and contributions these systems offer to educational organisations. In the above excerpts, participants highlighted some of the positive aspects of performative technology management systems. In March 2019, another electronic system called *Tawasul* (can be literally translated as *communication*) was introduced by the Saudi MoE to provide a reliable tool for mutual communication between citizens, non-citizens, and the MoE to handle their complaints, requests or suggestions. These complaints and requests would be subject to further study and analysis by the relevant departments at the MoE, and the results would be conveyed to the complainants or requests owners. It is described on the official website of the MoE as one of the most important e-services that allows people to contact the minister and all ministry levels and get responses assured within a timeframe. This system is believed to be one of the most efficient and widely used in the MoE.

5.2.2 Perceptions of Intermediate Teachers

5.2.2.1 Solution to Culturally Inherited Problems

Participants from intermediate schools expressed positive views of systems of performativity. An interesting finding that appeared in the data was the ability of systems of performativity to offer solutions to problems that are entrenched in and specific to the Saudi context. This theme generated 28 codes (19 codes appeared in the intermediate data).

a. Insufficiency of Educational Leadership

Insufficient school leadership emerged as a meaningful category from the data (11 codes). Intermediate teachers who referred to this topic showed an awareness of the importance of systems of performativity in managing schools and educational processes due to the lack of well-trained school principals. Their reactions to this showed support for systems of performativity as a suitable method for achieving this goal.

Reem felt that '*they are able to provide a framework for schools and teachers*', while Hend pointed out that it would make them more efficient if they were introduced gradually, as many school principals are not familiar with technological systems and technology in general. '*These systems should be practised by school principals and other staff before being introduced to schools.'*

However, Rawan attributed some of the challenges teachers face not only to the lack of support of the management team but also to their inability to use their own discretion and decisions when there was enough space to do so. In the following extract, Reem expressed this view when answering the question: How do you feel about these systems of performativity and the current audit culture?

I don't have any problem with the systems of performativity or accountability… just like any other system, it has advantages and disadvantages… problems come when the school principal assumes that such systems have an answer to every single problem that might happen in the reality of everyday school life or when the school principal has to consult the supervisor to make a simple decision that involves zero risk. (Reem)

Eman expressed how the support system they had in the past had not only dissolved, but it also seemed that the members of the management team at some schools were doubtful of the teachers' willingness and ability to implement the new performative teaching approaches. This created an unhealthy relationship within the school, characterised by disrespect and mistrust, as discussed later in this chapter (5.4.3.2).

Likewise, Hana, who seemed to share a more optimistic view about the new performative trend in schools, also expressed her doubts about the feasibility of a real reform happening when school principals lacked the basic leadership skills and competencies, such as communicating the shared goals and mission with staff, promoting teachers' professional growth, collaborating with teachers, forming a positive learning environment, and feeling confident to practise decision-making.

Maha, in the following extract, was more explicit in her views about the restrictions when the school principal was involved in decision making:

There was a whole unit about food with some cooking recipes, and I thought it would be a good idea if I taught these lessons in the school kitchen. I talked to the home economics teacher, and we rearranged our schedules to avoid clashes

with classes or wasting class time. We then informed the school principal, but she insisted on talking to both subject supervisors before approving the rearrangement. It took her a while to do so, and by then, I had already finished teaching the unit. (Maha)

This participant felt that communicating and arranging classes with a colleague was not an extra burden that should be dealt with by an administrative staff member. What was a problem was trying to get approval from the school principal, who was not confident enough to deal with an internal matter such as switching classes without communicating with a higher authority.

The decision-making process is one of the many factors embedded in the organisational structures and leadership of schools. It can facilitate or hinder the reframing of education as a more constantly inclusive and enabling project. Poor decision making is a key barrier to making education a democratic practice or an agent for social change. It should be obvious that a position of leadership and management carries ethical and moral responsibilities, such as trying to determine which kinds of lives are good or bad for a person to lead, and how a person should treat and take responsibility for other people. Principals need to continuously upgrade their knowledge, understand the role of principals' leadership correctly, engage in self-reflection, adhere to lifelong learning, and strengthen the practice of their decision-making experience.

Throughout the interviews, it appeared that only two participants had an idea about their school vision and mission, while the others did not know the terms or recognise those of their school. Four participants were merely familiar with the general objectives and goals of teaching English as they had them attached to their preparation notebooks, while two other participants mentioned a vision being written somewhere in the school documents. Furthermore, three interviewees were

confused between ‘mission’ and ‘vision’ and confirmed that no prior discussion about the importance of understanding the vision and mission of the MoE had occurred.

In summary, the findings provide a strong rationale for using technological systems in the Saudi context, as some teachers, school managers, and even higher management lacked basic knowledge and competency in school management. Nevertheless, within these systems, teachers (as well as other staff involved in teaching and education) can become deskilled and alienated as their practice becomes divorced from their beliefs and ideals about teaching. The participants in the study showed that they were highly dependent on external instructions, not only in choosing teaching materials and setting examination contents, but also in the way they taught inside their classrooms. Given this, teachers’ skills in planning and controlling their daily practices were no longer employed, as their goals were totally directed by bureaucratic requirements rather than individual needs. Key teaching goals then became ‘teach to the test’.

b. Nepotism, Favouritism, Tribalism, and Corruption

Analysis of the interview data showed that four of the intermediate teachers expressed satisfaction with centralised decision making with regard to key and significant decisions, especially staff appointment and recruitment.

Hana expressed her view about the current reform in schools by saying:

> *All educational efforts will go with the wind, and the only way for such efforts to pay off is to fight corruption and inequality in wages and chances first… Choosing among candidates is based now on their qualifications and expertise.* (Hana)

Eman stressed the reliability of the systems in terms of their ability to verify the information submitted in an application: '*The information you present in your CV is checked, and even the training courses are verified*'. This perception mirrored Hana's advocacy of the system as a way to achieve equal opportunities in recruitment and selection. Eman continued, *'I am a strong believer that the new systems will nip Wasta and other forms of corruption in the bud.' Wasta* is an Arabic term that refers to a broad set of practices in which an individual is expected to extend favours to family, friends, and people from their tribe.

Reem added that these systems would be resented by those '*who used to use their connections to get hired or recruited*'. Maha, however, was doubtful whether the process of choosing among equal applicants would involve any form of nepotism, '*but we don't know how they are going to choose among equal applicants'*.

A centralised recruitment approach can result in a shortage of teachers in some areas because of the time-consuming and rigorous bureaucratic procedures that lead to the final decision being made. Decentralisation in managing human resources would permit managers to make employment decisions more rapidly with less bureaucracy and would be more receptive and effective in dealing with teaching staff shortages. However, these participants offered a plausible justification for supporting centralised systems in relation to recruitment, indicating that inequality, favouritism, corruption, tribalism, and nepotism are more likely to prevail in decentralised systems, which can lead to hiring unqualified staff. This tension represents a real challenge for the KSA in moving to a more decentralised system and may help explain the ministry's reluctance to delegate recruitment powers to schools at this stage.

5.2.3 Perceptions of Secondary Teachers

Secondary teachers expressed a negative impression of performativity and its systems. The identified perceptions are presented in the following sections.

5.2.3.1 Policy Cloning: 'Penguin in the Desert'

This theme emerged from data referring to how participants viewed the current performativity systems. Three secondary teachers perceived the innovations to be incongruent with the prevailing social and cultural values of the classroom and therefore not supported by teachers and students. Therefore, they failed to take root.

Nadiah expressed her doubts about a real reform happening by saying, '*Relying on outside sources would not bring real reform*'. Sara also drew an analogy to point out the incompatibility between the imported policy of reform and the local culture.

> *Bringing an educational system that was successful in the USA or Australia does not guarantee its success in the KSA… It's like trying to make a penguin survive in the desert or trying to make a camel live in Antarctica.* (Sara)

Governments worldwide try to introduce educational policies and practices imported from developed countries, expecting rapid repairs and quick solutions to their educational systems. The participants' main concern about this process was that borrowed policies and practices that are effective in their original context may not prove effective elsewhere. The KSA and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have aimed at educational reforms by implementing policies and practices imported from and tested in the West without examining how the local educational and cultural context may undermine or support the implementation of a borrowed

educational policy. Policy makers tended to ignore the fact that the borrowing process covertly endorsed the decontextualisation of reform and challenged the past conception of education as a culturally bound system.

For Nouf, however, the problem that hindered an actual reform from happening was the lack of competent, well-trained and skillful teachers and managers who could make a genuine reform happen.

> *What we take from the imported reform is merely its appearance, as implementing it in reality needs qualified and experienced managers and well-trained teachers and administrative staff who understand the imported policy and who are able to execute it or even tweak it to suit our context.* (Nouf)

Nouf suggested that it was not only imported policy that was the problem but also teachers and managers who were enacting it. This perception was prompted perhaps by her awareness that imported policy was impractical, given the students and the context involved.

It is critically important to note that these reforms were apparently introduced through a state-controlled national consensus. That is to say, students, schoolteachers, and management were not consulted or invited to discuss the implications and limitations of these reforms. Hence, Tatweer represented the power of the state to exert reform and implement power in the relations between teachers and students, whereby the state works as an arrangement of multiple power relations throughout different social levels.

a. Contradiction of Educational Policy

The teachers mentioned that the current reform, with its systems, brought some contradictions and challenges (11 codes). This theme appeared for secondary teachers in seven codes. In her interview, Rawan explained this duality by saying:

> *These systems are designed to prepare students for the job market and to facilitate the process of Saudisation. The country needs graduates from medicine, engineering, and technology, and we need to prepare them for that, but very limited numbers of seats are offered and the rest of the students are directed to majors that the country does not need.* (Rawan)

Rawan pointed out a problem that was entrenched in the Saudi educational system. Lack of coordination between the MoE and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development caused this contradiction, and both ministries ended up blaming each other. Increasing the number of seats for healthcare and engineering majors and minimising the number of other majors that were not required by the job market could be a plausible solution to this problem.

Manal also referred to the contradiction of educational policy. She saw the inconsistency in the potential threat that imported policy, curriculum, and textbooks posed to the Saudi national identity.

> *What are we telling our students by importing everything from somewhere else? We are not good enough? Our educational policy, curriculum, and textbooks and even Saudi teachers are shunned in favour of native speakers, especially in universities and private schools. How are we going to protect our national*

> *identity or help students feel their self-worth?* (Manal)

If education is an integral part of nation building, at some point it could be assumed that the baton would have to be handed over to local expertise. However, while there is still a reliance on foreign input, the chance for this local capacity-building is weakened and, by association, the chance to influence educational reform within the parameters of Saudi culture may be lost.

Nouf also commented on the contradiction between policy and practice by saying:

> *On every occasion, they reiterate the importance of preserving our Islamic and Arab identity, but to secure a place in university or apply for a job, you have to provide IELTS or any English language proficiency test.* (Nouf)

Arabic is educationally marginalised in the KSA due to its associations with literature, theology, social interaction, and local tradition, and these associations clash with the internationally oriented economic goals of nation building. English is preferred to Arabic in the study of sciences. Arabic is not used due to a lack of resources, textbooks, and translation costs, but this does not stop other Far East nations from teaching science in the mother tongue. In the KSA higher education sector, Arabic proficiency is often assumed, and therefore the main focus is placed on English in HE, and increasingly in schools. The asymmetric relationship between English and Arabic in the KSA is sustained in education. All of this can pose a threat to Saudi national identity and show a mismatch between policy and practice.

b. Unfair System

This sub-theme appeared in comments made by secondary teachers (five codes). They described the way these systems categorised and classified teachers and schools as being unfair and presented explanations for this perception.

Five responses alluded to the need to consider different factors when ranking teachers and schools with respect to students' academic achievements.

> *There are many factors that come into play that determine students' academic achievements. Yes, the teacher plays a significant role, but we should also consider other factors such as students' level of intelligence, motivation to learn, the background of the student.* (Manal)

She continued by explaining how students' living standards can play a significant role in their academic achievement, reflecting on her own experience.

> *I taught English in Manfuha [a rough area in Riyadh with lots of illegal migrants and uneducated young citizens], and I also taught in Olaya [an area situated in the centre of the city]. I am the same teacher. I used the same methods, strategies, and assessment… In Olaya, students were excellent, but in Manfuha more than half of the class failed… I can't be blamed for their failure and I can't take full credit for their excellence.* (Manal)

Rawan also referred to the role of family income in students' academic results and achievements.

> *They rank schools according to students' achievement on aptitude tests and other centralised tests, and this is attributed to the school and the teachers.*

Students with good family income can afford private teachers, but students from poor families can't. (Rawan)

Nadiah similarly said:

Some students don't have laptops or even access to the internet, whereas other students can have all the resources they need. (Nadiah)

Nouf pointed out the impact of educated parents on their children:

You can notice the difference when you teach children of well-educated parents… the parents are easy to communicate with and they are more responsive to our concerns, and they encourage their children to study and do well in exams. (Nouf)

It is well documented in sociology, educational sciences, and economics that children from disadvantaged families have fewer opportunities for education than children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Large gaps in educational outcomes between students of higher- and lower-educated parents can be attributed to many reasons. A key reason why children who grow up in privileged families have better opportunities is because they have more resources to learn. These resources, however, are not always material. Some resources are immaterial and closely related to parental involvement in schooling, as described by Nouf.

Some families lack basic educational resources (e.g., computers, software) that are required for doing schoolwork**.** This problem might even be exacerbated in a situation where all school-going children share one computer, and this might not be sufficient. There might also be variation in the living space per household member, which might hinder the possibility for quiet study. This

lack of material resources that can be crucial for doing schoolwork is common in disadvantaged families with low incomes.

Another crucial resource is time, which might be a real challenge in some families. Some children grow up in households with domestic workers, while others do not have help.

There is a clear socioeconomic difference in the time that parents spend with their children. Parental involvement in schoolwork is known to have a strong effect on educational outcomes. When parents are more involved with schoolwork, cognitive test scores are found to be higher, resulting in higher levels of educational achievement.

To sum up, the above-mentioned factors have a paramount impact on students' achievement, and failure to consider them can render the process of classification and ranking unfair.

5.2.4 Similarities and Differences in Teachers' Perceptions

Similarities

Some sub-categories appeared in the data for all educational levels in different numbers. Keeping students' records and information appeared in the data of intermediate teachers' interviews (four codes) and in secondary data (one code), compared to seven codes in elementary teachers' data. Insufficiency of educational leadership also appeared frequently in the data of elementary (two codes), intermediate (11 codes), and secondary teachers' interviews (five codes).

Differences

Elementary and intermediate teachers held more positive perceptions of systems of performativity (39 codes). Elementary teachers perceived systems of performativity as an efficient way of keeping students' records and information, and intermediate teachers perceived

systems of performativity as a solution to culturally inherited problems. Secondary teachers held a negative perception of these systems as an imported policy that did not fit the local culture and could generate a mismatch between policy and practice.

5.3 The Impact of Performativity and its Technological Systems on ELT Teachers' Performance

This section answers the second major research question: How do practices of performativity affect female Saudi English language teachers' performance in public schools? As I discuss below, overall, the participants expressed that performativity and its strict directives and endless inspections had limited their autonomy and added strain to their already stressful role. The argument in this section focuses on the issue of power and suppressed teacher voice. Involvement of teachers in setting targets and standards is also argued for.

5.3.1 The Impact of Performativity and its Technological Systems on ELT Elementary Teachers' Performance

5.3.1.1 Distorted Picture of Reality

The data from elementary stage revealed that the quality of data production is not necessarily representative of students' achievements or the reality of schools and cannot be a reliable instrument to inform macro educational policy.

a. 'Much Ado about Nothing'

In response to the interview question: Do you think performativity and its technological systems meet expectations from the field (teachers, students, administrators, and policymakers)? How? Three respondents from the elementary stage explained their frustration of how the increased performative orientation of teaching and learning fell short of meeting the expectations from the field. As Amal remarked, *'All of what happens now is just much ado about nothing'*.

She quickly continued,

> *They should pay more attention to core educational issues. Take for example elementary schools. Many teachers teach subjects they are not qualified for. Last year I taught art to the 5th grade besides teaching English, and all they did was give me the manual and the phone number of the previous art teacher who was on maternity leave.* (Amal)

Other participants made frequent reference to the fact that much of the effort exerted to reform education was not paying off. Leena, another primary school teacher, explained that much of the effort was in the wrong direction and that was why, in her opinion, there was too much effort with little or no results. In her words:

> *If probably half of the money and effort was directed in the right direction, such as providing school buildings and equipment or at least improving the miserable conditions of rented school buildings only, then we could talk about real reform… What happens now is either reducing teaching and learning to a number of statistics and formulas or buying a new curriculum series that looks quite similar to previous ones just repackaged under a different name.* (Leena)

The data from Rana's interview indicate that she was not sure about what teachers knew in order to establish what needed to be developed and what needed to be kept in place.

> *I am not always certain of what I need to change…They need to know what we know and start from there…otherwise, nothing can be improved or changed.* (Rana)

The lack of integration, collaboration, and coherence occurs within and across the levels of the system. Leaders of reform at all levels rarely design, frame, and implement reforms coherently. By the time reforms come down from the state to the school, many educators in schools do not understand (or have not heard) an inspiring vision and theory of action for how the major reforms will translate into concrete changes in practice, culture, and process for schools and, ultimately, outcomes for students.

The above results show that the participants had not noticed any real reform or improvement in their practice. With the reality of having systems of performativity imposed on them, the teachers found that these systems were just a superficial reform that ignored core educational issues, such as providing a good learning environment with adequate materials. This finding has probably resulted from the teachers' negative impression of not being part of the decision for the implementation of the new systems. Recognising this has created dissatisfaction for teachers in this new teaching environment.

b. Exaggeration of Achievement

Whether referring to reporting their students' learning outcomes or their own professional practices, elementary teachers reinforced the view that, due to the increases in performativity mechanisms designed to make official judgements of them and their schools, they tended to exaggerate their achievements in order to present 'a favourable gaze of quality and accountability' (Webb, 2006).

In answer to interview questions related to how performativity impacted teachers' performance, comments such as '*Give them what they want*' and '*You have no choice but to do what they want you to do*' were repeatedly used by elementary participants to describe how they found

themselves obliged to engage in acts of fabrication. Amal, for example, said, '*I haven't changed anything, but when someone steps into my class, I just follow the lesson plan I submitted in advance*.' Leena similarly stated that understanding what was requested by higher management and adhering to it was the key to success, but she did not seem to think that such a strategy did not serve the educational objectives of the country.

> *Just learn how to make the school principal happy, that's all it takes now to be a good teacher, and most important, never try to question any command or try to understand the logic behind it, as this might be understood as an attempt to critically examine it and resist it… just show absolute submissiveness and you will be safe.* (Leena)

Leena's previous comment is understandable if one considers the hierarchical structures of schools. It could be argued that the school principal, her assistants, and other members of the management team are privileged because of their position in this structure. Some may use their position to construct versions of themselves and their schools according to what is needed by the rhetoric of policy, expecting little or no resistance from their subordinates in the structure; that is, teachers under their charge. These acts of fabrication are the result of transforming schools to become part of the 'audit society'.

An unanticipated finding, however, was how these acts of fabrication were valued as a sign of understanding and adhering to the new guidelines of practice, not only by the school principal and other management team but also by some external inspection team members. Consider the following quote:

> *We had a whole week of inspection by an external team. We had several months' notice, and both teachers and management team spent considerable time to prepare and make everything look its best. I refined my lesson plan and crammed every teaching strategy that I could muster into that specified lesson. I was confident and excited to perform a lesson I'd been preparing for weeks. Two days before the inspection date, a senior teacher told me I had to write the lesson behavioural objectives in a poster and discuss them for a few minutes with the students before introducing the new lesson, as this was one of the items in the assessment checklist. I found this difficult to do, as I usually tell my students quickly what I am expecting them to learn without initiating a formal discussion. Plus this will take time and may affect the evaluation activities, so I decided not to do it. During the discussion with the inspector after the lesson, I explained my reasons for not using the objective poster and her reaction was 'You should have done it at least for this lesson, you know it's the inspection day!'* (Hala)

Within the context of the performance management of teachers' work, many teachers tend to represent superficial versions of themselves. Exaggerating achievements are privileged by some individuals in the school setting and are informed by the priorities, constraints, and climate set by the policy environment. The instances of constructing new selves presented here are not necessarily indicative of dishonest teaching practices. These acts should be seen as choices among many possible representations or versions of the organisation or person. It is expected in a diverse and complex school environment that some teachers will purposely be less than authentic in order to be accountable. In this situation, honesty is not the point—the point is their efficiency

in the market or in the inspection.

c. 'That Doesn't Count'

In answer to the interview question: Can you talk to me about recent changes in your practice to meet the requirements of performativity? Participants' answers showed that they had to exclude any activity that did not count in their evaluation. This sub-theme generated six codes (four codes from elementary teachers).

Rana explained the changes as follows:

> *I used to do spelling competitions and 'show and tell' presentations to help students practice speaking, as well as other extracurricular activities with my students that we both enjoyed greatly. Now the school principal has told me I can only do one activity and I won't get any credit for doing more than one extra activity, so it is a waste of time to do something that doesn't count in my evaluation.* (Rana)

She went on to say:

> *Before, we [teachers] focused on helping students; now we focus on helping ourselves and the school—help yourself build a good record, help your school get a better evaluation.* (Rana)

Schools are ranked in the KSA by the Saudi National Centre for Assessment according to the results of two centralised tests: the General Aptitude Test (GAT) and the Student's Educational Achievement Test. The public has access to the annual evaluation of schools available at the Saudi National Centre for Assessment website, so that parents can make choices for their

children. Schools, educational supervisors, school managers, and teachers are also ranked according to their performance in the specified criteria illustrated in the audit system manual via a technological system called *Makken.* School managers need to enter teachers' data into the system so that algorithms can consume the data and elucidate a ranking structure, and the system will not accept two identical grades. For example, if two teachers receive a total of 95.5 points, the school manager must add or subtract part of a decimal in order for the system to accept it. One of these teachers has to be, for instance, 95.4 or 95.6.

Hala also said:

> *We work on things that are more likely to be reflected in our evaluation, and we disregard things that don't count, no matter how important.* (Hala)

Salma likewise commented:

> *It's worth investing your time in something that is more likely to be acknowledged in your report.* (Salma)

Teachers in a culture of performativity redirect pedagogical activities towards those that are likely to have a positive impact on measurable performance outcomes for a group, institution, or nation. Consequently, aspects of social or moral development that have no immediate measurable performative value tend to be disregarded. Such reorientation towards measurable outcomes changes the way in which many teachers experience their work and the satisfaction they get from it. Therefore, their sense of moral purpose and responsibility for their students is distorted. This reduction of teaching and learning into calculable procedures makes educators value what they can measure, rather than measure what they value, to generate market

information for choosers and enable the state to pick off poor performers.

The KSA launched the privatisation plan for education and other sectors in April 2018 (one year and six months after starting this research). According to the Saudi Vision 2030 website, the privatisation plan enhances the role of the private sector in the provision of services and the availability of government assets. This will improve the quality of services provided in general and contribute to the reduction of costs. It will also strengthen the government's focus on its legislative and regulatory role, in line with Vision 2030. The privatisation plan seeks to attract direct foreign investment and improve the economy. Nonetheless, the repercussions of the poor performance of both schools and teachers in the KSA remain vague and indefinite, and many questions remain unanswered: Are teachers' wages going to be performance-related? What will happen to poorly performing schools? Are there intervention plans for schools with poor performance? Is the Saudi MoE going to recruit teachers, or would that be left to schools? Are teachers going to be hired by annual/term contracts? What will happen to teachers who are already employed by the government? Do underperforming teachers get special help or extensive training programmes, or do they just get sacked for poor performance or poor students' results? This list of questions is not exhaustive and includes only some of the participants' most repeated questions.

5.3.1.2 Unity of Practice and Unity of Goals

a. Regulating Educational Processes

Data from elementary teachers (five codes) revealed that they appreciated the unity of practice provided by systems of performativity. They also expressed their satisfaction in terms of how all teachers could access the latest regulations and follow them.

Consider the following excerpt:

> *Most of rules were unwritten and given orally… just common practices that were considered rules to be followed… The systems provided a framework for all practices and regulations.* (Hala)

A different interview confirmed this opinion. The following excerpt is from the interview with Salma:

> *I had a problem when teaching first grade. Some girls did not have any preschool education while other girls had three years and a good background of letters and numbers… it is obligatory now under the new system to take preschool education before enrolling in elementary school.* (Salma)

Leena also said:

> *When moving to another school, you find it difficult to get used to the new school system and regulations. With the new system, all schools work in the same way, and the latest regulations are available on the system.* (Leena)

According to the participants, these new systems helped to implement the reform, including new

school regulations and accountability systems, in a coherent way.

b. Job Description

This sub-theme is related to the previous sub-theme, but the focus in this section is not on the unity of regulations. This sub-theme focuses on how these systems helped participants understand their roles and duties. When answering the following question, how do you feel about having to match the requirements of systems of performativity? Three participants (four codes) expressed their satisfaction with the new systems of performativity in terms of helping them know exactly what they were supposed to do, how they were going to do it, and how they would be evaluated. It gave them a clear and definite structure for their teaching practice, as explained by Leena:

> *Actually, now we know what we are required to do and what elements are going to be included in our evaluation. This keeps me focused and helps me direct my effort to what should be done first.* (Leena)

Rana also supported this view by saying:

> *Actually, now we have a framework to work within, and we are offered definite guidelines… There is nothing I hate more than working in a chaotic school environment.* (Rana)

Likewise, Amal said:

> *Regardless of being meaningless or not, these requirements work as guidelines and describe my tasks and responsibilities. In this way, I know my duties and my rights. In a previous school, the principal used to assign me a different task that*

> *had nothing to do with teaching English. I worked as a reprographer and a student advisor besides teaching English, but now they can't do it.* (Amal)

Many teachers and principals are unable to make sense of the reforms or connect the dots among multiple expectations and tools. Unable to see how the reforms are related, beneficial, or feasible, many educators have begun to lose sight of what they are supposed to do. Systems of performativity can direct their practices, define their tasks, and help them realise their potential.

5.3.1.3 Classroom Environment

The elementary teachers' interview data highlighted the physical conditions of primary classrooms in the selected primary school in Riyadh, which was further confirmed and elaborated by classroom observational data. The interview data demonstrated that the participants seemed to be critical of the physical classroom environment in their schools. Four participants directly or indirectly mentioned the overall classroom environment, which they considered unsupportive of conducting the introduced strategies.

Rana described her classroom environment, which she considered unsuitable for applying the new strategies because it was too small and students could not be arranged in groups.

> *Students would not feel comfortable actively participating in classroom activities. It is impossible to arrange them in circles or semi-circles. The size of the classroom is very small to accommodate 42 students. It is very difficult to apply the new strategies in an overcrowded class. A lot of time is wasted.* (Rana)

Large class sizes affected the teacher's ability to manage the classroom, resulting in a lot of time wasted. Elementary participants viewed a large class size as a challenge to managing the

classroom. In addition, Leena stated that it made it difficult for the teacher to establish rapport with the students. This could make it impossible for the teacher to provide students with a desirable classroom learning environment.

> *It is difficult to know their names or establish good relationships with them. This is very important not only for the students, but also for me as a teacher. I want to tell every student that she is important to me.* (Leena)

The large class size and resulting problems made the teachers feel cynical about their teaching. Although teachers wanted to be seen in certain ways as people, external challenges had a negative impact on the actualisation of such qualities.

The large class size also had a negative effect on curriculum coverage. The large number of students in the class resulted in a lot of discipline problems, which could take a lot of time out of the invaluable instructional classroom time. For example, Salma complained of spending a lot of time outside of tasks to sort out students' behavioural problems in a way that had a negative effect on carrying out curricular activities.

> *There are many distractions in the large classes, which makes it difficult to cover all parts of the book. Most of the lesson time is spent solving behavioural problems.* (Salma)

Although a class of large size is not an unusual story, it appeared in the data in a way that made it difficult to ignore. It is a challenge that affects the quality of teaching and the possibility of implementing real reform in the classroom.

5.3.2 The Impact of Performativity and its Technological Systems on ELT Intermediate Teachers' Performance

5.3.2.1 Rigid Conformity of Practice

Analysis of the data from intermediate stage revealed that most of the participants had a view that the educational technologies of performativity have displaced teachers' control and judgment and have also undermined their choice and autonomy, as I will discuss below.

a. Lack of Autonomy and Professional Agency

The five intermediate teachers interviewed described how they had been gradually losing control of their own work and how they no longer had a say in what to teach and how to teach it according to their professional discretion. As one participant explained:

> *We receive the new curriculum [here the term curriculum is used to mean textbook rather than the wider construct that includes a number of elements such as aims and objectives, needs analysis, methodology, assessment, evaluation, and so on], and we teach it the way we are told to… sometimes the exercises are too long. Bear in mind that we have only four periods per week, which is nothing compared to the density of the book… Doing three or four items would be enough, but we have to do every single item.* (Maha)

It seems that what matters to teachers is to cover the 'density' of the book. This is possibly a direct result of the teacher evaluation system in place, which considers adherence to the main textbook to be a factor of teacher effectiveness. This could make the textbook another tool for performativity.

Reem also shared a similar opinion about rigidity in conforming to the content.

> *Some grammatical structures are emphasised over other important ones. For example, three pages are devoted to practising adverbs of frequency that they have already learned in previous years, whereas a small box at the bottom of the page is intended for the use of tag-questions, which is a new grammatical rule… I wish I could do some modification to the grammar section but of course I can't… I don't want to get in trouble.* (Reem)

This quote highlights the consequences of the new assessment and accountability policies for teachers' professional agency. It shows how standardisation and micromanagement of teaching have reduced teacher's autonomy. Autonomy should not only be conceptualised as pedagogical freedom and an absence of control. It should also be conceptualised as focusing on issues of self-governance and one's capacity to develop, and justifying one's practice and knowledge base. Such conceptualisations of autonomy often receive less attention than issues of 'freedom'. This dimension of teacher's autonomy, the will and capacity for self-governance, is also interrogated through policymakers' concern with how much control is necessary to ensure quality and efficiency, in direct correlation with the degree to which teachers are trusted with autonomy. Consequently, teachers and schools risk reducing trust and legitimacy if they do not comply with curricula and related policies.

To a certain degree, intermediate teachers in this study positioned themselves as content deliverers rather than developers. Although they keenly focused on maintaining control over their classrooms, they seemed to accept their position somewhat as deliverers of prescribed content.

It is interesting how some teachers considered their attempts to modify the content to meet the

demands of their students' needs a way of causing trouble. When I tried to pursue this further, Reem continued:

> *To modify the content, you need to omit certain parts to have the space to practice others. They have zero tolerance for omitting any part of the content. If they find out, you will be questioned, and you might get a notice for doing so.* (Reem)

This reflects how excessive accountability can limit teachers' autonomy and professional judgement or at least make them confused about when and how to exercise it.

It is true that centralised curricula are always associated with a series of assessment criteria; standardised test scores that are used as performance indicators to evaluate teachers' performance and students' learning outcomes are commonly perceived by teachers as a covert method of control. The reason is simply that they are designed to ensure accountability and consistency in the performance of teachers and the content of teaching.

Nevertheless, it was evident from classroom observations across the three educational levels and a review of the participants' planning that they were afforded opportunities and flexible space for their creativity and agency. For example, Maha taught the discussion part of the whole unit and did not stick to the sequence of the book. This trouble could be merely perceived rather than actual if teachers, as one of the participants put it, '*know how to play it safe*' (Hend). This sounds like a survival strategy, a pragmatic approach to keep going in a stifling system.

It is also important to point out that teachers' strong adherence to external instructions can also contribute to minimising autonomy at both the collective and individual levels. That is to say, by

partially positioning themselves as content deliverers, teachers might be perpetuating their own marginalisation by being very compliant, thus contributing to the external control of defining standards for their work and professionalism.

b. Avoidance of Accountability and Change in Priorities

The noticeable role of accountability as the axis of the systems of performativity manifests itself in the finding that teachers perceived the ability to meet the requirements of these systems as taking priority over anything they actually did. This can be attributed to their willingness to avoid being held accountable. This is clear in the following extract:

> *I find myself sometimes baffled by the number of things I have to do every day at school. Piles of papers to fill in for no valid reasons. New teaching strategies to be applied in the classroom. For example, we have to apply a number of teaching strategies, at least four per lesson. Sometimes it's better to apply only one or two or to alter the strategies you listed in your preparation plan depending on how your students interact in the class, but we can't do that, we have to name the four strategies in our lesson plan and stick to them. The supervisor will come with a checklist, and you will lose points if you don't do so… that happened to me personally… but I have learned to reverse my priorities and do what they want me to do first.* (Maha)

Teachers in the KSA are visited in their classrooms four times a year for evaluation purposes (twice each term, one by the school principal and the other by the educational supervisor, and then both agree on the grade deserved). In an attempt to understand how ELT teachers are evaluated and the rationale behind the use of at least four teaching strategies per lesson, I

reviewed the latest audit system manual (5th edition). I learned that teachers are supposed to embed active learning strategies in their classroom practice as one of the six teaching performance indicators they are assessed on, as explained previously in the context chapter (2.4.3.4).

The English language educational supervisor evaluates the teacher's performance in terms of how successful the teacher is in implementing active learning strategies according to a 35-item checklist form. Once the teacher's performance satisfies the items listed in the form, both teacher and supervisor sign the form, and the teacher keeps it in her record as evidence of satisfying active learning indicator. In fact, the main focus of the checklist form is the involvement of students in classroom activities, and neither the manual nor the active learning checklist form specifies the number of strategies to be applied per lesson. That was completely left to teachers' discretion. The classroom observational data also showed that six out of the 15 teachers observed applied fewer than four strategies (usually three), and some of them already had the form in their records. Further discussions conducted with these participants who applied less than four revealed that such details were left to the subject supervisor or school principal to decide, as explained by Hana:

> *Generally, it's up to the supervisor's decision to determine the number of strategies applied per lesson. In certain circumstances, both the school principal and the subject supervisor decide on such details. The way the supervisor or the school principal understands the new audit system is the way you are going to apply it, no ifs about it. I think there is always room for our professional choice, but they always insist on being prescriptive.* (Hana)

This quote reflects the absence of teachers' voices in the entirety of the evaluation approach. The teacher here is an implementer/executor. It mirrors how managerialism and the tight supervision of teachers restrict their teaching practice and professional decision-making. It also shows how unbalanced power relations may present a cause for the large gap between teachers' beliefs and actions. In fact, it seems that some participants feel a greater sense of constraint and have already accepted the limited scope of teaching and learning. These restrictions are promoted not only by systems of performativity but also by how administrative staff members at the school level interpret the requirements of these systems and the way they should be executed, which adds another layer of accountability and control.

Data derived from field notes revealed that each school had developed its own tracking system and forms of teachers' performance to ensure that teachers were working towards the expectations of higher management. The small sample in this research prevents me from generalising about the nature of Saudi public schools in relation to performativity policies. However, when the audit system was first introduced in 2013, it upheld the slogan 'We manage what we measure'. It was accompanied by a performativity discourse and an obsession with evidence . This slogan was then changed in the new version (5th version) introduced in 2017 to 'Indicators are not evaluation; indicators are diagnosis and remedy'. Yet, this seems not to be well understood by some school principals, as one of them proudly handed me a pledge pamphlet she and her assistant had designed to, as she puts it, 'guarantee absolute compliance by teachers'. Nonetheless, some schools have adopted what Jeffrey & Troman (2009) call *weak performativity.* That is, performativity was not understood as a disciplinary system of judgements, classifications, and targets through which both schools and teachers were evaluated. Rather, it was understood as a symbolic system underpinned by 'a progression narrative that

teachers and learners celebrate as they travel from one symbolic grade or level to the next' (Jeffrey & Troman, 2009, p. 9). Performativity in this sense, could leave reasonable space for teachers' creativity and discretion. As one secondary school principal said in a pre-exams meeting I attended with teachers, *'Indicators are merely to indicate how well we are doing our work and to give signs where we can improve; they are not targets in themselves'*. I prefer to call this *moderate performativity* to avoid the negative connotation of the word *weak,* as such understanding of performativity can leave space for creativity and professional agency.

Moreover, the intermediate participants of the current study gave various reasons to justify the need to prioritise attending to systems of performativity requirements over students' actual learning. As explained by Reem:

> *If anything goes wrong, you will be responsible, and they [managers and supervisors] will be so picky on your work. You have to prove constantly that you are doing what you have been told to do.* (Reem)

This excerpt shows that the element of sanction is an indispensable part of performativity. If teachers do not abide by the rigidity of the predetermined structures of teaching and evaluating students, they will be held accountable for any undesired outcomes. Another justification was the avoidance of being under the microscope by school managers and supervisors.

The intensity of the use of market principles and the business model of management in the education sector provides a context for teachers to experience overload rather than an increase of professional autonomy. Absence of teachers' voices in the process of evaluation made them alter their priorities to accommodate their new roles and responsibilities to the requirements of educational technologies and performance indicators, not to their professional judgement or

students' needs. Both teachers and learners are treated as bodies in need of measurement and control.

5.3.2.2 Improvement of Skills

The intermediate teachers' comments in the interviews appeared to reflect a sense of confidence in their professional identity. They attributed their confidence to two factors: i) the development of technological skills and ii) the introduction of innovative practices.

a. Development of technological skills

Three participants from the intermediate stage indicated that systems of performativity helped them to practice and develop essential skills, such as IT skills and online communication skills. Teachers were able to acknowledge the benefits of systems of performativity with respect to these skills. Maha acknowledged that these systems had helped her reduce her computer illiteracy and develop her computer skills. Following is an excerpt from her interview, which illustrates this:

> *In the past, if you didn't know how to read or write, you were illiterate, but nowadays, if you don't know how to use computers, you are illiterate. We have to do almost everything online. I hated it at the beginning, but now I am more confident and professional.* (Maha)

Similarly, in her interview, Reem said:

> *Using online communication methods in schools helped me develop my computer skills. We can provide parents with information about school programmes and their children's progress through automated emails and*

official websites. We have become more professional now. (Reem)

Eman expressed how the increased use of online communications in the MoE helped her develop netiquette and write professional emails.

> *Communicating professionally was a hard task for me. I didn't even know how to write a proper email. My supervisor was so upset when I sent her an email with the subject line in capital letters. I didn't know this meant shouting. I am aware now of email protocols.* (Eman)

The use of the internet and other online activities and communication offers the opportunity for these teachers to enhance their skills and knowledge to use technology. This has boosted their self-confidence and influenced the way they perceive their self-image as professional teachers.

Data from classroom observations supported this finding. Data across the three educational levels revealed that participants were well trained in how to use technology. For example, an intermediate teacher used the Web Quest technique, where all the information that students worked with came from the web. She used simple word documents that included links to websites. Other participants demonstrated good use of a smart/white board and *Prezi* (a web-based tool for creating presentations).

b. Introduction of Innovative Practices

Four intermediate teachers indicated that the new educational reform offered them a variety of new teaching strategies. It offered their students a substantial opportunity to be better engaged in the learning process.

This advantage was reported in the following excerpt from an interview with Eman:

When I was first introduced to active learning, I felt reluctant to apply it, but once I did and saw how excited my students were, I used it all of the time. (Eman)

Reem also verified this opinion with the following extract:

I prefer the new strategies than the traditional boring way… I am always happy to try something new, especially when it helps to engage students in classroom activities. (Reem)

Maha said in her interview:

Traditional ways of teaching can't be sufficient now… Students now are exposed to a variety of resources… they can surf the internet and they need something as exciting… they need something to hook their interest. (Maha)

These quotes show that the teachers realised the benefit of the new and innovative teaching practices offered by the new systems of performativity in enhancing their students' behavioural engagement. They make teaching and learning more effective and appealing.

5.3.3 The Impact of Performativity and its Technological Systems on ELT Secondary Teachers' Performance

5.3.3.1 Monotonous March towards Target Grades

Analysis of the data revealed that all secondary teachers who participated in the study perceived their role as mainly to deliver the materials in a way that guaranteed good exam results. Though admitting that a level of monitoring was needed, they considered the effectiveness of their teaching performance hindered by the new discourse of target grades and performance indicators, which left them with no space for their creativity or professional judgement. In sum, this finding indicates that secondary teachers perceived teaching as a monotonous daily routine with no room for enjoyment or inspiration. In subsequent sections, I present more evidence that teachers were alienated and, in some extreme cases, forced to undertake actions against their professional ethics.

a. Control of Outcomes

Two secondary teachers emphasised that they had been put under severe pressure to make their students' grades match the grading curve (bell curve used by the Saudi MoE to ensure the distribution of students across a certain grade point average GPA threshold). Rawan explained:

> *Teaching is not pouring water into an ice cube tray where you can get predetermined results… If your students' grades do not match the grading curve, you will not get a good evaluation and you will be asked to sign a pledge…After a long exhausting semester of hard work instead of saying thank you… you sign a pledge!... I have learned the lesson… they know the results won't be realistic but they want you to do it anyway.* (Rawan)

This outcome-oriented culture has shifted the style of education towards notions of performativity and competition. In order to maintain control of education and teachers, different indirect methods are used. Such methods include goal setting coupled with delegation of responsibility for goal achievement through the school-based management system, which will be held accountable for not fulfilling the desired outcomes.

This is an effective way of maintaining control by the government. Such a procedure summarises the mechanism of how the social theory of control works in education by bringing together decentralised control or market control, maintained through factors such as competition and efficiency, and centralised control or bureaucratic control, maintained through administrative techniques of creating hierarchies, standards, or policies. As a result, teachers find themselves working in a context in which their professionality seems to be replaced by accountability through a new mechanism of control. This has moved schools from a direct strategy of visible imposition and surveillance to an invisible strategy through the discourse of efficiency, competition, and achievement indicators.

Sara voiced her opinion regarding the recent obsession with outcomes and indicators in her school.

> *If we pay more attention to improving our performance, the outcomes will automatically mirror our achievements. But if we are put under great pressure to perform in a certain way to achieve certain outcomes, we will not get anywhere near the expected level of performance. (Sara)*

Much of the rhetoric associated with teaching standards presents them as attempts to render

explicit the elements of effective teaching that will improve educational outcomes. The framework of standards identifies the knowledge, skills, and type of professional engagement required for effective teachers across their careers. This has involved a focus in education on how to perform and manage a set of given tasks more effectively to achieve desired outcomes.

The standards always focus on the skills and behaviours that teachers need to perform, rather than the intellectual and ethical dispositions they need to cultivate. Through this approach, the teacher is not seen as an independent decision maker but as an implementer and worker who needs to be guided, conveying the content as it is, sticking to the standards, and teaching for exam scores.

This technical turn in education serves neoliberal policies and degrades teachers to technicians, and it has led 'to disempowerment of teachers and veering towards a culture of educational positivism' (Biesta, 2013, p. 120). Some participants, therefore, found themselves obliged by this outcome-oriented culture, with its emphasis on objective facts in the form of statistics, to reduce their teaching practice into a mere exercise in prepping students to do well in exams. I will elaborate on this point in the following section.

b. Teach to the Test

Data generated from interview questions (12 codes) revealed that all secondary teachers who participated in the study acknowledged that they directed their efforts towards teaching items that were likely to appear in the test rather than teaching the set of knowledge or skills these items represented.

This finding is supported by classroom observations. For example, I observed a lesson performed by Hana, a fourth-grade teacher with eight years of experience, in which the students were asked

to do a variety of spelling exercises. I noticed that only 15 words were included in all the exercises done in the lesson, as well as in the other activities in her revision plan. When I tried to clarify from the teacher why she limited her spelling activities to those 15 words, she replied with a surprised look on her face: '*Some of them will come in the exam, and I want to make sure they all know how to spell them correctly'*. Data generated from observations of secondary teachers indicated that they presented the activities in exam format and restructured them to resemble exam questions, such as true/false and multiple choice.

Another example is the way essay writing is taught at the intermediate and secondary levels, as explained by Nadiah:

> *I always have a problem with time, especially in essay writing lessons, as we have to write the essay on the board for students to copy and then memorise it for the exam.* (Nadiah)

I asked the teacher if she was convinced that this was a good way of teaching essay writing. '*This is how composition writing is taught in all public schools; you can make sure yourself*'. She replied defensively. I asked her again if she was convinced of the way essay writing was taught, whether it was the common way or not. She explained:

> *Writing an essay is hard to master. This skill takes a lot of time and effort, but we do not have time to let students review and revise what they have written and to build on feedback. They are going to perform poorly on the exam, and we will be blamed for that, so we have no choice but to do it this way.* (Nadiah)

Writing skills in Saudi public schools are implemented in a significantly limited scope, and

students usually write descriptive essays to describe nature or a trip, for example, rather than argumentative essays that require critical discussions. This skill is usually taught in a strict and teacher-centred style, whereby teachers write the essay on the board and students are asked to copy it and then memorise it for the test. This approach to teaching writing is not new in the KSA context or in other parts of the Arab world. It is, however, partly due to an inadequate teachers' competence in writing skills, as well as the lack of training on how to teach it. This problem preceded the new performativity trend and, in fact, is deeply entrenched in the Saudi educational system and remains in vogue, despite myriad attempts at educational reform.

It is quite evident from Nadiah's excerpt that teachers have organised their instructions either around the actual items found on a test or around a set of similar items instead of directing their instructions towards a specific body of content knowledge or a specific set of cognitive skills represented by the test. It is also quite clear how frustrated this participant was by the overwhelming pressure to improve her students' scores, as these scores were made an indicator of the quality of her teaching. She seems competent and aware of what it takes to teach writing skill appropriately. Yet, she found herself obliged to teach it the same old-fashioned way, as it proved to be the only way for students to get high scores on exams.

We must bear in mind, as I have mentioned, that some teaching practices prevalent in Saudi schools, such as the way essay writing is taught, do not flow from neoliberal policies but are actually inherited teaching practices passed down from generation to generation. Nonetheless, it can be argued that the overall impact of professional standards in terms of their specific content, prescriptive teaching, learning within which they are framed, and the emphasis on educational outcomes is to limit teachers' ability to try something new or explore different alternatives to

prevalent practices.

To sum up, exercising power and control over teachers' autonomy and professionalism may result in teachers being deskilled or deprofessionalised. Such indirect control provides teachers with a competitive working environment to reshape their pedagogical techniques and educational knowledge to fit the pressures and demands of performativity. Therefore, for secondary teachers, these performative technologies have become a vehicle for domesticating students and teachers into conventional and predetermined forms of schooling, placing control on what to teach and how to teach it.

c. Do Experts Really Know Better?

The findings reveal an absence of coordination between policymakers and classroom teachers. Participants from the secondary stage expressed their lack of confidence in the performativity movement and the activities it mandates, as they were externally imposed on them in a top-down model of educational reform, introduced by policymakers and 'experts' who were remote from the educational scene.

Manal expressed this view by saying:

> *I wish I could meet those who create these standards. Have they taught in schools, or just imagined how it would be? Do they live in the same world that we live in?* (Manal)

Hend commented on the exclusion of teachers by saying:

> *One minute we're told that the exam must include the listening section, the next we're told to do it separately. Methods of teaching and assessing students that*

> *worked so well last year have been abandoned for the new (untested) ones. We [teachers and students] became just like lab mice so these experts can do well-controlled experiments on us.* (Hend)

Likewise, Rawan said sarcastically:

> *I think our role is just to be blamed when these arbitrary plans fail.* (Rawan)

It is clear from the above excerpts that the participants are speaking from a position of inferiority, exclusion, and marginalisation and that they have an uncertain attitude towards the feasibility of current reform. This impression is based not only on the content of their remarks, but also on the way the teachers conveyed this idea—with facial expressions that strongly implied that they believed the system sees them as inferiors to others involved in tailoring these new policies and the procedures to implement them.

Nouf, on the other hand, pointed out a very important point—the lack of agreement over what it means to be a good teacher and which standards are really important:

> *Will these standards guarantee good teaching or good learning? Why their standards not ours [teachers]? What is important to me may not be important to others. What I value and expect from my students is different from what other teachers value.* (Nouf)

These participants from the secondary level understood that the task of defining what is good in education and setting performance standards was left to experts. Due to the lack of a shared meaning for concepts like good education, achievement, and school success, and perhaps due to the absence of a productive public debate over such concepts, parents, teachers, students, and

other community members find themselves disconnected from each other at a basic level and excluded from the whole process of setting standards to implement them.

I noted during the analysis stage of this research that it was often difficult to determine what the participants across the different educational levels meant by success. Some simply defined success as ensuring that students were making academic progress. Others critiqued the system for not being set up in a way that contributes to student success. Some participants referred to 'maximising student success' without elaboration. Leena, an elementary teacher, for example, frequently used the term without explaining what it meant to her: *'I do my best to help my students achieve success'*. However, I had the opportunity to conduct follow-up discussions after observing the teachers in their classrooms, and I probed further about participants' understandings of the meaning of success. Most participants defined success as the ability to maximise students' academic outcomes.

To be clear, the issue is not merely the participants' use of the term *success*. My concern is whether success means that good citizenship and social justice are being prioritised or achieved. It is important to be concerned about what notions of success we are trying to achieve. Success is not a homogeneous or monolithic term, and to consider it so would be contradictory to social justice and would reflect how performative discourse has reduced it to 'students' academic outcomes'.

In summary, neoliberal education policy, with its performative demands of audit and accountability coupled with the prescribed methods of teaching and assessment, has led to the alienation of teachers. This alienation can be seen not only through their sense of detachment and powerlessness, but also through their feelings of meaninglessness in their work activities.

5.3.3.2 An Invasive Alien Species is Taking Over Education

I adopted this title from *The Secret Teacher,* which is a series of anonymous blog posts by real teachers in The Guardian online newspaper about the trials, tribulations, and frustrations of school life, lifting the lid on the teaching profession and teachers' experiences by telling the story as it is. An anonymous teacher draws an analogy between what happened in 1956's film *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and what is happening now in education. In the film, Dr. Miles Bennell realises that more and more of his patients and friends have been replaced by aliens who look and act human but are not, and that nobody is safe. Likewise, while some teachers look human, they are more like robots who cannot deviate from their lesson plans and assessment objectives. What this anonymous teacher was trying to convey is very similar to what some participants were trying to express throughout the interviews, as I will present below.

a. 'Work Like Machines'

In answer to the interview question: Do you think performativity can have an effect on your professional judgement? How? Analysis of the data revealed that secondary teachers perceived the effect of performativity on their professional judgement to be negative (11 codes). A number of recurrent remarks from the participants revealed that the teachers saw themselves as passive performers. Consider the following remarks: '*My task is to perform*' (Manal) and '*I am here to execute their orders. I don't think my judgement really matters*' (Nouf). Nadiah expressed this perception in the following excerpt:

> *They want us [teachers] to work like machines programmed with input and expected to produce their desired output as if there is only one way to teach and as if students are all alike and as if there is only one path to success. They want*

> *you to put your expertise, values, and commitments all aside and work according to their new scheme.* (Nadiah)

Such remarks are indicative of the teachers' perceptions of themselves as passively performing, with no space for their critical engagement or professional judgement. This seems to have had a profound impact on their performance. They also show how the mechanisms of performative technologies attempt to turn them into docile submissive objects.

A primary objective of any educational reform is to bring about changes in classroom practices that can lead to improved learning outcomes. This can be done only when teachers give conscious consideration to what they do and how they see and position themselves in relation to discourses associated with the nature and value of teaching/learning and educational achievement in general. However, this concept of teachers' critical engagement has been substituted by the self-policing or self-regulation advocated in many neoliberal reform agendas, whereby teachers are constantly encouraged to regulate themselves according to pre-established standards. These neoliberal reforms often promote an individualistic preoccupation in which educational failures are seen as an effect of teachers' lack of expertise.

However, while these technological systems are powerful, dynamic, and perspective altering, they do not change what it is to be human. The primary, essential attributes of being human are the intellectual capacities of reasoning with abstract concepts, rationality, self-reflection, and the freedom to choose actions based on one's knowledge and understanding of the situation and free will. Once teachers are deprived of these intellectual capacities, they are no longer humans but rather objects that can be manipulated, formed, and transformed continually in an ongoing process that is never finalised.

Throughout the interviews, participants repeatedly expressed their concern about how well they were answering the questions, and some of them asked me to stop the recording to get reassurance that they were answering properly. The following is an example of how participants across the different educational stages expressed this: '*Am I answering it correctly?*' (Hala), '*Is that what you expect me to say*?' (Eman), '*Tell me if I'm wrong*' (Salma). Such insecurities can be seen as a reflection of how the contemporary emphasis on performance influences the way teachers think and speak about education and how it exists inside their heads and minds. The pressure to perform was not only something they were reporting but also something that they were undergoing, even in the act of reporting. They perhaps wanted to confirm that they were expressing themselves accurately and phrasing their words correctly, as the topic of the interview gave them voice and provided them with a chance to talk about their own plight.

b. 'I Am No Longer Enjoying It'

Participants across the different levels considered that their schools' fear of missing targets coupled with a restrictive model of teaching and evaluating students had taken the heart out of education. However, this sub-theme appeared more frequently in secondary teachers' data (seven codes) compared to two codes in the intermediate data and four codes in the elementary data.

Manal explained in a frustrated tone how excessive monitoring and paperwork had sucked the enjoyment out of teaching for her.

> *I am no longer enjoying it. Most of what we're doing is filling out papers to provide evidence or trying to adapt to new teaching approaches that are imposed on us without any preparation… too much to do and so little time.* (Manal)

What was not obvious at first from the participants' answers was a sense of how they really understood the purpose of the reporting and evidencing of their performance. While three participants were confident that it was fundamental to their development as teachers, they were not able to say what it was that essentially brought about improvement.

Discursive replies were elicited to this question to encourage a deeper and more detailed understanding of the interviewees' views on how development was achieved through the constant process of reporting and providing evidence. By pursuing this question, I understood from participants' responses that they believed the need for reporting practices and providing evidence was to ensure compliance with policies and procedures advised by the MoE rather than reflecting on their performance.

The Saudi MoE put forward student-centred approaches to teaching, such as cooperative and active learning strategies that emphasise students' involvement in classroom activities to help them construct their own meaning of the material, as a rejection of traditional methods of teaching and learning. Almost all participants seemed to be convinced, to a certain extent, of the premise that learning occurs when students participate in shared endeavours and that learning is more lasting and pervasive when students take the initiative and are personally involved in the learning experience. However, four secondary teachers expressed their discomfort, caused by trying to achieve this within a framework that provides rigid and prescriptive instructions to achieve the desired change.

It can take a long time for new policies to actually be implemented in classrooms. It seems, however, that participants were not willing to spend the time that student-based learning requires, despite the fact that most of them were convinced of the effectiveness of such

approaches in the long run. This is perhaps due to the following reasons. First, dictating to teachers is not a way to get them involved or committed to new educational initiatives. Teachers need a chance to say how such initiatives will work in their classrooms using trial and error to figure out how to apply these initiatives in their teaching practice. Another reason is the constant change in policies and teaching strategies, as new policies and approaches often come in to replace the ones being implemented. To avoid this frustrating cycle, some teachers tend to deliver instruction based on their own personal discretion and ignore the winds of change that can shift so quickly.

Another participant expressed that recalling the early years of her career brought a sense of nostalgia and loss of the relationship they used to have with their students. Consider, for instance, the remark:

> *I no longer enjoy teaching. The level of discipline is now very low. In the past, the main task of the teacher was to build good relationships with her students and help them to be disciplined.* (Nadiah)

Through the dialectical nature of the epistemic interviews, I challenged respondents to provide good reasons for this lack of enjoyment. A long list was generated, including lack of autonomy, lack of appreciation, increasing work overload, and not feeling safe due to excessive micromanagement and accountability mandates. Teaching, therefore, has become to some participants a monotonous, disinterested, and passive process in which lessons are just like stones pelted at students, as explained by Nouf: '*I have to repeat the same lesson to five classes until my vocal cords feel strained*'.

The analysis of data from classroom observations did not support this finding. Analysis from the

secondary stage data showed that both teachers and students seemed to enjoy the classroom. When observing Nadiah, students were engaged in classroom activities, especially when working in groups to discuss the topic (reasons for crime). They eagerly offered their input during group discussions. Another example is when Manal helped her students to offer connections of the topic (travelling abroad) to other ideas. They were also encouraged to share their own experiences of travelling abroad.

To summarise, imposing rewards and sanctions on teachers has sucked the joy out of their experience. Such extrinsic motivators are very effective in creating short-term compliance but ineffective in producing any difference in the long run in terms of attitudes and behaviours. Nonetheless, there was still the possibility of creating space for enjoyment, as revealed by the classroom observation data of secondary teachers.

c. 'I Am Leaving the Profession for Good.'

Participants cited a number of what they considered the biggest influential factors as to why teachers quit the profession. Some of these factors are commonly cited in the literature, such as being underpaid, overworked, and underappreciated. However, I will direct my discussion to the factors that the participants saw as a direct result of the current neoliberal policies of educational reform.

Three of the selected secondary participants cited incompetent school managers and supervisors as one of the biggest influential factors in thinking seriously about leaving the profession. Rawan speculated about rumours that the rise in their annual basic salary would be performance related:

> *I don't mind my annual rise being performance-related if I am going to be evaluated by a qualified team, but if I am going to be at the mercy of the stupid*

school manager or a stupid supervisor to get this rise, then it is a big NO, and I will definitely leave for good. (Rawan)

The business model is designed to reduce labour costs and increase labour servility. Performance-related pay is one of its manifestations. It is designed carefully to increase job insecurity, and it creates a class of workers with no rights, no voice, and no economic stability. By not having guaranteed employment, employees will accept tiny salaries and do their work diligently.

Of all the participants interviewed, two shared their intention to quit teaching by choosing early retirement. Consider the following quote by Sara:

> *I do love teaching, but now I feel out of place. What brought me to the profession no longer exists. I lost any feeling of satisfaction or accomplishment. I am exhausted trying to cope with the constant changes. Every year they have a new version of their audit system with new demands and new requirements. I find it very hard to manage the stress and that's why I am saying goodbye.* (Sara)

Another interviewee affirmed that the feeling of being under extreme scrutiny was what made her think seriously about leaving teaching:

> *You are expected to teach according to a new scheme without any preparation or training whatsoever, and all they do is just tell you that the manual is available online and the attitude is like 'Get on with it!' But what I hate even more is being constantly watched simply because they want to make sure that I*

am working in line with the new scheme I am neither prepared nor trained for. Your students' books, lesson plans, and exam papers are all continuously checked… I can't handle this anymore and I'm happy to retire early and I wouldn't give it a second thought. (Nadiah)

It is neither revelatory nor controversial that the demands on teachers have increased more than ever before. Teachers today are under more scrutiny, which places them under great pressure, as their job now is becoming more and more aligned with test scores and performance evaluations. One consequence of this is the high attrition rates. According to the Saudi Public Pension Agency's official website, teachers made up the largest group of public sector employees taking early retirement for the year 2016, at a rate of 87% (Public Pension Agency, 2016).

The constant micro-level surveillance of classroom and school inspection, coupled with the macro-level performance data collection, is an efficient method of social discipline. This mechanism of constant observation has an ideological function that alters individuals' understanding of themselves and offers a structure whereby workers' behaviour can be modified. This form of discipline exercised in modern social institutions in the KSA forms the heart of the social system of power relation. Schools, as other social institutions, function to maintain and perpetuate the values and codes of behaviour that protect and serve the status of people who possess authority, be it economic, political, religious, or any form of position or authority.

Lack of respect from the policymakers who impose changes on them, from parents who have impracticable expectations, and from society in general, who seem to hold them responsible for improving the education crisis, forms a potential risk to their retention.

5.3.3.3 Similarities and Differences in the Impact of Systems of Performativity on ELT Teachers' Performance

Similarities

As the findings revealed, participants across the different educational levels pointed out that their practice felt like it was being controlled. Elementary teachers expressed this control in the way that they had to exclude activities that would not positively impact their evaluation. Intermediate teachers expressed how performativity limited the space for their autonomy and professional discretion. Control of practice was more evident in the data of secondary teachers, who expressed how performativity dehumanised them and turned them into passive machines.

Differences

Both elementary and intermediate teachers expressed mixed opinions on how performativity impacted their practice. Teachers from these two levels pointed out some positive aspects of these systems. Elementary teachers stressed how systems of performativity regulated their practice and defined their roles. Development of technological skills is among the advantages cited in intermediate teachers data. Secondary teachers, however, expressed only negative views of the impact of performativity on their practice. They expressed their dissatisfaction and stressed the rigidity caused by the content–bound exam format that forced them to teach the content in a specific way that was compatible with the exam.

5.4 The Impact of Performativity and its Technological Systems on ELT Teachers' Identities

The data analysis revealed plenty of evidence of performative identity among the ELT participants in this study. The use of technologies of performativity had become a normalised aspect of teachers' daily work that clearly reproduced the language and logic underlying these technologies. Development in teachers' identities should not be seen as a result of major changes, such as organisational reform, but also caused by daily routines in the school environment and interactions with other teachers. I have relied, to an extent, on the work of Foucault and other Foucauldian-inspired theorists to describe ELT teachers' identities, but these analyses offer only a partial sense of how neoliberalism is psychically lived. Thus, it makes sense to me to incorporate aspects of psychoanalysis that might contribute to understanding neoliberal versions of subjectivity.

In discussing my findings in the next chapter, I have examined Saudi ELT teachers' identities and the role of mutually respectful and democratic relationships, dialogue, and dialogic methods. In other words, how can a suitable psychological environment for school members be created? The most productive environments in education are profoundly psychological, that is, in the nature and quality of relationships. Education is interpersonal, interactive, relational, and psychological, and psychology can be educational. This necessitates interrogating how some groups become empowered to discriminate against the powerless within the educational arena.

5.4.1. The Impact of Performativity and its Technological Systems on Elementary ELT Teachers' Identities

5.4.1.1 Seeking Outside Validation

Responses from three elementary teachers showed evidence that they always relied on external validation for their teaching practice. They either sought approval from the school principal or the supervisor.

The following excerpt by Leena illustrates how some teachers adjusted their teaching practices to the preferences of the supervisor or school principal.

> *The young teacher strategy [one student explains part of the lesson to the class] was really fun to do, and my students used to enjoy it, but my supervisor told me it's old-fashioned and did not like it, so I stopped applying it.* (Leena)

Another example is the following:

> *I wanted to show a documentary from a national geographic about wild animals. I texted the school principal the day before to get permission, but she refused, as the content needs to be checked, and it might contain something against our Islamic values. (Rana)*

Hala likewise said:

> *I prefer to do quizzes in each skill rather than for each unit, but the supervisor did not approve that*. (Hala)

Not being able to confront the supervisor or disagree with the school principal, doing what they believe is good or efficient because someone else either approves or disapproves, and ascribing

their judgement to the approval of others—all are examples of a reliance on external validation. This reliance can be unhealthy, as it is guided by external criteria. Without a true understanding of what it is that they actually want or what fulfils and satisfies them as teachers, they might end up, at a minimum, disconcerted and unhappy. The loss of this external validation and rewards can impact their sense of identity and who they are. They might start questioning their self-worth, as it is dependent on others' approval.

5.4.1.2 Disengaged Teachers

According to the results, three out of five elementary teachers expressed that they were not emotionally connected and/or dissatisfied with their workplace environments. These teachers were also the least likely of the interviewees to feel as if their opinions at school counted. This impacted their view of their self-worth, resulting in a sense of disengagement.

Consider the following extract:

> *How can I give feedback on something I don't understand, I don't know why it is introduced in the first place, and what are the reasons for changing the exam structure. I need to understand first to give good feedback.* (Leena)

Unable to see how the reforms were related, beneficial, or feasible, elementary teachers expressed that they had begun to disengage once promising initiatives failed to realise their potential.

Data from classroom observations offered another example of disengagement. When observed in her class, Hala let the same students answer, although she asked four or five questions, only two or three eager students actually had an opportunity to demonstrate active cognitive engagement

with the topic. This did not achieve the purpose of active learning, which places importance on the students' engagement. It seems that the teacher was not very keen to understand the reason behind her practice.

It was evident from classroom observations that participants were very keen to get their students involved in their own learning and to provide opportunities for them to solve problems as members of collaborative teams. Most classroom activities were designed with this end. However, it came to my attention that most of these activities, albeit well designed, were not well executed in real classrooms. For example, a sixth-grade teacher (Rana) applying an active learning strategy asked students to work collaboratively in groups to write an end to a given story. Students got so excited and started to think of a suitable end to that story. The time allocated for this exercise was 12 minutes, but the students were given only five. As soon as they finished reading their stories, they were asked immediately to vote for the best story without explaining why they opted to finish it the way they did or why one story was better than the other.

Rana also showed an indifferent attitude towards any new initiative. When asked about her view of performance-related pay,

> *I don't really care… I really don't.* (Rana)

Data derived from field notes revealed signs of teachers' lack of interest and engagement. For example, in most meetings I joined, teachers passively listened and appeared uninvolved and just nodded their heads in silent agreement.

Sometimes, it is somewhat expected that teachers lose motivation or interest in a job they have

been at for quite a while, but that was not the case with these particular participants. These results might be a little easier to understand if this information came from teachers who had been teaching for 20 years, but they are not.

5.4.2 The Impact of Performativity and its Technological Systems on Intermediate ELT Teachers' Identities

5.4.2.1 Profit-Oriented Teachers

Two participants from intermediate schools stated explicitly that they were not willing to join any workshop or programme as trainers for other teachers or students if they were not going to be paid.

The following extract is from Hend's interview:

> *If I'm not going to be paid, I would rather stay in my school and teach. I see no point in working somewhere else and then putting myself under pressure to keep pace with my lesson plans.* (Hend)

For Eman, it was the number of training courses that mattered, regardless of whether she needed them or not.

> *Once I've satisfied the number of courses I need to climb one step in the ladder, I won't join any more courses.* (Eman)

These two extracts show that some participants were not really investing in their professional development. They were more interested in joining paid programmes or courses that would count towards getting a promotion. This can be attributed to many reasons: i) most professional development programmes fail to help teachers create successful communities of practice or

sustain a platform for knowledge, ii) the paid programmes by Tatweer made teachers feel reluctant to join unpaid programmes, and iii) the prevalent discourse of maximising performance in order to maximise profit has impacted the way teachers think about their professional development.

5.4.2.2 Confident Professional

This sub-theme emerged from three codes in the data of intermediate teachers. Teachers expressed their confidence in the current efforts made by the MoE to improve teachers' quality. Consider the following excerpts:

> *I feel that the reform is more serious now. The whole country is transforming not only education. The MoE introduced different programmes to train teachers abroad.* (Hana)

> *My friend joined Khebrat, and she was impressed by the quality of training, but it is very competitive to join the programme.* (Reem)

> *In the past, opportunities to join programmes outside the KSA were exclusive to male teachers… female teachers now have equal opportunities.* (Hend)

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is currently focused on diversifying its economy, with a greater focus on highly skilled jobs. As education is regarded as a key driver of economic and human development, the kingdom's MoE has been sending hundreds of teachers across the globe to experience other cultures and, in turn, to refine their teaching and English language skills. The hope is to create global-thinking citizens who can share their new teaching and learning experiences with their students once they return home. The *Khebrat* programme is an ambitious

long-term endeavour to transform the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of Saudi teachers. The programme is high on the development agenda of the Saudi government and is guided by Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Plan.

It is evident from the above quotes that the participating teachers had confidence in current initiatives to improve their quality and skills.

5.4.3 The Impact of Performativity and its Technological Systems on Secondary ELT Teachers' Identities

5.4.3.1 Interpersonal Conflict

Four participants from the secondary stage revealed evidence of a struggle between personal values and role expectations. For example, in discussing her experience as a teacher, Nouf commented on how some schools took unethical measures to accommodate the measures of performativity. In Nouf's case, this was done at the expense of weak students. It seems that this approach is the survival of the fittest, with no place for the weak students and perhaps no support for them.

> *It is all about quantity, now not quality. It is normal now to have students in the last year of the secondary stage who are not able to form a sentence correctly or, in extreme cases, cannot distinguish b from d when writing. Weak students are neglected, as we have to invest in those who are likely to score high grades and add to our added value.* (Nouf)

One of the downsides of neoliberal education policy is that it leads to a form of teaching that focuses on school subjects and student achievement, thereby overlooking and thus excluding children who do not live up to expectations regarding their school performance.

The following is another quote that echoes how some teachers experience dilemmas, tensions, and constraints as they try to manage conflicts between different performative imperatives and their personal values. In answer to the question: What do you think is expected of you as a teacher? Data analysis revealed that all secondary teachers believed that downplaying their actual role to comply with the recommended teaching technique and assessment was what was expected of them. Similarly, in answering the question: What does it mean to you to be a professional teacher? Nadiah said:

> *It means to understand what is required from me and what my duties and responsibilities are, and to work in accordance with the MoE guidelines to help students improve academically. That's what every teacher is trying to do, I think. For me it also means to understand that teaching is not as simple as they try to make it appear, and being professional is to help your students to be good citizens and find a way to escape whatever distracts you from doing so, and this makes teaching quite challenging.* (Nadiah)

Teachers have been reduced to a structurally determined social group, but are not engaged in collective agentive struggle. That is to say, due to the current discourses of performativity in educational organisations, secondary teachers in this study inevitably align their goals and aspirations with the desires of policymakers. They faithfully implement the prescribed curriculum in the approved manner for their school to perform better, which may include coaching students towards this end, as I have discussed somewhere else in this chapter (5.3.3.1).

In this process, teachers' autonomy and professional judgement have been sidelined to reconstruct teacher identity as an agent of neoliberal performativity and an enactor of

policymakers' plans and perspectives. There is also the possibility that these teachers accommodate performative imperatives out of fear of sanctions applied to them, such as losing any chance of promotions or even their jobs. This is an instrumental/pragmatic reason not necessarily out of belief in the system, as is evident through other data extracts. This may lead to unhappiness at work and feeling stuck in life.

In summary, the construction of performative identities takes place during the educational and social practices of performative teaching. The influence of these educational practices on ELT teachers is both extensive and significant, as it turns educational institutions into a site of struggle between teachers' imposed performative identity and other 'sub-identities' that have been constantly suppressed by the discourse of performativity.

5.4.3.2 The Affects of Neoliberalism

The term *affects* here is psychology terminology, used as a noun to refer to emotions that change or influence what people think or do (Halsey, 1984). However, the findings of this study showed that the affects of neoliberalism promoted the development of certain versions of subjectivity, character structures, defences, changes, and counterchanges.

The following sub-themes show how certain affects were tightly woven into the mechanisms and procedures of performativity and its technological systems: how the constant representations and comparisons made the participants feel, how they coped with them, and what the consequences of such feelings were for their professional identity. The participants' emotions or feelings described in this study were conceptualised from the perspective of professional identity (i.e., containing a conflict between the teacher as a person and the teacher as a professional). Each of the following categories under this theme appeared frequently in the data across the three

educational levels, which made it difficult to group them according to each level. However, they appeared slightly more in the data of secondary level. I used excerpts from the three educational levels.

A Crisis of Trust

It is not necessary to mention the importance of trust for stable social relationships and the maintenance of cooperation, not only in schools but in society in general. Lack of trust was another theme that emerged from the interviews, generating 27 codes (nine codes from the elementary, eight codes from intermediate, 10 codes from secondary). This theme centres on the idea that teachers perceive themselves as unworthy of public trust, which seems to have an impact on the development of their identities. Teachers' identities should be seen in relation to their sense of agency, values, emotions, and beliefs, as these can influence how they view themselves and how they will go about teaching. Participants shared stories about the lack of trust and respect they experienced in their school environment.

> *My main task now is to provide evidence to the school principal, the educational supervisor, and parents that I am doing my work properly because it seems that none of them trust me. I know there are some teachers who are incompetent in teaching English, and some are untrustworthy, but those are exceptions, and the majority are dedicated and honest.* (Sara)

This excerpt implies a low level of trust in teachers as professionals. Decisions to measure teachers' performance against a set of objective criteria are a clear indication that policymakers were unsure of teachers' competence and the quality of the teaching they provided. In addition, associating rewards and sanctions with performance created a context in which competition

could flourish at the expense of trust, which can consequently cause more tension, isolation, and less sharing among teachers in different educational settings. The public indifference and lack of sympathy towards teachers' plights in schools reflects its misgivings of the competence of teachers and their work.

Another example that came up repeatedly from participants was that prescribed teaching behaviour and continuous scrutiny give the message that teachers could not be trusted to take care of their responsibilities or to perform competently on their own. For example, Amal said, '*Sometimes they are so prescriptive that I question my mental capacity'*.

Likewise, Leena expressed regret at becoming a teacher.

> *After five years, I have realised that I made a wrong decision to be a teacher. I have now started a small business on Instagram and I will resign soon… What is happening now is really sickening. From the moment you enter school, you find someone sitting next to the attendance sheet to make sure you sign in with the time on the wall clock, not your cell phone, as you may set your cell phone a few minutes before the actual time. Another person will chase you to tick a box to confirm that you have attended the morning assembly. A third person is standing in the corridor to make sure you are not late to class, and I can spend the whole day describing how we are being constantly watched and monitored.* (Leena)

This quote by Leena is indicative of the state of mind these teachers have and the way they are treated. They are neither trusted nor respected.

The following excerpt by Salma illustrates another perspective on the lack of trust in teachers that is manifested in today's culture of performativity:

> *Our public system is rooted in Islamic values that emphasise treating people with respect and trust unless they prove to be dishonest, but in schools, the case is reversed; all teachers are treated as being untrustworthy and need to be monitored all the time.* (Salma)

Data from field notes provided additional examples of how teachers across the three educational levels were being disrespected. The school principal changed the timetable according to the supervisor's preference but refused to do so for the teacher who wanted to leave early for a hospital appointment. Another example is when a school principal assumed that teachers absented themselves the day of training for using a smart board to avoid being evaluated on how to use it.

Throughout the interviews, the participants of this study defined trustworthy principals as those who were competent, reliable, fair, open to other ideas, and most importantly, kind and caring. In answering the interview question: How do you feel about systems of performativity and the current audit culture? Manal said: '*Working with a school principal who is fair, caring, and kind can make you feel safe and ready to face whatever your career throws at you*'. Reem answered the same question by saying:

> *In fact, the way the management team deals with these systems is the problem, but the systems themselves are introduced to help [educators] achieve what is required… if the school principal is experienced enough to know when to trust teachers' discretion and opens up to other ideas or suggestions from them, we*

> *won't end up working in such an unhealthy environment of mistrust and suspicion where everyone is questioning the intentions behind others' actions.* (Reem)

Ensuring that all school members share role expectations and obligations for one another and demonstrate behaviours and attitudes that expose benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness is a promising road to strengthening the trust relationships in schools, especially during reform or change. Well-established trust ties between school members in a change-oriented culture are important. Such relationships can form fertile social grounds for policy initiatives to produce desired outcomes. Better understanding of the role of trust during reform and the application of innovative practice, as in the case of KSA now, has potential for improving educational outcomes.

It is usually the task and responsibility of school principals to implement new policies and reform endeavours, and promote appropriate climates that support new policies and practices. Their efforts have normally taken the shape of formal structures and processes that, presumably, will improve educational outcomes, indicating a more 'human capital' approach to reform and innovation. This style of approaching reform has often resulted in inconsistent improvements and continuing patterns of underachievement.

The classroom observation data offered further evidence that some participants viewed themselves as undervalued and untrusted. Rawan, for example, in a revision lesson, devoted the last five minutes of the lesson time to reading out items in a checklist form and getting affirmation from students that she had accomplished all that was required. After that, she passed the sheet to the students to sign. When trying to understand why she sought affirmation from

students and whether she could have relied on her own discretion instead, she replied:

> *I needed to find a way to silence the school principal. She always accuses me of not doing my job well without proof. It seems that she creates a narrative about each of us [teachers] in advance based on her impression and assesses your work according to it… Being a smiley person does not mean I am reckless in doing my job but she always treats teachers with glum faces with more respect, assuming that they are more serious about their job!… Now I have 36 student witnesses.* (Rawan)

This example indicates the low level of trust in some public schools in the KSA. Neither the principal nor the teacher trusted each other. The principal seemed to have a preconception of the teacher based on certain personal characteristics that had nothing to do with teaching competence. The teacher took this as an indication of the principals' inadequacy in assessing her work objectively and opted for what can be described as, in my view, at least an extreme defence mechanism of seeking students' written confirmation of what she accomplished in her class. Of course, trust relationships are reciprocal, and when they generate distrust among school members, the climate of distrust may very well produce closure among the relational patterns in schools, in which teachers tend to not feel safe or supported.

It became clear from a preliminary reading of field notes that concerns about trust, respect, and caring were quite significant for many ELT teachers. For example, when I was in an intermediate school setting in the teachers' room at eight o'clock in the morning drinking my cup of tea, I observed a teacher of two years' experience trying to consult a senior teacher of more than 15 years of experience about how to test students on a certain grammatical rule in the exam, and

whether it was better to form multiple choice questions or fill in the blanks. The senior teacher looked somewhat annoyed, so the young teacher said quickly, '*Do you want me to come back to you later*?' She looked straight at her and said: '*No my dear. The thing is that I want you to rely on yourself… you don't expect others to teach you how to do your work*'. The young teacher looked shocked, went back to her desk, grabbed her mobile phone, and walked out of the room quietly. The senior teacher said angrily, *'It is not my job to educate other teachers… do you think that she doesn't know how to form her exam questions or does she just look for someone to blame when she receives a bad report on her exams*?'

It is evident from this incident that the school environment needs to be fundamentally different for reform to occur. Teachers' relations are not bound together around a shared sense of mission to educate students. The senior teacher does not accept responsibility for supporting a new colleague as a central part of her role in the collective school-based community, but rather sees this as an extra burden and even questions the intention of the new colleague, which can be considered a sign of mistrust and suspicion. In a context like this, new teachers are more likely to feel unsupported and unsafe to take risks, to try, fail, and then to try again to improve the educational opportunities offered to students.

In short, healthy relationships and trust will not compensate for poor instruction, badly trained teachers, or dysfunctional school structures. However, reform attempts are more likely to fail if the way teachers, principals, parents, and students interact is overlooked.

Feelings of Tensions and Anxiety

The findings also revealed how performative technologies may invoke feelings of anxiety and tension. These feelings, however, were not necessarily a result of a clash between neoliberal and professional values, as discussed previously (5.4.3.1 Interpersonal Conflict), but rather due to the insecurities and tensions caused by performance evaluation uncertainties. That is to say, teachers may have the desire to perform well and be perceived as performers, but tensions arise when they become uncertain of how they are going to be evaluated because of the uncertainties surrounding the technologies of performativity.

Again, the case here is not that teachers in the Saudi context resisted completely the extensive use of classroom observations and other surveillance mechanisms. Nor did they seem to oppose the ideological underpinnings of such technologies; some rather supported them. What made them feel anxious and insecure were the uncertainties surrounding how their performative work would be recognised by these systems and how they would be rewarded or punished. Such uncertainties made them struggle as to what it really meant to perform. This finding suggests that the struggles teachers experience do not always have to be grounded in the perceived conflicts between traditional teacher values and performative values. This feeling of uncertainty is expressed in the following excerpt:

> *Me and another teacher teach the same grade. We do almost the same thing. Our lesson plans are almost identical, and we do extracurricular activities together, but she always gets a better evaluation grade. Probably her classes scored better results. What can I do if my class was used as a dumping class for naughty careless students? The value of your performance is always relative*

> *and has to be compared to other teachers' performance, regardless of different factors that may affect your performance… You can never be sure how your performance is going to be valued.* (Sarah)

Here, the teacher seemed to value the technologies of performativity and wanted to achieve the requirements (e.g., to score better results). On the other hand, she expressed her uncertainty about how her work would be reflected and recognised by these technologies. Although she even attempted to provide justifications to explain why she got a lower grade, she still could not reconcile her uncertainty.

Another tension expressed in the above excerpt is how the effects of collective educational processes were recognised by systems of performativity as if they represented individual performance. Teachers who actually strive towards a performative identity may encounter a number of performance evaluation uncertainties. This brings us to another strand of the argument, that is, the ability of these technologies to elicit our *entrepreneurial self*. This feature of technologies of performativity highlights the specific structure by which such technologies operate. The premise is that performative technologies not only make people and their activities visible, but also do so in a certain way that de-contextualises, reduces, and simplifies the assessment procedures. This is achieved by focusing on predetermined targets using the 'one size fits all' approach to simplify and narrow the goals of education and the assessment procedures by which such goals are evaluated. This translates the complexities of teaching and professional work into *generic* forms.

In the same vein, another participant expressed feelings of tension and anxiety. She perceived the technologies of performativity as not having the ability to distinguish the efforts of individual

teachers from all the other particular factors and eventualities that resulted in a certain outcome. To clarify, consider the following extract from a participant who pointed out that it was difficult to see whether her efforts yielded good results:

> *We have this general mandate that all pupils must do well on exams, and I really want them to do so. I always meet experienced teachers for consultations and try to find new and effective ways of teaching in order to help my students' learning, but I am always worried that this is not always reflected in outcomes, and that can be really disappointing when your efforts do not pay off.* (Eman)

Although some participants seemed encouraged to seek new and innovative ways to facilitate their students' learning, as well as make other efforts to look good for management, they regarded how contextual factors permitted converting such efforts to actual outcomes and how performance management practices appreciated such activities to be a problem. These uncertainties seemed to trigger feelings of frustration and anxiety.

Most of the tensions expressed by participants in the current research conform to those found in the literature. The interviewees, however, reported a tension that I could not compare with any of the tensions in the reviewed literature. Participants reported a profound feeling of tension about how they would be remembered by their students after leaving school. This type of tension was mentioned only twice by participants, but its effect on the way they valued themselves was considerable. Consider the following extract:

> *On a Twitter hashtag around the topic of former teachers (#leave a message to your former teacher), I came across many tweets; some are good and some are bad. I tweeted myself and left a nice comment to a former teacher… I was*

wondering what my current students would say about me… Have I inspired them to be their best? Or do the current audit system and all its mandates make me one of those teachers who just teach the subject and that is it? (Salma)

This tension made this participant feel frustrated because she seemed to struggle to find the opportunity to teach the way she wanted to teach, and was anxious about becoming the traditional teacher she did not want to be. Another participant expressed her tension about how she was going to be viewed by saying:

> *If I fail to enrich my students' memories with positive experiences, then my teaching is pointless. I have to admit that sometimes I feel happy and proud, but I also feel disappointed because the current focus on structured learning is soul destroying, especially for young learners.* (Amal)

Amal continued to highlight the importance of acknowledging the nature of young learners as emotional, loud, indecisive, excitable, distracted, unpredictable, and easily bored. Her inability to be free to nurture these individual characters intensified her feelings of tension and disappointment. Teachers should be allowed to decide when to intervene to guide and extend the opportunity to learn, as well as when to step back and let it unfold naturally. Teachers' attempts to create robots that will appease education ministers' requirements can be damaging to young learners and may create a negative attitude towards learning.

'I am Always in a Dark Mood.'

Classroom observation data supplemented findings from the interviews that some participants suffered from low moods and depression. Three participants showed an anhedonic attitude (*anhedonia* is a psychological term for the inability to feel and experience joy or excitement, which is a core symptom of depression) in their classes, presenting a lack of interest in what they were doing. This lack of interest ranged from moderate to severe, but the case of Amal was probably the most prominent.

Amal seemed competent in the subject matter; her English was fluent, and she used it with confidence. Her lack of interest was obvious during the first few minutes of her class. Her presence in the class lacked genuine connection with the students, as she barely looked at them. She also talked to them in a lifeless, low, monotonous tone that produced boredom and a lack of concentration in the students. When discussing the lesson with her afterwards, I asked her if she was feeling well and why she seemed disinterested in her class. She said:

> *I am always in a dark mood. I have been diagnosed with depression and advised to leave the profession. My idea about teaching and my life as a teacher was a total illusion. You are pushed to teach in a way that, most of the time, does not make sense to you.* (Amal)

Amal's beliefs in how teaching should be done were at odds with the school system's belief in the discourse of performativity. She faced intense pressure from the school to perform a particular form of pedagogy.

Likewise, the interview data revealed that experiencing low mood symptoms of depression was prevalent within such a climate of performativity. Nouf, for example, described how the acute

stress she experienced daily affected her overall mental health:

> *Stress seems to come from every area of my life and that makes me feel low and depressed. I have noticed a decline in my mental capacities. I can hardly remember where I put things and what I was doing moments ago.* (Nouf)

The relationship between work stress and depression preceded the current performativity trend. Depressed teachers may create an unhealthy classroom climate in which children may be less closely observed and may receive less guidance regarding appropriate behaviour. Students of depressed teachers may also emulate their teachers' behaviour, such as pessimistic mood, negative thought patterns, or unsuccessful ways of approaching problems.

5.4.3.3 Similarities and Differences in Teachers' Professional Identity Construction

Similarities

Teachers across educational levels expressed a set of feelings and emotions that were entrenched in the culture of performativity. Feelings of fear, anxiety, depression, and lack of trust appeared in the data of all levels. This finding made it evident that the effects of neoliberalism are difficult to avoid or even cope with.

Language teachers' identities are inextricably tied to their emotions and beliefs. They are constantly being shaped and reshaped by experiences and interactions with others and the interpretations teachers make of these interactions. In this sense, they use their emotions and feelings to make sense of themselves as teachers in a dynamic process. The current policy changes and reformist imperatives have caused some participants to start doubting their professional competence and feel confused about their professional identity. They are not sure to what extent they are able to use their discretionary judgement and undertake the responsibilities

associated with their new identities. This can sometimes challenge their values and beliefs and the way they see themselves, as policymakers have always regarded them as incompetent.

Differences

Data across all educational levels showed evidence that performativity has impacted teachers' identity construction. Elementary teachers have developed performative identities in terms of constantly seeking outside validation, whereas intermediate teachers have adopted the logic and discourse of performativity and have become profit oriented. Secondary teachers expressed their interpersonal conflict between performative mandates and their values, which rendered their identities a site of struggle.

5.5 Teachers' Resistance

Saudi female ELT teachers devise different forms of everyday resistance according to their distinct positioning. Instead of devaluing their everyday acts as apolitical or amplifying them as unquestionably emancipatory, I aimed to look at ELT teachers' multiple and different activities in relation to different forms of oppression and their unconscious forms of agency: which of the oppressive structures did they accommodate and which might they challenge? Which did they consciously challenge, and which might be unintentionally transformed? In an attempt to answer these questions, I tried to examine their everyday practice, which offered a more realistic way of dealing with the issue of resisting performativity in the Saudi context or, more accurately, with that of consciousness, action, and change.

Following Ball and Olmedo (2013), I approached the concept of resistance differently through Foucault's notion of 'the care of the self'. Thus, in this research, resistance is not thought of as a collective exercise of public political activity. The question of resistance here is approached through the fact that neoliberal reforms in education are producing new forms of teaching subjects and new kinds of subjectivity that should be the terrain of struggle and resistance. This 'different' approach starts from looking at forms of resistance to practices of performativity. That is, I wanted to examine resistance to practices of performativity in Saudi public schools and then, as Foucault suggests, use those practices of resistance 'as a chemical catalyst to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of application and the methods used' (Foucault, 1982, p. 211). My aim when approaching the issue of resistance was to try to understand the daily experiences and practices of Saudi ELT teachers, whose struggles might come up to the surface when they begin to question the necessity of and think about the revocability of their situation. Put simply, when teachers try to seek answers to questions about

power relations and their own beliefs and practices, it is then that they can start to take an active role in their own self-definition as a 'teaching subject' and begin to care for themselves.

5.5.1 Teachers' Strategies to Cope and Manage

Coping strategies depend on the kinds of feelings experienced and the kind of person a teacher is. Participants, however, mentioned possible ways of coping that somewhat helped them develop their professional identity. The feelings of helplessness, frustration, anger, tension, envy, guilt, and shame mentioned by the participants appeared to be dominant in accompanying performativity and its technological systems. In many cases, these feelings were quite severe to the extent that participants were leaving the profession for good, as discussed earlier in the chapter (Section 5.3.3.2). The findings of this study added to the general acknowledgement that feelings are an inherent aspect of teaching and learning.

A positive result of the current study was that some participants mentioned that they had learned from their tensions, struggles, and other associated feelings. As a coping strategy, for example, Hana and Maha both stated that the struggle they had experienced made them feel stronger as teachers. They were able to transform their tensions, struggles, and other negative feelings into a learning experience.

Nadiah stated that experiencing tension enabled her to become aware of and ready for new policies and helped her react in a better way in conditions similar to the one she experienced.

> *Now I am used to the constant change and I'm always ready for it… I've learned how to deal with my tension better than before… and to use my previous experiences to make better decisions in similar situations.* (Nadiah)

Other participants' stories suggested that the negative feelings that usually accompany systems of performativity and other mechanisms of accountability can have positive consequences. Rana, for example, said:

> *I can't understand why some teachers overreact when new instructions or a new curriculum is introduced… I understand that constant change can be annoying and distracting, but the best way is to try to understand what is required and incorporate it into your own practice*. (Rana)

Nadiah recalled her experience by saying:

> *When I felt confused, in my early career, I used to discuss the problem with the school principal or one of her assistants or other experienced teachers, and I found that to be very helpful, but now I feel confident to rely on my own judgement.* (Nadiah)

This extract shows the importance of supportive school environments. The support from colleagues and school principals helped Nadiah develop a positive, stable, and professional identity that enabled her to withstand the challenges of the teaching profession. As stated by Meijer (2011), teachers acquire dedication and commitment to teaching because of the intense emotions they need to cope with. She stressed that tension and other negative feelings, such as envy and guilt, could be of great importance for the development of teachers' professional identities.

However, simply maintaining the balance between the demands of performativity with its technological systems and teachers' abilities to cope as a survival guide is not actually the

ultimate goal. For teachers to flourish and thrive and to teach at their best, they need to actively manage and overcome the challenges and negative feelings they may experience in their career paths. Thus, teachers should learn how to turn their experiences of tension and disequilibrium into sources of learning and growth.

Hong, Day, and Greene (2017) drew a distinction between coping and managing, stating that coping was a passive and reactive response associated with a weak sense of agency and low confidence. It may enable teachers to survive in the shorter or longer term without solving the challenges. When teachers lose their ability to control their own work and make appropriate decisions, this is more likely to impact negatively on their professional learning and impede them from dynamically contributing to proper solutions to the challenges they face (Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, & Vähäsantanen, 2015; Vähäsantanen, 2015). That is to say, when teachers try to cope with challenges, all they do is tolerate the density and complexity of requirements and expectations. Yet, they are less likely to participate actively in the process of managing and overcoming problematic situations effectively. Their cognitive, motivational, and emotional energy, which is derived from the combinations of individual and social resources, is likely to be reduced. If the process of reduction continues, teachers tend to detach themselves and become unwilling to engage effectively in resolving challenges (Hong, Day, & Greene, 2017).

Managing, on the other hand, may be considered solving and overcoming the challenges and turning them into learning experiences to reflect on one's practice and build a sense of agency and professional identity. By actively responding to the different obstacles they face, teachers will develop their abilities to improve their practices by identifying problems and devising ways to address them. This process may entail reconsidering their principles, aims, and strategies,

which are essential constituents that shape their professional identity.

Manal expressed this idea by stressing the need for teachers to have a repertoire of procedures for dealing with new changes.

> *We [teachers] feel stressed whenever a new policy or a set of teaching strategies are introduced because we have a relatively small range of actions to deal with the challenges… This is the way you build your skills and gain expertise. (Manal)*

Moreover, teachers' beliefs about their abilities to exercise control over their own work and over events that affect their lives is a positive factor that adds to this process by offering a sense of certainty and confidence attached to their sense of self regardless of uncertain and difficult situations.

In sum, as teachers' identities are transitional rather than fixed, managing situations of challenges and uncertainties through the active exercise of their agency and a strong sense of self-efficacy will definitely help in the construction of a positive and firm sense of professional identity.

5.5.2.1 'Turn a Deaf Ear'

Two participants from the elementary stage expressed that there were avenues for resistance, such as ignoring the new policies they felt were not necessary. Leena stated that she ignored new orders that did not make sense to her. She also demonstrated how she negotiated, depending on her judgements regarding the reasoning behind an initiative and what it involved.

> *If I'm not convinced, I just ignore it and turn a deaf ear… they have to convince teachers… they can't do reform against the will of the teachers, but only with the teachers.* (Leena)

Teachers sometimes doubt whether there is a need for change in the first place. In schools, where teachers with individual qualifications and skills have developed specific processes and routines for their work, professional knowledge can be highly personal. Innovations and change processes can sometimes be regarded as an attack on professional competence and therefore generate resistance. In the case of Leena, if the change does not provide a good rationale, then it must be ignored.

Salma described ignoring new initiatives when there were no clear directions for how to execute them.

> *If there are clear instructions on what should we do and how to do it, it will be easier for us… most new policies are introduced in a briefing and the rest is left for us to figure it out... When I get lost, I just pretend that I haven't heard anything.* (Salma)

If new ideas, processes, or procedures are introduced to schools, those at the lower, executive, and work levels immediately raise the question: How can these new procedures be implemented and thus find their way into practice? In general, there is uncertainty when common and usual paths of practice need to be replaced by new ones. This in turn creates uncertainty and resistance, which usually causes an oppositional reaction. This happens in particular if the new procedures of work are experienced as a compression of work, an intensification of work, or as a restriction of individual autonomy in work—or as a combination of all three.

In summary, elementary teachers tend to ignore initiatives when they are not convinced of the rationale under which they are predicated or when there is no clear direction on how to execute new policies or initiatives.

5.5.3 Intermediate Teachers' Resistance to Performativity

5.5.3.1 Resisting the Discourse of Performativity

Data analysis revealed some practices of resistance and self-overcoming by intermediate teachers who directly confronted the discourse and enactment of neoliberalism and its technologies, in particular, the practices of performativity that impacted upon the ways in which they were able to be in their classrooms and their schools. In other words, how they were governed. The concept of government here is not confined to political structures or the management of states. It is used in this analysis in a more general sense to refer to 'the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed' (Foucault, 1982, p. 221). This relates to Maha's experience. She struggled with performativity, as it functioned to define what she wanted to become as a teacher, or as she put it:

> *To be admired and appreciated as a teacher, you have to speak their language and think their way, but that's what I am trying not to do, because once you start doing this, you will pay attention to everything except yourself and your students.* (Maha)

This extract highlights how the discourse of professionalism has been used, at least in the schools researched, to mean complete compliance to offer a weaker discursive edge to a working environment that, in some respects, is extremely controlled. I argue that such discourse exposes the role that both teachers and schools are expected to play within this culture of performativity.

Their realisation that their work will be shaped by regulations that support the performativity principles is central to this role. This constricted teacher professional identity has dramatically reduced any attempts at professional practices outside neoliberal logic.

Eman also recalled an incident when the school principal forced her and other ELT teachers to enter students' marks into the system a few days before the deadline so that the school could be ranked amongst the top fastest schools in submitting results. Consequently, they were put under great pressure and committed some mistakes.

> *We were put under great pressure, so we made some mistakes, and a series of consequences followed, and we were the only persons to be blamed. Reflecting on that incident, my ears have now turned deaf to discourses of competition and indicators, and what really matters is to protect myself.* (Eman)

This teacher revealed a kind of resistance to the discourses of performativity embedded within the reform of the Saudi educational system. However, such resistance quickly turned into a reaction to 'protect' herself and escape accountability rather than to offer an alternative account to the rigorous practices. Nevertheless, the data I collected from field notes while observing the discursive interactions between administrative staff and school teachers offered few hints of covert resistance. There were insufficient indications of overt resistance to performative discourses of competition and criteria. The resistance usually took the form of sarcastic comments by older participants, as their prior experiences suggested different understandings of professional teaching. Salma, for instance, said when handling the manual to one of the administrative staff after looking at it for a specific piece of information, '*I hope this will help all of our students to be Einstein!'*

Within this educational policy context, the current study attempts to illustrate how opportunities for resistance have become increasingly limited under the current practice of performativity. Performativity requires a new type of teacher identity formed within its logic of competition. It is a new identity with a new moral system that reorients us to its logic, principles, truths, and ends. It makes us responsible for our performance and for the performance of others and burdens us with the duty to perform to avoid being seen as irresponsible. We are produced and formed rather than oppressed or constrained. Performativity and its underlying rationality are presented as something logical and desirable, as the new common sense. This might explain why some participants believe that they are at their best when they are performative, when they come to want for themselves what is wanted from them, and when they align their values and desires with its requirements. This is quite evident from the participants' responses to what it means to be a professional teacher and their definition of *success,* as discussed in Section 5.3.3.1.

Resisting performativity at a discursive level requires problematising the core and essence of our own practices. It also necessitates a certain ability to scrutinise ourselves critically. That is actually what some of the teachers are doing throughout their responses or, at least, are helped to do throughout the epistemic interviews, as we were engaged in examining the topic, dialectically aiming to gain knowledge in an epistemic sense.

5.5.4.1 Resisting Meaninglessness

Participants from secondary schools expressed their struggle to form identities and meanings within the limitations of their everyday practice. One of the participants, for instance, acknowledged that one of the mechanisms by which these limitations were enacted in classrooms was what she identified as 'the meaningless practice,' which she explained as follows:

> *We keep receiving circulations of new instructions on how to teach, write your exam questions, and distribute your marks throughout the semester, but you don't know why these changes are made. All you have to do is sign these circulations and abide by their instructions. Our practice became meaningless and unjustifiable, but sometimes, to be honest, I just do what makes sense to me.* (Nadiah)

Data from field notes also showed that some teachers resisted what they saw as meaningless practice. An ELT teacher, for instance, refused to take part in what she regarded as a '*useless*' monthly discussion of ELT challenges in the school and told her colleagues that she would just sign the report.

In the midst of these performative techniques, 'we become ontologically insecure' and 'uncertain about the reasons for actions' (Ball, 2003, p. 220). Teachers might no longer feel encouraged to have a wider perspective or a basis for their practice or see significance on what they do or why they do it. Rather, they might feel required to produce measurable performances and stick to *what works*. Teachers are in danger of becoming unidentifiable to themselves – 'I am other to myself precisely at the place where I expect to be myself' (Butler, 2004, p. 15). The following extract from one of the participants highlights the limited space for teachers to justify their own practice:

> *I have no problem with being observed in the classroom or receiving helpful feedback from someone who perhaps knows better than myself. But sometimes neither the supervisor nor the school principal is more qualified than you, especially the school principal, as she has no background of English language.*

> *My actual problem is when I'm given a certain grade without any discussion. You have no chance to defend yourself or explain the limited perspective of the person who observed you.* (Rawan)

The evaluation of ELT teachers in Saudi schools has always been an issue. Many school principals and administrators base their evaluations of teachers mainly on classroom observation once or twice a year. Observation only will yield, at best, a partial and misleading picture of performance, let alone being conducted by evaluators who sometimes do not speak the language or understand the uniqueness and nature of the subject matter. Nevertheless, lack of discussion over the given grade seems to be the chief problem for this participant.

Rawan is revealing, probably unintentionally, the delicate line that separates practices of power from those of domination. This extract puts into context what Foucault says when he points out that 'power relations are not something that is a bad thing in itself' (Foucault, 1997b, p. 298). Power becomes a problem when 'an individual or social group succeeds in blocking a field of power relations, immobilising them and preventing any reversibility of movement by economic, political, or military means' (Foucault, 1997b, p. 283). Such situations imply that the practices of freedom are beyond the bound of possibility. As Foucault clearly put it,

> I see nothing wrong in the practice of a person who, knowing more than others in a specific game of truth, tells those others what to do, teaches them, and transmits knowledge and techniques to them. The problem in such practices where power—which is not in itself a bad thing—must inevitably come into play is knowing how to avoid the kind of domination effects where a kid is subjected to the arbitrary and unnecessary authority of a teacher, or a student put under the thumb of a professor who abuses his authority. (Foucault 1997b, p. 298–299)

These quotes reflect signs of resistance to practice through what Foucault (1982) termed 'processes of confrontation'. In these examples, teachers' critiques of imposed practices can be

understood as a means of resistance and confrontation with a sense of immediacy where people disapprove elements of power that are the closest to their action. They do not look for the chief enemy, but for the immediate enemy (Foucault, 1982, p. 211).

5.5.4.2 'My Well-being Matters Just Like Your Standards'

As discussed above, new educational policies realigned Saudi public schools with corporate values and ethics. Some teachers who participated in this study described how their values were challenged, compromised, or displaced by escalating regimes of performativity and managerialism. However, it is relevant here to ask how their ethical dilemmas, personal struggles, and concerns about students affect their own mental health and emotional well-being, as discussed in Section 5.4.3.2 The Affect of Neoliberalism. Regimes of outcome-based performance management were set against the ethics of care, professional autonomy, collegiality, and public service that had marked their work and professional identities. The following quotes are examples from the data on how performativity impacted teachers' well-being and mental health in the KSA context:

> *I come home completely drained and frustrated, having no energy for my children and family. I spent the rest of the day lying on the couch in my living room, yelling at my children when they make noise. At night, I find it difficult to deal with feelings of guilt for not being able to have quality time with them.* (Sara)

Nadiah likewise commented that her inability to cope with current accountability practices and constant observations had affected her health: '*I have developed migraines and high blood pressure*'.

Manal also stated:

> *I am diabetic, and stress is like sugar; both increase blood glucose levels. You can control your diet, but it is hard to control stress or what triggers it.* (Manal)

Throughout the interviews, the participants listed many complaints about the circumstances of their workplace that they thought had negatively impacted their overall well-being. These included a lack of freedom, constant observation, being overworked, and doing meaningless work. I introduced to participants the idea of 'taking care of the self' as a way of resisting, coping with, and managing workplace tensions and conflicts. Participants' reactions towards this idea varied from strong approval to doubt regarding the possibility of withstanding the challenges by simply taking care of the self.

Nadiah expressed her total agreement by saying, '*If I didn't take care of myself, no one would*'.

On the other hand, Nouf said:

> *Words are much easier than actions… When you are in the middle of it, you are swayed by your circumstances and cannot really control your emotions or how things affect you.* (Nouf)

When participants felt insecure, unworthy, underappreciated, or that the work they did was meaningless, the situation became a malicious cycle that was hard to get out of. Such negative feelings demotivated them, which could lead to feelings of stress or even depression. This is where the need for 'the care of the self' becomes crucial. It is fundamentally a form of self-care whereby teachers develop the skills required to cope with and manage stress and other challenges at work. Some teachers unfortunately do not develop this skill and fall victim to the system.

Some become casualties with health problems in such stressful jobs.

Personal growth (such as in the form of self-care) guarantees inner well-being, which in turn improves performance at work and enhances creativity, productivity, and social and communicational skills. By taking care of yourself at work, you become a better asset to your organisation; by giving yourself due value, you add value to the work you do. In the educational context, teachers' well-being is likely to have profound consequences for their students. Teachers with poor well-being are more likely to underperform and have poor classroom management, which will have a negative impact on students' achievement. They may not be able to support students or model positive social and emotional behaviours through the development of supportive relationships.

5.5.4.3 Resistance via Moaning or Whingeing

This sub-theme generated nine codes, and the data analysis showed that secondary teachers (five codes) had opportunities to practice resistance. They did this by practising 'moaning or whingeing'. This form of resistance is successful in that some decisions are changed, but it is not organisationally recognised. What I saw is that teachers were forced to find alternative routes for negotiation because of their lack of organisational voice.

Rawan negotiated and demonstrated this when she discussed the notion of what she called 'be a pain in the neck'. It was this group of teachers who objected to an organisational change, and some of the rules were removed.

Consider the following extract:

> *Not all changes are good or in favour of the students… we can be a pain in the neck until it's removed or at least weakened.* (Rawan)

Manal considered the power of the whingers and moaners to be extended because some of this group had good relationships with the school principal.

> *It's important to have one in the group the school principal likes… the task becomes way easier, and communication is easier too.* (Manal)

The first point for successful negotiation involves avoiding the trap of entangling people's personalities or emotions in the issue. Sometimes emotions get in the way of clear communication, especially if very different perspectives are involved. These emotions can cause some teachers and principals to lose objectivity and involve their egos instead. Having a teacher who can communicate effectively with the principal can prevent interpersonal conflict.

Nouf stated that negotiation within the school that took place in an informal setting, as opposed to a formal setting, such as a meeting, was more likely to achieve the desired outcome, as this formed a soft way of resistance.

> *I personally believe it's better to communicate our resentment to a new rule or a new policy if we can't see its value in an informal way. Once this way is not fruitful, we can complain and make a fuss about it.* (Nouf)

In summary, teachers showed resistance by trying to find a voice in their schools via the notion of 'moaning and whingeing'. This form of negotiation was successful in that some decisions were changed, especially when the whingers and moaners also had good relationships with the leadership of the school. However, this form of resistance is always informal, so it is not

organisationally recognised. As such, it is not a joint enterprise and is seen as a weak form of teachers' voices, as it only appears after a decision has taken place, thereby forcing resistance rather than embracing collective negotiation prior to decision making.

5.5.5 Similarities and Differences in Teachers' Resistance

Similarities

Participants across the three educational levels presented possible ways of coping and resisting that somewhat helped them develop their professional identities. The feelings of helplessness, frustration, anger, tension, envy, guilt, and shame mentioned by the participants appeared to be dominant in accompanying performativity and its technological systems, which led teachers to find methods of everyday resistance. Also, across the three educational settings, teachers expressed the possibility of tolerating the density and complexity of requirements and expectations, while others expressed their ability to manage their struggle and transform it into a learning experience by trying to participate actively in the process of overcoming problematic situations effectively.

Differences

Participants described different forms of every day resistance. Elementary teachers opted to ignore the new policies they felt were not necessary as a form of resistance. These teachers tended to ignore initiatives when they were not convinced of the rationale under which they were predicated or when there was no clear direction on how to execute new policies or initiatives. Intermediate teachers resisted the discourse of professionalism and efficiency, which entailed complete compliance, to offer a weaker discursive edge to a working environment that was governed and controlled. Secondary teachers followed various ways to resist performativity,

including resisting meaningless practice, whining and whingeing, and placing their well-being as a priority over the imperatives of performativity.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the new performativity takes the form of detailed control imposed on teachers in public schools. An unending stream of new regulations, instructions, guidance, and advice floods into public sector educational institutions. The new accountability and performativity culture seeks firm administrative control over institutional and professional life. The new regulations and controls are more than fine rhetoric; they entail specified and detailed conformity to teaching and assessment procedures and detailed provision of information and evidence in certain formats that are in line with the new standards of recommended accounting practice. Their aim is to guarantee more exacting provisions for ensuring non-discrimination and, of course, proliferating accountability and control procedures. Performance, therefore, is monitored and measured using performance indicators and subjected to quality control and quality assurance to rank schools in league tables of performance indicators.

Many participants perceived the culture of performativity and its technological systems as not just changing, but also as distorting the proper aims of their professional practice and damaging their professional autonomy and integrity. The strategies of surveillance in schools have, of course, affected teaching practice, but it was for limited periods, for the week of inspection, when teachers would produce fabrications intended to influence evaluations.

One way of framing my enquiry is, thus, with reference to the question, 'How did performativity impact ELT teachers' professional identity?' My premise is that as schools become increasingly regulated and teachers are held strictly to account for their performance, the aim and purpose of

education becomes less clear. Consequently, teachers' autonomy, agency, and professional identities are all overlooked and disregarded, and a chief task of education, helping the young generation learn how to be human, is damaged. We have been made oblivious to the philosophical heart of education and seduced into asking the wrong questions about education and what we want for society. In the KSA, there is now a huge obsession with what to teach young people rather than how to help them learn.

Identities of performativity are a constant combination of developing self-confidence, having it destroyed, and feeling successful and effective, to experiencing panic, tension, and anxiety, from being assigned high status, to feelings of denial, but all the time knowing that both self-worth and professional identities are grounded on striving for better performances and continuous improvement. The data drawn on for this research suggests a high level of compliance amongst teachers working in public schools in the KSA with regards to the reconceptualisation of their work and their identities. It reveals that their professional identities have been reconstructed by a neoliberal identity, so that teacher professionals have been recreated as performance maximisers who embrace some of the more powerful and dominant aspects of the neoliberal agenda on school reform, with a discourse dominated by standards and competitions.

For some, there are tensions between developing such identities and their personal and professional values and beliefs. Feeling a greater sense of constraint, some teachers are beginning to enthusiastically accept the limited scope of teaching and learning promoted by the proliferation of performativity, while others are struggling to cope or leaving the profession altogether. The findings also raise concerns for the well-being of school teachers who are going to shape the psychological forces and inhabitants of tomorrow. Teachers constitute a workforce

whose performance and outputs are very often measured with no thought to the well-being of the workforce itself.

In this analysis, my participants and I, through dialectical interviews, tried to determine the functions of technological systems of performativity as disciplinary instruments used to achieve the overarching discipline. Toward this end, these instruments serve four basic functions in the Saudi context: defining and regulating schools' reality; decreasing public school teachers' political power while maximising their productivity; infiltrating and documenting everything and everyone that is subject to the power of these systems; and neutralising a discourse of competition and achievements as the ultimate goal of education. This discourse of neoliberalism, Giroux (2018) argues, offers no critical vocabulary for speaking about what is fundamental to civic life or critical citizenship, nor does it offer the language to challenge corporate ideology and its social consequences.

I used a critical lens to frame my perspective and to make the following argument: If those of us who have been made visible by performative and accountability systems can identify the ways in which these systems exercise control over us, we will be empowered to resist being completely objectified by them. If we can learn to mark instruments of discipline and control when they are being used to define the reality for us and our schools and to place those in lower tiers of the educational hierarchy as suitable objects of scrutiny and control, then we will be empowered to take care of ourselves and reclaim our own authority in our schools. Nevertheless, I must admit that this ambitious idea seems to be out of reach in the Saudi context, where discussing issues of power and authority seems absent. Despite the fact that I have found a great deal of hope through the process of exploring my research questions, I will not deny that some participants showed

disappointment and defeat. But again, understanding the problem and realising how such systems of control operate will definitely help teachers find, to an extent, a sort of relief and will make managing the problem a plausible endeavour by striving to find a site of both resistance and transformation.

5.7 Summary of Chapter 5

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It starts by presenting how participants understand performativity. After that, answers to the main research questions were presented across the three educational levels. Teachers' resistance to the practices and discourses of performativity emerged as a major finding. The question of resistance here is approached through the fact that neoliberal reforms in education are producing new forms of teaching subjectivity that should be the terrain of struggle and resistance.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the findings in light of the literature reviewed and related sociopolitical theories.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

6. Introduction

The aim of this research was to critically investigate taken-for-granted performative practices, to question their background and to position them within their broader sociopolitical and socioeconomic context. It also aimed to understand the impact of the increasing drive towards a culture of performativity on the performance and the construction of ELT female teachers' identities in Saudi public schools.

Equally importantly, this study aimed to seek new possibilities for teachers who worked in public institutions to resist the endless burden to 'perform' according to an externally imposed set of standards and oppose structuring a version of themselves that is fabricated against a set of measurable criteria and to stimulate a change in their thinking and practice. It is a new possibility where teachers can gain a greater awareness that implementing a business model, with its extreme demands on performativity and measurability, does not handle the complexities that they encounter in the real world of schools.

This discussion chapter will follow the following structure: (a) a concise summary of the main findings of the study; (b) a section in which I will explicitly match the major findings with the relevant research questions (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3); (c) some explanation/speculation about the reasons for the findings; and (d) a comparison and contrast of the major findings with those of previously published studies to determine whether the current study confirms or challenges them.

6.1 Concise Summary of the Main Findings

Participants held different perceptions of performativity. Elementary and intermediate teachers expressed more positive views of systems of performativity. They perceived performativity as the right path to educational reform and a solution to culturally inherited problems, such as nepotism and a lack of well-trained teachers. This is probably a new and important finding. Secondary teachers expressed their perceptions of performativity as policy cloning that produced unfair systems and contradictions in educational policy.

With regard to the impact of performativity on teachers' performance, the findings revealed that participants across the three educational levels found it to be limiting the scope of their autonomy and that it turned them into machines. They found themselves obliged to present a distorted picture of reality to satisfy the imperative of performativity and to avoid accountability.

The study showed that performativity impacted teachers' professional identities. Elementary teachers have become reliant on the external validation of their practice, and they no longer trust their own professional discretion. Intermediate teachers have internalised the performative discourse and have become more profit oriented. Secondary teachers, on the other hand, expressed how performativity created an interpersonal conflict between their beliefs and performative mandates. The analysis showed that participants in a context of performativity experienced a set of emotions and feelings, such as tension, anxiety, depression, and lack of trust.

Teachers' resistance to the practices and discourses of performativity emerged as a major finding. Participants adopted many methods of everyday resistance, from ignoring meaningless practices to whining and whingeing as a form of resistance.

6.2 Major Findings with Relevant Research Questions

Pertinent to the first research question, which sought to understand how Saudi ELT teachers in public schools perceived the performativity culture and its technological systems, the findings from this study are interesting in terms of how individual teachers perceived this performativity within the same institutional context. The findings suggest that the participants held different views on this issue. Elementary teachers considered the demands of management systems of performativity and current government initiatives as a means of educational reform in terms of providing a centralised database that ensured the rapid exchange of information and resources. Intermediate teachers showed an awareness of the importance of systems of performativity in managing schools and educational processes due to the lack of well-trained school principals. Secondary teachers perceived the innovations to be incongruent with the prevailing social and cultural values of the classroom and therefore were not supported by teachers and students.

With regard to the second research question, which aimed to understand how performativity and its technological systems had impacted ELT teachers' performance, the findings revealed that some participants felt that the new culture of performativity had changed their performance and practices. Secondary teachers stated that this audit culture had led to a detrimental, target-chasing attitude, where traditional notions of context-specific practice arising through professional dialogue were curbed. For elementary teachers, the requirements of performativity imposed on them resulted in inauthentic practice and relationships in which they were no longer stimulated to have a rationale or justification for their own practice, and what was important was achieving the desired outcomes and reaching target grades.

In the current study, even those who did acknowledge the potential benefits of these technologies

of performativity admitted that they had also sucked the joy and creativity out of their careers and undermined their autonomy and agency, reducing them to machines. They executed their teaching in a way that guaranteed good performance in tests. In fact, experienced participants, who may be seen by management as resistant to change, were generally comfortable with the wider framework of management imperatives of performativity as long as they continued to enjoy the 'micro-autonomy' of the classroom. The expectation that teachers would demonstrate and provide evidence that they had aligned their practices and teaching activities to the performative agenda offered an opportunity for elementary participants to present themselves in a certain image to impress management, even if this image was untrue or fabricated. For secondary participants, this implied a focus on *evidencing/reporting* rather than *reflecting on* performance. This mechanistic concept of professional development is a typical attribute of the performative workplace, so this may be an important finding.

However, some interviewees' uncritical support for the enactment of neoliberal policies at school was merely a distorted common sense resulting from the dominant discourse about human capital and the knowledge economy. In this context, teachers' professional growth was a 'top-down' obligation rather than an authentic personal and collegial endeavour, and was likely to be viewed more as a disciplinary method than an inspiring and empowering one.

Classroom observation and participants' responses to research question three of this study, which asked about how performativity and its technological systems impacted Saudi ELT female teachers' identities, generated comprehensive data revealing the impact of such culture and its techno-bureaucratic systems. A set of themes emerged that together suggested a complex, nuanced view of ELT teachers' identity formation in a culture of performativity. The findings

showed that teachers were probably more capable of adapting to the demands of performativity and external regulation than was generally thought to be the case. Elementary participants expressed how the mechanisms of technologies of performativity aimed at turning them into disengaged, docile submissive teachers who constantly sought external validation. Intermediate participants perceived the performative workplace as helpful in offering them a chance to build up their professional skills and confidence in a competitive setting.

For secondary teachers, their productivity and outcomes defined their value not only to the school but also to themselves as professional teachers. Their professional identities, therefore, were recreated and adjusted to cope with the assigned performative identities and the new imperatives in educational settings. Their personal and professional identities were being constantly recreated, as their self-worth was developed in the context of their social practice. Secondary participants acknowledged the tension between the demands of accountability and their desire for autonomy. They expressed the struggle they experienced between their personal values and role expectations, creating irreconcilable conflicts but were sometimes accommodated as teachers demonstrated some features of compliance and resistance.

Furthermore, the data revealed that the culture of performativity generated emotions and affect that promoted the development of certain versions of subjectivity, character structures, defences, changes, and counterchanges, as such affects were intertwined firmly into the mechanisms and procedures of performativity and its technological systems. In this context, autonomy was replaced with measurable expectations and collegiality was replaced with competition, providing the means through which teachers could know their ranks relative to their peers. Such a process not only worked as a mechanism for reshaping teachers' practice and behaviour, but also

changed who they were as teachers, their subjective existence and their relations with each other.

A lack of trust appeared prominently in the data. Policymakers no longer trusted ELT teachers to make curriculum and assessment decisions and sought a way to ensure that all teachers in a given subject and grade level would do the same thing at the same time. Distrust also characterised some social interactions among teachers themselves, as well as with school management teams, which made it difficult for these groups to maintain a genuine dialogue about shared concerns and interests. The subsequent miscommunications tended to undermine teachers' and other school members' constructive efforts to support the academic and social development of students and teachers. In addition, other school members found themselves working in isolation or, in the worst cases, in opposition to one another.

The findings also revealed how technologies of performativity could invoke feelings of anxiety and tension that were not necessarily a result of a conflict between neoliberal and professional values, but sometimes due to the insecurities and tensions caused by performance evaluation uncertainties and how they were going to be evaluated by these systems. Some teachers in the Saudi context supported the extensive use of classroom observations and other surveillance mechanisms and the ideological underpinnings of such technologies. What made them feel anxious and insecure was how their performative work would be recognised by these systems and how they would be rewarded or punished.

Another finding of the current study demonstrated a positive link between the issue of performativity faced daily by teachers, the increased tension between enacting their idealism and pursuing academic excellence as required by the school, and increased levels of low mood or even depression. As a result of the performativity pressures exerted by the school system to limit

and regulate teachers' beliefs and practices, the participants experienced cognitive dissonance, as this was not what was advocated during teacher education. They consequently suffered low moods and depression.

As previously mentioned, the issue of resistance in this research was not thought of as a form of collective exercise of public political activity. Rather, it was approached from the concept of taking care of the self; that is, looking at forms of resistance to practices of performativity in Saudi public schools, and then using those practices of resistance to understand the daily experiences and practices of teachers whose struggles might lead them to question their situation and begin to care for themselves.

The participants of the current study revealed different forms of coping, managing, and resisting the prevalent practices of performativity and discourse. Some participants managed to solve and overcome the challenges and negative feelings and turned them into learning experiences to reflect on their own practices and build a sense of agency and professional identity. Resisting performative discourse and meaningless practice came up as important themes of resistance by elementary and intermediate participants. Secondary participants professed that they were prioritising their psychological and mental well-being over the demands of performativity and other challenges in the workplace as a way to resist.

Finally, I am convinced that education should be predicated on a moral purpose. Based on what I have presented in the previous chapters, my conclusion is that in Saudi society, the situation some ELT teachers find themselves in is unethical, and the way they are treated is immoral. Hence, despite the epistemological challenges, I affirmed my own instinctive prejudices. The work I have undertaken in conducting this study has taken the form of a 'critical enquiry' by

which I have tried to speak as I interpret my findings. Though I still maintain that we should not be doing things in education with the younger generation if they do not have theoretical and empirical grounds; I also agree with Biesta (2015, p. 12–13) that *'If we wish to say something about the direction of education, we always need to complement factual information with views about what is considered desirable. We need, in other words… to [also] engage with values.'*

While not all that this thesis suggests or offers is objectively guaranteed, as I have asserted, we do need to carefully examine the ethical and moral dimensions of what is happening and what could happen in the future, if it is possible to predict. I am, as many other educators, convinced that there are ethical and moral implications for education that policymakers and practitioners need to take into consideration when discussing any element of education.

6.3 Explanation / Speculation about the Reasons for the Findings

To follow Carspecken's model, I will interpret the findings by drawing a link to theories and models. I will draw on theoretical literature and empirical studies to support my explanation and discussion of the findings.

6.3.1 Research Question 1 (Perceptions)

6.3.1.1 Performativity for Definite Roles and Duties

Elementary teachers stressed the ability of performativity to know their definite roles and duties. This is a new finding of this research that can be attributed to two reasons. First, principals of elementary schools are usually senior teachers who graduated from Teachers' Institutes (a degree that is equivalent to secondary level). Such school principals lack professional leadership and management skills, knowledge, and expertise and usually view leadership as a way to exercise authority and control. This has been well documented by educational researchers (e.g.,

Alhumaidhi, 2013; Thumali, 2016). Another reason is that, during the process of educational reform, it is difficult for teachers to have a clear vision of what they are supposed to do.

6.3.1.2 Policy Borrowing as a Quick Fix to Educational Reform

There is no doubt that the globalisation of educational policy has become popular among educational policymakers worldwide (Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012). Governments try to introduce educational policies and practices imported from developed countries, expecting rapid repairs and quick solutions to their educational systems. The main concern about the process of cloning or borrowing an educational policy is that borrowed policies and practices that are effective in their original context may not prove effective elsewhere. This idea of having a mismatch between the imported policy and the local context was repeatedly mentioned by participants from secondary schools.

The KSA and other GCC countries have aimed to implement educational reforms through policies and practices imported from and tested in the West without examining how the local educational and cultural context may undermine or support the implementation of a borrowed educational policy. Policy makers ignore the fact that the borrowing process covertly endorses ‘deterritorialisation and decontextualisation of reform, and challenges the past conception of education as a culturally bounded system’ (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, p. 5). What most educational policymakers in the KSA and other GCC countries are doing is ‘adopting policy blueprints, management structures, leadership practices, and professional development programmes fashioned in different cultural settings while giving little consideration to their cultural fit’ (Dimmock & Walker, 2010, p. 147).

In the same vein, McDonald (2012) argues that educational policy cloning is rife, but without

full attention to the important issues of contextualisation, its value is less likely to be achieved. This process could be described, as one participant said, as trying to change a penguin to a desert species or a camel to an aquatic or ice species.

The elementary teachers who participated in this study expressed their lack of trust that the current system of educational reform would bring about the desired goals. Most of these reforms are meant to generate profit for certain beneficiaries. According to McDonald (2012), borrowing happens in different forms, including in-country training, student training/education in a foreign country, distance education programmes, educational study tours, policy adoption, exchange programmes, and establishment of educational institutions across borders, permitting the exportation of educational policies and products to develop into a lucrative and profitable business.

A. Reasons and Outcomes of Policy Cloning

It is pertinent here to discuss the reasons behind educational borrowing in the KSA and other GCC countries, provide local examples of educational cloning, and analyse the outcomes of importing educational systems, as discussed in the existing literature.

The six GCC countries share similar social norms and practices based on common religious, economic, cultural, political, and historical characteristics (Issan, 2013, p. 145). GCC policymakers view education as an essential tool to develop their nation's economy and guide social change in the knowledge age (Mansour & Al-Shamrani, 2015). The common general belief, however, that the development of a nation is firmly linked to education measures as a significant indicator of modernisation has led the GCC governments to invest in similar educational reforms (Issan, 2013). This belief has led to quick attempts to develop all levels of

education in the GCC that involve wide policy borrowing from Western countries (Mansour & Al-Shamrani, 2015). This has resulted in constant changes in educational policy in the GCC region because the borrowed reforms and ideas behind them tend to have been tested elsewhere, usually in a developed country, attempting to quickly fix education systems to deliver results (Donn & Manthri, 2013, p. 9). These constant changes have made some participants choose to ignore the winds of change, which can shift so quickly, as a means of resistance. This can be seen in the case of the elementary teachers who participated in this research.

B. Problems of Imported Educational Policy

According to Dahl (2010), members of the GCC struggle with a detachment between fostering modernisation and economic growth and the preservation of their culture as they attempt to reconcile traditional values and modernisation, especially in the educational systems. Dahl (2010) argues that leaders in charge of the reform in the GCC countries are aware of the incapability of traditional Arabic-style learning to develop the critical, analytical, and creative skills needed to provide skilled contributors to their workforce or minimise dependence on foreign expertise. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), for example, has sought out Western educational policies, practices, and models that could address the need to build a skilled workforce, believing that Western, English-medium education can enable this (Dahl, 2010). However, as the KSA and other GCC countries seek to raise the level of education, they must try to manage several negative social consequences, such as the decline of the Arabic language, the possible erosion of cultural identity, and the undermining of cultural and religious values (Louber & Troudi, 2019).

More profoundly, Western public educational systems are influenced by secular and liberal

epistemologies that are relatively free from religious influence (Diallo, 2014). Secular ideologies that have overlapping and complex relations with traditional religious ideologies play a substantial part in the construction of knowledge and form thinking and enquiry in Western education and pedagogical practices. Diallo (2014) argues that basic education and the transmission of Islamic knowledge rely on repetition, drills, memorisation, and recitation as the key learning methods. Moreover, rote learning has influenced, to a great extent, the philosophy of teaching and learning, which promotes passivity, obedience, dependence, respect for authority, and an unquestioning attitude (Prokop, 2003).

The prime purposes of education in the KSA and the constructs of teaching revolve around the conservative principles of Islamic philosophical thought. Islamic epistemologies and educational practices play a considerable role in the education systems in the KSA (Alnahdi, 2014). Learning in the KSA, as in most other Arab countries, has been deeply rooted in traditions and religion. Despite all the major changes taking place in Saudi Arabia and some countries in the Arab world in terms of the teaching of sciences, technology, and so on, all theories taught have to be compatible with the Islam religion (Dahl, 2011). If scientific theories are not in line with Islamic tradition, they need to be disregarded, no matter how fundamental they are to science (e.g., evolution and natural selection theory as the only evidence-based explanation for the epic diversity of life on earth).

C. The Outcome of Imported Educational Reform

The contradiction of educational policies is a sub-theme that emerged in the secondary stage data. A sizeable body of research has shown that for educational reform or innovation to be fruitful or have the desired impact on teaching and learning, the education system as a whole must be reorganised and mobilised, and should work harmoniously together (e.g., Markee 1997; Skilbeck 1990). If a certain part of the education system is not working in line with others, this could affect how the reform impacts teaching and learning. For instance, if teachers are not well trained in how to implement the curriculum, this might prevent the curriculum from bringing about the desired changes in teaching and learning, as they might not be able to implement it properly. Nevertheless, imported educational reform is even more complex, as is the case in the KSA and most developing countries in Asia and Africa. Reform does not just involve technical issues, such as new teaching materials and methods. In fact, worldviews involving sociocultural values are embedded in these materials and methods (Tabulawa, 2003). As a result, such innovations in so-called third-world countries, especially in Asia and Africa, have not been very successful, as a review of studies in those regions shows (e.g., Albadi, Harkins, & O'Toole, 2018; Rugh, 2002).

Another problem is that most of the innovations that are introduced in third-world countries, such as the KSA, follow top-down models or centre-periphery models of change, as they are usually borrowed or imported from outside, mainly from Western countries like the UK or the USA (Nkosana, 2013). Secondary teachers mentioned this problem four times in their interviews. Phillipson (1992) critiqued this type of innovation as not promoting development but rather perpetuating the dependency of developing countries on developed countries by implementing a centre-periphery model of development. Proponents of Phillipson's centre-

periphery model of development seem to think of pedagogical issues as packages like learner-centred teaching approaches, in technicist terms, and overlook the fact that such imported reforms come loaded with the values of the giver countries. As these reforms are imported into other countries, they have to function within the new sociocultural and systemic structures of the recipient country, which impose new considerations and parameters. This is not to suggest that there are inherent conflicts or contradictions between Muslim countries and modernisation, but rather to stress the fact that the Anglo-American or any Western approach is not necessarily the only path for modern education. Muslim countries can find their own path to modernisation using Islamic principles and values (Samier & ElKaleh, 2019).

In short, for education reform implementation to be successful, it should take a comprehensive approach, involving many stakeholders and mobilisation of the whole educational system. The sociocultural context of classroom interactions and the taken-for-granted classroom dynamics between teachers and students that shape their classroom practices–meaning stability and consistency–should also be understood. Necessary steps should also be taken to change these dynamics, if that is required. For this reason, imported reform has largely failed, as it comes laden with foreign worldviews and agendas involving sociocultural values that are unrelated to the prevailing social and cultural values of the classroom in the recipient country. Therefore, imported reform does not receive the support of both teachers and students and tends to fail or, at best, achieve partial success.

6.3.1.3 Discussion of the Similarities and Differences in Teachers' Perceptions

The positive views of performance reported by elementary and intermediate teachers shed light on how performativity could offer solutions to an issue that has always been at the core of educational problems: unqualified school principals. However, the negative views of performativity presented by secondary teachers also seemed to have a link to insufficient leadership skills of school principals, who failed to integrate the mandates of performativity and the realities of schools.

This implies that there is a need to motivate a debate about how to create educational structures and ethical practices that help teachers maintain the belief and practice that it is possible for all to learn. Education is dialogic, mutual, and respectful interplay of individual differences (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015). To frame the purpose of education otherwise, to label, stereotype, and isolate groups from involvement in educational policy and decision making is, as many have already suggested (e.g., Biesta, 2015b; Gibbs, 2018), to endorse the continuation of stratified and prejudicial systems that perpetuate social and cultural divisions. Therefore, changes to the organisational culture and leadership of education in theory and practice have become a necessity (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Biesta, 2015b).

6.3.2 Research Question 2 (Performance)

6.3.2.1 Systems of Performativity and Teachers' Total Visibility

Data across the three educational levels indicated that participants were being constantly observed and watched. The existing literature on teachers' identity has provided many insights into the type of teacher identity that an increased reliance on performative technologies in the educational sector may be expected to bring about. For example, Ball (2003) and others (e.g., Jeffrey & Troman, 2011; Sachs, 2001) have pointed out that performative discourse produces a new kind of teacher identity: 'a teacher who can maximise performance, who can set aside irrelevant principles or outmoded social commitments, for whom excellence and improvement are the driving force of their practice' (Ball, 2003, p. 223). This was evident in the elementary participants' interviews. In this sense, teachers are not who they are, but what they perform. The outcomes they produce define their value not only to the school, but also to the way they see themselves as professional teachers.

Put another way, it is assumed that when exposed to performative technologies over a considerable period, teachers tend to evaluate themselves and others in and through such performative language. This raises the question about how secondary and intermediate participants become eager to comply with such ideas. An explanation for this question is commonly cited in the critical educational literature and refers to the nature of possible visibility that performative technologies produce. A number of scholars (eg. Clapham & Vickers, 2018; Mutereko, 2018) have referred to Foucault and his discussion of Jeremy Bentham's construction of a prison in terms of a 'panopticon' to suggest that performative technologies may serve to create a form of 'total visibility'. The idea is simply that the architectural design of Bentham's prison allows for inmates to be constantly observed, or at least feel they are, from a single

watchtower, while the observed themselves can never see the officials in charge of them.

Foucault (1977) interprets Bentham's architectural figure in terms of its intended effect on the observed and its relationship to the exercise of social power. According to Foucault, the major function of the 'panopticon' is to make the observed conscious of their permanent visibility to sustain a power relation, independent of the person who exercises it. In this sense, the observed (i.e., teachers) are seen but cannot themselves see; they become the object of information, but not a part of communication. Surveillance becomes permanent in its effects, even though it may be 'discontinuous in its action' (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). The feeling of being constantly watched will perhaps, it is argued, help the observed become reflective and disciplined. This metaphor explains how neoliberal policies and new forms of governance are reengineering the ethos and identity of teachers. It also explains how participants in this study, through their realisation of being constantly watched and through fear of sanctions, are willing to comply with the accountability regime and adopt their practice to neoliberal discourse and notions that define the 'good' teacher in terms of students' exam performance scores.

Page (2015), on the other hand, brings a new perspective to the panoptic metaphor and highlights its limits in a consideration of teacher evaluation and discusses an alternative metaphor, that of glass, with which to view the performance management of teachers. On one level, the glass metaphor maintains the basic notion of the panopticon with its foregrounding of surveillance. Yet, the glass surveillance is overt—the observer can also be seen. On another level, Page (2015) states that understanding the modern school in terms of glass can help establish the notion of display and exposure to the 'critical gaze of the customer' (Gabriel, 2005, p. 19). The glass metaphor, therefore, emphasises transparency and gives it a supreme value. Teachers become

visible and observable at all times via a number of means, scrutinised and evaluated via a diversity of measures. This glass perspective is also offered as a measure of fairness and equality because surveillance may be constant and overt, but at least it applies to everyone, and this is central to Page's (2015) argument. Transparency, in this sense, becomes a sign of organisational justice. This may explain some participants' positive attitudes towards performativity and its systems.

6.3.2.2 Alienation of Teachers

It is pertinent here to use the 'policy alienation' model developed by Tummers, Bekkers, and Steijn (2009) to explain teachers' disengagement in policy-making. First of all, according to Tummers (2017, p. 2), alienation can generally be defined as 'a sense of social estrangement, an absence of social support or meaningful social connection'.

The concept of alienation can be traced back to Hegel and Marx, who both identified capitalism as the main cause of alienation. While Karl Marx concentrated on *objective* work alienation–workers are alienated when they do not have influence over the resulting product, contemporary scholars have studied *subjective* work alienation–alienation as perceived by the worker (Tummers, 2017). The 'policy alienation' framework has two main dimensions—powerlessness and meaninglessness—that can be used to study general experiences with public policies and their impact on the implementation of these policies. That is to say, high policy alienation can result in resistance to change and lower policy performance when teachers have the impression that they cannot influence the shaping of government policies. These policies are, in general, meaningless, and unable to add value to a larger purpose—students and society as a whole (Tummers, 2017).

A study by Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) revealed that the involvement of teachers and the autonomy they deserve are essential to successful educational reform. Tayan (2017) contends that in the case of Saudi Arabia, the involvement of teachers in current educational reform is just an 'illusion'. This is due to the fact that the King Abdullah Public Education Development Project, or the so-called 'Tatweer', was implemented with market objectives, with no training of teachers to meet these objectives. Alyami (2014) pointed out that the centralised system of power in the Saudi education system itself permits little authority or engagement of teachers.

In the same vein, a recent empirical study by Rajab (2017) surveyed the attitudes and perceptions of 550 female and 450 male English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers at public schools in the KSA in achieving the kingdom's Vision 2030 goals. The results of the statistical analysis showed that the majority of participants expressed a positive attitude towards achieving the vision, reaching 91%, yet 65% indicated that alienation of teachers and minimising the space for their professional involvement and discretion were still obstacles that negatively affected the implementation of the vision of Saudi Arabia in 2030.

In summary, neoliberal education policy, with its performative demands of audit and accountability, coupled with the prescribed methods of teaching and assessment, has led to the alienation of teachers. This alienation can be diagnosed not only through their sense of detachment and powerlessness, but also through their feelings of meaninglessness in their work activities. Clarke & Phelan (2017) contend that the process of teachers' alienation is not merely personal but it has a political dimension, as alienated labour is 'not only estranged from its own work activity but also debarred from the system of meaning and values as well as from any mechanism of evaluation in terms of which it and its products to be judged' (p. 21).

6.3.2.3 Robotising of Teachers as a Way of Control

The idea of turning the workforce into docile robots that appeared in secondary data is not new. It has its roots in the scientific management theory introduced in the 1880's. It is sometimes known as *Taylorism* after its founder, Frederick Winslow Taylor. It was designed to increase efficiency by employing scientific knowledge and evaluating every step in a manufacturing process by breaking down production into specialised repetitive tasks that can be evaluated and monitored (Locke, 1982).

In order to improve efficiency in recent neoliberal reforms, the priority is to develop corporate culture. Instead of the Taylorist approach to implementing low-trust methods of employee control, public managerialism accommodates what seems to be high-trust approaches in order to proceed with innovative actions. Through this change, managerial responsibilities are delegated to organisational members. In order to secure this design, 'devolution' needs to be espoused by the auditing system (Ball, 1990). In short, the discipline of educational management will always benefit from science, but can never itself be scientific; this is perhaps a dialectic that will never end. Efficiency experts will demonstrate the value of some of their assertions—and teachers will assert their values also.

6.3.2.4 Discussion of the Similarities and Differences in the Impact of Performativity on Teachers' Performance

While elementary and intermediate teachers reported some positive impact on their performance, secondary teachers reported only negative impact. The reason could be attributed to the importance of the secondary level. Centralised tests such as the Aptitude Test are performed at this stage, and schools are ranked on their students' academic achievement. This places more pressure on secondary teachers to teach in a way that guarantees good exam results, rather than

helping students become independent learners. This could explain the need for the preparatory year to address the never-ending problem reported by Saudi universities that school graduates are not equipped with the skills to pursue university education. Performativity in this sense could exacerbate the problem rather than solve it, as secondary teachers found themselves obliged to teach for the test.

6.3.3 Research Question 3 (Identity)

6.3.3.1 Compliance with Performativity as a Result of Teachers' Inner Conflict

The conflict experienced by participants creates a mental stress or discomfort known in psychology as *cognitive dissonance.* Leon Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance is concerned with relationships between cognitions, and refers to the mental stress or discomfort experienced by an individual who holds two or more opposing beliefs, ideas, or values simultaneously, or is confronted by new information that conflicts with existing beliefs, ideas, or values. It also centres on how individuals strive for internal consistency.

Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) hypothesised that this unpleasant state of dissonance motivates individuals to engage in a psychological effort to reduce the inconsistencies between cognitions and maintain a kind of internal consistency. Dissonance reduction involves personal responsibility, and reduction can be observed only to the degree that the individual sees himself as responsible for bringing cognitions into an inconsistent relationship. Researchers often measure this reduction through attitude change, as individuals tend to change their attitudes and behaviours in order to reduce inconsistent knowledge and sustain internal consistency (Ghosh & Singh, 2017). This may justify some participants' attitudes towards aligning their practices to the new educational performative imperatives.

Nonetheless, for all the participants in this analysis, professionalism has inevitably become tied up with compliance, even where associated with a form of personal or professional resistance. This type of compliance is referred to in the literature as ‘adaptive professional compliance’ (Hall & McGinity, 2015, p. 3), in which resistance is weakened to enable the formation of a feasible professional identity in an educational environment marked by excessive performativity.

A key finding of this study is that although teachers may be largely affected by the culture of performativity and its technologies, such an effect does not necessarily result in a clear-cut and secure performative identity. Put simply, some teachers have a deep desire to perform, but they come to struggle over what it really means to perform, what is important, and what is ‘good enough’. This struggle is a result of the tensions produced by different types of performance evaluation uncertainties.

6.3.3.2 The Construction of Performative Teacher Identity: A Psychoanalytical Lens

According to Althusser (1971), education is the most important ideological apparatus that works to ensure the perpetuation of the predominant ideology, not by directly teaching the values of that ideology, but rather by immersing people in ideologically predetermined practices that ensure subjection to hegemony and the ruling ideology. This immersion, of course, needs to appear neutral so that people falsely perceive education as distant from that ideology (Allman, 2000). The reasoning for such a market-based corporate ideology is that we should prepare students to enter the workplace. Teachers believe that they are teaching values of self-determination to students who are free to accept or reject these values (Johnson, 2011). Neither group can see the ideological web in which it is trapped. For some participants, technologies of performativity helped to make school practices and performance visible to both policymakers

and teachers themselves.

Some comments showed how participants from the elementary and secondary stages started to accept performativity to define their job requirements and their worth, expressing concern about what elements would be included in their evaluation. This is in line with a recent paper by Holloway & Brass (2018), who revisited two studies conducted 10 years apart in relation to the current performativity movement in the USA. These studies show the extent to which the accountability and performativity regime can reconstruct a managed and performative teacher who depends on numerical indicators of quality, accepts continual scrutiny and constant surveillance, and continually requests external critique and feedback. One teacher from the first study expressed that '*It's just so corrupting to a soul to watch what education has become*'. Ten years later, however, another group of teachers displayed complete acceptance of the performativity system and used it to evaluate their own value and judge their own worth.

This empirical comparison of the two groups of teachers in Holloway & Brass's (2018) study shows an alteration in teachers' governmentality (how teachers govern themselves and are governed by others), where objectification, indicators, numbers, and measurements are no longer considered detrimental to teacher professionalism, but rather what the teachers need to know in order to monitor, improve, and govern themselves.

In examining how we create psychological environments for each other in educational organisations, Gibbs introduced the idea of otherness in education as an important factor in shaping one's identity.

> We accept that we are each self-conscious, conscious of ourselves, but also related to the existence of other people who are reciprocally involved in shaping our existence, be they people we can see, hear, touch, remember having met once or just read about, we are not entirely alone. Near or distant, in some way or other, we have relationships with others. (Gibbs, 2018, p. 43)

Gibbs (2018) explored the concepts of teachers' identities, otherness, inclusion, separation, segregation, and the effects of grouping on those who group and those who are grouped (the manifestation of suspicion). He asserted that the most productive environments in education are deeply psychological: the nature and quality of relationships and education are relational, and psychology can be educational. This is in line with what participants across the three levels expressed, with their emphasis on the importance of healthy relationships. This entails questioning how some groups ultimately become empowered and powerful to discriminate against the powerless.

As Kumashiro (2000) argued, schools are places where the process of othering, whether by deliberate commission, policy, or omission, can be harmful. Initially, power in schools is usually in the hands of the staff, who have a responsibility to manage the environment so that students can safely explore and learn. However, participants in this study across the three educational levels acknowledged that power in schools has been limited within boundaries determined by the principals or even higher authorities, who are usually reluctant to delegate decision-making with regards to classroom management and the knowledge that has to be taught. Conventionally, models of pedagogy and theories of teaching, perhaps less about the nature of learning, have guided teachers' behaviour.

A teacher can also become degraded by being subject to discipline and dictating what has to be taught, rather than ensuring that what is being taught has significance and interest for the learner.

This process of ‘othering’ and the effects of being ‘othered’ can be psychologically and socially damaging to teachers’ well-being, as explained by secondary teachers who participated in this study. As Gibbs (2018, p. 58) puts it, ‘*Othering may disrespect a mutual I-thou relationship and create an I-it objectification of others*’. I also believe that this process of the exclusion of teachers from what could be seen as the heart of their job has a significant impact on shaping their performative identities, as they find themselves in a situation requiring them to change not only their performance and teaching practices, but sometimes the way they understand the purpose and aim of their performance and practice.

6.3.2.4 Discussion of the Similarities and Differences in Teachers’ Identity Constructions

Teachers across the educational levels expressed a set of feelings and emotions rooted in performativity and shaping their identities. Feelings of fear, anxiety, depression, and lack of trust appeared in the data at all levels, but mostly prominently in the secondary-level data.

It is important here to point out that although healthy feelings like trust are recognised by many scholars as fundamental to the functioning of any social system, they remain rather intangible. As Baier (1995, p. 98) puts it, ‘*We inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere and we notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted*’. It is this duality surrounding the concept of healthy feelings like trust (its importance in social systems versus its intangibility), attention is required to help school principals understand and make sense of their roles in facilitating healthy feelings and relationships. The outcomes of feelings like relational trust can be felt, even though they are not easily measured, in the presence of emotionally resourced school members and their commitment when they work together (Lynch, Baker, Lyons, & Cantillon, 2016). Acknowledging this fact could help in placing more importance on

such intangible issues that have paramount importance in educational settings.

6.4 A Comparison and Contrast of the Major Findings with Previously Published Studies

6.4.1 Research Question 1 (Perceptions)

6.4.1.1 Lack of Well-Trained School Leaders

Poor decision making by school principals is a key factor cited by intermediate teachers as justification for implementing systems of performativity. The following studies are in line with this finding. They highlighted the fact that school principals are either not qualified enough to practice efficient decision making or not given enough opportunities to do so.

Alsaleh (2019) explored the practices of Kuwaiti school principals acting as instructional leaders during education reforms. The findings indicated that principals faced challenges related to the deeply ingrained centralised structure in the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education, whose mandates conflicted with the stated goal of building principals' capacity and competence. The study showed similar findings to this research in terms of how school principals were not empowered to take leadership roles, and the school staff were not encouraged to take part in decision making. Alsaleh's study, however, relied solely on self-reported data collected from school principals about their instructional leadership practices that might be influenced by personal or social preference responding.

In a similar context, another study by Abalkhail (2017) listed other problems for women leaders in educational organisations in the KSA. These problems included inadequate guidelines, poor job descriptions, and multiple male and female department directors, which resulted in communication problems, poor coordination, and conflict. This is in line with the findings from intermediate teachers' interviews that indicated poor leadership standards as a reason for their

support for performativity.

Alyami & Floyd (2019) conducted a study to examine female leaders' perceptions and experiences of the educational system in the KSA. The study found that the level of decision making in general was 'semi-decentralised'. They had more decision-making power in relation to internal school affairs, but they found themselves restricted by strict guidance and regulations from the top when it came to key decisions, such as designing the curriculum, assessing students, and recruiting staff. The findings of their study are inconsistent with the findings from the intermediate teachers who participated in this study. They stated that their school principals had no power or courage to deal with internal school affairs.

6.4.1.2 Performativity and Nepotism

An interesting and new finding that is probably unique to the Saudi context is the potential of performativity to limit nepotism and its subcomponents, which have shown their negative effects, particularly in the workplace. A number of studies (e.g., Arasli & Tumer, 2008; Erdem & Karataş, 2015; Heilman & Alcott, 2001; Mohamed & Mohamad, 2011) have indicated that nepotism and other forms of favouritism are prevalent in GCC states and Arab-speaking countries.

A recent study by Alwerthan, Swanson, and Rogge (2017) investigated the correlates of nepotism (favours for family members), cronyism (favours for friends), and favouritism (favours for people in your social network), and psychological distress in a survey of 1088 educators from the KSA. The study suggested that different types of favouritism prevailed in contexts where managers enjoyed absolute authority. These studies support the findings from the intermediate data that the culture of performativity could help reduce nepotism.

6.4.2 Research Question 2 (Performance)

6.4.2.1 Presenting a Fabricated Picture

Elementary teachers reinforced the view that due to the increases in performativity mechanisms designed to make official judgements of them and their schools, they tended to present a fabricated picture to satisfy higher management and avoid accountability. The findings of the current study are in line with the literature that has offered many insights into the type of teacher identity that an increased reliance on performative technologies in the educational sector may be expected to form or generate (e.g., Jeffrey & Troman, 2011; Sachs, 2001). The performative discourse produces a new kind of teacher identity that is outcome-oriented, a teacher who can maximise performance, because teachers in such an environment are not who they are but what they perform.

This finding is also consistent with research conducted in an English secondary school by Perryman (2009). This study shows that in some schools, documentation was enhanced, lesson plans created, pupils temporarily hidden, briefings were rehearsed, displays embellished, and meeting records amended. A distorted, yet successful school was presented to inspectors, who wrote their report accordingly.

Today, it has become very common to find a report in the newspaper on how the system is being manipulated by schools under the pressure of league tables. A report in *The Telegraph* newspaper by Turner and Diver (2019) stated that private schools were making weaker students take exams as ‘external candidates’ to protect league tables.

6.4.2.2 Performativity for Efficiency

Elementary teachers attributed their positive views of systems of performativity to the use of students' academic records to keep track of their achievements. They perceived performativity and its technological systems as a way to maintain efficiency and manage schools, an instrument of goal achievement and a means of initiating a structure or a framework with detailed guidelines and definite roles that could help them to be more goal oriented and have a clear vision of where to direct their efforts. They saw the ways in which their practices were organised as no longer random and somewhat irrational, but rather characterised by rationality, whereby actions are justified on rational grounds. They regarded the use of numbers and data as appropriate to evaluate their performance and inform continuous improvement and decision making.

Li (2017) examined performance-based funding policy and the emphasis on the Student Achievement Initiative (SAI) in Washington State from the viewpoints of selected individuals working at one particular community college. The study provided a different finding from this research in that the cross-sectional nature of the data prevented tracking of the academic pathways of individual students and did not offer the college a clear direction on how to proceed to actually help students graduate.

In a similar vein, Tayan (2017) argued that the current educational reforms in Saudi Arabia, whereby managing student performance has been positioned as a core leadership function at the school level, had resulted in devolving greater accountability to both schools and teachers. Teachers had become 'measurable variables related to the educational performance of their students, while being held to account for their own performance and the performance of their school' (Tayan, 2017, p. 67). This is not exclusive to the Saudi context. According to Kelly and

Downey (2011), most teachers attributed the current trend of collecting student data to accountability and public use reasons (i.e., external reasons), but felt it should be collected primarily for self-evaluation and improvement reasons (i.e., internal reasons). The findings of these studies are inconsistent with the participants' claims that performativity and keeping student records helped them improve students' achievements.

6.4.2.3 The Authority of Experts and Exclusion of Teachers

Exclusion of teachers from policy-making procedures and giving authority to educational experts is in line with a study by Troudi & Alwan (2010). They reported similar findings in a qualitative interpretive study of 16 female secondary school English language teachers' perceptions of their role during curriculum change in the UAE. Most participants in their study expressed an image of themselves as being 'at the bottom of the pyramid', 'obedient slave[s]', and 'prisoners of the exam'.

6.4.2.4 Outcome-Oriented Context as a Form of Accountability

Ro (2019) reviewed 12 empirical studies focusing on teachers' professional learning in various test-based accountability contexts. The studies were all conducted in the US apart from one, which was conducted in Singapore. Most studies revealed that test-based accountability had a negative effect on teachers' learning by causing them to experience too much pressure and tension, and forcing them to produce teacher-directed lessons for exam preparation.

Likewise, Loh and Hu (2014) found that the performance-oriented teacher appraisal system led the teacher, who was initially critical of teaching to the test, to comply with this practice. The researchers argued that the student performance results were used as 'inscription devices' (p. 19), which affected the teacher's self-perceptions and the public's view of their effectiveness. To

prove their professional ability, the teachers had no choice but to teach the test.

These findings are similar to the findings of this study, in which all secondary teachers admitted directing their efforts towards teaching items that were likely to appear on the test rather than teaching the knowledge or skills these items represented.

6.4.2.5 Teachers Leaving the Profession

There is very little information on staff retention in the field of education in Saudi Arabia. Gahwaji (2013) conducted a qualitative study to address teachers' challenges in the KSA. The study reported a lack of respect for teachers as a potential risk to their retention. Teachers reported a lack of respect from the policymakers who imposed changes on them, from parents who had impracticable expectations, and from society in general, who seemed to hold them responsible for improving the education crisis. This study supports the finding from secondary teachers who mentioned lack of trust and lack of respect among other reasons that made them choose to leave the profession.

The continuing and substantial number of qualified teachers who leave the profession is a longstanding problem in the teacher workforce, not only in the KSA, but also in different parts of the world. An recent research paper by Berryman and Calvert (2019) used data collected from a survey in the last five years of 1,200 teacher education graduates of the University College London (UCL) Institute of Education (IOE) to explore the reasons they had left or would consider leaving in the future. The top reasons given by those who had left were to improve work-life balance (75%), workload (71%), target-driven culture (57%), government initiatives (47%), and lack of support from management (47%). As can be seen, target-driven culture came third after workload and work-life balance. This is in line with the finding that the culture of

performativity has caused some teachers to take early retirement or even resign and leave the profession.

6.4.3 Research Question 3 (Identity)

6.4.3.1 Conflict of Values

A conflict that appeared in the data was represented by a deep sense of dissatisfaction and discomfort that some participants experienced when trying to manage the conflict between what they believed to be a good practice and what they had to do according to new policies and reform. This finding is in line with Marco-Bujosa, McNeill, and Friedman (2020), who qualitatively examined one cohort of four urban teachers in the USA and found that all four teachers felt their school context to be contradictory. The teachers in the study used different strategies, including deconstructing the context and positioning themselves within and against it, to negotiate school policies and procedures that restricted student opportunities to learn.

6.4.3.2 Lack of Trust

Lack of trust is another theme that emerged from the interviews. This theme centres on the idea that teachers perceive themselves as unworthy of public trust, which seems to have an impact on the development of their identities.

A field-based study of school change in Chicago by Bryk and Schneider (2002) presented compelling evidence that supported this finding. They found that trust in schools was a strong predictor of student achievement, even stronger than socioeconomic status. They contended that schools with a high degree of relational trust were far more likely to make the kinds of changes that help achieve the required outcomes than those where relations were weak. The findings from Bryk and Schneider's study also suggest that while not all schools with high levels of trust

improve, schools with limited or no relational trust have almost no chance of improvement. That is, trust alone will not solve instructional or structural problems but will definitely decrease the vulnerability that teachers feel when asked to perform tasks related to reform or desired change.

6.4.3.3 Depression and Anxiety

Throughout the interviews, participants listed many complaints about the circumstances of their workplace that they thought had negatively impacted their overall well-being and mental health, such as anxiety and depression. This finding is supported by Al-Gelban (2008), who measured the prevalence and severity of depression, anxiety, and stress among Saudi secondary school teachers in Abha City in the southern region of Saudi Arabia. The findings revealed that of 189 teachers, 25% had depression, 43% had anxiety, and 31% of the participants had stress. Depression, anxiety, and stress were positively and significantly correlated.

6.5 Summary of Chapter 6

In this chapter, the findings of the study are discussed in light of their context and the existing literature. The first section provides a concise summary of the main findings of the study. The second section discusses findings pertaining to the three main research questions, which addressed the impact of the culture of performativity on teachers' perceptions, performance, and professional identity construction. The third section includes some speculation and reasoning for some findings. I referred to established social models and sociopolitical theories when possible to seek explanations of findings. Finally, the fourth section discusses the major findings with those of previously published studies.

The next chapter will assess the implications of the current study and provide major conclusions and contributions to knowledge, along with recommendations for language education policy and

practice in public education in Saudi Arabia.

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS

"Power remains strong when it remains in the dark; exposed to the sunlight it begins to evaporate."

— Samuel P. Huntington, American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony (1981, p. 75)

7. Introduction

This chapter offers major conclusions along with some key contributions to knowledge in the area of English language education policy and practice. It also presents the implications of, and provides recommendations for, language education policy and practice in public education in Saudi Arabia. These comprise implications for implementing new educational policies and teacher education. The chapter ends with some implications for future research in the area of implementing neoliberal policies in education and, finally, an account of my personal research journey is provided.

7.1 Contribution to Existing Knowledge

To conclude the previous chapters, it seems vital to highlight the key contribution of this study to existing knowledge. First, the study's main contribution relates to the notion that has been debated in policies in education and critical education literature: the importation of market philosophies into education through performativity and its technological systems and the impact of this on ELT teachers' performance and identity in the Saudi context. The study has both theoretical and practical contributions.

First, informed by a critical theory, the current study makes a major theoretical contribution in the sense that it presents a new perspective from which to approach the phenomenon of

performativity and its consequences on educational policies and practices in the Saudi context. As was described in chapter one, prior efforts devoted to studying performativity in KSA have been unsuccessful to link the prevailing culture of performativity and performance technologies as a manifestation of market-driven principals to its socio-political and socio-cultural context.

There are also evident indications that Saudi ELT teachers throughout this study have claimed a pattern of detachment between government language education policies and individual needs. The findings have also revealed the complexities and uncertainties of issues surrounding the phenomenon of performative educational technologies and the information generated by them and the fabricated reality such systems represent by rendering educational practice and assessment into a *generic* form. All these issues influence language education policy and practice and contributed to construct ELT teachers' identity in the Saudi context. These, as it was discussed, were an outcome of socio-political and socio-economic factors.

Furthermore, most of ELT research conducted in the Arab World has been limited to scientific modes of inquiry where central issues embedded in the ELT educational practices, such as voice, marginalisation and power relations are not addressed which the findings of the current research attempted to point out. The current research also can be said to function with a vision in which, in Pennycook's words, "what it means to be critical is limited to relating the language to broad social contexts" (2004a, p. 797). The results of such positivist-oriented studies create general knowledge about the issue studied without allowing the researcher to engage reflexively with the topic to fully understand the phenomena. Moreover, educational research suffers when it is not thoroughly permeated by democratic values. That is to say, when education researchers neglect the significance of democracy for educational research and carry out educational research that is

isolated from moral and political values and put it on absolute foundations, such research becomes based on a flawed understanding of social science. Owing to this, the current study has attempted to tackle performativity from a critical perspective and situate performativity and its technological systems in its broad socio-political and socio-cultural context to provide a picture of the background against which these techno-bureaucratic systems operate. It has also specified a need to further qualitative rather than quantitative research as well as ethically oriented critical rather than apolitical forms of inquiry in the Saudi context and the Arabian Gulf region in general, where there is still much to be studied and explored.

As for the practical level, this research makes a number of contributions by drawing recommendations from its findings. The recommendations below are consistent with Pennycook's (2001) concept of *preferred futures* in that they are predicated on ethical considerations of what is preferable to meet the needs of the Saudi ELT teachers and students in public schooling. Additionally, the participants suggested some solutions and ideas that they believed were worth supporting and should be taken into consideration by decision makers in order to understand and adjust ELT to the Saudi context. These suggestions were taken on board when writing the recommendations of this chapter. Besides, it is important to point out that these recommendations are also in line with the overall theorisation which informed this study and, thus, should not be considered as an alternative to the current language education policy and practice.

The recommendations below are proposed to policy makers and other stakeholders in the public education sector as a starting point for new possibilities and guidelines for robust educational management and teacher evaluation in public education that will best serve the interests of both

Saudi ELT teachers, students and the whole community. While this study started with a critical and political agenda, it did not attempt to prompt the participants towards taking action, but rather; to empower them through the research discourse and dialogue to better understand performativity and its accountability systems and the logic they are predicated upon. It also attempted to show the participants how such neoliberal policies can reshape their identity and practice so that they can take care of themselves. Thus, the recommendations below could be of some value to ELT policy and practice and teacher education in the Saudi context.

Although critical research is value-laden, some themes that emerged were different from the assumptions with which I began the research. I began with the assumption that the impact of performativity was entirely negative.

The study has identified key issues related to performativity that are specific to the Saudi context. Elementary teachers expressed their belief in the systems of performativity as an efficient way to regulate educational processes and offer fast communication between the different departments of the MoE. They also pointed out that these systems of performativity helped to direct their practices, define their tasks, and realise their potential.

Intermediate teachers pointed out the potential of the systems of performativity to limit nepotism and other forms of favouritism that have plagued Saudi society for decades. Another new and unexpected finding was the ability of performativity to improve teachers' technological skills and build their confidence as professional teachers.

The data from secondary teachers came to extend what was already known about the impact of performativity on teachers' performance and identity construction in terms of limiting the scope of their autonomy and excluding them from policy-making process. However, the analysis across

the three educational levels revealed a need to recruit professional school principals who are able to negotiate the mandated performativity and the reality of the classrooms. The research also highlighted the potential of some unrecognised forms of everyday resistance, such as ignoring meaningless changes and moaning and whingeing, to resist excessive performativity in Saudi public schools.

Finally, and most importantly, critical research always aspires to change social reality. The real contribution of a critical study should be seen in terms of how successful it was in achieving praxis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). That is, it helps participants develop conscious reflection about how power operates in various educational contexts. Once praxis is achieved, transformational teaching and learning are the result. I will elaborate on this in the following section (7.2 Tracing a Pathway to Hope).

7.2 Tracing a Pathway to Hope

Through the journey of exploring my research questions, I came to realise that the energy generated when people gather purposefully to talk to each other to find and create connections through focused discussions of certain ideas is somewhat transformative. The power of epistemic interviews should be acknowledged. This transformative potential manifested in the journey between frustration and hope that the participants of this study helped me to see. Because of the participants' experiences in discussing different aspects of the performativity movement and ideas about the aim and purpose of education and what it means to be a professional teacher, the participants were able to make some significant remarks. For example, when introducing participants to Henry Giroux's notion of teachers as transformative intellectuals as an alternative discourse to teachers as performative technicians, Nouf said, '*That's really inspiring and helping*

me to change my perspective', and Salma said, '*This idea should prevail… we should all work towards this end*'. To many participants, this idea felt rich and inspiring. Leena said, '*This discussion helped me to put a lot of my beliefs and thoughts about education in words and I'm starting to see myself as someone who can do something*'. Sara added, '*It is challenging the way I think*'.

Enabling this type of discourse between and among participants through the experience of this type of conversation using dialectical interviews was not an easy task, given the fact that the context of this study is characterised by extreme dogma and heavy reliance on religion and theological doctrines to interpret and approach all dimensions of social life. I have to admit that I experienced moments of deep frustration when some participants expressed their ultimate submissiveness by attributing their plight to the will of God. Nonetheless, I found hope in other participants' remarks about enabling an alternative discourse. I believe such discourse could contribute to a world in which teachers stand for something and will not fall for anything, to help them develop a willingness to be courageous, daring, and reflexive, which is not compatible with being compliant or submissive, and to help them appreciate the risk-taking elements in education to unravel performative discourse. I believe that these remarks are significant, as they indicate that a difference, albeit modest, has been made, and that a difference, no matter how small, was achieved, meaning that possibilities to redefine the realities of our schools do exist.

7.3 Recommendations

7.3.1 Recommendations for the English Language Education Policy in Public Schools in the KSA

The present research has revealed that there is a pressing need to take serious steps to seek new possibilities for a more effective language policy that is based on the future needs of Saudi learners of the English language. I envision the potential of the following:

- The culture of performativity generated by exploitative policy technologies of reason blocks the possibility of promoting behaviours and discourses that could introduce alternative goals and ideals other than those stressed under the performance indicators. Policy makers should encourage and reward teachers who resist performative goals, in order to show that they are open to different ideals and aspirations and there is a welcome exposure to alternative ways of thinking about issues in the education profession. This may help some teachers recover the values that have been displaced by neoliberal and performative ones. In order for this encouragement to be enacted, the following suggestions could be of some help:
- Legislation by the Saudi MoE is required to mitigate the common practices of some school principals and heads of educational offices to block teachers' legitimate criticism of the educational system. Threatening teachers and having them sign pledges not to publicly criticise (via press or social media platforms) should be deemed unethical. School leaders and teachers should feel safe to articulate their concerns and it is clearly in the public interest for them to have a voice. This means that school principals will need some education/professional development about this issue.

- The set of criteria to identify outstanding teacher awards should include a demonstration of the teachers' ability to critique the different aspects of the work they are engaged in and the systematic constrains that are placed on them. Keeping a record of critical incidents and conducting analysis of them (Tripp, 1994) can be a useful technique for this end. Critical incident analysis serves as a form of reflective inquiry and can promote a sense of professional awareness. To take something as a critical incident is a value judgment we make and a significance we attach to the meaning of the incident (Tripp, 1994). For this to happen, teachers will need to receive professional development sessions on critical reflection. This can demonstrate that the MoE is committed to encouraging teachers to be critical and sees this as a source for change and improvement.
- The process of inviting teachers and school principals to communicate their concerns to higher authorities in annual meetings should follow a certain scheme. Currently not everyone is allowed to express their views; only certain teachers are invited to do so. This process is subject to personal preferences by the heads of educational offices, who may exclude teachers who are likely to express views that are different from those of higher authorities. To ensure fair and consistent selection, teachers should submit an application online form that summarises their expertise and the issue they want to raise. A committee can then make the decision and reply to unsuccessful applicants, explaining why their applications were deemed unsuccessful.
- The question of what is the nature of education and what is it for should become central in educational discourse. Understanding the purpose of education should not be limited to statistics of learning outcomes and performance indicators that can be easily manipulated and fabricated. Education is embedded in a complex social context and dealing with

human subjects makes it hard to reduce education to a generic form or simply trying to "fix" it. Professional development programme for all involved about the nature of education and multiple perspectives on the issue becomes vital. These questions are at the center of Biesta's expanding work and one of the core issues in his (2015) book *The Beautiful Risk of Education*.

- In relation to league tables, test scores should not be taken as the only indicator of a school's standard of achievement in a subject as a whole. Most tests do not sample the whole of the subject domain, but a selection from it, this should be considered.

- When reporting to higher management in the MoE, schools should be encouraged to present themselves in a realistic light, not only focusing on their strengths. Highlighting shortcomings and challenges in different kinds of learning should also be valued as a way to indicate avenues for development and to allow test results (including value-added results) to be viewed in their proper context. It would also reduce the temptation for schools to fabricate evidence in order to appear good.

- Although the current reform was introduced by Tatweer to grow a knowledge-based economy and to strengthen the country's competitiveness in labour market, I believe that any educational transformation needs to take account of local culture, values and norms. The impact of neoliberal policy implementation and enactment should perhaps be positioned within a local context and tailored to the demands of the local level. National policy makers should acknowledge the need to address the local context, as this would

possibly create a more effective transition and educational reform by adapting local needs to international requirements. Also, a broader understanding of the way high-performing countries have identified and implemented policy in their local contexts is equally important, but again reform needs to be approached in a way that is appropriate to the unique Saudi context.

- The Saudi- Finnish partnership to improve the Saudi education sector is a good initiative. Yet, Saudi policy makers should keep in mind that the process of educational reform is complex, challenging, very gradual and sometimes frustrating. The benefits of the educational reforms may take some time to materialise. For example, it took the Finnish education system, which is said to be one of the best in the world, more than 30 years since it started a comprehensive school reform in the 1970's (Alnahdi, 2014). With Saudi Arabia facing a real challenge of catching up with developed countries in providing quality education, reforms must be well-designed, legislated and effectively implemented. This necessitates addressing the local problems of public education specific to the Saudi context and including all aspects related to education, and not being misled by the idea that education can be simply fixed by a set of criteria or performance indicators.

- Key policy makers in the Saudi MoE should take serious steps to maximise sustainability of educational organisations and practices, especially in the public sector. Many projects and initiatives are discarded in the middle phase or even earlier and replaced by new ones. Lack of consideration paid to sustainable principles while implementing a new project has resulted in undesirable waste of money, time and effort. For Saudi

educational organisations to operate efficiently in the long term, they must incorporate sustainable principals into their activities by considering sustainability during the preparation and review of project strategies, supporting new agreements and negotiations that promote sustainable practices, developing new projects driven by sustainability principles and broadening their vision of sustainability beyond the limits of the organisation. The literature offers a wide range of project sustainability models that can be adopted. For example, Silvius, Schipper and Nedeski (2013) proposed evaluation of sustainability in projects using social, environmental and economic dimensions that could be efficient.

- Policy makers and other educators should understand that there is no such thing as apolitical expertise. The widely held belief that expertise is an external variable that merely informs policy-making while itself remaining apolitical results in an incomplete and partial understanding of political realities (Bock, 2014). This is especially true for the KSA and other developing countries where many internal and external factors influence what experts and whose expertise are deemed valid or acceptable in a policy-making context. Expertise must therefore be seen as intrinsically politicised. This is not to seek to demonise consultants or experts but is a call for caution. Only if we see expertise as politicised and consultants as a highly influential subgroup of experts, we can reach an adequate understanding of their role in policy-making.

- Teachers and other educators must be included in the process of generating and implementing educational policies, as excluding and alienating them can result in a loss

of connectedness when they cease to find meaning and agency in their everyday activities. Many participants in this study admitted to being excluded from the process of negotiating the policy implications or the meaning of their imposed practice. Their perspectives on the loss of their classroom autonomy and freedom to assess their students' understanding and progress and to adjust the pace of instruction accordingly were not taken into account in policy making. Policy and the lived world of classrooms were separated by an excessive audit culture and micro-management practices. Technological systems of performativity such as *Noor* or *Tawasul* can provide useful communication channels, where educational initiatives can be introduced and left open for vote.

- Terms such as *success* and *good practice,* in the KSA at least, are profoundly embedded in educational policy and discourse. Incorporating alternative notions such as good-citizenship, social justice and equity, and articulating 'performance standards' that align with these, is crucial for subversion and transformation of this neoliberal discourse. Policy makers, therefore, should encourage educators at all levels to examine and articulate this revised meaning of success and related terms with all their complexity, and try to construct a more equitable, socially just, critical democratic system of education with a new set of values that is capable of challenging corporate values and the excessive accountability culture.
- As participants in this inquiry revealed, the present fashionable culture of performativity and accountability damages rather than repairs trust. If we want greater accountability without damaging professional performance, we need the so-called "intelligent

accountability" (Johnson, 2017) that focuses on good governance, on obligations to tell the truth rather than stressing micro-management by means of performance indicators or total transparency. Good governance, in this sense, is possible only if educational institutions are permitted some space for self-governance in a way suitable to their specific responsibilities, within a structure of financial and other reporting. Effective accountability offers essential and well-informed independent judgment of an institution's or an individual professional's work when reporting. It is not being completely standardised or detailed since much that has to be accounted for is not easily measured and cannot be reduced to a set of stock performance indicators. Those who are called to account should report their successes and failures to others who have sufficient time and experience to assess the evidence and report on it. In order for a culture of public service to thrive, professionals and public workers must in the end be free to serve the public, not policy makers or their paymasters.

- This being said, if the above recommendations are to be significant there are a number of steps to be considered first. Interviewees in this study pointed out a number of problems, such as weak curriculum planning and implementation, constant changes to textbooks, out-of-date teacher training and professional development programmes, and insufficient school buildings with large class sizes and no adequate ELT facilities. These problems were the result of an arbitrary distribution of the educational budget and random policy decisions, coupled with the lack of policy transparency and consistency. Hence, the MoE should include teachers, students, parents, and employers and keep them informed as part of the reform process. Furthermore, the MoE should ensure the availability of adequate

classroom size with appropriate learning facilities, as the absence of such enhancements would definitely contribute to increasing, rather than bridging, the gap between policy and practice and would hinder any educational reform.

7.3.2 Recommendations for ELT Teachers and Teachers Education and Development

- Based on the findings about teachers' depression and mental health problems, medical insurance becomes a basic necessity for teachers and their dependents. This will provide an environment for a better performance in the workplace. Saudi teachers have been campaigning over health insurance for decades. Like employees working in other public sectors, teachers should have access to state-sponsored healthcare coverage. It might be useful to establish a department of teachers' wellbeing at the ministry of education that would have the responsibility of looking after teachers' mental health. The department could have a unit in every educational zone in the country. A free helpline should be available for all teachers and other educational staff members to communicate their problems to certified well-trained counselors with confidentiality.

- I suggest designing teacher education curricula with critical pedagogical principles, in order to prepare educators to identify and interrogate potentially harmful ideologies and practices in their schools. I maintain that not only teachers but all educators need to develop political and ideological clarity in order to increase the chances of understanding how ideology functions as it relates to power. I also argue that it is imperative that these educators instil in their students the same kind of critical consciousness that enables them to read and act upon the world around them. This is perhaps a challenging task to achieve in the Saudi contect but it is worth trying.

The juxtaposing of ideologies should help teachers and all educators to better understand if, when, and how their belief systems uncritically reproduce those of the dominant society and thus maintain unequal conditions that so many educators and students experience on a daily basis (Bartolomé, 2004). Many voices across the KSA educational spectrum have presented the market-driven reform and performance-based funding to be the ultimate solution to all educational dilemmas. While this could be true in terms of adding structure and regulating what seems like a somewhat chaotic system, those advocates have failed to recognise it as an ideology or a philosophy that emerged as a conscious attempt to reshape human life and shift the locus of power. One effective way to ensure that teachers, school principals and other educators start to build and increase their political and ideological clarity is by having teacher education classrooms overtly examine the way ideology operates as it relates to power. It is also important for all educators to explore the political and cultural role that counter-hegemonic resistance can provide to oppose and transform the damaging and undemocratic values and beliefs that inform educational practices in the KSA. I have to acknowledge that this is a hard task to achieve but I believe that the consequences would be transformational and would dramatically change the way education is approached in the KSA.

- Teacher education programmes offered by the Saudi MoE should also be tailored to help teachers develop a coherent professional identity, in addition to helping them be competent in subject matter pedagogy. This can be done through helping teachers to examine systematically their own personal and professional influences with reference to educational research to develop a unique whole. This unique whole is what a coherent professional identity could mean (Olsen, 2016). In other words, the more teachers know

about themselves and the influences that have shaped their identities, the better they can meet their needs by obtaining greater professional satisfaction. Therefore, the current tendency in most educational programmes to present professional identity as something detached from one's emotions and personal experiences should be altered. Teaching is inseparably connected to teachers' emotional and personal lives. This entails the following:

- A greater attention should be directed to the emotional side of teaching. Teachers experience a range of stresses and have significant responsibilities with high expectations. They may work under pressure in difficult circumstances. Like many others in schools, teachers may avoid talking about stress, mental ill health and depression. Female teachers may have a greater role at home, and may struggle to care for themselves while caring for both their students and their own families. Such non-stop pressure may take its toll on their mental health. Teachers should be taught more about dealing with the emotional burden of caring for others. As well as the technical side of training, self-care should be given equal status to other aspects of training. All teachers should be encouraged to make a *safety plan*, a mental health plan equivalent of putting on a car seat belt. This plan is a personal set of things to help keep teachers safe in times of distress, including whom to contact for support if needed.

- Teacher education should be directed toward the responsible exercise of autonomy and place large emphasis on direct and explicit discussions of teachers' discretion,

responsibilities, and rights, as this will have considerable impact on the unavoidable exercise of power in schools (Webb & Gulson, 2013). Teachers, not policy makers, have the potential to make visible what everyone is searching for, as the latter group is disconnected from classroom realities and the direct involvement with students. Teachers, thus, should continuously attempt to live up to their own moral purpose in teaching, as failing to do so can be emotionally distressing and create feelings of guilt and dissatisfaction.

- The continuous efforts to standarise the ends of education and to infantalise teachers can be seen as a serious attempt to de-agonise education. Agonism as a "strategic and tactical doctrine concerned with the capacity of human agents to challenge the tragic forces that seek to govern their lives and determine their conduct" (Wenman, 2013, p. 39). Agonism, as both a political doctrine and a critical educational praxis has the potential to revitalise the 'declining' business of teacher education in the Saudi context and transform it to a socially responsible business that helps teachers to be aware that the current world of schooling is only one among numerous options, which often serves the interests of particular groups at the expense of others. Thus, teachers should be encouraged to participate in educational forums, debates, conferences and critical questioning of the purpose and meaning of their practice and try to imagine realistic rather than idealistic alternative approaches to education. These 'tools' of resistance can help teachers challenge their status quo and not to become resigned to their own afflictions.

7.4 Implications for Future Research

Now, as performance technologies and commensurate cultures tend to be diffused across school systems both locally and globally, I particularly suggest the following:

- Several thought-provoking questions related to value, interests and application have the potential to generate further research in the Saudi context. For example, (i) how can neoliberal policies be efficiently applied to other (developing and religiously conservative) countries; and (ii) would the application of Western neoliberal ideology to the Saudi context lead to the erosion of traditional and cultural values? However, it is of paramount importance to determine how low scores countries (e.g. Gulf states) on the supranational agencies such as Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) are capable of effectively implementing a policy reform at the local level grounded on statistics derived from supra-national agencies. However, as the educational performative technologies were introduced in Saudi educational system in 2005, scholarly efforts should be also directed to assess their impact on students' academic progress.
- Future research should, more than is typically the case today, take an interest in the performative technologies in terms of unpacking their complexities and uncertainties rather than ignoring them to place their effect on teachers' performance and identity under further scrutiny. Thus, the identified performance evaluation uncertainties and the concept of a struggling professional may establish a good basis for further scholarly discussions in the KSA.
- Another suggestion for future research addresses the relationship between policy alienation and policy performance. Research has shown that policy alienation has a strong correlation with policy performance as well as change willingness among public

professionals (e.g. Kickert, 2010; Tummers, 2017). It would be stimulating to examine the effect of policy alienation on actual performance of policy by teachers and other civil workers in the KSA. A future study could, for instance, develop a mixed method approach. Interviews and survey techniques could be used to determine the public professionals' level of policy alienation. A different source could be utilised to investigate the actual policy performance of these public service workers when implementing the policy. The reported policy performance could then be related to the level of policy alienation. Such inquiry could also be significant for policy makers who need information on the factors that affect policy performance. Moreover, it would be valuable to study the effects of policy alienation in the Saudi context as most policy alienation studies have been attentive to Western contexts and almost no studies have been conducted in developing countries or Middle Eastern countries (Tummers, 2017).

- The final suggestion for future research is that researchers could further explore how the mid-career teacher attrition phenomenon in the Saudi context might better be understood and tackled in the future.

7.5 My Personal Research Journey

In this concluding section, I reflect on my research journey and the significance of my personal learning in the course of this journey. Reflecting to my PhD experience as I reached the end of it and gear up to submission, I can honestly admit that I consider this journey one of the most rewarding and eye-opening experiences of my life. In the following paragraphs, I would like to share my personal PhD experience, struggles, challenges, fear and joy that I endured and enjoyed during my thesis journey. I hope that these thoughts will offer other students with some insights and encouragement to persist in accomplishing what is undeniably one of the most rewarding

challenges in one's educational life. As a starting point, I will tell the story of how I became interested in the topic that eventually became my research project.

What I understood when doing my masters degree in applied linguistics is that there are lots of things come into play when trying to choose a research topic or even the wider research area. The rule that says the good research project is a completed research project guided me when choosing the topic and the scope of the current study. Issues of time and other practical considerations were taken into consideration from the outset of this inquiry. The aspiration, however, for selecting the current research questions came after taking a module in critical applied linguistics at the pre-thesis phase in which I was introduced for the first time to notions such as unequal power relations and the need to question the taken for granted assumptions, concepts and practices in the fields of TESOL and applied linguistics. Nonetheless, conducting a small-scale critical study was the real catalyst that helped me adopt a critical mind frame and realise that critical research is foundational to education research. Critical ontology needs to be conceived not merely as a mode of inquiry but rather as an attitude or ethos or even a philosophy of life whereby we can become aware of the ways power shapes us and the way we perceive the world. It is a means to express a commitment to social justice and is essential in order to move away from approaches characterised by implicit or explicit positivist/postpositivist assumptions that often promote covertly neoliberal values and consequently fail to question and thereby transform the status quo when education researchers flee from critical research and chase after pure science. Without such realisation, it would be impossible to move forward to where we should be going or redefine our unpleasant reality. That was the point where I made my final decision about carrying out a critical study which offers a model of education research that recognises the priority of democratic values to education research. Such research can also help

me investigate how power intersects with the ways educators make meaning of themselves and the contexts in which their teaching and identities are embedded. Therefore, after a careful review of the literature, I found corporatisation of education as my wider area of interest and performativity and its impact on Saudi ELT teachers' performance and identities as my specific topic is not merely something that I felt passionate about but also will fill a gap in the literature and will offer potential research questions. It is this passion that helped me sustain the discouraging, often seemingly endless middle of this journey.

Although the course work for my doctoral degree served as a strong foundation for this mission, the thesis phase was still a leap of faith. In fact, there was no reason to believe this process will be linear and smooth and I was fully prepared for considerable confusion, as I did not expect complete certainty. For many reasons, I often felt as though I was "shooting in the dark" and would be lucky to hit the target. First, as this study attempted to address the hegemony of neoliberalism in education and link performativity and its technological systems to its socio-political and socio-economic context, I needed to build up some knowledge in these aspects before starting the actual research. I had to go back to some classical political economy writings of the eighteenth century such as the works of Adam Smith and others. Reading Adam Smith was as difficult to me as trying to grasp a shadow; political economy simply did not make sense to me, let alone being written in old English of the eighteenth century. I followed the words but failed to grasp what they were telling me. I had to read about Adam Smith's work before reading him firsthand, to gain some foundational knowledge that will provide the basic understanding for concepts related to my study. Nonetheless, reading about others' interpretation of Adam Smith's work is a slippery ground as some economists misunderstood some of his ideas such as the famously quoted "invisible hand". Also, his original work suggests that Smith would not

necessarily totally support the advocacy of free markets enthusiastically. However, these moments of clarity and understanding often sustain the motivation and enthusiasm.

When you aim at producing around 100,000 words thesis, it can be tempting and sensible to measure your productivity in terms of how many words you have written per day. This can be, however, damaging at times because some of the most productive parts of my thesis were the result of an informative discussion with my supervisor or colleagues or drawing a mind map of a chapter plan or even refining an idea when going for a walk to return to a challenging chapter of my thesis fresh. Writing a thesis is a tough task that needs not only setting deadlines and trying to meet them by producing daily a certain number of words but equally importantly is to be immersed with research community that may offer potential solutions to research problems and challenges and bring new insight to the research.

At a more personal level, my research was transformative as it changed the way I saw myself in the world and the world around me, resulting in a shift in self at the levels of both personal and professional awareness. Understanding and researching teachers' identity and its formation process have made me reflect on my own experience as a teacher and what I have become as an educator under such performativity and accountability movement. Where the research participants helped me to understand the terms and effects of the performativity movement in the everyday experience of being teachers in the public schools, the process of the research itself supported my ability to frame those experiences in a larger context. This has significantly shaped my understanding of why education must be devoted to the cultivation of imagination and the pursuit of other possibilities to enable children to "become human". This can be done by promoting moral and ethical factors related to good education. The attempt to depersonalise and

commercialise the educational process will diminish the role of teachers to the deliverers of the curriculum rather than relatively autonomous professionals whose main purpose is to help children acquire the knowledge, skills and ethical vocabulary necessary for the richest possible participation in public life.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:
The link to The Powell Memorandum

https://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=powellmemo

Appendix B:
Information of Participants

Participant pseudonym	Qualification	Years of experience	The stage they are teaching	The grade they are teaching
Amal	Bachelor of languages and translation/ PNU university/Riyadh	**11**	Elementary	Fourth - fifth - sixth
Salma	Bachelor of English Language/ Hail university/ Hail	**16**	Elementary	Fourth - fifth - sixth
Leena	Bachelor of languages and translation/ PNU university/Riyadh	**5**	Elementary	Fourth - fifth - sixth
Hala	Bachelor of languages and translation/ Imam university/Riyadh	**9**	Elementary	Fourth - fifth - sixth
Rana	Bachelor of English Language/ Kau university/ Jeddah	**6**	Elementary/	Fourth - fifth - sixth
Eman	Bachelor of languages and translation/ Imam university/Riyadh	**11**	Intermediate	
Hana	Bachelor of languages and translation/ Qassim university/Al- Qassim	**8**	Intermediate	

Hend		**9**	Intermediate	
Maha	Bachelor of languages and translation/ PNU university/Riyadh	**14**	Intermediate	
Reem	Bachelor of languages and translation/ PNU university/Riyadh	**8**	Intermediate	
Manal	Master of Applied Linguistics/ Imam university / Riyadh	**11**	Secondary	
Nadiah	Bachelor of languages and translation/ Imam university/Riyadh	**10**	Secondary	
Nouf	Bachelor of languages and translation/ PNU university/Riyadh	**12**	Secondary	
Rawan	Bachelor of languages and translation/ PNU university/Riyadh	**8**	Secondary	
Sara	Master of TESOL/ KSU university/ Riyadh	**13**	Secondary	

Appendix C:
Classroom Observation Sample

Class: 4 th Period: 2nd Name: .... Date: 21/ 12/2017
Time : 45 min. Number of students (34)

General Remarks of the Lesson

The teacher started the lesson by checking homework and correcting it on the board. The title of the lesson was My Body. It was about the five sense organs and their function. Students were introduced to each organ sense and its function through a variety of teaching aids (pictures- video clips-games). Students were asked to do exercises in their workbook connected to the lesson's objectives as a closing evaluation. Homework was clearly illustrated. Procedures are covered within the allotted time.

- The teacher is well prepared and moved systematically and smoothly from one stage of the lesson to the next
- Warming up activities are appropriate
- Demonstrated proficiency in English language use (both written and spoken)
- Used smart board effectively
- Students are well arranged in groups to work cooperatively
- Teacher has established basic classroom routines and procedures and students followed them without prompting and knew exactly what they were expected to do.
- The students demonstrated respect in interactions with the teacher
- At times, teacher does not listen well or encourage students to share their ideas or viewpoints (e.g. the student who wanted to share an extra piece of information on how people who lost their sight may possess exclusive skills)
- She speaks with a low monotone voice that made the lesson to be somewhat dull and boring. A student sitting at the back of the classroom was about to fall asleep
- Ineffective communication skills— too little or no eye contact with her students and she seems to be uninterested in what she was doing
- The teacher did not smile at all

Appendix D:
Interview Schedule

Q1: What are your views/ understanding of performativity?

1. Can you talk about your work experience?
2. Can you tell me what in your opinion performativity is? What performativity involves?
3. Can you explain what is meant by 'systems of performativity'?

Q2: What are the current performative practices?

1. Have you been currently asked to perform differently or to change your performance style?

Q3: Nature of change due to adopting a performativity approach

1. Can you talk to me about the recent changes in your practice to meet the performative requirements?
2. Do you think that your practice has improved? In what ways?

Q4: Teachers' role under performativity

1. Do you think you are playing (or have played) a role in the process of forming the standards/criteria required by systems of performativity?
2. Who designs these practices?

Q5: Effect of performativity on teaching

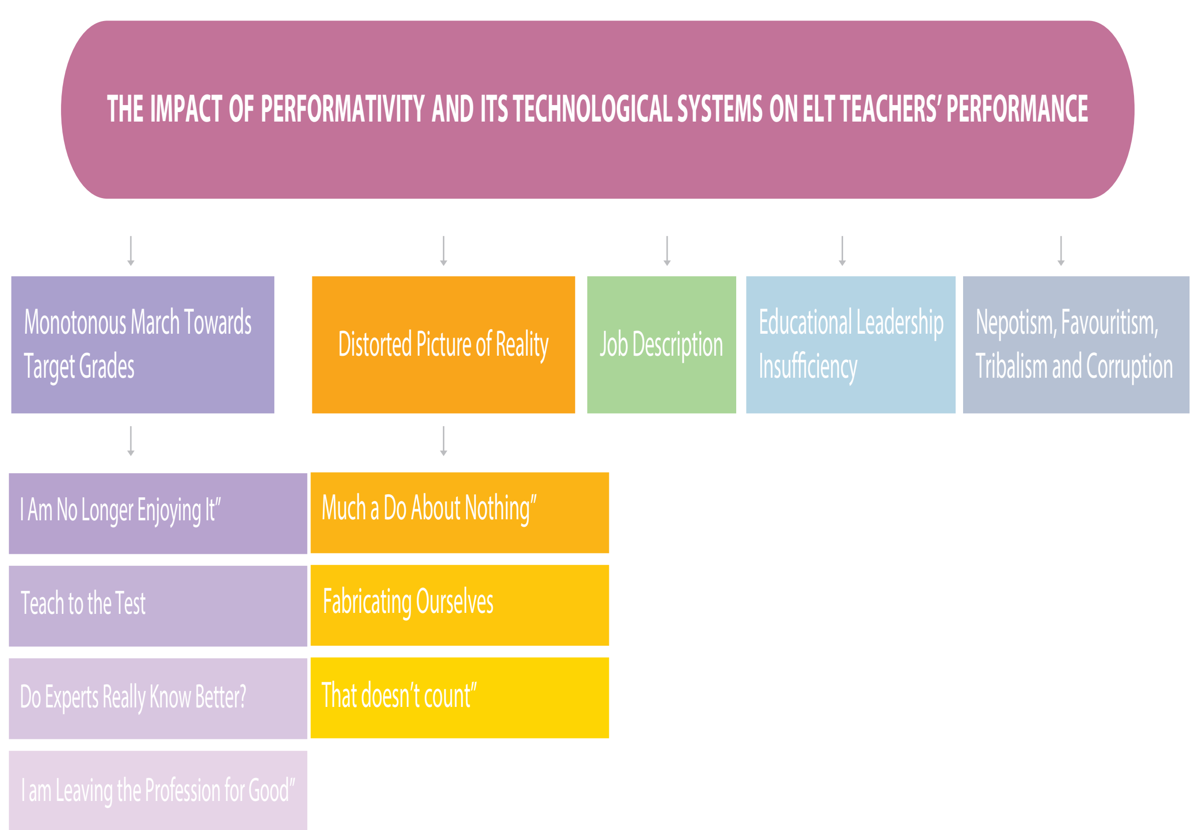
1. Do you think performativity and its technological systems meet expectations from the field (teachers, students, administrators and policy makers)? How?
2. In your opinion, what are the most pressing challenges for your students as language learners?
3. To what extent are these challenges met in by the performative practices?
4. How do you feel about these systems of performativity and the current audit culture?
5. How do you feel about having to match the requirements of systems of performativity?

Q6: Teachers' identity and sense of professionalism

1. What does it mean to you to be a professional teacher?
2. Where do you see yourself in the whole new process of performativity in schools?
3. To what extent do the performative practices help you to meet the needs of your students?
4. Do you think performativity can have an effect on your professional judgment? How?
5. What would you do if you find the performative practices do not match your professional judgment? i.e. What would you do if you find that these practices do not help your students to attain academic success? Or help the teacher to achieve academic goals for students?
6. How do you see yourself as a preoefessional teacher in the current audit culture?

Appendix E:

Sample of Preliminary Analysis of Interview Data (One Theme)



Appendix F:
Epistemic Interview Transcript (translated)

Interviewer: Can you talk about your work experience?

Interviewee: My experience at the very beginning was very nice. I was so enthusiastic and I wanted to do my ultimate effort to be a good teacher but I was shocked by the workplace reality. They gradually kill your ambition and enthusiasm.

Interviewer: Who are they? And how they kill your ambition and enthusiasm?

Interviewee: School principals and their assistances as well as supervisors and the way they manage schools. They ask for too much conformity. They want you to execute their orders with no discussion. You can't point out the weakness of any new teaching strategy or initiative. It's a form of slavery. The teaching environment is so infertile. If you have an idea that you want to do with your students, the whole ministry needs to agree and eventually it dies before getting approval.

Interviewer: What will happen if you attempt to discuss or for example point out the pros and cones of a specific strategy?

Interviewee: I have tried and they took it as a way of reluctance to apply new teaching strategies. They will turn your life into hell. They will attend your class more frequently to give the impression that you are not good enough. They will deprive you from chances of promotions or joining development programmes. There are a lot of other things they can do. These are just common examples. They can also exaggerate your mistakes and give you a very bad score on your evaluation to block any chance for you to get promoted or move to another school. Those principals and supervisors are convinced that they are better than you and you have zero

ability to improve teaching. Every year they introduce a new strategy that yields no results because it is applied incorrectly but they never ask for our feedback.

Interviewer: Why do you think it is applied incorrectly?

Interviewee: They are not convinced of these strategies to begin with. They just receive the instructions from higher management and then start accumulating files of evidence that these strategies are applied in classrooms. I am okay of providing evidence but it should be representative of what I did in reality. Not evidence for the sake of evidence. Many teachers are happy to provide evidence for something they haven't done in their classes. For me this is very difficult. What I present as evidence and what I do should be the same.

Interviewer: What do you think should be done to overcome this?

Interviewee: Giving more space for teachers' feedback and discussions and these attempts should be valued not condemned. We are asked about our feedback only when higher management in the ministry asks school principals to report their teachers' feedback. After submitting the feedback nothing changes and we never hear back from them. But I should also say that the school principal herself is just an executer of higher management instructions and her authority is somewhat limited.

Interviewer: Do you think this is the case across the board?

Interviewee: No, of course not. There are school principals who are willing to listen to teachers opinions and feedback and take them into consideration. But I have to say this kind of management is less common in our schools but it does exist. Personally I have not come across one.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what in your opinion performativity

is? What performativity involves?

Interviewee: Performativity, in my opinion, is doing the job that is required from me to the fullest extent possible but this can't be done without a reasonable space for teachers'own judgements. We are the ones who experience classroom realities. I am the one who teaches and who is able to point out potential problems and difficulties.

Interviewer: Can you explain what is meant by 'systems of performativity'?

Interviewee: They are technological systems designed to improve educational processes but I believe these systems should be introduced gradually. Take *Noor* for example, when it was first introduced they asked all teachers to put the marks in the system in the same day. Some teachers were put under great pressure to the extent that they had to put marks to some students before taking the exam.

Interviewer: How do they fix that?

Interviewee: I have no clue. I didn't do it but some teachers had to do it.

Interviewer: What if they refused to do it? What will happen?

Interviewee: They know they would be held accountable and take the responsibility for any shortcomings.

Interviewer: Have you been currently asked to perform differently or to change your performance style?

Interviewee: Yes, of course. In general, I receive praise for my performance but they will give you suggestions too. Sometimes these suggestions are valuable and sometimes they don't make any sense.

Interviewer: Can you talk to me about the recent changes in your practice to meet the performative requirements?

Interviewee: Every time a new strategy is introduced we are asked to implement it in the classroom. If it yields good results I continue doing it, if not, I just do it when my class is attended by the principal or the supervisor. To be honest 80 per cent of the instructions we receive from the ministry do not make sense to me and I just do them because I have to.

Interviewer: Do you think that your practice has improved? In what ways?

Interviewee: I think it makes your work sometimes easier. You just do what they want you to do. You do not bother yourself of what to teach and how to teach it. You don't take the burden of making decisions and be blamed on if they were not good enough. In the past the content of the textbooks was very simple and the exam questions were also very simple and straightforward but the students used to take exams more seriously because it comes from the ministry not the school. Now the students are busy with the social media and the web so they can easily be exposed to knowledge so they could not be confined to the textbook.

Interviewer: So do you think this is something positive?

Interviewee: Not from all aspects. This can be distracting to the students. They are busy now with social media but it can be positive because it put teacher under pressure to think of ways to hook students' interest and make the lesson more interesting and efficient. We need to adjust our teaching to the students' need and the students of today are unlike the students of yesterday.

Interviewer: This is an argument for slavery? Isn't it? You condemned earlier the management of the school that was, in

your opinion, a form of slavery for asking for so much conformity. How do you explain that?

Interviewee: It is easier but not fulfilling.

Interviewer: Do you think you are playing (or have played) a role in the process of forming the standards/criteria required by systems of performativity?

Interviewee: No at all. Nobody asks your opinion about these criteria. Even if you try to communicate your views about these standards, they will nod their heads but no body will take you seriousely.

Interviewer: Who designs these practices?

Interviewee: I think they are imported from outside like anything else from the English language curriculum to the way we test students and everything in between.

Interviewer: Do you think performativity and its technological systems meet expectations from the field (teachers, students, administrators and policy makers)? How?

Interviewee: Sometimes yes, it can be useful but most of the time no.

Interviewer: In your opinion, what are the most pressing challenges for your students as language learners?

Interviewee: Over my years of experience I have noticed that active skills such as writing and speaking are more difficult than passive skills that is listening and reading.

Interviewer: To what extent are these challenges met in by the performative practices?

Interviewee: The performative practices can be of some help but they do not take into consideration individual differences

between students.

Interviewer: How do you feel about these systems of performativity and the current audit culture?

Interviewee: Sometimes they can be very comfortable because they direct you to a certain and specific objective and offer prescribed methods to achieve it. The worst part is they can put you under great pressure and stress to accomplish what we are asked to do especially when the school management team is so rigid. Working with a school principal who is fair, caring and kind can make you feel safe and ready to face whatever your career throws at you.

Interviewer: How do you feel about having to match the requirements of systems of performativity?

Interviewee: I do not think this is a bad thing because it will help me improve and reflect on my practice. If the system does not accept a student's mark, for example, below a certain number, I will go back to my records and try to find out what went wrong.

Interviewer: What does it mean to you to be a professional teacher?

Interviewee: A professional teacher in my opinion is a teacher who teaches according to her own discretion. A teacher who once enters her class forgets all nonsense standards and criteria and chooses what works best for her students.

Interviewer: You just mentioned that these standards can help you reflect in your practice and direct you to a specific goal. But now you describe them as nonsense. Could you please explain?

Interviewee: These standards can be of some help but they tend to treat students as identical entities not as different human beings. They assume that their designed practices are suitable

for every single student in the class. Teachers also have different teaching styles and approaches that they can master better than others. We can take the general guideline of these performative practices but neglect the very detailed prescriptive, strict and inflexible way of doing it.

Interviewer: Where do you see yourself in the whole new process of performativity in schools?

Interviewee: We feel stressed whenever a new policy or a set of teaching strategies is introduced because we have a relatively small range of actions to deal with the challenges. The key is to try different ways to adapt to the constant change. We should be receptive to different initiatives and test them in our classrooms. We should neither take them as the ultimate solutions to students' underachievement nor to resent them without testing them. This is the way you build your skills and gain expertise.

Interviewer: To what extent do the performative practices help you to meet the needs of your students?

Interviewee: As I have mentioned previously, if these performative practices allow a space for teachers to use their own judgment and decide what is best for their students, they can be of some use. Doing the required practices just to fill in papers and provide evidence is a waste of time and effort. It will burden us and benefit nobody.

Interviewer: Do you think performativity can have an effect on your professional judgment? How?

Interviewee: Of course, I will modify my practice according to what I am supposed to do according to the requirements of these standards. I will provide whatever evidence they need. This is time consuming and takes a lot of effort. But inside the class I will choose what is best for my students.

Interviewer: What would you do if you find the performative practices do not match your professional judgment? i.e. What would you do if you find that these practices do not help your students to attain academic success? Or help you to achieve academic goals for students?

Interviewee: I will not use them as simple as that. I will stick to the teaching practices that proved to be efficient. If I am forced to do them and they started visiting you unexpectedly of course I will use them even if they are not efficient. They should deal with the consequences but we all know that teachers are always to be blamed for all unwise decisions. They can easily ignore it or say these decisions are wise but teachers were not good enough to do them. If you listen to school principals or parents or people in higher authority they always blame teachers. The unqualified teacher seemed to be the root of all educational problems but they never ask why they are not qualified or what type of courses they offered them. We are just made as hangers for their failures and mistakes. They want us now to take exams to prove we are qualified. They want us to do it every year. That's funny because every person who work in the ministry needs to take an exam even the minister himself to prove that he is able to do his job. They are completely blind when it comes to mangers in high authority even if some of them are bringing superficial programs that are just a waste of time and efforts.

Interviewer: But you will do them when your class is attended, right?

Interviewee: Yes, I have no choice but to do it this way.

Interviewer: How about your students? Aren't you concerned how they will perceive you when you change your practice once you are observed?

Interviewee: [Silence for 4 seconds] Well, I know this is embarrassing but I apply the strategies few times before being observed in my class so my students get acquainted with it. When the school principal or the supervisor attends my class, my students look familiar with it. After being visited in class, I rarely apply these strategies (giggled) and I focus on their actual learning. This feels quite annoying and made you sometimes feel guilty but I don't know other way to sort this out.

Interviewer: Do you think you are doing something wrong or unacceptable by doing so?

Interviewee: I just told you. I feel bad about it and it feels quiet annoying.

Interviewer: You mean you feel so because it is wrong?

Interviewee: Yes, I guess

Interviewer: Why do you think it is wrong?

Interviewee: Because I pretend doing something that I am not actually doing and give evidence for that. Probably because it makes me question my values and ethics. It somewhat makes me feel I am cheating because I pretend doing something I didn't do. That makes someone disrespect himself. What is cheating? It's being dishonest and present something that is not true. That's what it is and that's what we are doing to get what we want whether to polish our image or avoid being questioned for not doing what they want us to do. But every time I feel bad about it I remind myself that I've been forced to do it and I had no other choice.

Interviewer: But you are doing it because it is the right thing to do for your students learning. Don't you think this is a just cause for doing so?

Interviewee: Yes but for them I am probably a cheater and dishonest and this doesn't feel nice. If they knew I am just applying these strategies when being attended they will not like it

Interviewer: You will probably feel worse if you prioritise the application of these strategies over students' needs and interests. The impact of this would be even worse and what you have done is the right thing to do. [I introduced to the participant Giroux's idea of teachers as intellectual transformers and not as technicians.]

Interviewee: That's an interesting idea! I hope it gains publicity in our schools. I don't know I think it's more important for them to make teachers obedient more than any thing else. Every time you try to justify your practice they never listen they will simply say this is the system and it needs to be followed or they will show you some circulations that they want you to abide by. They never care about the students or the need of the students just look at how periods are distributed two for each religious subject but only four for English.

Interviewer: How do you see yourself as a preofessional teacher in the current audit culture?

Interviewee: I think the audit culture can add to my professionality as it is based on scientific way of using numbers. It gives me an idea of the goals I should achieve. Also, the competition it creates can help teachers improve their practice and try to do more. But it could distract teachers from focusing in their actual teaching and spend time to provide evidence. The key is to strive to create a balance to make a good use of these standards without affecting the way we teach. For this to be achieved, we should contribute in making these standards and decide what is important and what is not, not merely execute

them.

Interviewer: Is there anything you want to add?

Interviewee: No, I think I’ve said what I wanted to say.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time

Appendix G:
Tables of Analysis of Interview Data

Perceptions

Title of Theme	Sub-Themes	Basic Idea	Number of Codes		
The Right Path to Educational Reform			E	I	S
	Keeping Records and Information	Keep students' records and information	**7**	**4**	**1**
	Fast Communication	Fast and efficient communication between the different departments of the MoE	**9**		**3**
Solution to culturally inherited problems					
	Insufficiency of Educational Leadership	Systems are welcomed as reactions to insufficient school leaders	**2**	**11**	**5**
	Nepotism, Favouritism, Tribalism and Corruption	Systems help to minimise the space for nepotism…etc		**8**	**2**
Policy Cloning: "Penguin in the Desert or a Camel in the Antarctica"					**3**
	Contradiction of Educational Policy	Lack of coordination between the MoE and other ministries. Some educational policies place a threat to the Saudi national identity and show a mismatch between policy and practice	3	1	**7**
	Unfair System	The need to consider different factors when ranking teachers and schools		1	**5**

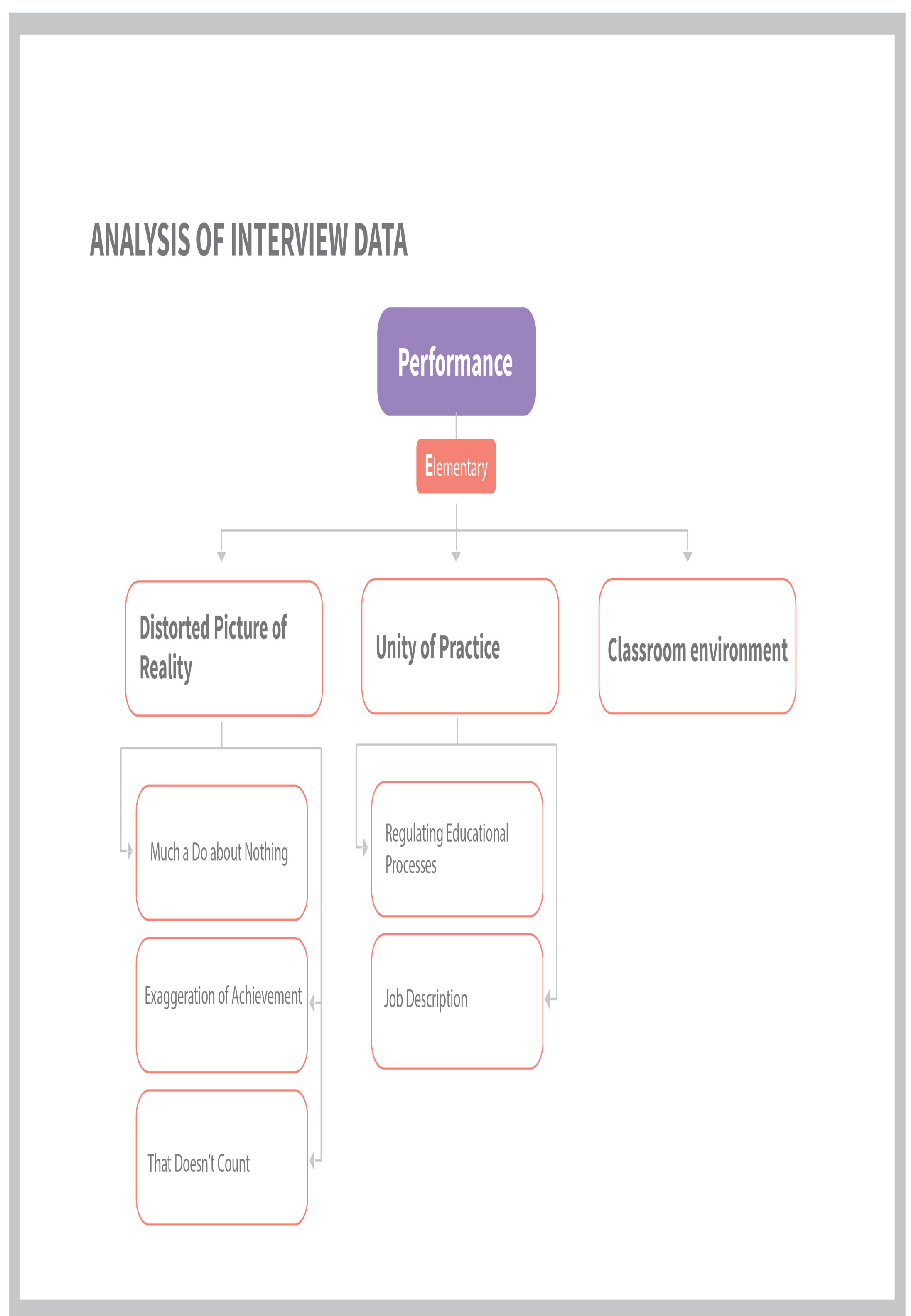
Performance

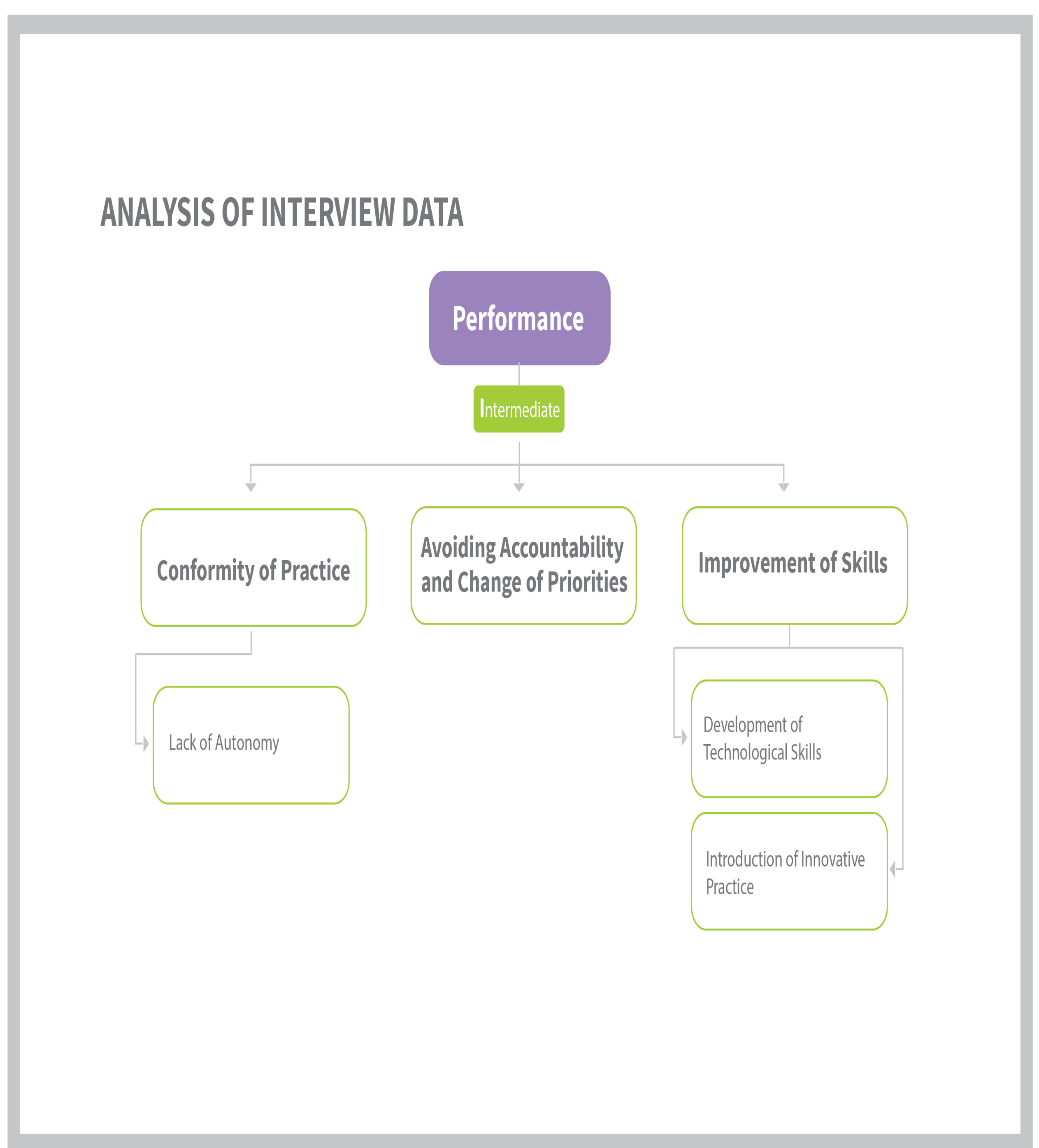
Title of Theme	Sub-Themes	Basic Idea	Number of Codes		
Distorted Picture of Reality			E	I	S
	Much a Do about Nothing	no real reform is taking place	3		
	Exaggeration of Achievement	Teachers are encouraged to exaggerate their achievement to satisfy higher management	6		
	That Doesn't Count	Teachers exclude all activities and practices that doesn't have value in their evaluation	4	2	
Unity of Practice					
	Regulating Educational Processes	There is unity of rules and regulations concerning educational processes such as student enrolment …etc	5		
	Job Description	Teachers roles and duties are defined	4	1	2
Classroom environment			4		
Conformity of Practice	Lack of Autonomy	Teachers have limited space for their autonomy and professional discretion	2	5	3
	Change in Priorities	Teachers change priorities to accommodate performative mandates not their students' needs		3	
Skills Improvement					
	Development of Technological Skills		1	3	
	Introduction of Innovative Practice	Teachers are introduced to new teaching strategies		4	2
Monotonous March					
	Control of Outcome			1	2
	Teach to the Test	Teaching becomes grade oriented/coaching students			12
Do Expert Really Know Better		Experts are detached from classroom realties	1		4
An Invasive Alien					
	Work Like Machines	Lack of meaning in teachers' practice	3	3	11
	No Longer Enjoying it	Lack of Enjoyment	4	2	7
	I am Leaving the Profession for Good	Reasons behind teachers choosing to leave the profession	1		3

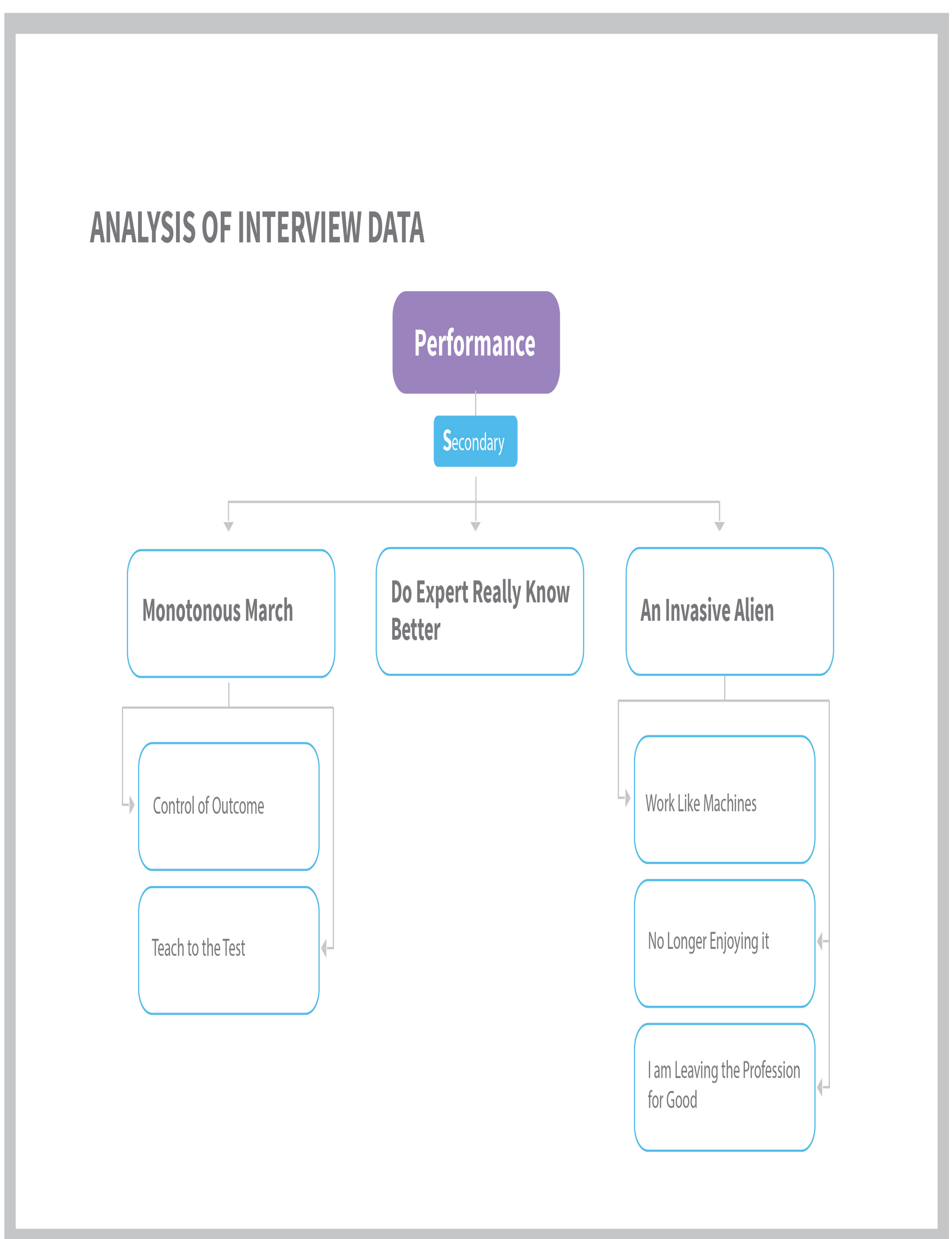
Identity

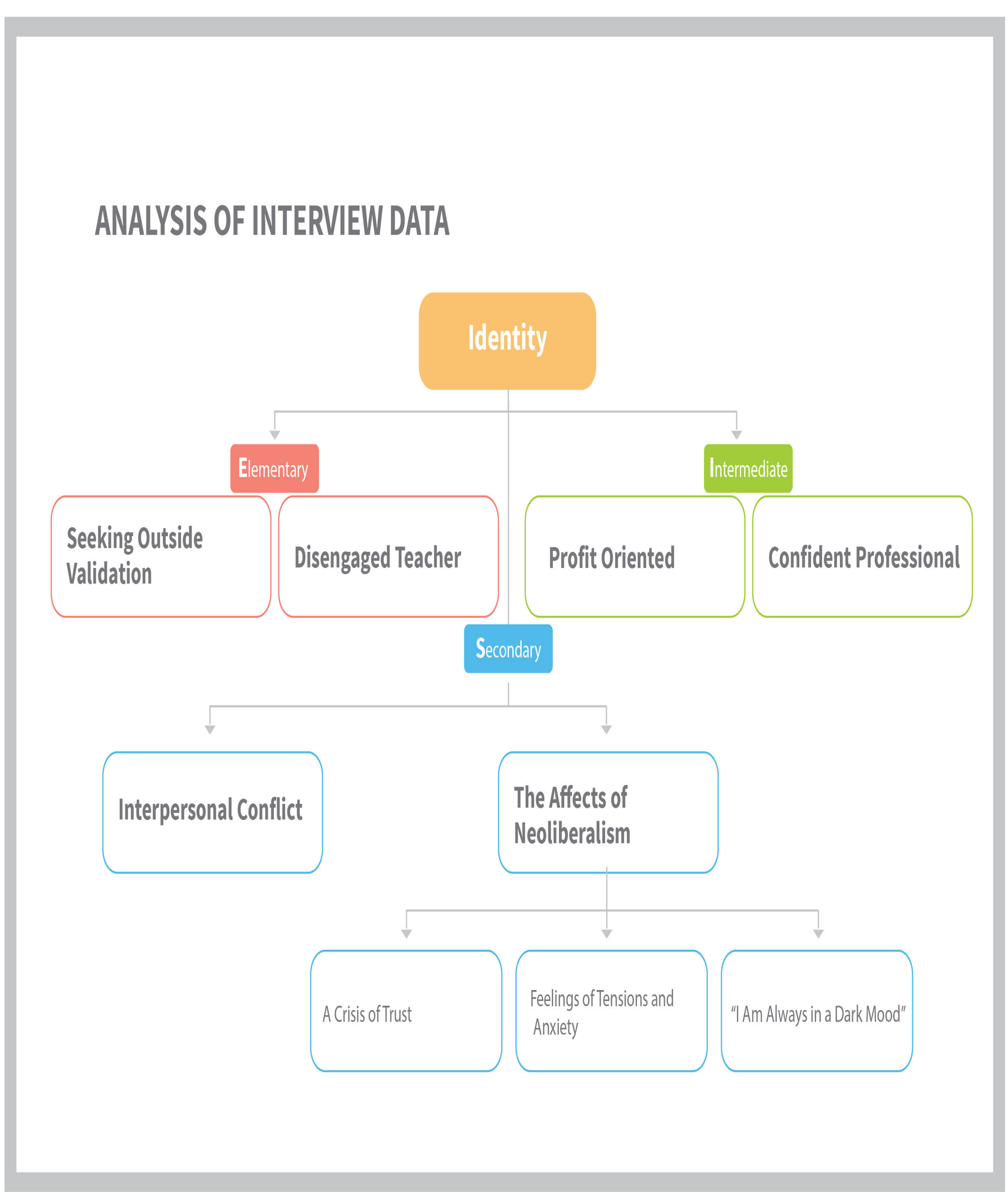
Title of Theme	Sub-Themes	Basic Idea	Number of Codes		
Seeking Outside Validation		Teachers always rely on external validation for their teaching practice. They either seek an approval from the school principal or the supervisor.	E 3	I	S
Disengaged Teacher		Teachers aren't emotionally connected and/or are dissatisfied with their workplace environments	3		1
Profit Oriented Teachers		Teachers prefer to join paid workshops and programmes		2	
Confident Professional		Khebrat and other professional development programmes built the teachers confidence		3	
Interpersonal Conflict		Conflict between their beliefs and performative mandates	2	1	4
The Affects of Neoliberalism					
	A Crisis of Trust		9	8	10
	Feelings of Tensions and Anxiety		8	7	9
	"I Am Always in a Dark Mood"		1		2

Appendix H:
Mind Maps of Interview Findings


ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA
Performance
Elementary
Distorted Picture of Reality
Unity of Practice
Classroom environment
Much a Do about Nothing
Exaggeration of Achievement
That Doesn't Count
Regulating Educational Processes
Job Description


ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA
Performance
Intermediate
Conformity of Practice
Avoiding Accountability and Change of Priorities
Improvement of Skills
Lack of Autonomy
Development of Technological Skills
Introduction of Innovative Practice


ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA
Performance
Secondary
Monotonous March
Do Expert Really Know Better
An Invasive Alien
Control of Outcome
Teach to the Test
Work Like Machines
No Longer Enjoying it
I am Leaving the Profession for Good


ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA
Identity
Elementary
Intermediate
Seeking Outside Validation
Disengaged Teacher
Profit Oriented
Confident Professional
Secondary
Interpersonal Conflict
The Affects of Neoliberalism
A Crisis of Trust
Feelings of Tensions and Anxiety
"I Am Always in a Dark Mood"

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA
Resistance of Teachers
Elementary
Intermediate
Secondary
Turn a deaf Ear
Resisting Performative Discourse
Resisting Meaninglessness
My Well-being Matters Just Like Your Standards
Resistance Via Moaning or Whingering

Appendix I:
Complete Set of Field Notes

	Codes	Date of incident observed
Elementary Teachers	Teachers are monitored by administrative staff from attending morning assembly	25/12/17
	Changes the timetable according to the supervisor's preference but refused to do so for the teacher who wanted to leave early for a hospital appointment	03/01/18
	door is locked and nobody can leave the school within the working hours without showing written permission from the school principal to the gatekeeper	29/12/17
	Principal assumes that teachers absent themselves the day of training on using smart board to avoid being evaluated on how to use it	26/12/17
	Teachers who absent themselves in extra curracula days are given extra work as penalty	14/12/17
	Teachers who do not absent themselves are rewarded in the morning assembly in front of students	05/01/18
	Our Students will be like Einestien	10/01/18
	The principal asked the gatekeeper about the time the teacher left school and wether any student went after she had left	01/12/17
	some school principals have created their own track systems and forms of pledges	11/12/17
	The parent went directly to the class to take her daughter without permission from the principal or the teacher	12/01/18
Intermediate Teachers	senior teacher does not want to help	26/12/17
	lack of willingness to participate or discuss in meetings	12/12/17
	A teacher refused to take part in the monthly discussion about the challenges and difficulties ELT teachers face in their school and asked to just to sign the rep	05/01/18
	refusing to teach in the late periods	28/12/17
	One teacher complained about having music during sport class	13/01/18
	refused to swap invigilation	20/12/17
Secondary Teachers		
	School principals and their assistances are responsible for setting internal policy	18/12/17
	students, teachers and parents are rarely included when setting policy	15/12/17
	Internal circulations are supposed to be signed without discussions	20/12/17
	Internal policies were not justified and the rationale behind them was not communicated	29/12/17
	teachers sign a pledgeto teach the whole curriculum designed by the MoE	11/12/17
	Teachers were reluctant to give critical feedback	16/01/18
	Sarcastic comments	21/12/17
	I Will make a stamp with my name and I will give it to the cleaner to sign these circulations on my behalf	27/12/17
	Just nod in agreement and do whatever you want in your class	19/12/17

Appendix J:

Complete Set of Classroom Observation Notes

Classroom Observation Notes

Elementary Teachers

The teacher managed disruptive behavior constructively when she saw the student busy with her colouring book
She arranged the classroom for effective instruction without wasting too much time(students were asked to turn to form small groups of four
this participant seemed competent in the subject matter and her English was fluent and she used it with confidence.
At times, teacher does not listen well or encourage students to share their ideas or viewpoints (e.g. the student who wanted to share an extra piece of information on how people who lost their sight may possess exclusive skills)
Ineffective communication skills— too little or no eye contact with her students and she seems to be uninterested in what she was doing
The teacher did not smile at all
Let the same students answer although she asked four or five questions, only two or three eager students actually got an opportunity to demonstrate active cognitive engagement with the topic.
Effective use of classroom time that provided sufficient time to use extra curricular activity
classroom rules, procedures and behavioral expectations were established that helped the teacher to use classroom time effectively to provide maximum time for learning.
Students responeded to the nature of the story by laughing spontaneousely
They responded promptly to teachers instructions and they seemed well trained to classroom routine
students did not speak to each other with respect or respect group discussions rules and the teacher didn't show any concern
students seemed intrested in the topic but they didn't ask questions
Teacher's lack of interest was very obvious from the first few minutes of her class.
teacher presence in the class lacked genuine connection with the students as she barely looked at them.
Teacher talked to them in a lifeless, low monotonous tone that produced boredom and lack of concentration by the students
The students demonstrated respect in interaction with the teacher
The teacher demonstrated proficiency in English language use (both written and spoken)
effective use of smart board in the warming up activity
The teacher didn't instruct students how to interact or distribute the tasks when working cooperately. She just let them do the exercise individually and attributed the answer to the group although some students seemed to have other an
It is impressive how students cleaned up the esources room as instructed with minimum effort from the teacher
The students made eye contact and smiled when saying goodbye as they leave the room.
The teacher didn't offer the group any hint on how to mark important information
good distribution of group work tasks and she asked them to justify their answers
Classroom time can be invested better instead of repeating the same fill in the blanks excersise over and over. She could have asked them to greet each other using the new expressions introduced
The teacher completely ignored the students who was so desparate to participate in chant and change name excercise

Intermediate Teachers

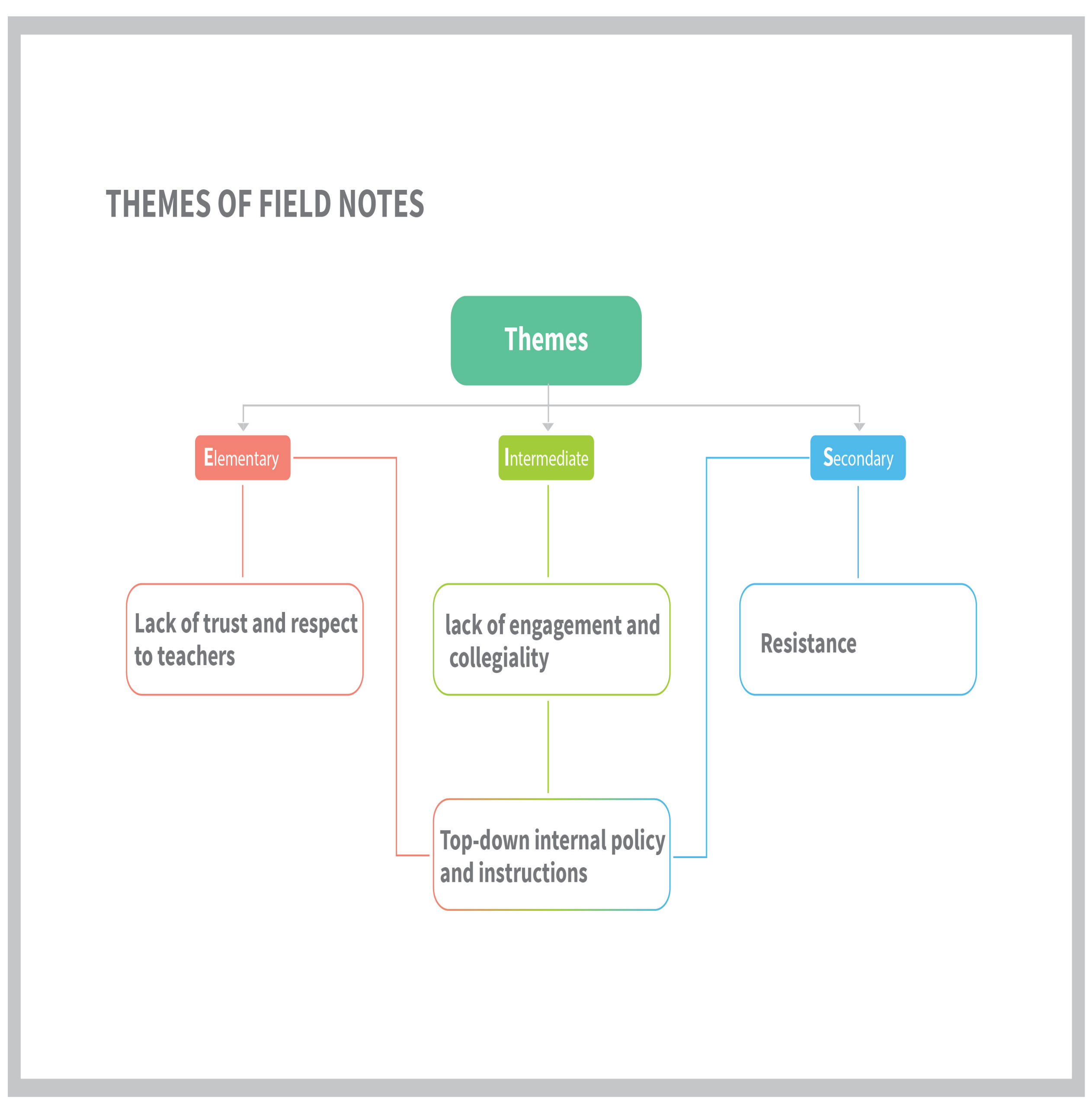
Teacher organized materials, supplies and equipment prior to the lesson in very effective way which helped her to apply variety of active strategy
effective use of white board and even students are well trained to use it
students were asked to do variety of spelling exercises. I have noticed that only fifteen words were included in all the exercises done in the lesson as well as the other activities in her revision plan. When
Arranges and sets up instructional materials and equipment in advance of class to facilitate their effective and efficient use during lessons.
used different activities than those listed in the text book(she played a video about King Abdulaziz and asked students to answer the questions in a worksheet)
The teacher presented her lesson in a learning resources room that was arranged by English teachers. It was full of well arranged resources and materials that helped the teacher to make good use of ins
The teacher began her class with teacher-directed instruction but she presented with enthusiasm and visual aids the 12 months of the year. The use of active learning strategies was clever and successful
The teacher did not apply Think-Pair- Share technique properly. Students should be given enough time to think individually then share their thoughts. Students started discussing ideas about different car
Too much emphasis on multible choice exercises. All activities were done in this format.
The teacher used Web Quest technique all the information that students worked with came from the web. She used simple word documents that included links to websites
I don't understand why the teacher used projector to show the exercise on the board. It was not clear and it would be better if she asked them to open their books.
Teacher used variety of active learning strategies to teach writing (brainstorming-one minute paper- group evaluation) They were suitable to lesson aims
Teacher spent too much time getting students settled in groups. They didn't seem used to it
They were not encouraged to ask questions that go beyond the material and connect to other ideas(e.g. connect the topic (where I live) to discuss different ways and places of living or even ask them to s
Give students responsibilities and tasks (e.g. students are encouraged to take care of school property)
There was no link between the objectives of the lesson(using Auxiliaries and modal verbs) and the evaluation activity (fill in the blanks but no auxiliaries were used)

Secondary Teachers

Both teacher and students seemed to enjoy the classroom and were engaged in classroom activities especially when working in groups to discuss reasons for crime
The teacher taught the discussion part of the whole unit and did not stick to the sequence of the book
Effective use of smart board to hook students interest and to introduce the new lesson
students were not encouraged to display initiative and assume a personal responsibility for learning (e.g. when the student asked about the debate about climate change)
Present the activities in exam format i.e. restructure them to resemble exam questions (true/false)and multible choice
In a revision lesson devoted the last five minutes of the lesson time to read out items in a check-list form and get affirmation from students that she has accomplished all what is required.
the expressions on the students' faces show that they're interested in the lesson
interactive class with variety of active learning techniques. All activities were given approbriate time
students offered connections of the topic to other ideas and they were willing to share their own experiences of traveling abroad
they eagerly offer their input during group discussions
they gave the teacher genuine smile and they interacted positively
Students were alert and listening to instructions
The corridor invigilator checked the class twice
asked students to work collaboratively in groups to write an end to a given story. Students got so excited and started to think of a suitable end to that story.
The time allocated for this exercise was 12 minutes but students were given only 5 minutes. As soon as they finished reading their stories, they were asked immediately to vote for the best story without asking students to explain why they opted to finish it this way or why one story is better than the other.
Student-led classroom where students did most of the discussion and the the teacher's role was just guiding students and addressing mistakes
She asked variety of questions about traditions and cultures and students worked together to determine the answer and report it.
Clearly stated her lesson goals or objectives. She announced it in classand wrote it on the board. She made it simple and clear for all of your students to understand. Then, they knew what they were working towards and what they should know by the end of the class.

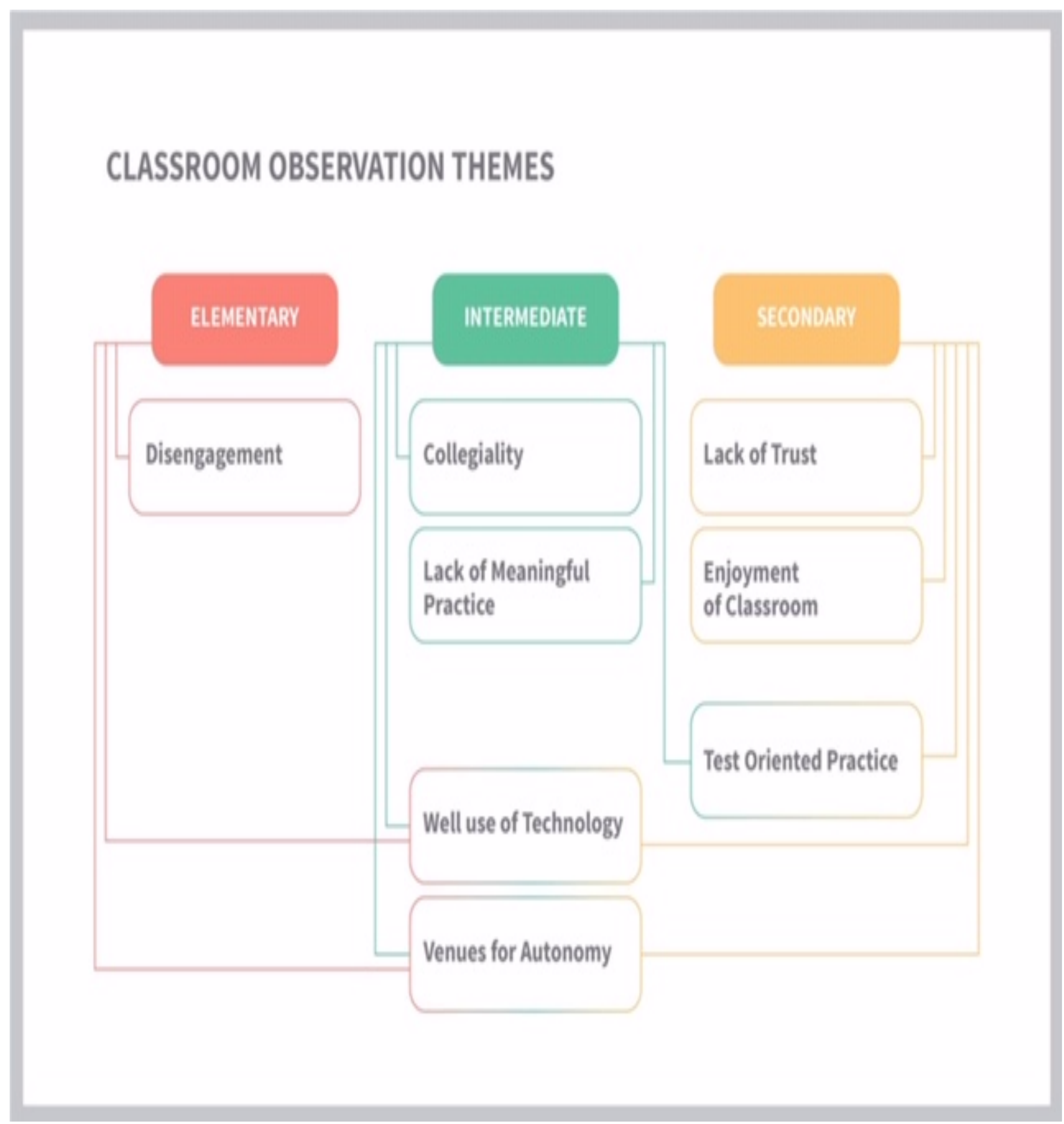
Appendix K:

Themes of Field Notes



Appendix L:

Themes of Classroom Observations



Appendix M:
Certificate of Ethical Approval

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

St Luke's Campus
Heavitree Road
Exeter UK EX1 2LU

http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: Performativity in Education and Its Impact on ELT Teachers' Performance and Identities

Researcher(s) name: Kholoud Abdullah Almanee

Supervisor(s): Salah Troudi

This project has been approved for the period

From: 01/09/2017
To: 20/01/2020

Ethics Committee approval reference:

D/17/18/04

Signature: Date: 30/08/2017
(Dr Philip Durrant, Graduate School of Education Ethics Officer)

Ref (for office use only)

D/17/18/04

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

When completing this form please remember that the purpose of the document is to clearly explain the ethical considerations of the research being undertaken. As a generic form it has been constructed to cover a wide-range of different projects so some sections may not seem relevant to you. Please include the information which addresses any ethical considerations for your particular project which will be needed by the SSIS Ethics Committee to approve your proposal.

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Students:http://intranet.exeter.ac.uk/socialsciences/student/postgraduateresearch/ethicsapprovalforyourresearch/

All staff and students within SSIS should use this form to apply for ethical approval and then send it to one of the following email addresses:

ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk This email should be used by staff and students in Egenis, the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, Law, Politics, the Strategy & Security Institute, and Sociology, Philosophy, Anthropology.

ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk This email should be used by staff and students in the Graduate School of Education.

Applicant details	
Name	Kholoud Abdullah Almanee
Department	Graduate School of Education
UoE email address	Ka341@exeter.ac.uk

Duration for which permission is required		
You should request approval for the entire period of your research activity. The start date should be at least one month from the date that you submit this form. Students should use the anticipated date of completion of their course as the end date of their work. Please note that retrospective ethical approval will never be given.		
Start date:01/09/2017	**End date:**20/01/2020	**Date submitted:**Click here to enter a date

Students only	
All students must discuss their research intentions with their supervisor/tutor prior to submitting an application for ethical approval. The discussion may be face to face or via email. Prior to submitting your application in its final form to the SSIS Ethics Committee it should be approved by your first and second supervisor / dissertation supervisor/tutor. You should submit evidence of their approval with your application, e.g. a copy of their email approval.	
Student number	640057519
Programme of study	Select programme from dropdown list Doctor of Education EdD
Name of Supervisor(s)/tutors or	Prof. Salah Troudi

Have you attended any ethics training that is available to students?	Understanding Research Ethics workshop 25/10/2016

Certification for all submissions
I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given in this application and that I undertake in my research to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research. I confirm that if my research should change radically I will complete a further ethics proposal form. Kholoud Abdullah Almanee Double click this box to confirm certification ☒ *Submission of this ethics proposal form confirms your acceptance of the above.*

TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT

Performativity in Education and Its Impact on ELT Teachers' Performance and Identities

ETHICAL REVIEW BY AN EXTERNAL COMMITTEE

Select from this dropdown list

No, my research is not funded by, or doesn't use data from, either the NHS or Ministry of Defence.

MENTAL CAPACITY ACT 2005

Select from this dropdown list

No, my project does not involve participants aged 16 or over who are unable to give informed consent (e.g. people with learning disabilities)

SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Maximum of 750 words.

Performativity is defined by Ball (2003:216) as "a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgments, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic)". The introduction of performance management systems and other audit mechanisms to monitor and control teachers and teaching is one of the manifestations of neoliberal ideology in education which necessitates increasing central control of what is taught and how it is taught, coupled with the introduction of centralized testing regimes to continually evaluate the output of teaching by making it visible, calculable and comparable (Lim & Apple, 2016). These educational reforms represent an assault on teachers' knowledge and undermine their autonomy and judgment (Furlong, 2004). As Ball (2003: 215) puts it "the novelty of this epidemic of reform is that it does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who they are".

This study was stimulated by the concern that the rigours and disciplines of performativity became central to the discourse of educational reform and is unconditionally embraced in the Saudi context and therefore this research aims to critically interrogate the taken-for-granted performative practices, question the philosophical underpinnings surrounding them to position the study within the broader socio-political and socio-economic context. This research also focuses on understanding the ways in which the increasingly drive towards the culture of performativity has impacted the performance and identities of English language (EL) female teachers in the Saudi schools. It also aims to seek new possibilities where teachers who work in public/private institutions can withstand "the constant pressure to "perform" according to imposed and often reductive "standards" (Apple, 2006:100) and resist constructing a version of themselves that is fabricated against a set of measurable criteria (Biesta, 2015). It is a new possibility where teachers

can fight back for more humane treatment and argue for a greater awareness that market-driven solutions with their excessive demands on performativity and measurability do not deal with the complexities that they encounter in the real world of schools.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following three questions

1. How do (primary-intermediate-secondary) EL female teachers perceive performative culture in Saudi public/private schools?
2. How do performative practices affect (primary-intermediate-secondary) EL female teachers' performance?
3. How do performative practices affect (primary-intermediate-secondary) EL female teachers' professional identities?

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

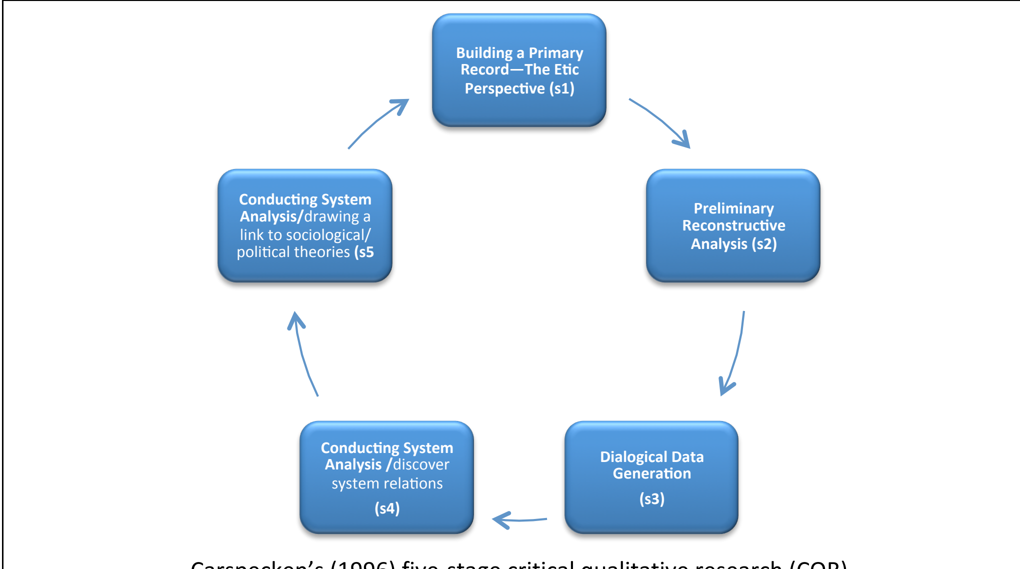
My research will take place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Research protocols there include seeking permission to collect data from schools gateskeepers such as school heads. At Saudi Arabian schools, a written permission is required before going to the field and seeking participants' responses but no specific form is required. I will obtain this written permission prior to commencing any fieldwork. I am totally aware about the required procedures and I will adhere to them.

The following sections require an assessment of possible ethical consideration in your research project. If particular sections do not seem relevant to your project please indicate this and clarify why.

RESEARCH METHODS

Carspecken's (1996) five-stage critical qualitative research (CQR) will be adopted. These stages are: Building a Primary Record—The Etic Perspective (S1), Preliminary Reconstructive Analysis (S2), Dialogical Data Generation (S3) and Conducting System Analysis (S4-5).

Moreover, Carspecken's (CQR) utilizes simultaneous data collection and analysis to identify cultural structures (Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002) by applying hermeneutic-reconstructive techniques of dialogue and reflexivity.



Carspecken's (1996) five-stage critical qualitative research (CQR)

I planned to use Carspecken's model. In this type of design, data collection and analysis procedures can evolve over the course of a research project in response to what is learned in earlier stages of the study (Schwandt, 2001). If the research questions and goals, for example, change according to new information and insight, the research design may need to change accordingly. This flexible approach to data collection and analysis allows for ongoing changes and alteration in the original research design as a function of both what has been learned so far and the ultimate goal of the study (Robson, 2002).

In line with Carspecken's (1996) framework, the initial data collection method in this research will include field notes and classroom observation in which concentrated and thick description of EL teachers' social interaction and daily routines will be constructed to help constructing preliminary analysis of existing cultural themes. I opted to adopt *overt* participant observation whereby subjects are aware that they are being observed and the researcher is easily identified. One classroom observation (45 minutes) will be arranged in a time that is convenient to participants. I will use the same classroom observation sheets used by the English language supervisors of The Saudi Ministry of Education to observe, monitor and evaluate EL teachers' performance. These observation sheets will be filled out and stored immediately in my password protected laptop as word documents.

I will also use audio-recorded face-to-face semi-structured interviews (45minutes) as the major data collection technique to carry out this investigation. I will arrange a time and place to meet, which are convenient for participants. It could be at school, a coffee shop or a hotel lobby. There will be an interview during which I will ask participants about (20-30) questions. The interview is expected to last no longer than one hour and may not be a one-off event as additional interviews could be conducted if needed to ensure accurate understanding or if new issues raised. When I have completed the interview I will write down the analysis and send it to participants to make sure that I have understood what they told me. The interviews will be conducted in Arabic or English or a mixture, depending on participants' preference. They will be recorded digitally using the voice

memos app available for my mobile device. Each interview will be assigned a label (pseudonym) and then transferred to my password protected laptop and u-disk.

PARTICIPANTS

The research participants of this study comprised fifteen EL female teachers in their mid-career professional lives (approximately 5 to 15 years in their career) in the KSA. Five teachers from each level (elementary-intermediate- secondary) and they might be Saudis or other nationalities. I will use my personal contacts to recruit potential participants who fit into the specified sample characteristics as I have been working in The Saudi Ministry of Education for several years.

I will select the participants on two bases: purposiveness and accessibility. Hence, I will choose EL teachers in their mid-career professional life as some of them might have been already developed the performative identity. Accessible sampling will be chosen because female teachers are more approachable due to gender segregation in the context studied. It is acceptable to modify methodologies to be sensitive to the culture where the study takes place Pseudonyms will be used to refer to participants when quoting them. Carspecken (1996) suggested that key informants within the study take a role in analyzing the data during the last two stages (4-5). The possibility of conducting this participatory analysis depends largely on the informants' understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, nature of the study, and the time available to conduct this kind of analysis.

THE VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

Informed consent will be obtained from the participants. I will clearly communicate the aims of the research with the participants. I will also conduct an initial meeting to explain what the research is about if possible. To avoid the so-called "place threats", I will conduct the meeting and interviews at a time and location which are convenient for all participants. The location could be a café, a library or a hotel lobby. I will explain the purpose of the research briefly before each interview. Participants will be provided of an information sheet attached to the consent forms which they have to sign. Participants will be informed that their participation is of great value but their agreement to participate willingly is essential. Besides, I will obtain permission to record interviews from each participant. I will pause the recording in accordance to their wishes if they do not want to share confidential information. To respect this confidentiality, I will ask their full permission to use quotes from the interviews in reporting the research without referring to any information that may reveal their anonymity. As for the classroom observation While *Covert* participant observation has more potential to generate more valid data as the researcher's identity is not recognised, it is severely criticized on ethical grounds (Radnor, 2002). Thus, I will use *overt* participant observation and I will pre-arrange the visit with the participant being observed.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

N/A This study will be conducted with teachers, therefore, no other special arrangements are considered.

THE INFORMED NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

Participants will be provided of an information sheet attached to the consent forms which they have to sign. Participants will be sent the transcripts of their interviews for verification, and they will be asked permission in the consent form to quote their words in the data analysis.

ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE HARM

The study will not cause any harm to the participants.

DATA PROTECTION AND STORAGE

In terms of storage of data, classroom observation sheets will be filled out and stored immediately in my password protected laptop as word documents. Interviews raw data will be initially stored in my password protected mobile device and transferred immediately to my password protected laptop. Once all interviews are transferred to my protected laptop and u-disk where the archives are protected by password, I will destroy them immediately from my mobile device. I will explain to all participants that their data will be used anonymous with high confidentiality. I will also explain that I will retain their data for five years and then destroy the audio files. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants will be maintained by changing their names into pseudonyms. Moreover, all of participants will be informed about what kind of data I will collect and how I will deal with the data and they have the right to refuse the use of their data.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

I will indicate in the information sheet that this research is funded by the Saudi Ministry of Education to be submitted to the University of Exeter for the degree of Doctor of Education. The purpose of the study will be declared in the meeting and before each interview and how I will use the data collected will be explained to all participants.

USER ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK

Member validation technique will be used by providing each participant with the findings to confirm that I have correctly understood their interpretation of the phenomenon under study.

INFORMATION SHEET

Information Sheet for Participants (English)

Title of Research Project:

Performativity in Education and Its Impact on ELT Teachers Performance and Identities

I would like to invite you to participate in this project, which is concerned with English Language teachers in Saudi schools and how they perceive the prevailing culture of measurement and output and how this culture impacts their performance and identities as language teachers.

Why am I doing the project?

The research project will be submitted for the degree of doctor of education for the University of Exeter.

Appendix N:
Letter of Invitation to Participate (School Principals)

(Translated)

Date: September, 2017

Dear (principal's name),

Thank you for your wonderful cooperation with me throughout my career as a supervisor of EL teachers in your school. I am currently working on my doctoral studies at the University of Exeter in the UK. The topic of my dissertation revolves around issues relates to teachers' perceptions of performativity and its technological systems. As I have a prior knowledge of the high level of professionalism that the EL teachers in your school have, I would like to seek their participation in my study.

I am writing to seek your kind permission to grant me access to your school to be able to collect data for my study. I plan to visit the school for ten days for the period from December 2017 to January 2018. The research plan will be as follows. I need to have an initial meeting with the staff of English to explain the purpose of the study, encourage them to participate, and clarify how I intend to collect the data. Participation will be voluntary. Classroom Observation and interviews will be conducted at times that are convenient for each participant. I will ensure that my presence does not disturb the work in the school in any way.

The names of participating schools and teachers will not be disclosed when reporting the study.

Looking forward to your consent to grant me the permission to interview the teachers. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Kholoud Almanee

Ex-supervisor of English

Doctoral Candidate, University of Exeter, UK

Letter of Invitation to Participate (School Principles)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

اليوم:

التاريخ: سبتمبر ٢٠١٧

الاستاذة الفاضلة مديرة مدرسة/...

تحية طيبة وبعد،

اشكر لكم تعاونكم معي طوال فترة عملي معكم كموجهة لمادة اللغة الإنجليزية في الأعوام السابقة.حاليا أقوم بالتحضير للحصول على درجة الدكتوراه في فلسفة التعليم من جامعة اكسترالبريطانية.عنوان الأطروحة يتناول مفهوم الأدائية والأنظمة التكنولوجية المصاحبة لها.ولعلمي بكفاءة الطاقم التعليمي لديكم،اتطلع إلى مشاركة معلمات اللغة الانجليزية في مدرستكم في البحث الميداني.لذا آمل السماح لي بالتواجد في مدرستكم وذلك لمدة عشرة أيام متتالية في الفترة ما بين سبتمبر ٢٠١٧ إلى يناير ٢٠١٨ لغرض تجميع بيانات البحث.وسأبذل قصارى جهدي ألا يتسبب تواجدي بعرقلة أي من أنشطة المدرسة. وستكون خطة البحث كالتالي: في البداية سأقوم بعقد اجتماع مع المعلمات لشرح هدف البحث وخطته وتوضيح أن المشاركة ستكون اختيارية.وستتم الزيارة الصفية للمعلمات الراغبات بالمشاركة، كما سيتم اجراء مقابلات مع المعلمات المتطوعات بالمشاركة في أوقات مناسبة لهن بما لا يتعارض مع التزاماتهن المدرسية.وأود كذلك التنويه على حرصي التام على أن تكون معلومات المشاركات في هذا البحث في غاية السرية بما في ذلك اسم المدرسة.

مع جزيل الشكر على حسن تعاونكم
وتقبلوا فائق التقدير والاحترام
خلود المنيع
موجهة اللغة الانجليزية السابقة لديكم وطالبة دكتوراه حاليا في جامعة اكستر البريطانية

Appendix O:
Consent Form

Title of Research Project

Corporatisation of Education: Performativity in Education and Its Impact on ELT Teachers Performance and Identities

Details of Project

I am a graduate student at the University of Exeter and this research project will be submitted for the requirement of a doctorate of Philosophy in Education degree. This project will try to find out the impact of the current data-driven trend in education has affected English Language Teachers' performance and identity. Data collection methods will include field notes, interviews and classroom observation.

Contact Details

For further information about the research /interview data), please contact: Kholoud Almanee Postal address: *The University of Exeter*

Mail room, the old library Prince of Wales Road Exeter,Devon UK EC4 4SB

Telephone: 00 44 7533227779 Email: *ka341@exeter.ac.uk* If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact: Prof. Salah Troudi Email: *S.Troudi@exeter.ac.uk*

Consent

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project. I understand that:

- My participation in this study will be through interviewing me (45 minutes) probably more than once and observation in classroom. The interview will be recorded and excerpts of the interviews will be used in the final report of this research project.
- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may withdraw at any stage;
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me;
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations;
- If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form;

- All information I give will be treated as confidential; the researcher will make every effort to preserve my anonymity.

Data Protection Notice

The information you provide will be used for research purposes and your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and the University's notification lodged at the Information Commissioner's Office. Your personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties. The results of the research will be published in anonymised form. Data will be stored in a password protected document in a password protected computer. I will retain their data for 3 years and then destroy the audio files.

....
(Signature of participant) (Date)

.... (Printed name of participant)

Kholoud Almanee ....

(Printed name of researcher) (Signature of researcher)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher. Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data.

Appendix P:
Information Sheet for Participants

Title of Research Project:

Performativity in Education and Its Impact on ELT Teachers Performance and Identities

I would like to invite you to participate in this project, which is concerned with English Language teachers in Saudi schools and how they perceive the prevailing culture of measurement and output and how this culture impacts their performance and identities as language teachers.

Why am I doing the project?

The research project will be submitted for the degree of doctor of philosophy in education for the University of Exeter.

What will you have to do if you agree to take part?

1. We will arrange a time and place to meet, which are convenient for you

2. There will be an interview with myself during which I will ask you about (25-30) questions. The interview is expected to last no longer than one hour and may not be a one-off event as additional interviews could be conducted if needed to ensure accurate understanding or if new issues raised.

3. When I have completed the interview I will write down the transcript and send it to you to make sure that I have understood what you told me.

4. The interview will be conducted in Arabic or English or a mixture, depending on your preference.

5. One classroom observation will be arranged in a time that is convenient to you.

6. You may be asked to take part in the analysis if possible.

How much of your time will participation involve?

One interview lasting no more than one hour and one 45-minute classroom observation. However, more interviews could be conducted if needed.

Will your participation in the project remain confidential?

If you agree to take part, your name will not be recorded on the interview and the information will not be disclosed to other parties except my supervisor. Your responses to the questions will be recorded and used for the purpose of this project only and I will retain the audio files for 3 years and then destroy them. You can be assured that if you take part in the project you will remain anonymous.

What are the advantages of taking part?

You may find the project interesting and enjoy answering questions about your teaching experience. Once the study is finished it could help you understand your own experience.

Are there any disadvantages of taking part?

It could be that you are not comfortable talking about your personal experience. You are not obliged to answer every question should this be the case.

Do you have to take part in the study?

No, your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part. If you do not wish to take part you do not have to give a reason and you will not be contacted again. Similarly, if you do agree to participate you are free to withdraw at any time during the project if you change your mind.

What happens now?

If you are interested in taking part in the study you are asked to sign the consent form attached to this form and keep a copy as I keep the original. Once you sign the consent form I arrange to meet at a time and place that are convenient for you. If you decide you would rather not participate in this study, you could withdraw offering no explanation and no further contact will be made.